

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEGAL NETWORK OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY (D.V.L.N.)
THE EDUCATION & AWARENESS COMMITTEE
THE EDUCATION/ AWARENESS/COMMUNICATION/HEALTH (T.E.A.C.H) NEWSLETTER
VOLUME 1: ISSUE 2

OUR HISTORY: *The Domestic Violence Legal Network of Montgomery County (DVLN) was formed in 1986 by professionals from law enforcement, the court system, and agencies working with victims of domestic violence (DV), for the purpose of sharing resources and expertise to serve victims more effectively.*

OUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES: *DVLN strives to eliminate Domestic Violence (DV) in the community by whatever means available including, enhanced communications between victim of (DV) and county services in an effort to secure safety and relief; to work with DV victims to remove stumbling blocks in their path to a more secure future; to keep the community informed by providing a clear profile of available services; to take action on behalf of DV victims through policy reform.*

SERIES OF ARTICLES: *So that we may reach more victims of DV, DVLN 's Education and Awareness Committee (TEACH) will create a series of ongoing articles to offer a better understanding of DV which impacts the lives of 1 in 4 woman and 1 in 7 men.*

Warning Signs of an Abusive Relationship

by Jan Biresch

Abusive behavior usually starts at a subtle level and escalates over time. Whether you fight back or refuse to exhibit fear, things will escalate.

The list below includes behaviors and responses that are warning signs of an abusive relationship:

- W**ants to move too quickly into a relationship
- D**oes not honor your boundaries
- S**eems "too good to be true"
- W**ants to know where you are at all times including frequent calls/emails/text
- I**nsists that you stop spending time with friends and family
- D**emands that you stop participating in your own interests
- T**ells you how to act or dress
- E**xcessively jealous, accuses you of having affairs
- C**ritical of you and calls you names
- M**akes fun of you in a group setting
- S**ays one thing and does another
- A**lways angry at something or someone
- B**lames you for all of their discontent or troubles
- T**akes no responsibility for their own behavior
- G**rew up in a violent or abusive home
- D**rug/alcohol abuse
- D**oes not work or go to school
- C**ontrols finances; takes your money or sabotages' your work to get you fired from your job

- O**ut of control rages and impulsive
- H**istory of abuse with others
- T**hreatens to kill self, you, pets
- R**eport you to immigration
- T**hreatens to, or takes children away
- D**isplay weapons as a threat
- P**hysically rough including hitting, hair pulling, biting, pushing, limiting your freedom of movement, burns, and strangles (chokes) you
- Y**ou are afraid to say "no" to sexual advances
- S**exual assaults, birth control sabotage, known sexual disease transmission to you.

Other cues of an abusive relationship may include the following responses from you:

- Y**ou are afraid to end the relationship
- Y**ou feel tied down; have to constantly check-in
- Y**ou are afraid to bring up certain topics or make decisions because they might anger partner
- Y**ou blame yourself for all bad things that happen
- Y**ou tell yourself that if you try harder or love your partner enough everything will be alright
- Y**ou become obsessed with trying to please your partner
- Y**ou find yourself feeling depressed; unhappy and often crying
- Y**ou find emotional and/or physical abuse escalation to a point where you are afraid to leave the relationship.

Warning Signs cont.

Many similar issues may also pertain to your relationship with a family member who is not a current or former intimate partner. They are still considered domestic violence and should be addressed.

Remember: becoming a victim is a process; therefore becoming a survivor is also a process and no advocate will blame you if you choose or need to stay while you make a plan for safety.

The information in the article come from my experience as a DV advocate over 18 years, along with factors adapted by the National Network to End Domestic violence and the Domestic Abuse Project.

MAKE THE CALL TO STOP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



Why Does She Stay? By: Stacy Sweinhart

The question of “Why does she stay?” has plagued people throughout the years. Families, friends, attorneys, advocates, and law enforcement have all, at some point or another, asked that very question. As advocates, we can rattle off a myriad of reasons why victims have decided not to leave their abusive relationship and each one is specific to each individual victim. However, there are many general and common concerns that they all share.

