

OCTOBER IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

Surveys indicate that 1 in 4 women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime. Domestic Violence is a pattern of violent and coercive



behavior exercised by one adult over another in an intimate relationship. It is not “marital conflict,” “mutual abuse,” “a lovers’ quarrel,” or “a private family matter.” Domestic Violence may consist of repeated, severe beatings, or more subtle forms of abuse, including threats and control.

Eighty-five percent of domestic violence victims are women, although men may also be victims. It happens in every congregation or mosque. Regardless of who is being

victimimized, domestic violence is a serious problem that needs to be addressed by religious communities.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS...

PHYSICAL ASSAULT: Includes shoving, pushing, restraining, hitting or kicking.

SEXUAL ASSAULT: Any time one partner forces sexual acts that are unwanted or declined by the other partner.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSAULT: Includes isolation from family and friends, forced financial dependence, verbal and emotional abuse, threats, intimidation, and control over the partner’s activities.

ATTACKS AGAINST PROPERTY AND PETS: Destruction of property, household objects or treasured objects belonging to the victim, or abusing or killing beloved pets.

WHY DOES SHE STAY?

She stays because she is terrified that he will become more violent if she leaves, that he will try to take the children, and that she can’t make it on her own.

I AM AFRAID AND NEED TO TALK TO SOMEONE

Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline:

1-800-799-7233 (24 hours)

1-800-787-3224 (TDD)

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WHAT CAN I DO TO BE HELPFUL IF AN ABUSIVE SITUATION IS REVEALED?

- **Listen to the woman and believe her.** Tell her that the abuse is not her fault and this is not God's will for her.
- **Refer her only to specialized domestic violence counseling programs,** not to couples counseling. Help her find a shelter, safe home or advocacy resources to offer her protection.
- **Hold the abuser accountable.** Don't minimize his abusive behavior. Support him in seeking specialized batterers' counseling to help change his behavior. Continue to hold him accountable and to support and protect the victim even after he has begun a counseling program.
- **Restoration of the relationship** can be considered only after the above steps have taken place.

"Have pity on me, O God, for I am in distress with sorrow my eye is consumed; my soul also, and my body. I am like a dish that is broken... But my trust is in you, O God; I say, 'You are my God.'" (Psalm 31:10-15)

Religious teachings can serve either as a roadblock or a resource. **There is nothing in Christian, Jewish or Muslim teachings that can rightly be used to justify abuse.** However, there are teachings that can be misused and distorted to suggest that domestic violence may be acceptable, or even God's will. As religious communities, our mandate is to minimize any roadblocks facing victims and to maximize the resources that exist within our religious traditions.



Working together to end sexual & domestic violence

BOOKS AVAILABLE THROUGH FAITHTRUST INSTITUTE:

Keeping the Faith: Guidance for Christian Women Facing Abuse, Rev. Dr. Marie Fortune

Opening the Door: A Pastor's Guide to Addressing Domestic Violence in Premarital Counseling, Rev. Susan Yarrow Morris

For information about these and other educational materials and resources, visit www.faithtrustinstitute.org or call toll free 877-860-2255.

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