



**DASH**

# Domestic Violence Training Manual

## Domestic violence takes many forms.

Many people think those in a domestic violence situation have an easy way out. But the reality is, victims are forced to overcome a host of obstacles and barriers in order to get safe from abuse.

The District Alliance for Safe Housing (DASH) provides safe housing and services for survivors of domestic violence — no matter what their situation. From emergency and long-term housing to support and expert advice about available options, DASH helps survivors rebuild their lives on their own terms.

*Updated: March 2018*

**DISTRICT ALLIANCE FOR SAFE HOUSING**



**D A S H**

# Definition of Domestic Violence & Examples of Abusive Behaviors

## Domestic Violence is:

- A pattern of abusive behaviors that is assaultive and coercive.
- Used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another.
- Directed towards an intimate partner, dating or formerly dating relationship or a family member.

## Domestic Violence takes many different forms and can include:

- **Physical Abuse:** Hitting, slapping, shoving, grabbing, pinching, biting, hair-pulling, biting, etc. Physical abuse also includes denying a partner medical care or forcing alcohol and/or drug use.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Coercing or attempting to coerce any sexual contact or behavior without consent. Sexual abuse includes, but is certainly not limited to marital rape, attacks on sexual parts of the body, forcing sex after physical violence has occurred, or treating one in a sexually demeaning manner.
- **Emotional Abuse:** Undermining an individual's sense of self-worth and/or self-esteem. This may include, but is not limited to constant criticism, diminishing one's abilities, name-calling, or damaging one's relationship with his or her children.
- **Economic Abuse:** Making or attempting to make an individual financially dependent by maintaining total control over financial resources, withholding one's access to money, or forbidding one's attendance at school or employment.
- **Psychological Abuse:** Causing fear by intimidation; threatening physical harm to self, partner, children, or partner's family or friends; destruction of pets and property; and forcing isolation from family, friends, or school and/or work.
- **Social Abuse:** This involves isolating the individual from their social networks and supports by either preventing them from having contact with their family or friends or by verbally or physically abusing her in public.
- **Stalking:** Sometimes the victim is stalked by the perpetrator either before or after separation. Stalking includes loitering around places the individual is known to frequent, watching them, following them, and making persistent phone calls.

**Domestic violence does not discriminate.** It crosses the demographic lines of age, race, ethnicity, socio-economic class, gender, sexual orientation, educational level, religion, and ability—physical or mental. This violence occurs in every neighborhood. It occurs in the homes of college professors, corporate executives, doctors, lawyers, judges, and clergy as easily as it takes place in the homes of day laborers, store clerks, and homemakers.

Source: DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Safe Harbor

# Causes of Domestic Violence

**Domestic violence is a LEARNED behavior. It is reinforced by cultural values and beliefs that are repeatedly communicated through the media and other societal institutions that tolerate it.**

The perpetrator's violence is further supported when peers, family members, or others in the community (e.g., coworkers, social service providers, police, or clergy) minimize or ignore the abuse and fail to provide consequences. As a result, the abuser learns that not only is the behavior justified, but also it is acceptable.

Psychopathology, substance abuse, poverty, cultural factors, anger, stress, and depression often are thought to cause domestic violence. While there is little empirical evidence that these factors are direct causes of domestic violence, research suggests that they can affect its severity, frequency, and the nature of the perpetrator's abusive behavior. Although there is debate among researchers regarding a definitive theory to explain domestic violence, there is little disagreement that it is an insidious problem requiring a complex solution.

