



Understanding Domestic Violence

Crime Victim Advocate Program

Definitions: Abusive Behavior

When one person uses **power and control** tactics to get another person with less power to do what they want in a way that is harmful to that other person



Definition: Abusive Relationship

A relationship where there is a **pattern of abusive** behavior with one “primary” abuser and one “primary” survivor



Statistics:

- Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women ages 15-44 in the United States
- 1 in 4 women will experience abuse
- 74% of Montanans know a victim of DV
- 40% of all abuse goes unreported
- Nearly 80% of women who have been physically abused in their intimate relationships continue to date their abuser

Community Effects:

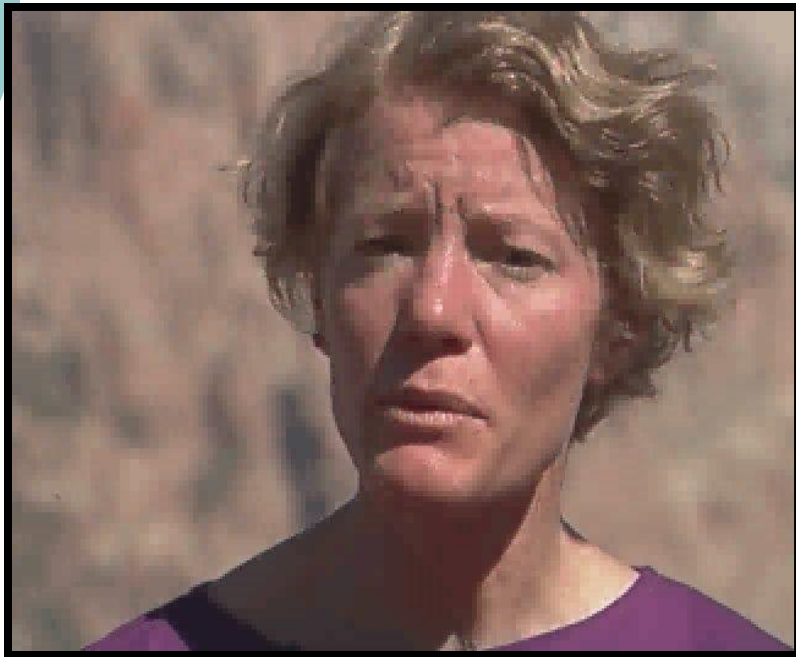
Not just an individual problem

- **Mental Health:**
Women: 88% PTSD, 72% depression, and 75% anxiety.
Children: Attention Deficit Disorder, Hyperactivity Disorder, Serious Emotional Disturbances.
- **Injuries:** 40% of family violence victims were injured during the incident.
- **Lethality:** Of all the murders of females in 2005 (nationally), family members were responsible for 43%.
- **Homelessness:** 39% of U.S. cities cite domestic violence as the primary cause of family homelessness.
- **Suicide:** One study showed that 29% of the women subjects who attempted suicide had domestic violence in their medical histories.
- **Criminal Activity:** 76% of men who engage in domestic violence report engaging in one or more deviant acts concurrently, including stealing or drug use.
- Violence has become accepted in many of our societies and is therefore often not discussed. Violence has become normalized (ex: don't react to gendered stereotypes or violence on TV any longer).

The Victims:

- Victims cross all socio-economic, religious, racial, ethnic, age groups
- Victims can be men or women, yet women represent 95% of adult victims
- Domestic violence happens between people who are dating, married, separated, and divorced.

The Victims:



Stacy

First American woman to summit
Mount Everest

“When people meet me, and find out that I’ve been in an abusive relationship... they just can’t believe it.”

“Looking at me, with all the things I’ve done in my life.. They think, how could I have been in a relationship like that?”



