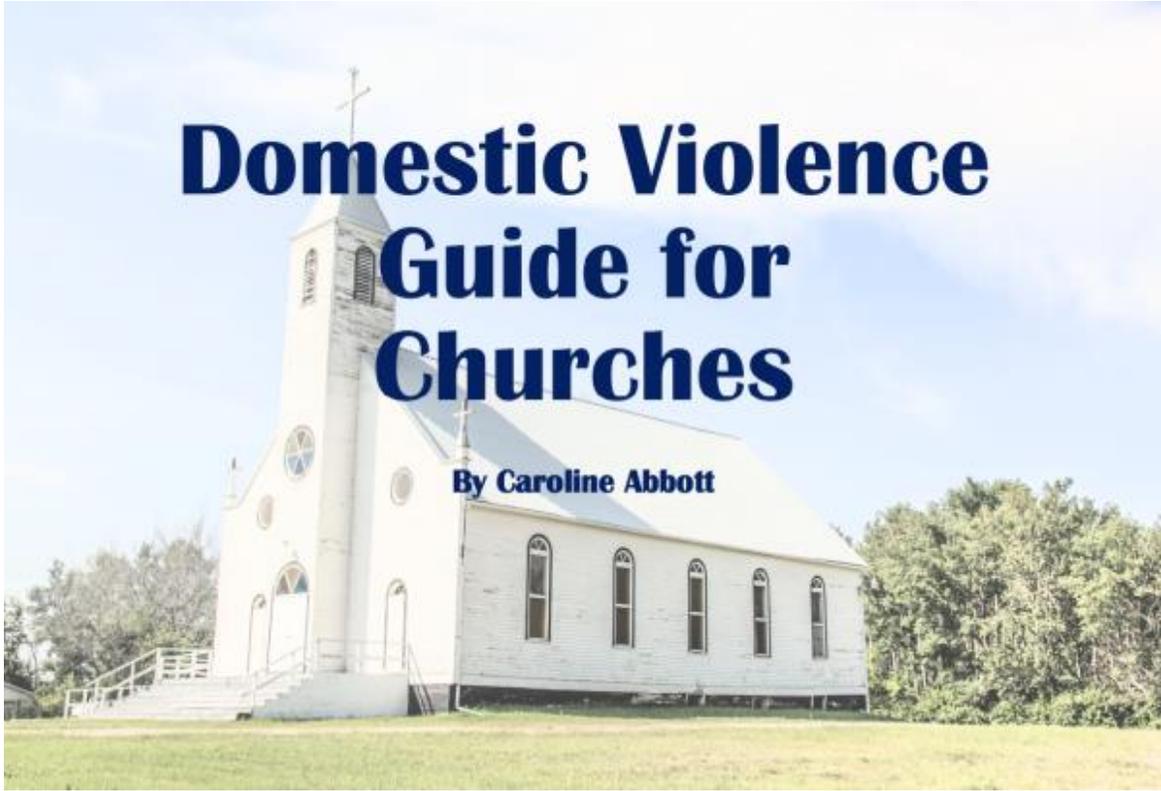


Domestic Violence Guide for Churches

By Caroline Abbott



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Part 1 – Understanding the Dynamics of Domestic Violence

Congratulations on being willing to learn about a subject in which few people are interested. This has traditionally not been a subject leaders in the Christian Church have wanted to address, so hooray to you for tackling it! Abusers can be male or female, and so can their victims. You might see or have to deal with either – however, most domestic violence is perpetrated by men. Often in the church you will find male abusers because they are adept in twisting God’s word about submission to keep control over their wives. For ease of writing, I will use “he” for the abuser, and “she” for the victim.

As Christians, we can agree we are all sinners. However, abuse is a category of sin that is unique. While we all have lied, and broken God’s laws during our lifetime, we are not all abusers. An abuser looks at the world very differently than do non-abusers. An abuser seeks to gain power, control and domination over others because he feels *entitled* to this power. He feels validated to use *any means necessary* to force his victim to do what he wants because he is not usually constrained by the conscience that most of us have. In his mindset, he deserves power and control because he is superior to his victims, and they exist only to serve him.

I gathered much of the information for this guide from the State of New Hampshire Governor’s Commission on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Attorney General’s Office Faith Communities: Domestic Violence Protocol 2007.¹ This guide will suggest several actions you and your church can take to help abuse victims. Consider these suggestions carefully, and always remember dealing with abusers can be dangerous. If you are ever unsure how to help an abuse victim, call an expert, such as your local domestic violence crisis center, or your local police department.