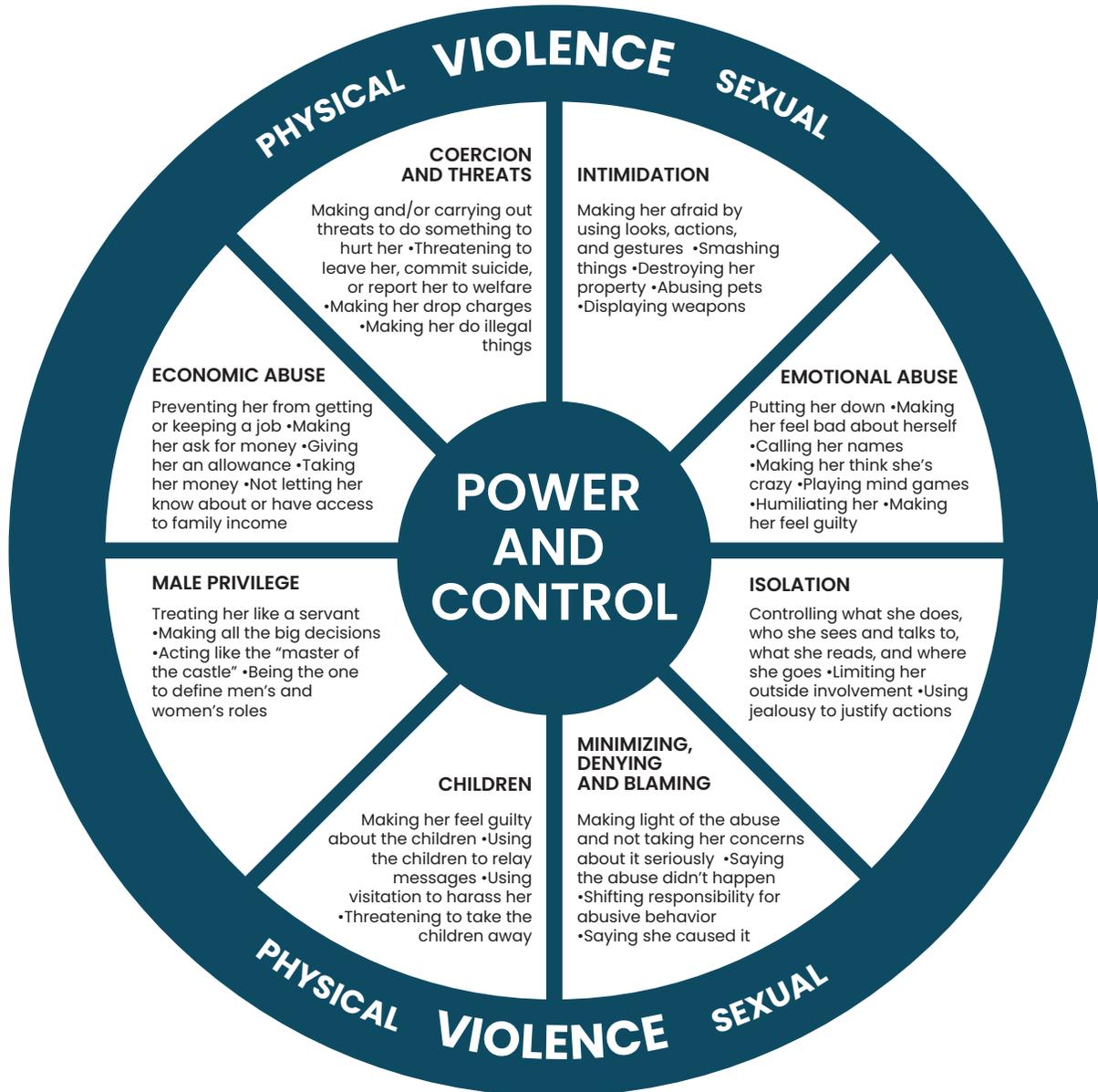


## Domestic Violence

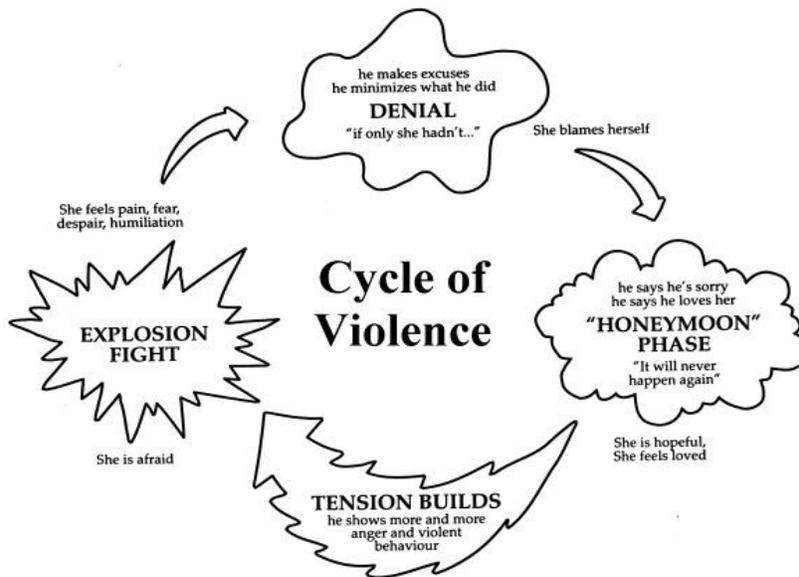
<b>Is NOT caused by</b>	<b>Is caused by</b>
Alcohol abuse; Drugs; Anger management; Behavior of the victim; Genetics; Depression; Stress	Childhood observations of domestic violence; One's experience of victimization; Exposure to community, school, or peer group violence; Living in a culture of violence

