

A photograph of a woman with her eyes closed, looking distressed, being held and comforted by another woman. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter. The text "Understanding & Responding Effectively to Domestic Violence" is centered over the image in white.

Understanding & Responding Effectively to Domestic Violence

Lesson Overview

Goal: To provide PCS participants a framework for recognizing and responding effectively to disclosures of domestic violence encountered in their ministries.

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the dynamics of domestic abuse
2. Discover the impact of domestic abuse on the family
3. Learn how to best respond to those impacted
4. Increase participant knowledge of resources

Overview of Domestic Violence

Defining Domestic Violence

Types of Abuse

Cycle of Abuse

Myths

Culture, Society & Religion

Impact of Domestic Violence on Children



MYTHS

True or False

1. Women are just as likely to perpetrate domestic violence as are men.
2. Domestic Violence is no more prevalent in homosexual relationships than in heterosexual relationships.
3. If she leaves him, she will be safe from the abuse.
4. Anger management is ineffective in stopping an abuser's abusive behavior.

MYTHS

5. Since intergenerational abuse is common, there is a genetic component to domestic violence.
6. Alcohol and drug abuse are root causes of domestic violence.
7. Stress is a risk factor for abuse.
8. A victim who provokes her abuser is not blameless.
9. Men who use violence are unsuccessful, low achievers and unable to cope with the world.

Adapted from www.ncadv.org ♦ www.pcadv.org ♦ www.ndvh.org
♦ www.futureswithoutviolence.org ♦ www.cdc.gov

MYTHS

10. Remorse on the abuser's part means he has changed.
11. All couples fight; it's just a bump in the road.
12. Abusers are mentally ill.

Adapted from www.ncadv.org ♦ www.pcadv.org ♦ www.ndvh.org
♦ www.futureswithoutviolence.org ♦ www.cdc.gov

Defining Domestic Violence

Domestic Abuse is Learned Behavior

How is it learned?

- Observation
- Experience
- Reinforcement

Where is it learned?

- Family
- Community
- Culture

Domestic Violence
Power & Control
Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)
Child Witness
Perpetrator
Victim
Survivor
Marital Discord

1. the secondary victims even when they are not the target of the abuse
2. an individual who is physically, emotionally, and/or sexually violent toward their partner/family member
3. a pattern of abusive behavior exercised by one person in an intimate/familial relationship over another
4. an individual who is no longer being actively abused
5. a pattern of behavior exercised by one person over another, involving such tactics as coercion, threats, intimidation, emotional abuse, isolation, etc.
6. abusive behavior that occurs in a relationship in which couples fight, but does not fit the definition of domestic violence
7. an individual who is being actively abused by their intimate partner/family member
8. abuse that occurs between intimate partners, including same sex relationships

Types of Abuse

- ▶ Physical abuse
- ▶ Psychological Abuse
- ▶ Sexual abuse
- ▶ Economic abuse
- ▶ Other abuses

“Violence against women should be understood not as a single act or form of abuse, but rather as the sum total of physically, sexually and psychologically abusive behaviors directed by one partner against another.” —Judith Herman

- Walking on Eggshells
 - Blaming
 - Controlling

Tension Building

- Physically Violent
- Emotionally Threatening

Calm

Cycle of Abuse

Incident

- Returns to Norm
 - Tolerable

Reconciliation

- Apologetic • Buys gifts • Promises "It will never happen again."

"Why Does She Stay?"

HIS TACTICS

**SOCIETAL/RELIGIOUS
MESSAGES**

HARSH REALITIES

HER BELIEFS



**Why Doesn't
He STOP
Abusing Her?**



Culture, Religion, & Society



Culture, Religion, and Society

Power and Control Tactics

- Minimizing, denying, and blaming
- Pressuring the victim to stay or try harder
- Colluding with the batterer
- Not providing sufficient resources
- Financially supporting products and companies that promote violence against women
- Misusing religion to justify abuse

Culture, Religion, and Society

Resource or Roadblock?