Domestic violence is not a disagreement, a marital spat or an anger management problem. Sometimes when people have difficulty distinguishing the victim from the abuser, they will use the term “mutual domestic violence.” *By definition, domestic violence cannot be mutual.* However, there are many forms of violence that can be erroneously described as domestic violence, which often results in a victim being mislabeled as the abuser²:

- **Resistance Violence:** violence that is committed by a victim in reaction to the abuse that she is experiencing, and includes defending herself from an attack.
- **Pre-emptive Violence:** violence that is committed by a victim because she is anticipating an attack by the abuser or has been “walking on eggshells” for so long, she is trying to precipitate an end to the tension. The victim often knows that the longer the tension builds the more the risk of injury is increased.
- **Situational Violence:** violence that happens in reaction to the victim’s circumstances; there is no pattern, or it is out of the victim’s character to use violence.
- **Mutual Violence:** this differs from domestic violence because violence or aggression may be used but not as a means to control the other partner.

There are many incorrect beliefs (“myths”) about why an abuser will abuse. Here are a few:

1. He can’t control his behavior.
2. He doesn’t know how to handle his feelings.

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3. He was abused as a child, and this is the only way he knows how to behave.
4. He has poor communication skills.
5. He has low self-esteem.
6. He hates women.
7. He is mentally ill.
8. He doesn't understand the bible; he isn't a believer in Christ.
9. He is addicted to drugs and/or alcohol.³

The reality may surprise you. While drugs and alcohol can make his behaviors worse, they are not the cause of his abuse. Most abusers only abuse their domestics and children, and have complete control over when and why they behave abusively. They rarely lose control of themselves in other social situations, and usually look great to their bosses, friends, and pastors. They usually treat other women wonderfully. In fact, the only time they are abusive is at home. Why is that?

In his mind, an abuser abuses his victim because:

- He likes being in control
- He has convinced himself it is OK to behave this way
- He gets what he wants by this behavior.

He has a great feeling of entitlement, and feels he has a special status no one else in the family does. In his mind, he has the right to:

- Physical, emotional and sexual caretaking
- Deference ("Everyone should respect me, but I owe no one else any respect.")
- Freedom from accountability ("No one should question my actions.")

In contrast, his wife and children have few, if any rights.

If you have overlooked an abuser in the past, don't berate yourself – you are not alone. These people are master manipulators. Just as Satan disguises himself as an angel of light, abusers are highly capable of deception and presenting a very different public face than their private face. To those outside their homes they appear to be:

- Good husbands
- Model fathers
- Upstanding Christians
- Even leaders of the church, elders and pastors.

These people look so good on the outside they are often able to fool those around them into thinking their *victim* is causing all the trouble in their home, and that she is:

- A Liar
- An unsubmitive wife, and/or
- Crazy.

But *why* are they able to fool us?

We don't want to believe people can be this evil.

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We *want* to believe the outward appearance of a godly man loving his wife and children, don't we? There are many men who father children and never take any responsibility for them. When we see one who *appears* to be doing the right thing, we *want* to believe the outward appearance.

But God doesn't look at the outward appearance, and neither should we. The Bible has a lot to say about people who disguise themselves in this way, but we must search the Bible for them. For example, 1 Samuel 16:7:

But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

We are going to look into the world the abuser forces his victim to live in, pulling off the mask he wears so we are able to help the victim, and expose the abuser for who he really is.

Jesus himself warns us about people like this in Matthew 7:15:

"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves."

Why do wolves dress up like sheep? So they can *eat the sheep!* These abusers have been dressing like sheep and have been eating their victims right in our own pews for years, and we haven't realized it. Why not? What do wolves dressed like sheep look like? They look like *sheep!* In other words,

They look just like us.⁴

They are masters at disguising their thoughts and actions. They might be your next-door neighbor, your brother-in-law, or your best friend and you would *never know it!* Probably the only people who know it are their wives and children. And the abuser has made sure their wives and children won't tell anyone through many abusive actions that make them too afraid to share what life at home is really like. But, were you to implant a nanny cam in their home you would be shocked to see him committing⁵:

1. **Verbal Abuse** - He criticizes the appearance, actions and thoughts of the victim, often calling her obscene names in front of their children.
2. **Emotional Abuse** - He robs her of sleep, waking her in the middle of night, or will keep the children up very late. When he is in a rage, he might scream at her all night long. He will monitor everything she does, her phone calls, her car mileage, her computer usage, how much money she spends, where she goes and whom she sees. He will tell her what to wear and whom she is allowed to speak to. He will keep her from her friends and family so that she has no one to help her if she should decide to leave, or turn them against her so they refuse to help her. He threatens her with weapons, and threatens to harm her pets or children.

He may also give her the silent treatment, refusing to acknowledge she exists. He may be very neglectful, and refuse to help her with anything about their home, children or life. **Psychological Abuse** - He will try to make her think she is going crazy. He will move an item that is important to her, and then help her "find" it. He

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will make promises to her; then deny ever having the conversation. Later, when she begins to doubt her own perceptions, he will call her crazy, or seem concerned about her mental health.