Source: Administration for Children and Families

# Power and Control Wheel



Adapted from the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, Duluth Minnesota



\* The cycle can cover a long or short period of time  
\* The violence usually gets worse  
\* The "honeymoon" phase, then the denial phase, will eventually disappear

### Phase One: Normal Phase

- Batterer and victim behave "normally" – no extreme behavior on batterer's part  
Strong motivation for the victim to remain in the relationship, because it provides hope for a normal life
- Eventually, old habits and behavior will begin to resurface
- In the distance another storm looms.

### Phase Two: Tension building Phase

- The victim can sense tension mounting.
- Struggle for dominance and control increases.
- Warning signs appear (l.e. words, glances, intimidating gestures).
- Victim may become compliant or nurturing or provoke the attack.

### Phase Three: The Violent Incident

- An explosion leads to a violent incident (including physical, sexual, and/or psychological abuse).
- Violent incident followed by feelings of embarrassment, shock, confusion, numbness or disbelief.
- This is the most dangerous time for a victim.
- This pushes the victim away from the relationship

### Phase Four: Honeymoon or Calm Phase

- The calm after the storm
- Batterer may express contrition, guilt, and/or show extreme kindness.
- This phase is designed to pull the victim back in to the relationship after being pushed away by the batterer's violence
- This phase is the safest time to leave for a victim, however, it is also the most difficult time to leave

Source: The Battered Woman by Lenore Walker and Safe Harbor

# Common Effects of Domestic Violence on Children

Research studies consistently have found the presence of three categories of childhood problems associated with exposure to domestic violence:

**Behavioral, social, and emotional problems**—higher levels of aggression, anger, hostility, oppositional behavior, and disobedience; fear, anxiety, withdrawal, and depression; poor peer, sibling, and social relationships; low self-esteem.

**Cognitive and attitudinal problems**—lower cognitive functioning, poor school performance, lack of conflict resolution skills, limited problem-solving skills, acceptance of violent behaviors and attitudes, belief in rigid gender stereotypes and male privilege.

**Long-term problems**—higher levels of adult depression and trauma symptoms, increased tolerance for and use of violence in adult relationships

Based on The National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence (NSCEV, 2015)

- 37.3% of youth (4,000 participants) in study experienced a physical assault
- 2% of girls experienced sexual assault or sexual abuse
- 15.2% of children and youth experienced maltreatment by a caregiver
- 5.8% witnessed an assault between parents

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in Children (PTSD):

Some children exposed to violence develop symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. Many children who do not meet the criteria for an official PTSD diagnosis will also display some of these symptoms:

- **Preoccupation/re-experiencing** Children may think about a traumatic experience over and over again. They may be unable to get the experience out of their minds, making it difficult to finish school and other tasks.
- **Hyperarousal** Children exposed to violence may always appear “on guard.” This includes being irritable and easily startled and having difficulty relaxing and staying calm.
- **Numbness/avoidance** To avoid feeling upset, children may stay away from situations, people, or places that remind them of the traumatic event. They may forget parts of what happened or use drugs and alcohol to avoid feelings. If the exposure to violence occurred at school, the school must work hard to overcome the experience. However, if the exposure to violence occurred at home, the school may be a place where the child feels safe.

Sources: Administration for Children and Families and The Safe Start Center Series on Children Exposed to Violence Issue Brief

# Danger Assessment: The Warning Signs of an Abusive Relationship

Many people wish to have a formula to determine the probability that someone will be physically abusive. We have documented some common characteristics that abusers share, along with a brief discussion about each behavior. Please be warned that it is not uncommon to under or overestimate the margin of safety.