LOVE: We have to remember that abusers have spent time courting their victims and over time their victims fall in love with them. They did not get slapped in the face on their first date. They went to family picnics together, they married each other, and they had children together. Intermixed with all of that happiness is the pain and hurt they have been subjected to, which is something that victims have a very difficult time understanding. You often hear victims talk about a Jekyll and Hyde persona that their abuser has and they believe if they love them enough, they can change them and keep Dr. Jekyll here forever.

FEAR: Threats, intimidation and physical abuse are a huge part of the abuser’s plan for control over their victim. Victims have been told countless times that if they leave, their abuser will find them and kill them. Maybe he has even threatened their family, their friends, their children, or even their pets. Perhaps she has even left before and he found her and made her pay for leaving. All of these things have helped to create terrifying thoughts of what he could possibly do to her if she were to try to leave again.

FINANCES: Many victims that we work with have few financial resources. Many of them are not allowed to have a job because their abuser will not let them. Those who are employed are usually forced to turn their paycheck over to their abuser. Abusers check their bank accounts, hold on to all the credit cards, and even cause victims to lose their jobs by harassing them non-stop while at work. How could the victim possibly leave without enough money for gas, a taxi, or even bus fair?

ISOLATION: Abusers use isolation as a tactic for power and control over their victim. Victims no longer speak to family members and friends due to the abuse and when they do finally get up the courage to want to leave, they feel like they have no one to run to and no one to help them and when they finally get up the courage to want to leave, they feel like they have no one to run to and no one to help them.

SHAME: Despite strides made by the domestic violence movement, there is still a lot of stigma attached to the words: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE and finally admit to friends and family that they are victims. They fear being judged by the people that they love.

This is only a brief list of the general reasons that victims will stay. Advocates could write a whole book on the reasons that they have heard over the years. We will never get one good, solitary reason for why she stays but maybe that’s because we are asking the wrong question. Maybe we should be asking, “Why does the abuser do that?” instead of “Why does she stay?” Maybe when we get answers that we truly need we can finally begin to defeat domestic violence.

WHO IS AN ABUSER-II by Lillian Sulliman

To further address that which describes the ABUSER: the Power and Control Wheel as shown within Issue 1 contains an overall description of what has been found over the years to be associated with the behavior pattern of the abusive partner. Herein I would like to expand on those characteristics.

Narcissistic tendencies - egotistical admiration of oneself, physically, mentally and otherwise; vanity; conceit; self-absorption

Ownership/entitlement – you belong exclusively to the abuser; therefore need to adhere to the “rules”; “if you love me, you will do this to make me happy”

Inability to accept responsibility, especially negative-related issues; quick to blame; whatever the abuser sees as “wrong” is your fault; from the burned dinner to the noisy kids to the lost job

Anger management issues – inability to think rationally; immediate reaction to that which is happening around the abuser often may be uncontrolled anger; please be aware that there is a distinct difference between anger issues and Power and Control issues; anger issues may be evoked by any one and/or everyone; Power and Control issues directly relate to a specific individual or intimate relationship partner

Mood swings/Instability – Jekyll & Hyde persona; happy to sad to angry within short span of time; volatility, a lack of constancy; difficult to please; what one time is acceptable may at another time no longer be acceptable; impulsiveness, unusual reactivity without rationalizing thought; emotional sabotage or blackmail as a tool for “getting own way”

Manipulative – verbal, emotional, physical - includes name calling, belittling/degradation of character; looks and/or gestures

Bullying – similar to the schoolboy image of same, escalated to the adult level

Co-dependent- need to avoid “aloneness”; need to know where, what, when with whom and how at all times; frequency of phone messaging et al; “if I can’t have you, no one can” is a frequently used phrase; ties in with personal insecurity of the abuser

Accusatory – inability to accept the truth of what, when and where; if you are gone to the store longer than deemed necessary, accuses of “seeing” someone, or having an affair