Financial Abuse - No matter how much money they have, he will keep her in poverty. She is put on an allowance, or must beg for money to feed the children, even if she works. Meanwhile, he buys anything he wants for himself, like TVs and new cars. He may refuse to work, whether in the home, or to bring finances into the family.

3. **Medical Abuse** - He will prohibit her and the children from seeking medical care, saying they “can’t afford it,” but go to the doctor himself for the smallest bump.
4. **Sexual Abuse** - He will demand sex, even when she is ill, even raping her. He will call her sexual names, force her to watch pornography, and refuse to use birth control. He will have affairs and give her sexually transmitted diseases.
5. **Spiritual Abuse** - He will use the Bible to inflict guilt or gain control over her. He will claim to be her God, to be all-powerful and all knowing, and require her to bow to his wishes over God’s.

Of course, every abuser will not do every one of these actions. But these are typical. Please notice that I did not list physical abuse here. If he can keep her in line, (make her do whatever he wants), without resorting to physical abuse, he will. If she refuses to do something he wants her to do, he may resort to physical violence at any time, without any warning. She is aware he could do this, and is fearful that he might.

Please refer to the Power and Control Wheel⁶ below to see the most common abusive behaviors or tactics that were used against domestic violence victims. The tactics chosen for the wheel were those that were most universally experienced by battered women.

“Battering is one form of domestic or intimate partner violence. It is characterized by the pattern of actions that an individual uses to intentionally control or dominate his intimate partner. That is why the words ‘power and control’ are in the center of the wheel. A batterer systematically uses threats, intimidation, and coercion to instill fear in his partner. These behaviors are the spokes of the wheel. Physical and sexual violence holds it all together—this violence is the rim of the wheel.”⁷

POWER AND CONTROL WHEEL



DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT

202 East Superior Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802
218-722-2781
www.duluth-model.org

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Many people in the church believe that as long as the abuser is not physically violent, a wife should stay in the marriage. Perhaps you have thought this in the past. If so, please consider the following:

- When asked which was more damaging to their souls and hardest to heal from, former victims say that non-physical abuse is harder to heal from than physical abuse.⁸
- Also, keep in mind that by the time an abuser begins physically abusing his victim, he is *extremely* dangerous. She is literally taking her life, (and the lives of her children) in her hands by trying to leave if she waits until he becomes physically violent.

If he does resort to physical violence, here are some actions he might take:⁹

Physical Abuse

1. Use weapons to threaten or hurt her, her children or her pets.
2. Drive recklessly or dangerously while she and her children are in the car.
3. Lock her out of the house without proper clothing; abandon her in unfamiliar places with no car, phone or money.
4. Force her to use alcohol or drugs against her will. Many abusers get their victims addicted in order to make them easier to control.
5. Pull her hair, punch, slap, kick, bite, or strangle her until she passes out.
6. Prevent her from calling the police or seeking medical attention after doing the above.

It is difficult to hear about these abusive behaviors, isn't it? Imagine living with a person who does them day after day. He will prevent her from leaving him by threatening to take her children from her, or threatening to hurt or kill her, her pets or her children. He will even threaten to kill himself.

Many abusers *do* kill themselves, *but they kill their victims first.*¹⁰

We have all heard of stories of men who seem to be wonderful husbands and fathers killing their wives, children, and then themselves.

You may find it almost impossible to imagine a friend or church member behaving abusively toward his wife and children. Sadly, this happens every day to people *you know*. One in four adult women will experience domestic violence from a partner in her lifetime. Some statistics show that one in seven men will experience domestic violence as well. Even more sadly, the percentage of families that experience domestic violence is the same in Christian homes as it is in non-Christian homes. As Jesus says in Matthew 7:16 – 20:

By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

Again, sadly, you will have difficulty recognizing their bad fruit, because they will go to great lengths to hide their behavior from you. And they will terrorize their wives and children so that they will be afraid to tell you.

Cycle of Violence

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Most abusers do not behave abusively all the time. Abuse tends to follow a cycle that gets worse and more frequent over time. The following diagram depicts the abuser's behaviors, which go around and around, keeping the victim off-guard, never knowing what to expect. These are the "phases" of abuse.



The abusive behaviors I listed above occur in the "**abuse**," or **explosion** stage.

After that stage, the abuser will often act remorseful and make a lot of promises to his victim, so that it feels like a "**honeymoon**." He might apologize profusely, and say he will "never act like that again." He might bring her flowers, take her on expensive dates or trips, and treat her like a queen for a time. During this time, the victim is often so relieved, she makes every effort to believe him, no matter how many times the cycle has happened before. Other abusers may blame the victim, ignore, or deny the abuse he's just committed. The honeymoon stage is never a real honeymoon. It is an attempt by the abuser to draw the victim back into the relationship. This stage might last for a few hours, days, weeks, months or even years.