Religious leaders & faith communities can be a source of support & comfort when they:

- ▶ De-construct roadblocks
- ▶ Re-construct resources

“We need... to begin articulating a faith that will provide women with resources for strength rather than resources for [putting up with the abuse]. We must articulate a theology of empowerment rather than a theology of passive endurance.” —Rev. Joy Bussert
Battered Women: From a Theology of Suffering to an Ethic of Empowerment, 1986

The Impact on Children

Exposure to Domestic Violence badly affects children's social, emotional, and cognitive development and has long term consequences for their well-being, ultimately affecting their adult functioning.

- The Family Refuse Center, Lewisburg, WV,(2004),www.familyrefusgecenter.com
- Children Exposed to Domestic Violence: A Teacher's Handbook to Increase Understanding and Improve Community Responses, NEA & Centre for Children & Families in the Justice System, London, ON (2002), www.lfcc.on.ca

A photograph of a woman and a child sitting together. The woman is on the right, wearing glasses and a light-colored jacket, with her hand on the child's shoulder. The child is on the left, wearing a white lace-trimmed top. The background is blurred, suggesting an indoor setting. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter.

Dispelling Myths

True or False

1. Children are usually asleep or not around when domestic violence occurs.
2. Parents would know if their children saw or heard the violence.
3. If children do somehow see it or hear it, they don't get involved in the violence.
4. Men who hurt their children's mother are good fathers and don't hurt their children.

IMPACT ON CHILDREN'S BRAINS

Domestic
Violence
Incident

Prolonged Alarm
Reaction

Altered Neural
Systems

A photograph of a woman with short blonde hair and glasses, wearing a light-colored jacket, sitting and holding the hand of a young child. The child is wearing a light-colored sleeveless top with lace detailing. Another person's arm is visible on the left side of the frame. The background is blurred, suggesting an indoor setting.

Child Witness Warning Signs

Preschool Age Children

- Atypical parent-child bond
- Atypical startle response
- Shame-based personality or interactive style
- Inhibited independence
- Regressive behavior

Child Witness Warning Signs

Ages 6-12

- ▶ Consistently late or missing homework assignments
- ▶ Lower engagement in classroom
- ▶ Truancy or low attendance
- ▶ Angry or withdrawn
- ▶ Appears to be jumpy, fearful, on edge
- ▶ Overly eager to please adults/ teachers
- ▶ Overly wary of adults
- ▶ Sudden change in their normal behavior (mood, personality)
- ▶ Seems afraid of getting in trouble
- ▶ Seems afraid of going home
- ▶ Comes to school very early, leaves school very late
- ▶ Poor hygiene or unkempt appearance

Child Witness Warning Signs

Ages 13-20

Impact on Adolescent Boys

- ▶ Learning that males are violent
- ▶ Learning to disrespect women
- ▶ Using violence in his own relationships
- ▶ Confusion or insecurity about being a man
- ▶ Attacking parents or siblings

Impact on Adolescent Girls

- ▶ Learning that male violence is normal
- ▶ Learning that Women don't get respect
- ▶ Accepting violence in her own relationships
- ▶ Embarrassed about being female
- ▶ Becoming pregnant

The Wolf

by Catie Curtis & Jennifer Robohm

When my daddy lived here, I never worried
When my daddy lived here, he read me
stories
And I never was afraid when the endings
were scary
'Cause my daddy would say,
"I will keep you safe when the wolf comes to
the house."
Now my mother has a boyfriend,
She let him move in
She let him tell her she's just a fool
And I've heard them fighting,
I heard him knock her down
I try to read at night, but I don't like it now

'Cause when the wolf lives in your house
You can't get him out
When the wolf lives in your house
You can't get him out
My mother tells me we are a family
But I don't want to be, I have a plan
Yes I'm waiting for the day when I am stronger
And I will step in the way, I'll make him sorry.
When the wolf lives in your house
You can't get him out
When the wolf lives in your house
You can't get him out
I will get him out.

