

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

What every congregation needs to know about domestic violence

Surveys indicate that one in every four women and one in seven men will experience domestic violence in their lifetime. **Domestic Violence** refers to 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.” It may consist of repeated, severe beatings, or more subtle forms of abuse, including threats and control.

Statistics show that 85% of domestic violence victims are women, although men are also victims. Regardless of who is being victimized, domestic violence is a serious problem that needs to be addressed by religious communities.

The four basic types of domestic violence:

- **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 where the partner can go and what she/he can do.
- **Attacks Against Property and Pets:** Destruction of property, which may include household objects or treasured objects belonging to the victim, hitting the walls, or abusing or killing beloved pets.

Why do they stay? Victims stay for many reasons. Often she/he is terrified that the abuser will become more violent, that the children will be taken away, and/or that they have nowhere to go.

What can I do to be helpful if an abusive situation is revealed?

Listen to the victim and believe them. Let them know that the abuse is not their fault and this is not God’s will.

- Tell them that they are not alone and that help is available.
- Explain that without intervention, abuse often escalates in frequency and severity over time.
- Seek expert assistance. Refer only to specialized domestic violence counseling programs, not to couples counseling. Help find a shelter, safe home, or advocacy resources to offer her/him protection and options. *Suggesting that the victim returns home potentially places the victim and children in real danger.*
- Hold the abuser accountable. Don’t minimize abusive behavior. Support the abuser in seeking specialized batterers’ counseling to help change their behavior. Continue to hold him/her accountable while also supporting and protecting the victim even, after the counseling program has begun.
- If restoration of the relationship is to occur, it can be considered only after the above steps have taken place.

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

What every congregation needs to know about domestic violence

Surveys indicate that one in every four women and one in seven men will experience domestic violence in their lifetime. **Domestic Violence** refers to 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.” It may consist of repeated, severe beatings, or more subtle forms of abuse, including threats and control.

Statistics show that 85% of domestic violence victims are women, although men are also victims. Regardless of who is being victimized, domestic violence is a serious problem that needs to be addressed by religious communities.

The four basic types of domestic violence:

- **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 where the partner can go and what she/he can do.
- **Attacks Against Property and Pets:** Destruction of property, which may include household objects or treasured objects belonging to the victim, hitting the walls, or abusing or killing beloved pets.

Why do they stay? Victims stay for many reasons. Often she/he is terrified that the abuser will become more violent, that the children will be taken away, and/or that they have nowhere to go.

What can I do to be helpful if an abusive situation is revealed?

Listen to the victim and believe them. Let them know that the abuse is not their fault and this is not God’s will.

- Tell them that they are not alone and that help is available.
- Explain that without intervention, abuse often escalates in frequency and severity over time.
- Seek expert assistance. Refer only to specialized domestic violence counseling programs, not to couples counseling. Help find a shelter, safe home, or advocacy resources to offer her/him protection and options. *Suggesting that the victim returns home potentially places the victim and children in real danger.*
- Hold the abuser accountable. Don’t minimize abusive behavior. Support the abuser in seeking specialized batterers’ counseling to help change their behavior. Continue to hold him/her accountable while also supporting and protecting the victim, even after the counseling program has begun.
- If restoration of the relationship is to occur, it can be considered only after the above steps have taken place.

Religious teachings can serve either as a roadblock or a resource in addressing domestic violence. There is nothing in Christian, Jewish or Muslim teaching 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. When these teachings or interpretations of scripture are misused, they become roadblocks to ending the abuse.

As religious communities, our mandate is to minimize any roadblocks facing abused members of our congregations and to maximize the resources that exist within our religious traditions.

*"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)*

For information on religious issues and domestic violence:



2900 Eastlake Avenue E., Ste. 200, Seattle, WA 98102
www.faithtrustinstitute.org • 206-634-1903

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, Susan Yarrow Morris

For more information about these and other educational materials, visit

www.faithtrustinstitute.org
or call toll free 877-860-2255.

I need help. Who can I call?

Where can I find more information for victims and survivors?

National Domestic Violence Hotline

1-800-799-7233 (24 hours)

1-800-787-3224 (TDD)

Religious teachings can serve either as a roadblock or a resource in addressing domestic violence. There is nothing in Christian, Jewish or Muslim teaching 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. When these teachings or interpretations of scripture are misused, they become roadblocks to ending the abuse.

As religious communities, our mandate is to minimize any roadblocks facing abused members of our congregations and to maximize the resources that exist within our religious traditions.

*"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)*

For information on religious issues and domestic violence:



2900 Eastlake Avenue E., Ste. 200, Seattle, WA 98102
www.faithtrustinstitute.org • 206-634-1903

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, Susan Yarrow Morris

For more information about these and other educational materials, visit

www.faithtrustinstitute.org
or call toll free 877-860-2255.

I need help. Who can I call?

Where can I find more information for victims and survivors?

National Domestic Violence Hotline

1-800-799-7233 (24 hours)

1-800-787-3224 (TDD)