A building up of tension – the "tension-building" stage, usually follows the honeymoon stage. During this stage, the abuser becomes edgy, irritable, and possessive, making the victim feel like she is walking on eggshells. She tries to do whatever she can to not upset him and bring on another explosive stage, which will invariably come again.

Thinking of the abuser's behavior as the repetitive, round and around cycle of abuse diagrammed by the Bridges Domestic and Sexual Violence Support Group (figure above)¹¹ can be helpful. It describes the victim's three emotions that keep the cycle going:

- She **loves** her partner, and the relationship has its good points.
- She **hopes** his behavior will change because the relationship didn't start out this way.
- She **fears** her partner will follow through with the threats he's made against her or her loved ones.

Be aware not all abusive relationships follow the tension building-abuse-honeymoon pattern. Some do not have a honeymoon stage. These abusers move directly from the abuse

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stage into the next tension building stage. Other abusers are so unpredictable they might move from the honeymoon stage directly into the next abuse stage.

What About Submission?

Many Christians become confused when they think about Christian submission as it pertains to domestic violence. Doesn't the Bible say wives should submit to their husbands in *everything*? Let's examine submission by looking at what the Apostle Paul says about it. Ephesians 5 is often used to describe submission only for women. However, it really describes submission for all people. It begins in verse 21 by saying:

*Submit to **one another** out of reverence for Christ.*

It then continues by saying:

Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Many Christians tend to focus on these three verses, but the next eight verses are just as important:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— for we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.

The Apostle Paul sums up his discussion of Christian submission in marriage:

However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

John Piper, a renowned preacher, describes submission this way: "Headship in marriage does not give the husband the right to command and control his wife. It's a responsibility of the husband to love like Christ: to lay down his life for his wife's in servant leadership. And the submission of the wife is not slavish or coerced or cowering. That's not the way Christ wants the church to respond to his leadership: he wants it to be free and willing and glad and refining and strengthening.

"In other words this passage of Scripture does two things: it guards against the abuses of headship by telling husbands to love like Jesus; and it guards against the debasing of submission by telling wives to respond the way the church does to Christ."¹²

Domestic abuse has no place in any loving, mutual, respectful partnership. It is not a family fight that has escalated out of control, nor is it caused by extreme stress. The victim does not cause the violence against her, no matter what she has done in the relationship. Domestic violence is about entitlement—the abuser feels he has the right to treat his intimate partner in this manner. The abuser is solely responsible for choosing to use

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violence against the victim and her children. He alone should be accountable for his behavior.

Unfortunately, an abusive husband often uses verses of the bible, such as Ephesians 5:22–24 to justify his abusive behavior. This makes it even harder for a Christian woman to stand up to her abusive husband than the average woman in society. You can help Christian women who are being abused by letting them know you do not condone her husband committing violence against her just because she is a Christian woman.

How an Abuser May Misuse the Bible to Harm his Victim (Spiritual Abuse)

Spiritual abuse tactics can inflict considerable harm on the victim, making her question her spiritual values and beliefs. Here are some examples of spiritual abuse used by an abuser:

- Abuser uses scripture to justify abusive, dominating or oppressive behavior;
- Abuser denies his partner the freedom to practice the religion of her choice;
- Abuser forces his partner to violate her religious beliefs;
- Abuser shames or belittles his partner for her religious practices;
- Abuser makes oppressive demands based on his interpretation of scriptures or other religious teachings (e.g., “the bible says that you must obey me because you are my wife”);
- Abuser instills religious guilt for not doing what he wants her to (e.g., “How can you call yourself a Christian if you don’t forgive me?”);
- Abuser’s sense of marital entitlement causes him to justify his sexual demands, including forced sex (marital rape);
- Abuser involves or forces children to witness ritual abuse (e.g., sacrificing pets).¹³

Because abusers misuse scriptures to justify physical, sexual and other abuses, we as a church must be careful to guard against unwittingly corroborating an abuser’s claims of “head of household” without expounding upon their responsibilities in this role. Husbands should be admonished to honor their true calling as provider and protector of the family, and encouraged to model respect, mutuality and non-violence.

A victim submitting, praying, or becoming a more righteous person will not stop her partner’s abuse. In fact, her submission to his abuse feeds into his entitlement. The more abuse he commits without accountability, the more abusive he will become. Unfortunately, when a victim receives advice to submit to her husband’s abuse, she is often left feeling hopeless—unworthy of love, respect and dignity.

She begins to question whether her faith is real, or may feel she must choose between her faith and her life.