Activity 1: Types of Abuse

- What are the different types of Abuse?
 - Give examples of each



Emotional and Psychological Abuse

- Insults, put downs
- Taking away self-worth
- Name calling and yelling
- Making her feel crazy
- Mind games
- Humiliation and guilt



Isolation and Exclusion:

- Controlling what she does
 - who he sees
 - what she wears
 - where he goes
- Limiting outside involvement
- Using jealousy to justify actions

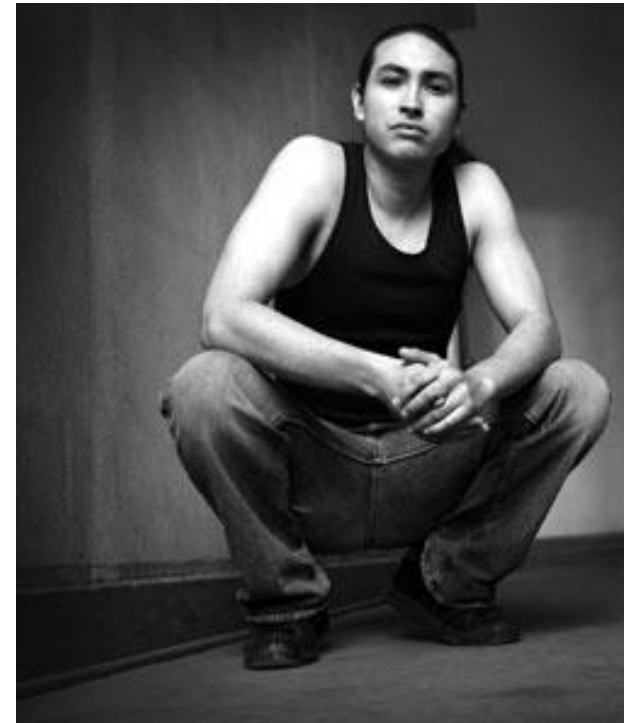


Example:

- “It started out slowly. At first he just wanted to *know* where I was going all the time. Then he wanted to *tell* me where I was going all the time. By the end, I wasn’t allowed to go anywhere.”
- “If I went out with my girlfriends, I knew I would come back to find the house trashed... he would always break something he knew I really cared about.”

Minimizing, Denying, Blaming

- Minimizing abuse
- Not taking concerns seriously
- Saying the abuse didn't happen
- Shifting the responsibility to the victim



Example:



“Either dinner wasn’t exactly what he wanted,
the house wasn’t immaculate,
I didn’t look presentable enough...
any excuse at all, really...
and it was always **my** fault.”

“ It was very debilitating,
I ended up walking on eggshells.
I began questioning my own
competence
to do anything.”

Using Social Status/ Peer Pressure



- Treating her like a servant
- Making all the decisions
- Threatening to expose someone's weakness
- Telling malicious lies
- Spreading rumors

Using the Children:



- Making them feel guilty about the children
- Saying they are a bad parent
- Using the children to relay messages
- Using visitation to harass them
- Threatening to take the children away

Economic or Financial Abuse



- Controlling the finances.
- Withholding money or credit cards.
- Giving you an allowance.
- Making you account for every penny you spend.
- Exploiting your assets for personal gain.
- Withholding basic necessities (food, clothes, medications, shelter).
- Preventing you from working or choosing your own career.

Intimidation and Threats

- Making and/ or carrying out threats to do something to harm her
- Threatening to leave, to commit suicide, to report them to the police
- Making her afraid by looks, gestures, actions, destroying things



Sexual Coercion



- Manipulating or making threats to get sex
- Getting her pregnant
- Getting someone drunk or drugged to get sex
- Refusing to let them sleep until they have sex

The Batterers:

- Batterers cross all socio-economic, religious, racial, ethnic, age groups
- DV Is Learned Behavior by Batterers
- DV Is NOT Caused By:
 - Illness
 - Genetics or gender
 - Alcohol or other drugs
 - Anger
 - Stress
 - Victim's behavior
 - Relationship problems



Violent Behavior is an Abuser's Choice

- He does not batter other individuals
- If you ask an abused woman, "can he stop when the phone rings or the police come to the door?" She will say "yes".
- The abuser very often escalates from pushing and shoving to hitting in places where the bruises and marks will not show.

What Makes Batterers So Powerful?