Isolationism – control who, what is in your life, relates back to narcissism and to co-dependency; abuser keeps

you to self and away from family and friends; “if you love me, then you do not need anyone else in your life”

Alcohol/drug dependency/addiction – often used as an excuse or crutch for abusive behavior; fulfills a need to repair the emptiness/ fill the void,, which is very much a part of the Power and Control Personality; “you know I would not have done that if I were sober”

Mental Issues - may or may not be present within the scenario; the scripted drugs associated with “disorder” and manipulation of same (taking too many or too few or none at all) may play heavily within the overall picture; feelings of worthlessness may often underscore the egoistic behavior noted earlier.

May possibly have been a “victim” or observed same in his/her early years in the family home; may use same to excuse lack of “sensitivity” and/or to receive “self-sympathy”; plays the role of the “chronic victim”, who consistently alleges persons intentionally are out to “hurt” them, “out to get” them, “setting them up”; yet constantly sabotages options for assistance/ help; the “yes, but” thought process

The above is an abbreviated list of behavior patterns for which to be on the look-out. Hopefully it will allow you a base upon which to justify your own feel that “something” is not “right” within your relationship; if you notice any or all of these traits exhibited by your partner, please step back to address their presence within your own life. Do not hesitate to reach out to those whose job it is to provide you with assistance for a safer life style – a phone call away, answers may be yours to find.

EXAMPLE OF CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

by Denise Flynn

TENSION BUILDING STAGE: “Mary” (a fictitious name), has been living with husband and 2 children for 10 years. He is emotionally and verbally abusive and at times, physically abusive. He controls the finances by doling out minimal money to go food shopping and getting the children’s necessities. Mary has been walking on egg-shells for the last few days because her husband has been having some concerns about his job. “When he comes home,” she says, “you can feel the tension the air”

Examples of the Cycle (cont)

He began “snapping” at Mary and the children for the least thing and blaming them for his moodiness, his being angry and having angry words to them.

Mary tried to make him feel better by fixing one of his favorite meals and he ended up throwing the plate against the wall, which upset the children and the atmosphere in the home. He threatened to “knock her head off” if she didn’t clean up the mess immediately. Mary is afraid that he will “explode” and she and/or the children will be hurt.

HONEYMOON STAGE: Mary’s husband came home with her favorite movie, pizza for the kids/dinner, wanting to have family night. He’s playful with the kids and gentle with her. The atmosphere in the home is good! In the back of her mind is always the feeling that this will self-destruct at any time and this mood will quickly turn “ugly.” They are enjoying this side of him, the man she fell in love with, fathered two children, and made a life with. She wishes this part of him would stay, and the angry, sometimes hurtful man would go away.

INCIDENT: Mary called the domestic violence program after her husband carried out his threat and shoved her into the wall and raised closed fist to her face, shouting obscenities. She is afraid; afraid to leave because she has no money and no where to go; afraid to stay because he may increase his abusive behavior and carry out the threats to do bodily harm to himself and to her. She feels if she does ANYTHING, he will carry out his threats. She does not really have family support but friends are telling her to leave with the children as soon as possible. Calling the police may make matters worse!

The Cycle of Violence does not follow any set pattern. It could change and inter-change at any time. It could skip the Honeymoon stage or it could go long periods of time in either stage. The danger of someone getting hurt is ever-present and possibly ever-escalating. There are no specific triggers. What appeased the abuser at one time could be the very same thing to set off abusive behavior and actions. Abuser could be male or female, same sex or heterosexual partners; crossing all socio-economic boundaries. The dynamic of abuse is the same! The main thing to remember is: Help is available. Confidential, safe, and non-judgmental help is a phone call away.

