

## ...about abuse.

**Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive and controlling behaviors that a person uses against an intimate or former partner. It might include:**

**Physical Abuse:** Shoving, hitting, kicking, burning, choking, using weapons or other objects to cause injury; restraining.

**Sexual Violence:** Forcing or coercing unwanted sexual acts, refusing to practice safer sex, treating a partner like a sex object.

**Emotional Abuse/Intimidation:** Name-calling/put-downs; denying/shifting blame; treating a partner as an inferior; threatening to harm others/self or to reveal information that might be harmful; using threatening looks, actions, or gestures.

**Property/Economic Abuse:** Destroying/stealing property; denying money for basic needs such as food or medical care; interfering with a partner's work or education.

**Stalking:** Monitoring activities, phone calls, or emails; following a partner; impersonating or questioning others about a partner. This may be done without the victim's knowledge.

### TECHNOLOGY WARNING—

*The Internet, caller ID, cell phones, and other technologies can enhance survivor safety, but may also be used by abusers as tools for stalking, harassment, and intimidation.*

## Help is Available

There are many places that offer 24-hour support, emergency shelter, advocacy, and information about resources and safe options for you and your children.

*For assistance call the:*

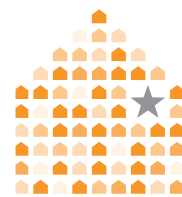
**National Domestic Violence Hotline**

**1-800-799-SAFE (7233)**

**1-800-787-3224 TTY**

(assistance available in over 140 languages)

This publication was adapted from brochures by the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence by:



**NNEDV**

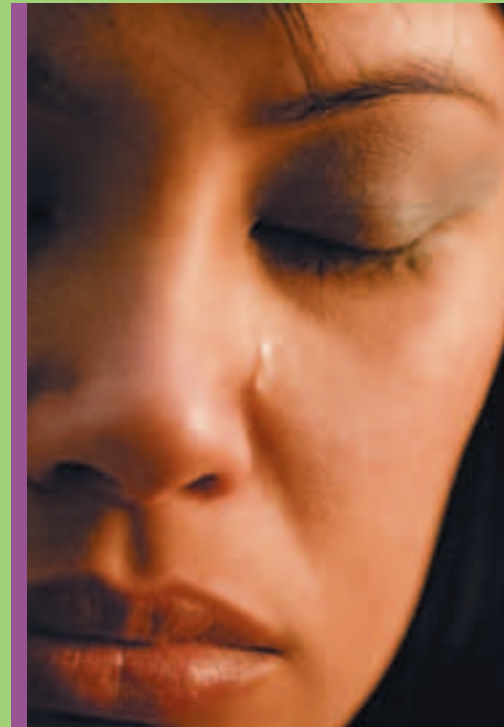
NATIONAL NETWORK  
TO END DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE

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phone: 202-543-5566  
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NNEDV is dedicated to creating a social, political and economic environment in which violence against women no longer exists.

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# Domestic Violence



■ Domestic violence has harmed relationships for centuries and still remains a widespread problem. In the U.S., it affects millions of people annually, mostly women.

■ Anyone can be abused, regardless of employment or education, racial or ethnic background, religion, marital status, health, disability, age, or sexual orientation.

■ Domestic violence is rooted in social customs that reward people for having power over others. Victim blaming and the lack of serious consequences for abusers perpetuates violence against women and others.

■ *Abusive behavior is a choice.* Abuse is not caused by drug/alcohol use, mental illness, stress, or poor anger control.

■ There are many barriers for those seeking to escape abuse—fear of injury; lack of money, resources and support; self-blame; social pressures to stay with their partners.

■ Discrimination based on nationality, disabilities, or other factors can make finding safety even more difficult for some survivors.

■ Leaving an abusive relationship can be a dangerous time. During separation there is increased risk for violence and homicide.

■ Too often, abusers are charming and well-respected community members.



*Enhancing Safety,  
Enhancing Lives*

## Knowing the facts...

Whether it is you, someone you know, or a complete stranger...

## If You are Abused

If you are being abused by your partner, you may feel confused, afraid, angry and/or trapped. Your partner might try to blame you or you might feel what is happening is your fault. All of these emotions are normal responses to abuse. But no matter what others might say, you are never responsible for your partner's abusive actions. No one deserves to be battered.

## Identifying Support

Developing a support network can be very helpful as you plan for safety. There are many places you can turn to for assistance.

**Community support.** Friends, family, women's and community groups, churches, and service providers (such as legal, health, counseling centers) can provide a variety of resources, support, and assistance.

**Domestic violence services.** In many communities, there are organizations that provide free and confidential help to individuals who are being abused. Services are provided regardless of personal factors such as age, gender, sexual orientation or immigration status and are not dependent on whether you choose to stay with or leave your partner. Information about finding/using these services is on the back of this brochure.



## Legal Options

**Criminal charges.** If you or other loved ones have been physically injured, threatened, raped, harassed or stalked, you can report these crimes to the police. Criminal charges may lead to your abuser being arrested and possibly imprisoned.

**Restraining/protective orders.** Even if you don't want to press criminal charges, you can file for a civil court order that directs your partner to stay away from you. In many states, civil orders can also evict your partner from your home, grant support or child custody, or ban him/her from having weapons.

## Safety Planning

Without help, domestic violence often gets more severe over time. It can sometimes become deadly. To increase your safety:

■ Tell others you trust such as friends, family, neighbors, and co-workers, what is happening and talk about ways they might be able to help.

■ Use the internet and other technologies cautiously. Use computers, telephones, and email accounts your partner does not have access to. You can get more information about this at [www.nnedv.org](http://www.nnedv.org) or by talking to a local domestic violence advocate.

■ Memorize emergency numbers for the local police (such as 911), support persons, and crisis hotlines (see back of brochure).

■ Talk with your children about what they should do if a violent incident occurs.

■ Identify escape routes and places to go if you need to flee from an unsafe situation quickly.

■ Put together an emergency bag with money/checkbooks, extra car keys, medicine, and important papers such as birth certificates, social security cards, immigration documents, and medical cards. Keep it somewhere safe and accessible, such as with a trusted friend.

■ If you decide to leave your partner, it may be an especially dangerous time. Consider speaking with a trained domestic violence counselor to create a detailed safety plan.

■ Trust your instincts—if you think you are in immediate danger, you probably are. Get to a safe place as soon as you can.



## Join the Effort

To stop domestic violence, we all need to work together. The following are some things that you can do to help:

**Help a friend who is being abused.** Talk only in a safe and private environment. Listen without judgement, advice, or expectation. Let her know that the abuse is not her fault. Help her to identify resources and options and empower her to make choices for her safety. Call the hotline number on the back of this brochure for more information or support.

**Support your local domestic violence program.** Most hotlines, advocacy, or shelter organizations could benefit from your time, financial support, or other donations. Call them to find out how to help in your area.

**Speak up about abuse.** Let abusers know their behavior is wrong and encourage them to get help. If you see someone being abused, call the police—doing nothing can make the abuse worse and even deadly.

**Educate yourself and others.** Call your local domestic violence program to schedule informational workshops for your workplace, community group, or church. Encourage schools to include abuse prevention as part of their curricula.

**Set an example.** Make a commitment to work for equality and ending violence in all its forms. Model non-violent and respectful behavior in your everyday actions.

...ending domestic violence is everyone's business.