- Isolation of victim
- Societal Denial
- Use of Religious Issues
- Use of Cultural Issues
- Threats of Retaliation



Red flags:

Characteristics of a batterer:

- Manipulative
- Extreme Jealousy
- Controlling behavior
- Quick Involvement
- Explosive Anger
- Isolates you from friends and family
- Alcohol/Drug use
- Frequently charming

Warning signs of a victim:

- Physical signs of injury, with the excuse of “accidents”
- Frequent and sudden absences from work
- Fear of the partner, references to the partner's anger
- Changes in mood or personality
- Excessive fear of conflict
- Submissive behavior, lack of assertiveness
- Isolated and withdrawn
- Depressed or anxious

Fear

“Everyone seems to think that what you need to do is to just leave the relationship and then everything will be fine.”

That’s the myth. The reality is that the violence escalates if you try to get away.

“I knew that not only did I have to leave, I had to DISAPPEAR.”

Why do they stay?

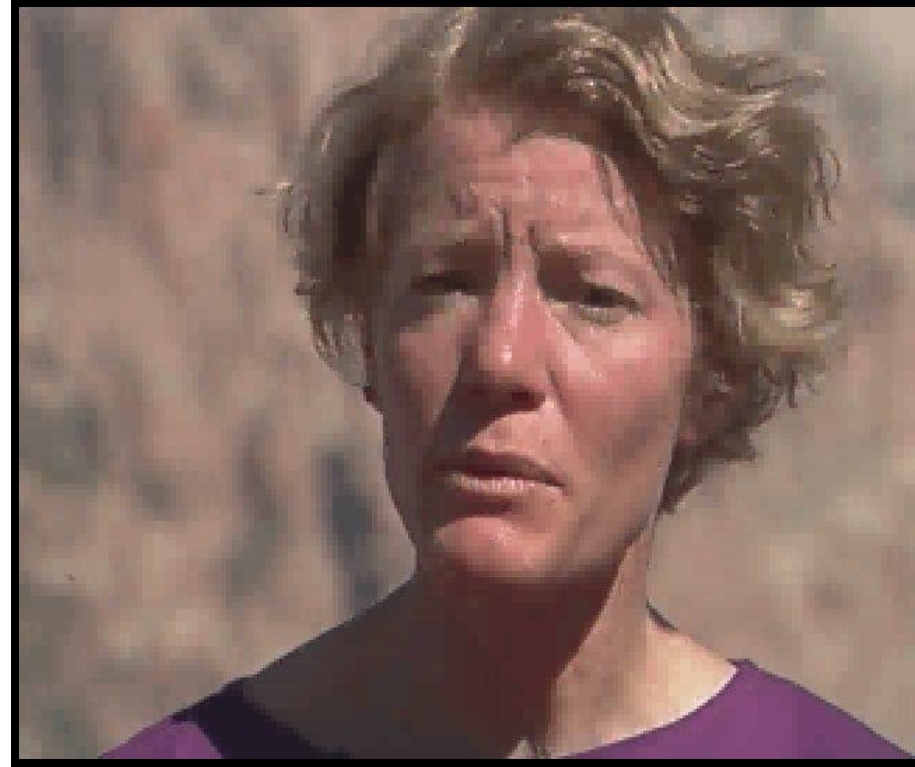
1. Fear
2. Lack of resources/economic dependency
3. Religious and cultural beliefs/societal pressure
4. They believe they can change and love them
5. Stay for the children



Low Self Esteem

“I thought that I was worthless,
that I couldn’t do anything right.”

I thought I was ugly, just a
horrible individual ... no one
would ever love me and I myself
was incapable of love.”



Stacy
First American Woman to
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Leaving is a process



“I think I left 12 times before I finally stayed gone.

When I look back on it now, I realize I was practicing. It was a process...

it took time, I had to learn how to leave and I had to learn how to stay gone.”

Promises to Change

“I don’t really know why I kept going back... He begged me to, swore he’d never do it again.”

“And, I wanted to hear it. I was overweight, I felt unloved...”