**Whether you are calling for yourself or just want information for a friend or family member don’t hesitate.
Knowledge is power!**

MAKE THE CALL TO STOP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



UNDERSTANDING AND ASSESSING SEXUAL VIOLENCE WITHIN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP by Annelise Bloch

*“It’s just easier to go ahead with it then have to go through all of that. I mean I was going to end up having sex with him anyway. So I’m going to have sex with or without the ass whipping...”
(Logan, 2013)*

*“He had this thing - this way of taking things away from me, punishing me if he didn’t get sex. He would punish me by taking my keys to my car so that I couldn’t go anywhere or taking my car and you know leaving his without the keys or, taking the kids to his mother’s instead of me keeping them, yeah, punishment”
(Logan, Cole, & Shannon 2007).*

These stories highlight not only what sexual violence within the context of intimate partner violence can look like, but they also highlight the complex issue of identifying sexual violence within abusive relationships. Identification is an important step in receiving help and beginning the healing process. These stories are examples of rape within an abusive relationship. What they don’t say is how these women would define their experiences. To be clear, they are sexual assault/rape. However many women in these situations would not identify as a rape victim and therefore not know where to access support and services for rape victims.

Sexual Violence (cont)

This is not to say that all women would not call this rape or sexual assault, but many would not due in part due to the control and manipulation experienced within abusive relationships adding to difficulty for women to conceptualize the abuse they experience as well as our cultural and societal norms and myths about marriage and sexual assault preventing women from identifying the above abuse as sexual assault or rape. Ideas such as: “real rape” is with strangers, sexual relations within a relationship are private matters, “real rape” uses physical violence and force, sex is a wifely duty and once in a relationship women automatically and continuously consent to sexual relations.

So how as concerned family members, friends, religion communities, mental health service providers, healthcare professionals, and law enforcement can we help survivors of sexual violence by abusive partners when these women might be hesitant to identify as a victim or unsure of what has happened to them? The answer depends on your relationship to the survivor. It is important not to label this behavior for a victim or force someone to talk about their experience but it is equally important to not cut survivors out of our lives or dismiss them as “illegitimate victim” who doesn’t need help just because they don’t identify what is happening to them as abusive.

For friends and family members, due to societal norms about sexual matters between partners being private, we might not be privileged to information about sexual assault occurring in a survivor’s relationship. But as friends of family members we can be aware that sexual assault can take many forms and be open to the possibility that someone we know in an abusive relationship might experience sexual violence. We can try to remain judgment free when our loved ones come to us to talk about an uncomfortable, confusing or frightening sexual experience they have had. Oftentimes survivors of sexual violence within abusive relationships will not bring up the abuse due to embarrassment. If we acknowledge these can be embarrassing conversations but stress our concern for the survivor and their worth and right to not be abused, we can open the door to conversations leading to support and healing. Although the above mentioned norms and myths are well ingrained in our society, we can try to put them aside through our awareness of them and not use them to convince a loved one that what they experienced is not abuse. For example if a

loved on is confused about how to understand her sexual experience which did not involve any physical force, it would be helpful to refrain from statements like “Well if you didn’t fight back, you must have wanted it” or “All men want sex all the time, you’re married, what’s the big deal?”. Most importantly we can offer love and support to our friends and family members, and encourage them discuss these matters with a professional and assist them in accessing the resources they need.

As professional it is also important to have awareness about the many forms of sexual violence and bringing this awareness into how we speak to potential clients/survivors. For example, the question “Have you ever been raped?” might cause survivors to shut down, or feel out of place, or deny their experience. Instead we can ask questions like, “Are you afraid of your partner?” and then elicit conversation about why that might be the case. We can also ask “Have you ever had sex with your partner when you didn’t want to?” or “Has anyone forced you to have sexual activities that made you feel uncomfortable?” being aware that how women define force can be different (Basile, K., Hertz, M., Back, S., 2007). We can explain that force takes many forms and provide examples. We can explore if there are any consequences to denying sexual relations. We can provide education about what sexual violence looks like within an abusive relationship and provide information on the many forms coercion can take.

The most important thing service providers can do is **not be afraid to ask the questions**. We need to set aside our judgments and embarrassment about discussing sexual matters with others and provide a safe and understanding environment for women to begin to explore these issues. Our empathic response will allow a survivor to feel like she can discuss her experiences and receive the help she needs.

