

Your Personal Safety

For you and your baby

Your personal safety is important for ensuring a healthy outcome for you and your baby. This chapter guides you through questions to consider about domestic violence. It also provides tips and resources to keep yourself safe.

Please Let Us Help You

Is your answer “yes” to any of these questions?

- Have you ever been shoved, slapped, punched, kicked, or hit?
- If the person who hurt you said, “I’ll never do it again,” have you believed it?
- Have you ever been called names and been put down until you felt worthless?
- Do you believe that you deserve to be beaten?
- Are you ashamed that you stay in an abusive relationship?
- Are you isolated or alone with children, with no one to call when you need help?
- Does someone’s threats of violence control your decisions and influence your behavior?
- Are you afraid you can’t make it on your own?



If you answer “yes” to any of these questions, please let us help you. You are not alone.

Have you ever had any of these thoughts?

“Why would anyone smart stay in a relationship with someone so cruel?”

There are many forms of domestic violence. It may be emotional, physical, or sexual abuse. An abuser uses power and maintains control over the victim in many harmful ways, and rarely uses only one form of abuse.

Many victims feel helpless to change. It is not a matter of being “smart” – but it is about taking care of yourself and your children.



Domestic violence affects people of all races, cultures, religions, ages, sexual orientations, and economic classes.

“It could never happen to me.”

Domestic violence affects people of all races, cultures, religions, ages, sexual orientations, and economic classes. No group escapes from this crime.

“What if someone found out? How embarrassing!”

Most (95%, or 95 out of 100) of the survivors of violence are women. Most of their abusers are the men that they have had a relationship with, either now or in the past. Many women want to defend their partner and save face, but they always suffer when they do this.

“I must have deserved it. I had it coming to me.”

Domestic abuse is sometimes called a "hidden crime" because many times it is never reported. This is often because the victims feel they are to blame. In the U.S., about 2.5 million women are survivors of violence every year.

“It only happened once. He promised it wouldn't happen again.”

Once violence starts in a relationship, the abuse increases. It then occurs more often and with greater force.

There can be a pattern of abuse that includes a period of calm after a violent episode. This is followed by increasing anger and then more violence, followed by calm again. It rarely goes away.

Many women who are victims of domestic violence feel alone.

“As long as I keep this quiet, no one else will get hurt.”

Violence affects the whole family. More than 3 million children watch a parent be violent every year.

Children who see violence in their parents show emotional and behavior problems such as:

- Low self-esteem and blaming themselves for the violence
- Nightmares
- Angry actions toward friends, family, or property

Children get injured, too. Very often, they are also hurt by the abusive spouse or partner. And, children learn what they live. If they are abused in childhood, they are more likely to become abusers or be in abusive relationships as adults.



Being angry is NEVER an excuse for being abusive or violent.

“What's the big deal? So he got a little angry. Doesn't everybody?”

This is serious. Being angry is NEVER an excuse for being abusive or violent.

Violence doesn't just hurt. It kills.

Every 3 weeks, a woman is killed by domestic violence. Six out of every 10 women who are murdered are killed by a spouse or someone they have been intimate with. Making an excuse for someone who becomes violent when they are angry can cost a life.

Women who are abused:

- Are more likely to need medical care
- Take more time off from their jobs
- Spend more time at home in bed
- Have more stress and depression

Many women respond to violence by:

- Having suicidal thoughts or trying to kill themselves
- Having feelings of low self-worth
- Abusing alcohol or drugs.

“How could I leave? There is nowhere to go. He'd come find me.”

Many women feel powerless. They do not know how to find a safe place to go, and they are afraid of what the abuser will do if they leave or try to leave.



You do not have to live in fear. Take steps to put an end to the violence.

It does not have to be this way. You did NOT cause the violence but you CAN put an end to it.

To find out more about being safe for you and your children, call:

National Domestic Violence Hotline:

800.799.SAFE (7233)

OR

800.787.3224 (TTY)



Have a plan. Know how you will leave and where you will go if you are not safe in the house.

Have a Personal Safety Plan if You Live with a Violent Partner

If you live with a person who is abusive or violent, here are some other ways to help keep you and your loved ones safe:

- Try to AVOID arguments in **rooms that are small or where there are weapons** (such as the kitchen). Avoid talking with your partner in rooms that do not have **a way to get to an outside door**.
- Be aware that if you drink alcohol or take other drugs, you will not be able to act quickly to protect yourself and your children.
- Know which **doors, windows, or fire escapes** you and your children would use if you have to escape quickly to safety.
- Know **where you would go** once you have left the house. If possible, practice taking this route.
- If you can, **tell a friend or neighbor to call the police** if they hear suspicious noises coming from your home.
- Arrange to use a **code word** with your children, neighbor, or friends so they know when they should call for help.
- **Teach your children** how to use call the police and fire department.
- **Take a class** in self-defense.
- Hide these items in a place where you can grab them quickly when you decide to leave:
 - **Identification** for yourself and your children. This might include a driver's license, passports, green cards, birth certificates, or social security cards.
 - **Important documents** you will need later. This might include school and health records, children's immunization records, welfare identification, insurance records, car titles, lease or rental agreement, mortgage papers, marriage license, and address book.
 - **Copies** of any protective orders, divorce or custody papers, or other court documents.
 - **Money, checkbook, bankbook, and credit card**, in your own name if possible.



If you leave an abusive relationship, take extra steps to make sure you and your children are safe.

- A small supply of any **prescription medicines** you take, or a list of the drugs and their doses.
- **Clothing, toys**, and other comfort items for yourself and your children. You may also think about items of special sentimental value and small objects you can sell.
- **Extra set of keys** for car, house, office, and safe deposit box.
- **Phone numbers and addresses** of family, friends, and community agencies.

If You Leave – Staying Safe

If you leave the abusive relationship, take these extra steps:

On the Job and in Public

- Is there someone at work you trust, who you can tell about the situation? A coworker? Supervisor? Employment assistance person?
- Can you use voice mail, a receptionist, or a coworker to help screen calls or visitors at work?
- Have a plan for arriving and leaving work and other public places safely. Vary the time you arrive and leave, and take different routes.

At Home

- Change the locks on the doors and windows as soon as possible.
- Be sure the doors are secure and made of steel or metal instead of wood.
- Install extra locks, window bars, outdoor lights that turn on when they sense movement, an electronic security system, and so on.
- Install smoke detectors, purchase fire extinguishers, and have rope ladders for upper floor windows.
- Contact the police and get a restraining order.

Who to Call for Help

Tear out this page and keep it with you, so that you have these phone numbers if and when you need them.

Washington State Domestic Violence Hotline

800.562.6025

Crisis Clinic Hotline

866.427.4747

New Beginnings – Shelter, Advocacy and Support

206.522.9472 (24-hour hotline)

DAWN – Domestic Abuse Women's Network: Shelter, Advocacy and Support

425.656.7867 or 877.465.7234 (24-hour hotline)

National Domestic Violence Hotline

800.799.SAFE (7233) or 800.787.3224 (TTY)

This nationwide toll-free hotline will provide immediate crisis intervention, counseling, and referrals to emergency shelters and services.

National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline

866.331.9474

Resources

National Resource Center on Domestic Violence

800.537.2238

Email: nrcdvTA@nrcdv.org

This organization provides information, resources, and policy development. It also helps communities develop ways to respond to and prevent domestic violence.

Family Violence Prevention Fund

800.595.4889

383 Rhode Island Street, Suite 304

San Francisco, CA 94103-5133

Questions?

Your questions are important. If you have concerns about domestic violence, call your healthcare provider right away.

The hotlines and other resources on this page can also help.