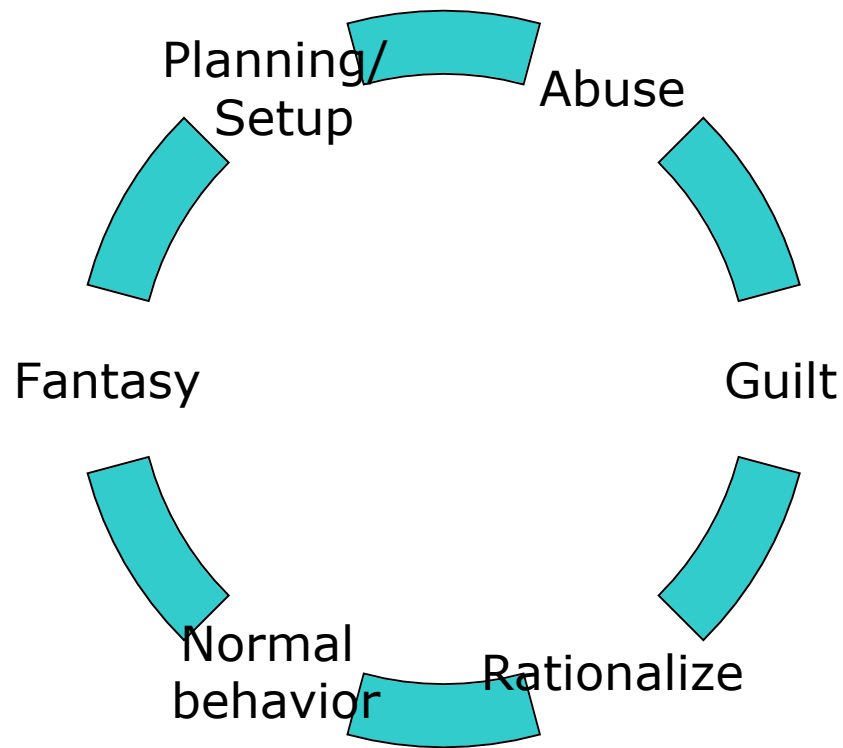



Lack of Resources

“After years of violence, I was completely bewildered. I didn’t know how to get away!”

There has to be a place to go to, its not just a matter of leaving from someone. And, for many victims of domestic violence that place either doesn’t exist or they don’t know that it exists.

Cycle of Violence





Abuse — The abuser lashes out with aggressive or violent behavior. The abuse is a power play designed to show the victim "who is boss."

Guilt — After the abusive episode, the abuser feels guilt, but not over what he's done to the victim. The guilt is over the possibility of being caught and facing consequences.

Rationalization or excuses — The abuser rationalizes what he's done. He may come up with a string of excuses or blame the victim for his own abusive behavior—anything to shift responsibility from himself.

"Normal" behavior — The abuser does everything he can to regain control and keep the victim in the relationship. He may act as if nothing has happened, or he may turn on the charm. This peaceful honeymoon phase may give the victim hope that the abuser has really changed this time.

Fantasy and planning — The abuser begins to fantasize about abusing his victim again, spending a lot of time thinking about what she's done wrong and how he'll make her pay. Then he makes a plan for turning the fantasy of abuse into reality.

Set-up — The abuser sets up the victim and puts his plan in motion, creating a situation where he can justify abusing her.

Leaving is a Process

- Battered women on average will leave and return 5 to 7 times before leaving for good.
- In order to leave:
 - Must realize relationship is unhealthy
 - Must realize that it will not get better
 - Experience a large event
 - Experience hope for the future
 - Community Support

Leaving Is a Process

- **Ways to support a victim of DV:** From Dr. Fiore's study of 400 Western MT Women
 1. Validate their experience
 2. Provide emotional support
 3. Provide material assistance
 4. Offer encouragement
 5. Provide protection

How to Help:



1. **Believe them**
2. **Listen**
3. **Be nonjudgmental**
4. **Don't tell them what to do**
5. **Don't minimize the abuse**
6. **Work on a safety plan**
7. **Don't put down the abuser**
8. **Refer them to the help line**
9. **Don't give up!**