

## Recognizing Family Maltreatment

Domestic violence is a pattern of behavior that has the goal of controlling an intimate partner by means of emotional (psychological), physical or sexual violence. It is also the deprivation of financial support, and the deliberate manipulation of the home environment so as to cause one partner in the relationship to feel trapped or isolated. The intent behind why a person acts is irrelevant in assessing domestic violence. The effect that the controlling behavior has on the victim is the key indicator in assessing domestic violence. Domestic violence is about patterns of behavior; patterns that seek to control and punish one partner in the relationship.

### Battered Mates

- Battered mates are found in all socioeconomic, educational, ethnic, racial and age groups
- Are psychologically, verbally and physically abused. They are also frequently sexually abused.

### Characteristics of Batterers

- Use excessive minimization and denial
- Long-suffering, martyr like endurance of frustration, passive acceptance, internalized anger.
- Stress disorders and psychosomatic complaints, sadness and depression.
- Economic and emotional dependency; high risk for secret drugs and alcohol, home accidents, high risk for co-dependency.
- Unlimited patience for discovery of "magic combination" in solving marital and abusive problems, "travels miles" on tiny bits of reinforcement.
- Uncertainty of own ego needs defines self in terms of partner, children, family, job, and other external components.
- Low self-esteem, continued faith and hope that battering mate will get "lucky" break.
- Unrealistic hope that change is imminent, belief in "promises."
- Gradually increased social isolation including loss of contact with immediate family and friends.
- Inability to convince partner of loyalty, futilely guarding against accusations of "seductive" behavior towards others, compliant, helpless, and powerlessness.
- Constant fear and terror, which gradually becomes cumulative and oppressive with time.
- Helplessly "allowing" containment or confinement/restriction by mate; usually misinterpreted as caring behavior.
- Gradually losing sight of personal boundaries for self and children; unable to assess danger accurately; accepts all blame.
- Belief that transient acceptance of violent behavior will ultimately lead to long term resolution of family problems.
- Emotional acceptance of guilt for mate's behavior; thinks mate "can't help it;" considers own behavior as provocative.
- Generational history of witnessing abuse in family and/or being used.
- Participation in pecking order battering.
- "Creative" behavior which either diverts or precipitates mate's violence; but level of carelessness increases (judgment of lethality potential deteriorates) over time.
- Poor sexual self-image, assumes that role is total acceptance of partner's sexual behavior. Attempts at abstinence result in further abuse.
- High risk for assaults/abuse during pregnancy.
- Frequent contemplation of suicide; history of minor attempts, occasionally completes suicide or becomes a homicide victim; frequently wishes partner dead. Occasionally completes homicide in self-defense.
- Powerless in custody issues; lives in fear children will be "kidnapped," struggles to maintain rights of children and self; may use "underground" to escape.

## Forms of Spouse Abuse

There are many forms of abuse directed toward women that many of us may or may not have recognized as abusive situations. Below is a list of some of these situations for your awareness:

### Physical Abuse

- Has your partner done any of these things to you?
- Pushed you or shoved you
- Held you to keep you from leaving
- Slapped or bit you
- Kicked or choked you
- Hit or punched you
- Thrown objects at you
- Locked you out of the house
- Abandoned you in dangerous places
- Refused to help you when you were sick, injured, or pregnant
- Subjected you to reckless driving
- Forced you off the road or kept you from driving threatened or hurt you with a weapon

### Sexual Abuse

- Has your partner done any of these things to you?
- Told jokes or made demeaning remarks about your gender
- Treated you as a sex object
- Been jealously, angry, assuming you would have sex with any available individual
- Insisted you dress in a more sexual way than you wanted
- Minimized the importance of your feelings about sex
- Criticized you sexually
- Insisted on unwanted and uncomfortable touching
- Withheld sex and affection
- Called you sexual names
- Forced you to strip when you didn't want to
- Publicly showed sexual interest in others
- Had affairs with others after agreeing to a monogamous relationship
- Forced sex with him/her or others or forced you to watch others
- Forced particular unwanted sex acts
- Forced sex after beating you
- Forced sex when you were sick or it was a danger to your health
- Forced sex for the purpose of hurting you with objects or weapons
- Committed sadistic sexual acts
- Raped you

### Emotional Abuse

- Has your partner?
- Ignored your feelings
- Ridiculed or insulted your gender as a group
- Ridiculed or insulted your most valued beliefs, your religion, heritage, or class
- Withheld approval, appreciation, or affection as a punishment
- Continually criticized you, called you names, shouted at you

- Insulted or drove away your friends or family
- Humiliated you in public or private
- Refused to socialize with you
- Took car keys or money away
- Regularly threatened to leave or told you to leave
- Threatened to hurt you or your family
- Punished or deprived the children when he/she was angry at you
- Threatened to kidnap the children when he/she was angry at you
- Abused pets to hurt you
- Told you about affairs he/she imagined you were having
- Manipulated you with lies and contradictions

### **Effects of Family Maltreatment of Children**

Facts on children growing up in abusive homes

- Domestic violence is a crime against all family members, but its saddest victims are children. Seventy-percent of children living in violent homes are themselves physically abused or seriously neglected.
- When children witness abuse, or are abused, they are seeing, hearing and learning about violence. They learn that the people you love most may hurt you, that living in fear is normal, and that violence is the way to handle conflict. As they learn, a generational cycle begins in which children grow up to be victims and abusers as adults.