A victim of domestic abuse needs to hear that God does not condone the violence against her, and that her physical and spiritual wellbeing are more important than saving the marriage¹⁴.

If/When a Victim Asks for Help

If and when a victim or child finally gets the courage to come and tell you what is happening in her home, she is probably desperate, and things are most likely *worse* than what she describes.

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Many people believe, erroneously, that she must be exaggerating, and that both parties bear the blame equally for their marital problems. That is not the case with domestic violence. In these relationships, the victim usually has very little culpability, and will do her best to hide just how bad her home life is from you for several reasons:

1. She is fearful of her husband finding out what she has said, and following through on his threats.
2. She is embarrassed that her home life is so bad, as if she could stop it. Most abusers manage to make their wives believe the abuse is *her* fault. So, by admitting to the abuse, she is somehow admitting to *her* failure to make her husband happy, though it would be impossible for *anyone* to make him happy.

The Children

When abuse occurs between the parents, what happens to the children? Children who live in homes where domestic violence exists are called **Children of Domestic Violence**. Here are some effects of being a CDV:

- Children from abusive homes have problems with attention and memory, lower IQ scores, and poorer language skills than children from non-abusive homes.¹⁵
- Children are at a greater risk of having serious adult health problems, including tobacco use, alcoholism and substance abuse, heart and liver disease, sexually transmitted diseases, depression, suicide attempts and having unintended pregnancies.¹⁶
- These children are five to seven times more likely to have significant psychological problems than other children,¹⁷ and they often experience PTSD.¹⁸
- More than 90 percent of prisoners experienced violence as a child.¹⁹
- Some children will become abusive themselves, often picking on someone lower than themselves on the pecking order, like younger siblings, they will bully children in school, or abuse animals or household pets.²⁰
- Some children come to assume abuse in the home is normal. They believe every home is like theirs. They assume parents who appear loving in public become abusive when behind closed doors.²¹ They grow up not realizing their childhood home was abusive.
- Those children who do realize they are being abused will usually go to great lengths to hide this from people outside the home for the same reasons their mothers do - they are embarrassed by what is happening, or are afraid of their abusive parent. Or they might try to hide the abuse in order to protect their non-abusive parent.

By far, the worst outcome of raising children in an abusive home is the high likelihood they will become either an abuser or a victim of abuse in their future relationships. Men who, as children, witnessed their parents' domestic violence are twice as likely to abuse their own partners as sons of nonviolent parents.²²

Teen Dating Violence

Teens, just like adults, can experience abuse in their dating relationships. In fact, the percentage of teen dating violence is even higher than the percentage of adult domestic

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violence. While one in four adult women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime, the percentage for teens is one in three. Violent behavior often begins as early as sixth grade. This means every third teen in your youth group who is dating is likely being abused by his/her partner. Like adults, many teens will not tell anyone they are being abused. See Appendix C to view the Teen Dating Power and Control Wheel.²³

Abuse in Diverse Populations²⁴

Abuse can be experienced in many diverse populations:

The Elderly and Other Adults with Disabilities – are often dependent on caregivers to help them with their daily activities. These individuals are vulnerable to abuse and neglect by those who take care of them. They may experience physical, emotional, sexual and financial abuse, or they may be neglected.

Immigrants or Refugees – are especially vulnerable because they may not understand our language and laws. Their abuser may threaten to have them deported or arrested if they try to leave or resist their abuser. If you need to help an immigrant or refugee, try to find a certified or confidential interpreter to communicate with the victim.

Same Sex Couples – also experience domestic violence. Often the abuser will threaten to “out” the victim. Remember, regardless of the size of the abuser, domestic violence is always about one person trying to gain power and control.

Animal Abuse

Pet and animal abuse is often an early indicator of domestic violence. Abusers will often hurt or threaten the family pet as a way to abuse their partner and/or children. Many victims will not want to leave their pets behind when they leave for fear of what the abuser will do to them. Some safe houses now accept pets. If a victim wants to leave and cannot find a safe place for the family pet(s), you could help find a temporary or long-term placement for the pet(s).

Why Doesn't She Just Leave?

Many people, especially those who don't understand the dynamics of abuse, often wonder why a victim doesn't simply leave her abuser when she begins to be abused. There are many reasons for this, but I will list a few below:

1. Leaving an abuser is the most dangerous time for a victim. This is when most domestic violence homicides occur.
2. She may not realize she is being abused, especially if she is not being physically abused.
3. She may believe her children are better off with two parents instead of one, especially if her children are very attached to the abuser and/or if she has no means of support.
4. She may fear the reaction of God, her church, her friends and family.

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5. She may have no financial means, and no way to provide for her children and herself.
6. When she does leave, even if her abuser has been convicted of abuse, the courts will often give her abuser partial (and possibly full) custody of her children. At that point, she will not be there to protect them. Therefore, she will sometimes decide that staying is better than having her children be with him alone.