References:

- Basile KC, Hertz MF, Back SE. *Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence Victimization Assessment Instruments for Use in Healthcare Settings: Version 1*. Atlanta (GA): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control; 2007.
- Logan, T., Walker, R., Cole, J. (2013) *Silenced Suffering: The Need for a Better Understanding of Partner Sexual Violence. Trauma Violence and Abuse*, December 30, 2013.
- Logan, T., Cole, J., & Shannon, L. (2007). *A mixed-methods examination of sexual coercion and degradation among women in violent relationships who do and do not report forced sex. Violence and victims*, 22(1), 71-94.

Children Learn What They Live

By Dorothy Law Nolte, Ph.D.

Submitted by Michele Kristofco

If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn.
If children live with hostility, they learn to fight.
If children live with fear, they learn to be apprehensive.
If children live with pity, they learn to feel sorry for themselves.
If children live with ridicule, they learn to feel shy.
If children live with jealousy, they learn to feel envy.
If children live with shame, they learn to feel guilty.
If children live with encouragement, they learn confidence.
If children live with tolerance, they learn patience.
If children live with praise, they learn appreciation.
If children live with acceptance, they learn to love.
If children live with approval, they learn to like themselves.
If children live with recognition, they learn it is good to have a goal.
If children live with sharing, they learn generosity.
If children live with honesty, they learn truthfulness.
If children live with fairness, they learn justice.
If children live with kindness and consideration, they learn respect.
If children live with security, they learn to have faith in themselves and in those about them.
If children live with friendliness, they learn the world is a nice place in which to live.

Commentary by Michele Kristofco

One could argue that Dorothy Law Nolte oversimplifies life and the childhood experience in her poem, "Children Learn What They Live", but study after study and my own 20 years of work in the field of Child Welfare appear to prove that she was right on. When children are exposed to childhood trauma or adverse childhood experiences, the consequences are life long.

Dr. Vincent Felitti has been the lead **ACE Study (Adverse Childhood Experience)** investigator along with the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) studying thousands of middle-aged adults and measuring the connection between current circumstances and adverse childhood experiences. ACE studies show that children exposed to domestic violence, child abuse and other trauma suffer more illnesses and injuries throughout their lives and even have a shorter life expectancy. Additionally, adverse childhood experiences have a

cumulative negative effect. The more adverse trauma or the longer the trauma persists, the greater the likelihood of problems into adulthood including increased physical illness, increased mental illness, decreased educational and economic achievement, substance abuse, criminality, and ultimately a shorter life expectancy overall.

There is no greater argument to break the cycle of violence. If not for ourselves, for our children, their children, and our future. We have a duty. We are our children's parents, teachers, role-models and mentors. We must be their guides in the conduct of life. We must nurture and protect them. And we must protect ourselves for the good of our children.

Update on Campaign for Mandatory Healthy Relationships Training in PA

By Pauline McGibbon

"There are too many victims" was the headline blazoned across the Pottstown Mercury on March 3rd, 2014. This article was a two part piece, starting with an interview with the family of last year's first victim of domestic violence in Montgomery County, Julianne Siller, seventeen years old. Julianne's family struggle with the label of "domestic violence victim", knowing that their daughter's relationship with her killer was tenuous at best. He on the other hand, felt that she belonged to him and that he had the power of life and death over her.

Julianne's family joined with the Women's Center of Montgomery County in the campaign to promote mandatory healthy relationships training in middle and high schools in PA. As part of the process we talked to legislators, including Senator S. Greenleaf, whose quote was used in the newspaper article. Senator Greenleaf believes new legislation could be comfortably added to the existing rules on mandatory training in schools on bullying. The next step was to use findings of the anticipated State Board of Education PA Study, on the benefits and detriments of mandatory dating education, which was due in January 2014, and submitted to the Chairman of the Education Committee of the Senate, and the Chairman of the Education Committee of the House of Representatives.

