

What Is Domestic Abuse?

Domestic abuse, also called "domestic violence" or "intimate partner violence", can be defined as a pattern of behavior in any relationship that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. Abuse is physical, sexual, emotional, economic or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This includes any behaviors that frighten, intimidate, terrorize, manipulate, hurt, humiliate, blame, injure, or wound someone. Domestic abuse can happen to anyone of any race, age, sexual orientation, religion, or gender. It can occur within a range of relationships including couples who are married, living together or dating. Domestic violence affects people of all socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels.

Anyone can be a victim of domestic violence, regardless of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, faith or class

Victims of domestic abuse may also include a child or other relative, or any other household member.

Domestic abuse is typically manifested as a pattern of abusive behavior toward an intimate partner in a dating or family relationship, where the abuser exerts power and control over the victim.

Domestic abuse can be mental, physical, economic or sexual in nature. Incidents are rarely isolated, and usually escalate in frequency and severity. Domestic abuse may culminate in serious physical injury or death.

Are You Being Abused?

Look over the following questions to think about how you are being treated and how you treat your partner.

Recognizing the signs of domestic abuse

Does your partner...

- Embarrass or make fun of you in front of your friends or family?
- Put down your accomplishments?
- Make you feel like you are unable to make decisions?
- Use intimidation or threats to gain compliance?
- Tell you that you are nothing without them?
- Treat you roughly—grab, push, pinch, shove or hit you?
- Call you several times a night or show up to make sure you are where you said you would be?
- Use drugs or alcohol as an excuse for saying hurtful things or abusing you?
- Blame you for how they feel or act?

- Pressure you sexually for things you aren't ready for?
- Make you feel like there is "no way out" of the relationship?
- Prevent you from doing things you want – like spending time with friends or family?
- Try to keep you from leaving after a fight or leave you somewhere after a fight to "teach you a lesson"?

Do you...

- Sometimes feel scared of how your partner may behave?
- Constantly make excuses to other people for your partner's behaviour?
- Believe that you can help your partner change if only you changed something about yourself?
- Try not to do anything that would cause conflict or make your partner angry?
- Always do what your partner wants you to do instead of what you want?
- Stay with your partner because you are afraid of what your partner would do if you broke up?

If any of these things are happening in your relationship, talk to someone. Without help, the abuse will continue. Making that first call to seek help is a courageous step.

Always remember...

- NO ONE deserves to be abused. The abuse is not your fault. You are not alone.
- DON'T worry about threats to your visa. We have information about visa options for your situation.
- DON'T worry if you do not speak the local language. We can get you help in many Languages.

Power and Control Wheel

Physical and sexual assaults, or threats to commit them, are the most apparent forms of domestic abuse and violence and are usually the actions that allow others to become aware of the problem. However, regular use of other abusive behaviors by the abuser, when reinforced by one or more acts of physical violence, make up a larger system of abuse. Although physical assaults may occur only once or occasionally, they instill the fear of future violent attacks and allow the abuser to take control of the victim's life and circumstances.

The Power & Control wheel is a particularly helpful tool in understanding the overall pattern of abusive and violent behaviors, which are used by an abuser to establish and maintain control over his/her partner or any other victim in the household. Very often, one or more violent incidents may be accompanied by an array of these other types of abuse. They are less easily identified, yet firmly establish a pattern of intimidation and control in the relationship.

(Source: Developed by Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, Duluth, MN, <https://www.theduluthmodel.org/>)

Emotional abuse includes undermining a person's sense of self-worth through constant criticism; belittling one's abilities; name-calling or other verbal abuse; damaging a partner's relationship with the children; or not letting a partner see friends and family. You may be in an emotionally abusive relationship if your partner:

- Calls you names, insults you or continually criticizes you.
- Does not trust you and acts in a jealous or possessive manner.
- Tries to isolate you from family or friends.
- Monitors where you go, whom you call and with whom you spend your time.
- Does not want you to work.
- Controls finances or refuses to share money.
- Punishes you by withholding affection.
- Expects you to ask permission.
- Threatens to hurt you, the children, your family or your pets.
- Humiliates you in any way.

Psychological abuse: involves causing fear by intimidation; threatening physical harm to self, partner or children; destruction of pets and property; "mind games"; or forcing isolation from friends, family, school and/or work.

Financial or economic abuse: involves making or attempting to make a person financially dependent by maintaining total control over financial resources, withholding access to money, and/or forbidding attendance at school or employment.

Physical abuse: involves hurting or trying to hurt a partner by hitting, kicking, burning, grabbing, pinching, shoving, slapping, hair-pulling, biting, denying medical care or forcing alcohol and/or drug use, or using other physical force. You may be in a physically abusive relationship if your partner:

- Damages property when angry (throws objects, punches walls, kicks doors, etc.).
- Pushes, slaps, bites, kicks or chokes you.
- Abandons you in a dangerous or unfamiliar place.
- Scares you by driving recklessly.
- Uses a weapon to threaten or hurt you.
- Forces you to leave your home.
- Traps you in your home or keeps you from leaving.

- Prevents you from calling police or seeking medical attention.
- Hurts your children.
- Uses physical force in sexual situations.

Sexual abuse: involves forcing a partner to take part in a sex act when the partner does not consent. You may be in a sexually abusive relationship if your partner:

- Accuses you of cheating or is often jealous of your outside relationships.
- Wants you to dress in a sexual way.
- Insults you in sexual ways or calls you sexual names.
- Has ever forced or manipulated you into having sex or performing sexual acts.
- Holds you down during sex.
- Demands sex when you are sick, tired or after beating you.
- Hurts you with weapons or objects during sex.
- Involves other people in sexual activities with you.
- Ignores your feelings regarding sex.

Stalking involves any pattern of behavior that serves no legitimate purpose and is intended to harass, annoy, or terrorize the victim. Typical stalking activities include repeated telephone calls, unwelcome letters or gifts by mail, surveillance at work, home and other places that the victim is known to frequent. Stalking usually escalates.

For Survivors

- No one deserves to be abused. The abuse is not your fault. You are not alone.
- Contact the Critical Incident Stress Management Unit (CISMU) if you are concerned that you may be experiencing any form of abuse or are in fear for the safety of yourself or your children.
- If English is not your first language, you can request a language you feel more comfortable speaking when contacting CISMU to provide support.
- You can also see Support Organizations to identify and contact an appropriate resource for your assistance (for both US and International).
- Read how you can protect your digital privacy.

For Concerned Staff - How Can You Help?

How you can help victims of domestic abuse?

- Listen and believe the abused person to let them know they are not alone.
- Encourage her/him seek support through a confidential hotline to connect with a professional in the field.
- Express concern for him/her, show support, and offer referrals to available resources.
- If you have not been directly approached but have reason to believe that a colleague may be in an abusive relationship, consult with your Organization's Counselling or Ombudsman's Office >

Note: Keep in mind that a survivor often makes several attempts to leave the abusive relationship before succeeding.

For Abusive Partner - Are You An Abuser?

- If you recognize that you are mistreating your partner, there may be resources in your community to assist you end the abuse. The National Domestic Violence Hotline has a number of resources that can assist. While this a US Hotline, the advice and information may be useful no matter where you live.
- Understand that the domestic abuse is not only against the United Nations code of conduct, but you may be subject to criminal prosecution under the law that is applicable in the duty station where you work.