What Can You DO About Domestic Violence in Your Church?

Domestic violence *is* a difficult problem to address. However, you are not without resources. I invite you to read Part 2 of this booklet – *How Can the Church Respond to Domestic Violence*.

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Part 2 – How Can the Church Respond to Domestic Violence?

Thank you for hanging in there! Now that we've learned the basics of domestic violence, we will consider how the church can come alongside victims. As stated in Part 1, victims and abusers can be either male or female. For ease of writing, I will refer to the victim as "she," and the abuser as "he."

I gathered much of the information for this guide from the State of New Hampshire Governor's Commission on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Attorney General's Office Faith Communities: Domestic Violence Protocol 2007.²⁵ This Guide will suggest several actions you and your church can take to help abuse victims. Consider these suggestions carefully, and *always remember dealing with abusers can be dangerous*. If you are ever unsure of a suggested action, **call an expert**, such as your local domestic violence crisis center, or your local police department.

Be Approachable

Often, abuse victims will turn to their church first before going anywhere else for help. This is great, because the sooner a victim seeks help with this problem, the better the chance you will be able to save the victim's life. On the other hand, if they don't feel comfortable coming to you, they may not seek help at all, or they may wait until their situation is extremely dangerous. In order to feel comfortable coming to you for help, victims must see you and your church as a safe haven and a place where they will be understood and helped, rather than condemned.

How can you make your church a safe haven for an abuse victim?

1. **Accept** that domestic violence is a serious problem occurring in all facets of society—including your church.
2. **Pray** for domestic violence (DV) victims in your church, publicly and in private. This will help you and your congregation realize that DV is not OK, and have empathy for DV victims.
3. **Learn** about the dynamics of domestic violence. You are already on your way by reading this guide! Participate in training from a domestic violence/sexual assault crisis center. Periodically, offer classes to your leaders and members about domestic violence, or announce DV classes being held at local crisis centers. This demonstrates to a victim that the church leadership takes DV seriously, and is, (or wants to be) educated about DV.
4. **Study** the Bible to better respond to family violence and address the spiritual crisis of victims and abusers. You can begin by referring to my blog posts on spiritual abuse at: <http://www.carolineabbott.com/tag/spiritual-abuse/>.
5. **Preach** practical sermons that talk about relationships. In these sermons, talk about mutual submission, not one person submitting to the other.
6. **Speak out** against family violence from the pulpit so that a victim feels you will be sympathetic to her needs if she comes forward. We can profoundly impact people's attitudes and beliefs. Abusers should be told that domestic violence is a sin, and that their victims are innocent of complicity. Describe signs of abuse, and encourage a victim to seek help.

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7. **Look for** a church member to be the domestic violence advocate for your church. Many DV crisis centers offer free classes.
8. **Display** DV resource phone numbers around the church. If you have a DV advocate church member, add her contact information to the materials. If not, post information from local hotlines and/or shelters. Also add the National Domestic Violence Hotline number (**1-800-799-7233**). One great place for these is in the women's bathroom, where a woman or teen can look them over without her abusive partner watching her.
9. **Develop** a resource center that includes books, videos and other materials addressing the subjects of family violence and sexual assault. See Appendix A for a potential list of books.
10. **Create** premarital counseling curriculums that discuss DV.
11. **Intervene** when a victim comes forward to ask for help.
12. **Understand** that couple's counseling is not an appropriate referral because a victim is not safe to disclose abuse—she may suffer retaliation.
13. **Develop** relationships between your church and nearby DV shelters and crisis centers. In addition to crisis centers, the community agencies who can help you include:
 - Your local police department;
 - Batterer Intervention Programs;
 - Substance abuse counselors trained in domestic violence;
 - Therapists who specialize in domestic violence;
 - The local prosecutor's office;
 - The local victim/witness assistance program.
 - Child protective services.
14. **Acquire** a liability insurance policy in the event an irate abuser, or even a disgruntled abuse victim sues you. Have a plan in place in case an active shooter arrives at your church. Your local police department would be very helpful in creating this plan.
15. **Find** out what local crisis centers need, and challenge your congregation to help fill those needs. For example, collect toiletries for victims at your local DV shelter.
16. **Offer** space at your church for crisis centers to hold fundraisers, trainings and support groups.
17. **Sponsor** an awareness program or healing service for victims and survivors of domestic violence and/or sexual assault.
18. **Lead** by example, and serve on the board of directors of your local domestic violence/sexual assault crisis center, or participate in a local domestic violence community council for training and access to resources.
19. **Write** to local, state and federal legislators encouraging them to support local programs.

Creating a safe haven for children and teens is just as important.