### **Emotional/Behavioral Problems**

- Anxiety: children worry about when the next outbreak of violence will occur
- Fear: children are afraid that one parent will die or be seriously injured
- Guilt: Children think the abuse is their fault
- Confused Feelings: Children are upset by their mixed feelings of love and hate for parents and of fearing the wanting to be with the abuser
- Lack of Trust: Children have difficulty in forming positive relationships due to lack of parental nurturing
- Poor Self-esteem: children inherit low self-esteem from parents
- Aggressiveness: Many children "act out" violence they witness at home
- Passiveness: Some children are overly eager to please any adult
- Role Reversal: Children are often placed in the parental or caretaker role, because the parents are too involved in the abusive situation to adequately address the family's needs
- School Problems: Children want to stay home, because they think they can control the abuse. This results in truancy, poor attention span, grade failing and dropping out
- Depression: Children feel overwhelmed by their inability to stop abuse, and in some cases children are suicidal

### **Physical Problems**

- Developmental Delays: children are often behind developmentally, due to lack of parental nurturing and stress. In babies, this takes the form of failure to thrive
- Speech Disorders: Children develop speech disorders as a result of stress
- Stress-Related Ailments: Children often complain about headaches, stomachaches, and feeling bad. Children are accident-prone. Children may wet the bed
- Physical Abuse: Children are often themselves victims of abuse

### **When They Grow Older**

- Children, who experience violence at home, often turn this violence out on the community. A high percentage of juvenile delinquents are battered children. Eight percent of men in prisons grew up in violent homes. In murders by boys aged 11-20, 63% killed the men who were abusing their mothers.
- Often teenagers from violent homes turn to drugs and alcohol. Many escape into early marriages and/or pregnancies.
- Violence is a learned behavior. Many children who witness abuse grow up to repeat the behavior as spouses and as parents. Seventy-three percent of batterers witnessed violence as children.

### **Child Abuse & Neglect**

Any intentional action or inaction, or any reckless behavior that has the result of causing harm to a minor child in the custody of an adult. In most cases where a child is not in the custody of the alleged offender adult, their actions may not be defined as abuse but rather as child endangerment or assault of one degree or another. Physical, emotional (psychological), and sexual abuse are the more often discussed forms of child abuse. However leaving a young child in a car on a hot day will likely cause its death long before any of the above. Unattended children provide the largest number of referrals for Family Advocacy because concerned citizens do not want to see them get hurt or violated by a stranger. Intentional inaction such as failing to provide adequate opportunity for medical care, nutrition and education also constitute cases where Family Advocacy would receive a report and activate an assessment.

### **Child Maltreatment**

Includes physical injury, sexual maltreatment, emotional maltreatment, deprivation of necessities, or a combination by an individual responsible for the child's welfare under circumstances indicating that the child's welfare is harmed or threatened. The term encompasses either acts or omissions on the part of the responsible person.

### **Physical Abuse**

Acts against a child that causes physical injury to the victim. Major injuries include brain damage or skull fracture, subdural hemorrhage or hematoma, bone fracture, shaking or twisting of infants and young children, dislocations or sprains, internal injury, poisoning, burns or scalds, severe cuts, lacerations, bruises, or welts; or other physical injury that seriously impairs the health or physical well-being of the child victim.

Minor injuries include minor cuts, bruises, or welts or other shaking or twisting incidents that do not result in significant injury.

### **Child Neglect**

Acts of omission or commission that result, or could reasonably be expected to result in physical or emotional harm to the victim. This includes, but is not limited to, failure to provide the victim with nourishment, clothing, shelter, health care, education, and supervision. "Failure to thrive" may be evidence of neglect.

### **Child Sexual Abuse**

This category of maltreatment includes the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or having a child assist any person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct (or simulation of such conduct) or the rape, molestation, prostitution, or other such forms of sexual exploitation of children, or incest with children. All sexual activity between an offender and a child, when the offender is in a caretaker relationship with the child, is sexual maltreatment. Child sexual

abuse specifically includes the following:

### **Exploitation**

Forcing a child to look at the offender's genitals.

Forcing a child to observe an offender masturbate.

Exposing a child's genitals for the sexual gratification of the offender(s).

Talking to a child in a sexually explicit manner.

Surreptitious viewing of a child while undressed for the offender(s)' sexual gratification or the involvement of the child in sexual activity such as pornography or prostitution.

### **Incest**

Sexually explicit activity between a child and a parent, stepparent, adoptive parent, an older sibling, or other relative too closely related to be permitted by law to marry.

### **Molestation**

Fondling or stroking a breast or genitals, oral sex, or attempted penetration of the victim's vagina or rectum.

### **Rape or Intercourse**

Sexual intercourse between an offender, male or female, and a child involving the penetration of the child's vagina or rectum, however slight, by means of physical force or emotional manipulation; taking advantage of a child's naiveté by encouraging and having sexual intercourse with a child.

## **INDICATORS OF POSSIBLE CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT**

Child abuse is an action or series of actions inflicted upon a child that causes harm and leaves scars. These scars can be physical, emotional, or spiritual and may not be evident to the casual observer. Abuse damages bodies, minds, self-esteem, relationships, and family systems. In the United States, there are over one million cases of child abuse each year. Over two thousand children die each year from child abuse. Even more frightening is the mounting evidence that abused children often grow up to be abusive and violent adults. Eight of ten criminals in prison were either victims or witnesses of family violence.

Children who have been abused and their families need help. Reporting suspected abuse could help abusive families break the cycle of violence. Many people think they must be able to prove the abuse in order to report it. This isn't true. You don't have to prove it; the task of substantiating abuse is handled by the staff of the Family Advocacy Program in conjunction with the Family Maltreatment Case Management Team and/or the local county Children Services. The bottom line is, "When in doubt, check it out."

Air Force Instruction 40-301 states that all active duty military personnel and DOD civilian employees are mandated to **report all suspected family maltreatment.**

Child maltreatment is usually categorized as either physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect. Following are definitions and possible indicators of each of these areas. This list is not all-inclusive.

*Please remember that not all children with behavior problems are abused children.*