A photograph of a woman with her hair tied back, looking down with a somber expression. She is being supported from behind by another woman with short blonde hair and glasses, who has her hands clasped around the first woman's hands. The background is blurred, showing other people in a group setting. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter.

How Best to Respond

What strategies help

Do's & Don'ts

Victims • Children • Abusers

Safety Planning

Screening

Questions to Consider



Unhelpful Strategies

1. We enjoy giving advice!
2. The urge to move immediately to problem-solving
3. Thinking we know best
4. Limited understanding of cultural differences
5. Our personal values and beliefs get in the way
6. Internal and external noise

Helpful Strategies

1. Self-awareness
2. Honesty
3. Awareness of your value system
4. Knowing your limits
5. Avoid giving advice

GIVE R.I.C.H.

- **R**espect
- **I**nformation
- **C**onnection
- **H**ope

Responses to Abusers

DO's

- ▶ Maintain strict boundaries with abuser
- ▶ Hold them accountable
- ▶ Respect the law regarding restraining orders

DONT's

- ▶ Confront them if victims fear their response
- ▶ Imply that their behavior is caused by anger drugs or stress
- ▶ Demonize them

Responses to Children

DO's

- ▶ Allow the child to tell their story
- ▶ Reassure the child
- ▶ Follow the child's lead

DONT's

- ▶ Pressure the child to talk
- ▶ Criticize or speak negatively about the abuser
- ▶ Make promises that you cannot honor

Safety Planning

Professionals often want to strongly encourage victims to leave an abuser, especially those who have been seriously injured. Keep in mind victims often face limited, poor choices.

Deciding to stay or leave a relationship is a life-altering, difficult decision. Victims need support and information to help them with these decisions.

Safety Planning is the most important intervention for victims of abuse.

Screening for Abuse

Lead into questions about abuse with a statement such as:

“Because many of the people I work with are hurt by family members, I ask everyone questions about relationships and abuse”

1. How are things going with your partner/spouse?
2. Who makes decisions at your house?
3. Are you afraid of your partner/spouse?
4. Does anyone you live with make you uncomfortable?
5. Does anyone threaten you or force you to do things you do not want to do?

Questions to Consider

1. Do you screen everyone for domestic violence?
2. Do you consider how the abuser's behaviors might put the victim at risk?
3. Is the victim fearful of speaking out or speaking at all due to their awareness of your limitations or perceived limitations for protecting them?
4. Does the abuser isolate the victim from safe friends, family or a supportive community?

A photograph of a woman sitting at a table, looking down with a somber expression. A woman with short hair and glasses, wearing a light-colored jacket, is sitting across from her, looking towards her. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter.

Questions to Consider

5. Does the abuser prevent the victim from accessing resources?
6. Does the victim suffer from internalized prejudice for their behavior and for the domestic violence?
7. Do you screen for domestic violence before working with couples?

Questions to Consider

8. Have you encouraged the victim to develop a safety plan? Have you asked:

“Will you be safe when you leave?”

“What do you normally do when things get out of hand?”

9. Do you consider the role of domestic violence when confronted with alcohol or other drugs abuse?
10. Is there an existing policy & procedure for domestic violence at your work place?

Vicarious Trauma

- Normal & cumulative consequence of exposure to traumatic stories
- Affects our world view
- Specific to trauma work

D. A. Sinclair, 2006
Pearlman & Saakvitne, 2005

A photograph of a woman in a white lace top being supported by others, overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter. The image is the background for the slide.

Domestic Violence Programs

Hotline

Emergency Shelter

Transitional Housing

Community Counseling

Children's Program

Legal Services

Law Enforcement Advocacy

Medical Advocacy

Community Education

Volunteer Opportunities

Additional Resources

- Love Is Respect (on line chat for youth)
www.loveisrespect.org
- Futures Without Violence
www.futureswithoutviolence.org
- National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
www.ncadv.org
- Faith Trust Institute
www.faithtrustinstitute.org

**Data and statistics adapted from & supported by all of the above resources and the Center for Disease Control: www.cdc.gov*