Positive Steps for Youth Leaders—

1. **Build** an in-house big brother/sister program.
2. **Develop** church activities, such as anti-bullying, anti-violence and mentoring programs.

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3. **Develop** youth classes that address domestic violence and other forms of oppression. Teach that violence against women and against other family members is morally unacceptable.
4. **Create** a general youth bulletin board including local crisis line numbers and pamphlets, addressing issues such as:
 - Domestic violence and getting help staying safe
 - Teen dating violence and date/acquaintance rape
 - Teen suicide
 - Drug and alcohol abuse intervention
5. **Designate** a youth day to discuss these sensitive topics both from a spiritual and a secular viewpoint.
6. **Teach** a class on ways for children to keep themselves and their bodies safe.²⁶

Practical Help for the Abused Woman and Her Children

Note: Much of the next section is taken from the book *Refuge: A Pathway Out of Domestic Violence and Abuse*²⁷ written by Detective Sgt. Donald Stewart, a police officer who has worked with domestic violence cases for 25 years.

Thinking through what practical help your church is willing to offer an abused woman and her children before you are called upon to help them would be wise. Most communities have DV shelters nearby. To find out what shelters or other support is available near you, go to www.domesticshelters.org. There you will be able to enter your city or zip code, and get a list of all DV shelters and centers that are nearby. However, there will be some holes in what they can provide. Specifically, area shelters are often full, and because of this must turn away about half of the women who need their help. Here are some questions to begin considering:

1. If area safe houses are full, the abused woman will need shelter. Is there someone in the church who has a spare room they can let her use for free? You will need to keep this location confidential, so that her abuser will not be able to find her there.
2. Does the woman have a car? If not, how is she going to get around? Is there someone who will loan or give her a car to use? Is her residence on a bus route, or is there someone who can drive her around?
3. Can the church help her with food, day care, and clothing?
4. Is there someone in the church that can give her a job and/or train her in a skill?
5. Leaving an abuser can be dangerous, so she will need legal help. Many local crisis centers can connect victims with potentially free attorneys, and with victim advocates who have been trained to help her. Partnering with your local crisis centers will be a huge asset to your church.
6. If she needs counseling, will the church help her pay for it? Where should she go? Finding a counselor who is trained to work with trauma and domestic violence would be wise.
7. If she or her children become ill and need medical treatment or hospitalization, who will care for them? Can someone help them get medical insurance?

This may seem a daunting list to tackle. Often when things seem difficult, we are apt to delay doing anything at all. Rather than becoming overwhelmed, work to find some people in the church who are passionate about helping DV victims. Have this group work to

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find one resource at a time. Having even one or two of these items ready in the event you need to support an abuse victim will be helpful.

Sgt. Stewart recommends churches let women minister to women while men play a secondary role from a distance. There are a variety of reasons for this:

1. Women will be more inclined to bond with a woman or a husband/wife team than with a man.
2. If an abuser sees his partner with a male counselor, he may assume the man is her new boyfriend may harm her counselor in a jealous rage.
3. The man assisting the victim may start a relationship with her out of pity, sympathy or a desire to protect her; or she may look to him as the only stable influence in her life, and begin to have feelings for him. This would cause all types of trouble for her and for the church and the man and his family.
4. If they do become romantically involved, and it later turns sour, the church may be sued for negligent entrustment.
5. Even if they do not become involved, should she feel rejected, she might be willing to make false accusations against him to the police to get even with him.²⁸

Be aware that leaving an abuser is not an event; it is a process. On average, an abuse victim will leave and then return to her abuser seven times. This may be hard for you to understand, but she has many reasons to fear leaving her abuser, (see “Why Doesn’t She Just Leave” on page 11). Don’t put your hopes on her leaving for good at any point during this process. She needs to know she is accepted, loved and cared for whether she leaves him permanently or whether she returns to him.

Know yourself, and how much time and energy you are able to give a victim. Don’t make promises you will later not be able to keep. Her best resource will be your local crisis center.

What Should You Do If/When a DV victim contacts you?

When a DV victim contacts you, there are specific actions you can do that can help, and others that may not help. Thinking through and planning your responses beforehand can make all the difference in a crisis situation.

Sometimes people think DV victims are responding in an irrational manner to a rational situation. In fact, victims of domestic abuse are often using survival and coping skills that are very rational in the face of irrational situations. The victim is taking a very courageous step in coming to you for help and you should focus on giving her compassion and understanding. Let us take a sample scenario, and think through the steps that you should take:

You receive a call from a victim who is being abused, is in crisis and is asking for help—*NOW WHAT?* In the immediate crisis:

- First ask her if she is safe, and whether she needs you to call the police.
- **Do not** go to the home, and **do not** attempt to work with both parties at the time of crisis. The abuser may still be dangerous to the victim or the children, and may threaten or harm anyone who tries to interfere. Offer to call the police.
- Ask her if the violence is over, and what assistance she needs. Does she need medical attention? Does she fear her abuser will be back? Where are the children? Does she have somewhere safe to go and the means to get there?

