

Domestic Abuse is Not Always Physical

By Liz Ashe, M.Ed. Director of Training Affiliated EAP

Many folks hear the words “domestic violence” or “domestic abuse” and think of brutality, physical beatings, or even murder. That kind of abuse can be recognized by injuries incurred, pain felt by the victim, or by other tell-tale signs seen by friends or coworkers.

A less recognizable form of domestic abuse is non-physical, something I call the “Invisible Invasion” of another person’s soul and emotional health; it’s the robbery of one’s inner peace and well-being. Marked by a prevalence of disrespectful behaviors that include degradation, intimidation, bullying, and the feeling of walking on egg shells, this non-physical abuse is about power and control. Examples include:

Emotional Abuse or Esteem Degradation?

“My husband was nice while dating, but once married, he changed. I became his verbal punching bag. He criticized how I kept house, cooked, and how I looked. He called me every horrible, degrading name in the book. Daily he told me what a useless b_____ I

was. Nothing I did pleased him. Hour by hour, minute by minute, he eroded my self-esteem.”

Isolation

“My husband timed how long it should take me to get places and called to see if I had arrived. If I wasn’t home on time, I’d pay. He often followed me and accused me of having an affair. He sold my car so I’d have to depend on him for transportation. He didn’t want me spending time with my friends or family.”

Controlling or Manipulating Activities

“I decided to finish my degree. My wife began to resent my study time. She often hid my books. I had to miss several classes because she called to tell me she had to work late and couldn’t watch the kids. I found out later she went shopping. Once after working long and hard on a term paper, she tore it up and deleted the file from the computer. When I confronted her, she yelled saying, ‘I’m not taking a back seat to your ___ studies.’”

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October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Domestic violence or abuse is an ongoing, debilitating experience of physical, psychological and or sexual abuse in the home. Victims of abuse are hurt and controlled by someone who they are or have been emotionally and intimately involved with. Research suggests that 95% of abuse is male to female, but it is important to acknowledge that there are women who abuse and batter their male partners, women who abuse women, and men who abuse men. The number of cases is staggering.

You or People You Care About Have the Right Not to be Abused

There are many resources and services available to anyone who feels abused or fears for his or her safety. There are agencies that offer “safe homes” or shelters. There are also many low cost legal assistance services. If you are being abused or suspect abuse of a friend or loved one, call your EAP counselor for more information at 1-800-769-9819, or call the National

Hotline for Domestic Violence, 1-800-799-7233. You can also find information at the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence: www.nrcdv.org or by calling 1-800-537-2238.



Domestic Abuse is Not Always Physical (continued from front)

Fear and Intimidation

“My domestic partner purposely made messes on the floor and made me get on my knees to clean them up. Once he threw a casserole on the floor then pushed me down and washed my face in it. He also broke a lot of my things and said that if I didn’t shape up, he’d break me. Once he cut up all my favorite clothes.”

Making Home a Prison

“My husband put tape on the outside of the door or a crayon in the door each morning when he left for work to make sure I didn’t leave or have company during the day. He also called at least 10 times a day to make sure I was there. I was a prisoner in my own home.”

Economic Abuse

“My husband wouldn’t let me get a job or have money of my own. I had to ask him for everything. He blamed me when we didn’t have enough money for bills. I didn’t dare spend anything on myself. He used our money to gamble, buy booze and designer clothes and then blamed me for spending too much on groceries. A few times he pushed me against the wall when the checkbook was overdrawn.”

Sexual Abuse

“My spouse put on a great show in public and was well-liked. Behind closed doors, he was a sexual predator. He forced me to have sex when I didn’t want to, when I was tired, sick, or sleeping, and he also made me do things that hurt or were degrading.”

Threats

“My spouse continually threatened to hurt me, the children, and my family if I told anyone about

our private life. She often said, ‘I’ll kill you and then myself if you try to leave me.’”

When You Break the Silence, You Begin the Cure

Unfortunately there are countless stories like these. Living in an abusive relationship takes a tremendous toll on a person’s health, and on their physical and psychological well-being.

It isn’t easy to admit someone you love treats you badly. There are many reasons why people deny or stay in abusive relationships. Some people minimize the behaviors by saying “It isn’t as bad as what you see on TV,” or they fear things will get worse if they seek help. The best barometer of whether or not you are abused is how your partner’s behavior makes you feel.

You have a right not to be abused, victimized, intimidated, put-down, degraded or controlled by another person. You have the right not to walk on eggshells or to live your life without dignity. The unknown is always harder than the known, but nothing will change unless the problem is identified and faced.

Is your Body Fat Healthy?

Measure the circumference of your waist with a flexible tape measure to find out if your body fat is healthy. Find your hip bone and place the tape measure around your waist above your hip (snugly, not tightly). A healthy body fat for women is a waist measurement less than 35 inches and for a man less than 40 inches.

You can also determine body fat with BMI or body mass index. There are websites that calculate this automatically for you (Google “body mass index”). Ideal BMI is 18.5-24.9. Underweight: Less than 18.5. Overweight: 25.0-29.9. Obese: 30.9-39.9. Extremely Obese: over 40.

EAP Can Help!

Your EAP is a confidential, assessment, short-term counseling and referral program for you and your family members. It is a free benefit provided to you by your organization.

1-800-769-9819 ~ TTY dial 711 for TRS then dial 800-769-9819

Online Work/Life Services

If your organization offers Online Work/Life Services, visit our 24-hour internet resource for information, advice and support on a wide variety of issues. Contact your human resources department for a company code then check our Work/Life Services at www.affiliatedeap.com