Update on Campaign (cont)

The published report was disappointing at best, and misguided in its recommendation to allow the status quo to continue – the “school districts have the flexibility to address dating violence education in a manner appropriate to local needs and in a manner that allows districts to determine how to best manage their time, given the breadth of the district’s other academic responsibilities”. It further recommended the Department of Education “strengthen “current materials and resources, and “make information available to districts about the characteristics of effective prevention programs” and finally that school districts “ensure that school counselors are appropriately trained to address dating violence”.

Despite the evidence and comments offered by the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence, (PCADV), the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR), and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Pennsylvania continues to be one of nine states that “encourages” or “endorses “dating violence education, while fifteen other states (including Texas) mandate dating violence instruction, and two have legislation pending that will mandate it.

As part of the consultation process, PCADV submitted evidence to the State Board in support of the mandatory dating violence curriculum. It contended:

- Dating violence education is an essential part of adolescents’ health and wellness education;
- Educating about dating violence will lead to better student outcomes and safer school environments;
- Dating violence education is effective; and
- Schools are exactly the right venue to be delivering this education.

PCADV propose d that:

- The State Board of Education should incorporate dating violence education into the annual health curriculum for students in grades seven through twelve.
- School districts should be required to consult with a local domestic violence program to develop a comprehensive dating violence education curriculum.
- School personnel should be trained by the local domestic violence program on issues of dating violence.

PCADV also highlighted the fact that dating violence is **deadly**. Research indicates that intimate partner violence starts most frequently between the ages of 18-24, with ages 11-17 the second largest group. Early intervention and education is essential in the prevention of serious violence and fatalities. Research also shows that where training is part of the required

curriculum physical violence is reduced. Victims and bystanders learn about healthy relationships, the signs of an abusive relationship, and strategies for resolving conflict without violence.

The State Board considered these submissions, that education prevents a serious public threat, that it prevents risky and unhealthy behaviors, that it empowers students, raises awareness, and ultimately helps provide victims with the strategies and resources they need to remove themselves from those relationships.

They also considered the “detriments” – the financial cost, the time and expansion of the already stretched school curriculum, the needed expertise and training, parental and student resistance, doubts about the efficacy of the programs, and potential legal liability – “while school officials certainly want students to be safe, their primary role is that of educators, not law enforcement” (comment from the PA school Boards Association).

Senator Greenleaf has responded to this by saying “I do not believe this is a financial burden on schools, and even if it was, this is a life or death situation”

Pennsylvania has seen dating violence become deadly – Samantha Heller, 19, Tiffany Moody, 17, Emily Silverstein, 19, and Demi Cuccia, 16 (PA’s first teen dating violence education bill was named for Demi).

Could Julianne Siller’s death have been prevented had she received healthy relationships training at school? We can never answer that question, but we can suggest that had she known the signs, the tactics and manipulations of abusers, the available and confidential community resources, had she even been able to put a name to what was happening to her, it might have made a difference to the outcome.

Ultimately, what we do know is that adolescence is a window of opportunity for prevention and education, and that as advocates we must challenge and educate, never permitting that window to slam shut.

*Citations: PA State Board of Education-“The Benefits and Detriments of Mandating Dating Violence Education in the Public Schools of the Commonwealth”, Published 1/2014
PCADV Comments and Sub missions to State Board of Education, 2013
PCADV fatality Reports 2010-2012
The “Pottstown Mercury” 3/3/2014*

MAKE THE CALL TO STOP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



For confidential domestic violence, sexual assault, or child abuse help or resources: **Laurel House Hotline: 800-642-3150**
Women's Center Hotline: 800-773-2424
Victim Service Center: 888-521-0983
Office of Children and Youth: 610-278-5800
PA Child Abuse Hotline: 800-932-0313*
Montgomery County Domestic Relations: 610-278-3646
(Child support issues)
***Correction**

Contributors are all members of the Montgomery County Domestic Violence Legal Network/T.E.A.C.H.

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This is Article II

A new article will be published each quarter by The Domestic Violence Legal Network and can be accessed at: www.montcopa.org/DVLN

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