**Domestic Violence Advocates also warn that if there is any doubt, danger assessments should be carried out by trained professionals.** There is plenty of room for intuition and gut feeling about personal safety, but the following traits and behaviors can serve as a good rule of thumb.

1. **Past Battering:** An abuser may admit that they have assaulted past partners, but that the partner made them do it. The abuser may hear from relatives or ex-spouses that they're abusive. Situational circumstances do not create a battering personality and a batterer has the potential to abuse any person they're with.
2. **Threats of Violence:** These would include any threat of physical force meant to control their partner. "I'll slap your mouth off; I'll kill you; I'll break your neck." In a healthy relationship people do not threaten their mates in this manner but a batterer will try to excuse this behavior by saying everyone makes these kinds of threats or that the victim is taking them too seriously.
3. **Breaking or Striking Objects:** This is used to punish and also to terrorize the victim into submission. They may pound on the table with their fist or throw objects around their partner to intimidate or frighten them.
4. **Any Force During an Argument:** This may involve holding their partner down, physically restraining them from leaving the room, any pushing or shoving, spitting or hair pulling. They may hold them against the wall and say, "You are going to listen to me." Any force during an argument is very dangerous. More often than not, the force becomes more intense with each occurrence.
5. **Jealousy:** In the beginning, an abuser will say their jealousy is a sign of love; however, it is really a sign of insecurity and possessiveness. They will question whom the victim talks to. They will not like the time the victim spends with friends, family, or even children. As the jealousy progresses, they may call the victim frequently during the day and stop by unexpectedly. They may refuse to let the victim work for fear they may meet someone else. They may check the car mileage, or ask friends to watch the victim when they are gone.
6. **Controlling Behavior:** At first, the batterer will often say that this behavior is for the victims' safety, that they want the victim to make good decisions, or use their time well. The abuser will be angry if she is late coming back from the store or an appointment. They will question the victim closely about where they went or who they talked to. As this behavior gets worse, they may not let the victim make personal decisions about the house, choice of clothing, or if the victim may go to church. They may keep all the money and go so far as to have the victim ask permission to leave the house or room. Extreme controlling behavior is fundamental to an abusive personality.

7. **Quick Involvement:** Many battered people dated or knew their abuser for less than six months before they were married or living together. The abuser comes on like a whirlwind, claiming “love at first sight”, and tells the victim things like “you’re the only one I could ever talk to” or “I’ve never felt like this about anyone else but you.” The abuser is insecure and needs someone desperately and pressures for commitment.
8. **Isolation:** They will try to cut the victim off from all their support and resources. For instance if the victim is a straight woman and has male friends, she is a “whore;” if she has female friends, she is a “lesbian.” If the victim is close to their family, then they are “tied to the apron strings.” The abuser accuses people who do support the victim of “causing trouble.” They may want to live in the country without a phone, or refuse to let the victim use the family car. They may not want the victim to work or go to school where they may make new friends.
9. **Blame Others for Their Problems:** If they are consistently unemployed, someone is doing them wrong and is out to get him. They may make mistakes and then blame their partner for upsetting them or keeping them from concentrating or doing their job. The victim is at fault for almost everything that goes wrong in their lives.
10. **Hypersensitivity:** An abuser is very easily insulted or hurt when really they are mad. The slightest setbacks are personal attacks. Things that are normally part of living, like getting a traffic ticket, working overtime, or being asked to help with chores, cause them to rant and rave.
11. **“Playful” Use of Force in Sex:** Acting out fantasies during sex where the victim is helpless is commonplace. An abuser shows little concern about whether the victim wants to have sex and uses sulking, anger, and other manipulative behavior until they comply. They may start to have sex with the victim while they are sleeping or demand sex when they are tired or ill.
12. **Stereotyped Gender Roles:** The abuser expects their partner to serve them. They will say they must stay at home. They will expect that they must obey them in all things...even things that are criminal in nature. The victim is seen as inferior to the abuser, unintelligent, and unable to be a whole person without a relationship.
13. **Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde:** Many victims are confused by the sudden mood swings of their abuser. Abusers are often described as sweet as honey one minute and explosively violent the next. This does not indicate that they have special mental problems or that they are “crazy.” Explosiveness and mood swings are typical of those who beat their partners, and these behaviors are related to other characteristics such as hypersensitivity.
14. **Verbal Abuse:** We are not talking about a family argument. We are referring to a pattern of cruel and deliberate verbal assaults that are degrading and humiliating. Over time the victim begins to feel stupid and unable to function without the direction or permission of the abuser.
15. **Cruelty to Animals or Children:** This is a common trait among batterers. An abuser will brutally punish or kill an animal with no regard for its helplessness. They may demand that children behave or perform in a manner far beyond their ability, such as whipping a two-year-old for soiling a diaper. They may enjoy teasing children until they cry. They may expect children to stay in their room all evening or not allow them to eat at the table.

