

Fact: Abuse does not have to be physical or sexual to be considered domestic violence, although physical and sexual abuse is common. Abusive behavior can also be verbal, emotional, mental, financial, technological, isolating, and/or involve other people, children, or pets.

Fact: Once an abuser uses physical violence, the abuse tends to get worse and more frequent, sometimes causing permanent injury or death. What may begin as an occasional slap or shove will turn into a push down the stairs, a punch in the face, or a kick in the stomach.

Fact: Domestic violence is not about anger or losing control. People who cause harm choose not to beat their bosses or terrorize their friends when they are angry. Abusive behavior, far from being an uncontrolled act, is used specifically to maintain the abuser's control over the partner.

Fact: The abusive person is responsible for the violence - not the survivor. Survivors are often blamed for the violence by the abusive person, friends, family, and society. Individuals are often blamed for staying with an abusive partner, but it's not the violence individuals want to preserve: it's the relationship. No one *wants* to be abused.

Fact: Violence does occur in LGBTQ+ relationships, and the issues of power and control are similar to those found in heteronormative relationships. Prejudice against the queer community allows people to trivialize the violence in LGBTQ+ relationships and compounds the effects of the abuse for the survivor.

Fact: Society views violence inflicted by an intimate partner as less serious than violence inflicted by a stranger. In order for domestic violence to be taken seriously, we must challenge the belief held by general society as well as the abusive individual that one partner has a right to control another. Domestic violence is not a "private matter" or a "women's issue" but in reality an issue of public health and human rights.

Fact: Domestic violence crosses all demographics of gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status, citizenship status, nationality, ethnicity, race, age, physical ability, emotional and mental health, and formal education level. There is no "typical victim."

Fact: Racism compounds the effect of domestic violence for people of color.

Services for people of color are often not culturally sensitive or language appropriate, which makes seeking safety more difficult.

Fact: Abusive people do not cause harm because they are crazy, mentally ill, insecure, jealous, have an anger problem, or just have poor communication skills. These things may contribute to, worsen, or shape the expression of violence, but they do not *cause* violence. Also, statistically speaking, people who are mentally ill are more likely to be abused rather than perpetrate the abuse.

Fact: Domestic violence is not mutual. If individuals choose to use violence against the partner, either in self-defense or anger, the intent is not domination or intimidation. Individuals who choose to use violence against the primary aggressor face more severe consequences by the criminal justice system.

Fact: Domestic violence is a widespread social problem. Our society presents violence as a normal part of intimate relationships, especially as it concerns relationships between men and women. By encouraging an unhealthy image of “what it means to be a man,” which reinforces stereotypical gender roles and promotes a “power over others” ideology, our society as a whole is complicit in the perpetuation of violence – whether it’s enabling entitlement in a male abuser or silencing a male survivor for “not being enough of a man.” Mitigating domestic violence in the coming years will be a process of not only supporting individual survivors and providing grassroots education but also enacting change to law and policy.

Fact: No matter what the survivor does, they do not deserve violence. It doesn’t matter how a person acts or what they say, or whether they are passive or assertive. The abusive person makes the *choice* to be abusive. Even when partners disagree, no one deserves to be hurt, threatened, or beaten.

Fact: People who cause harm are unlikely to change or stop their violence. For someone to change they must be able to recognize that the abusive behavior is actually abusive, be willing to take responsibility for their actions, and to be proactive and sincere in seeking help to change. Participation in a 52-week batterer’s program does not guarantee change. Short-lived reconciliation periods are common in which the abusive person is liable to say or do anything to keep the relationship going; in all likelihood these “good intentions” will quickly pass and the violence will begin again.