

Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behaviors that adults and adolescents use to control their intimate or dating partners. It can include physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and other controlling behaviors. The following questions may help you decide whether you are in an abusive relationship.

### Does your partner ever...

- hit, kick, shove or injure you?
- use weapons/objects against you or threaten to do so?
- force or coerce you to engage in unwanted sexual acts?
- threaten to hurt you or others, have you deported, disclose your sexual orientation or other personal information?
- control what you do and who you see in a way that interferes with your work, education or other personal activities?
- steal or destroy your belongings?
- constantly criticize you, call you names or put you down? make you feel afraid?
- deny your basic needs such as food, housing, clothing, or medical and physical assistance?

If you answered “yes” to any of the above, please know that help is available.

### For assistance call:

#### National Domestic Violence Hotline

[www.thehotline.org](http://www.thehotline.org)

1-800-799-SAFE (7233) / 1-800-787-3224 TTY

Secure online chat: <http://www.thehotline.org/what-is-live-chat/>

#### National Dating Abuse Helpline

[www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org)

1-866-331-9474 / Text “loveis” to 22522

Secure online chat: <http://www.loveisrespect.org/get-help/contact-us/chat-with-us>

### Access your local resources:

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This brochure is part of a series developed by the Capacity Building and Education Team of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence ([nrcdv.org](http://nrcdv.org)). It can be freely reproduced. For more information, call (800) 537-2238 or email [nrcdvTA@nrcdv.org](mailto:nrcdvTA@nrcdv.org).

 National Resource Center  
on Domestic Violence

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

### Putting the Pieces Together



### Finding Safety and Support

**No matter what others might say, you are never responsible for your partner's abusive actions. No one deserves to be abused.**

### It Can Happen To Anyone.

Domestic violence is a serious and widespread problem. On average, 24 people per minute are victims of rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Domestic violence can happen to anyone regardless of employment or educational level, race or ethnicity, religion, marital status, physical ability, age, gender, or sexual orientation.

### It Is Not Your Fault.

If you are being abused by your partner, you may feel confused, afraid, angry and/or trapped. All of these emotions are normal responses to abuse. You may also blame yourself for what is happening. However, please know that abuse is a purposeful and deliberate behavior where one person uses abusive tactics to gain power and control over another person. Abuse is never the victim's fault.

#### Citations

<sup>1</sup> Black, M.C., Basile, K.C., Breiding, M.J., Smith, S.G., Walters, M.L., Merrick, M.T., Chen, J., & Stevens, M.R. (2011). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Summary Report. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

### Help is Available.

Without help, domestic violence often continues to get more severe over time. It can sometimes become deadly. Please know that you have options.

- **Domestic violence programs.** These organizations offer free and confidential help to individuals in abusive relationships, including crisis intervention, safety planning, emergency shelter, advocacy and other supportive services. Contact information for your local program is on the back of this brochure.
- **Community support.** Friends, family, women's and community groups, places of worship, and service providers (such as legal, health, counseling centers) can also provide a variety of resources, support, and assistance.
- **Criminal charges.** If you or other loved ones have been physically injured, threatened, raped, harassed or stalked, you can report these crimes to the police. Criminal charges may lead to the person who is abusing you being arrested and possibly imprisoned.
- **Restraining/protective orders.** Even if you don't want to file a police report, you can file for a civil court order that directs your partner to stop abusing or to stay away from you. In many states, restraining/protective orders can also evict your partner from your home, grant support or child custody, or ban him or her from having weapons.

### Safety Planning is Key.

Many survivors find it helpful to implement concrete safety plans in the case of emergency, whether they are planning to leave or stay in the relationship. Here are some suggestions:

- Consider telling others you trust, such as friends, family, neighbors and co-workers, what is happening and talk about ways they might be able to help.
- Memorize emergency numbers for the local police, support persons and crisis hotlines. For example, the National Domestic Violence Hotline number is 1-800-799-SAFE (7233).
- Identify escape routes and places to go if you need to flee from an unsafe situation quickly.
- Talk with your children and/or other household members about what they should do if a violent incident occurs or if they are afraid.
- Put together an emergency bag with money/checkbooks, extra car keys, medicine, and important papers such as birth certificates, social security cards, immigration documents, and medical cards. Keep it somewhere safe and accessible, such as with a trusted friend or at your place of work.
- Trust your instincts – if you think you are in immediate danger, you probably are. If you are afraid for your safety and want the police to come to where you are now, call 911.

**Please contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 to develop a detailed, safety plan that is specific to your unique situation.**