Source: Council on Family Violence

## Why Do They Stay?

For someone who has never been abused, it can be hard to understand why people don't just leave if they are being abused by their partner.

There are a number of reasons why people stay in unhealthy relationships – it is never as black and white as it may seem to outsiders. It is not our responsibility to tell survivors that they need to leave, it's our responsibility to make sure that they are safe and supported in any choice they make.



Additionally, this question puts the impetus and blame on the victim, not where it belongs on the batterer. The more important question is, **why do people abuse their partners, why don't they just stop?**

- **LOVE.** Many survivors remember the person they fell in love with (prior to the abuse beginning) and want to believe the abuse will end. Often, survivors don't want the relationship to end; they only want the abuse to stop.
- **TERROR.** Abusers terrorize, threaten, and intimidate their partners. Statistically, the chances of the abuser severely injuring or murdering their partner significantly escalates when the partner is trying to leave the relationship.
- **MONEY.** Many survivors have few financial resources. The abuser may destroy the survivor's credit history, maintains control of the household income, and/or causes the survivor's job termination by harassing the survivor at work.
- **ISOLATION.** The abuser may physically isolate the survivor in the house by locking the survivor in a room, and may take the telephone when leaving so the survivor has little, if any, contact with anyone outside the home.
- **SHAME.** Although abuse is never the survivor's fault, many survivors feel ashamed that someone is hurting them. Survivors may believe, "this doesn't happen to people like me."
- **FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN.** Will the abuser continue to stalk and terrorize me after I leave? Will I be alone the rest of my life? Will the children and I end up homeless? Will people believe me or blame me when I seek help?
- **IMPACT OF ONGOING ABUSE.** The survivor's sense of self has likely been damaged by ongoing abuse. Their identity may be entirely enmeshed in the abuser's identity due to isolation and ongoing verbal and/or physical abuse. They may start to believe the abuse is their fault or that they're an inherently bad person.
- **ABUSER IS RESPECTED COMMUNITY MEMBER.** The abuser may be a community leader such as a religious leader, a high-ranking law enforcement officer, a doctor, or a well-known politician. Often, abusers are charming, witty people that most people think are "great people."
- **HOMELESSNESS.** The survivor may risk being homeless if they decide to leave, their name may be on the lease, they may not have money for a down deposit or rent. Which is why DASH exists.

Source: Americans Overseas Domestic Violence Crisis Center

# Local Domestic Violence Resources

The DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence provides an extensive listing of domestic violence resources in DC, Maryland and Virginia. Go to [dcccadv.org](http://dcccadv.org) for more resources

**House of Ruth:** (202)-667-7001 – [www.houseofruth.org/](http://www.houseofruth.org/)

Offers 24-hour shelter/safe house program for battered women and their children with support groups, case management, children's program, economic/financial advocacy, services for men, mental health services, substance abuse services and emergency shelter.

**My Sisters Place:** (202)-540-1064 – <http://www.mysistersplacedc.org/>

Offers shelter/safe house program for battered women and their children with support groups, bilingual (Spanish) advocates, case management, community education, mental health services and children's services.

**SAFE (Survivors and Advocates for Empowerment), Inc:** (202)-879-0720 – <http://dcsafe.org/>

A court-based support center providing legal advocacy and referrals.

## Hotlines

**My Sister's Place** 1-844-443-5732

**DC Rape Crisis Center** 202- 333-RAPE

**Prince Georges County Family Crisis Center** 301-731-1203

**Prince Georges County Sexual Assault Center** 301-618-3154

**Virginia Family Violence & Sexual Assault Hotline** 1-800-838-8238

**National Domestic Violence Hotline** 1.800.799.SAFE(7233);  
TTY: 1.800.787.3224

**Gay and Lesbian National Hotline** 1-888-843-4564