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- If a shelter is her only option, you can help her find an available shelter by accessing www.domesticshelters.org. Or, provide her with the phone number for the **24-hour National Domestic Violence Hotline (800-799-SAFE)** to speak with an advocate in her area. Most domestic violence programs need to speak to the victim directly for intake into their shelters. Empower and encourage her to make the call herself.
- Take the lead from the victim to discern her needs. If she asks for her privacy while talking to the crisis center, give it to her. If she indicates that she does not want to be alone, give her your support.
- If the victim refuses to go into a shelter or speak with a crisis center advocate, try to contact your church's DV Advocate. If you don't have one, or cannot get her on the phone, you can offer to help the victim safety plan (see "Safety Planning" in Appendix B).

Recognize your limitations, and do not give help beyond what you have been trained to do. If you need assistance to help the victim develop an effective safety plan, you can call the local crisis center for suggestions.

Community Referrals—Working with Service Providers

Depending on where you live, services are available to you and the family to help address the domestic violence and other issues they are facing. To give the family the most complete support system possible, try to develop relationships between your church and local services.

Crisis centers are the single most valuable resource for the family in crisis. Crisis center advocates receive extensive training on domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, teen dating violence and sexual harassment, and are a valuable emergency resource when you are looking for guidance. They can provide referrals to a variety of services, and are often familiar with the best programs to fit your members' needs. Many can also provide legal and social service advocacy, and help the victim navigate all community services.

Questions to ask community resources include:

- Are they trained to handle domestic violence, and do they have experience with domestic violence cases?
- Is there a waiting list? How long before a family can access services?
- Do they offer couples counseling even with a current threat of violence? (If so, *do not* make that referral. See "Counseling Cautions.")
- What do they charge for their services, if anything? Do they provide assistance for low-income families?
- What is their service philosophy? Is it empowering to the victim?

Guidelines for Talking to the Victim

Coming forward to ask for help is very frightening for an abuse victim. It is very likely that her situation is much worse than she feels safe enough to tell you about. The information you will hear from the victim is sensitive and difficult to hear. Especially if you have an ongoing relationship with the entire family, the victim's allegations may seem unbelievable or exaggerated. The entire community must support and help her and her children find safety, and hold the abuser accountable.

Dos and Don'ts When Talking to the Victim²⁹

1. **Protect her confidentiality.** The victim needs to know that you will protect the information she shares with you. Only release this information to others when she gives you written permission. Make sure you let her know the limitations to confidentiality. Please tell her right up front that you will have to call Child Protective Services right away if she tells you about any child abuse or neglect, whether this is something she has done, or her partner has done. *Do not confront her abuser with her allegations or ask for his side, and do not share information with others who might bring information back to her abuser. Her safety and even her life may depend on this.*
2. **Listen with an open mind.** You cannot listen to the victim if your mind is busy. Empty your mind of biases and prejudices; put aside your perceptions of this person and/or her family. Focus your complete attention on all that she has to say; listen without judgment. Reiterate what she has said so she knows you have heard her.
3. **Ask direct and clarifying questions.** Your ability to address this sensitive subject with candor will give the victim assurance that it is OK to talk about it. Do not use vague terms like 'violence' and 'threats.' Help her name the abuse she and her children are experiencing; use specific terms such as 'hitting,' 'name-calling,' 'isolation,' etc.
4. **Believe her.** She will begin to trust you if you let her know that you believe what she is telling you. Remember that she is likely to minimize, deny and blame herself for the violence done towards her. If she feels that you doubt her, she may not come back to you for help, which will leave her cut off from any help your church might be able to give her.
5. **Be cautious in expressing emotion.** It is good to be empathetic when listening as a victim recounts her experiences. However, be careful not to react with disgust, anger, doubt or shock. Extreme reactions can trigger the victim, or make her reluctant to continue to share her story. Keep your emotions in check.
6. **Address her moral and religious concerns.** A victim's faith can be a powerful resource for her survival, or a roadblock to her safety. This is an opportunity to emphasize the love, safety and support that the church can give her. Rather than telling her what her faith demands of her, encourage her to read scripture, pray and find her own answers. Offer her my book *A Journey through Emotional Abuse: from Bondage to Freedom* that will help her address her spiritual questions.
7. **Give her referrals, especially to the local DV crisis center.** Offer to let her call the local crisis center to create a safety plan with her. It is important for her to see that your church supports her accessing outside resources to more completely address her needs. Have a resource handout ready, and give her appropriate referrals to community agencies.
8. **Express concern for her and her children's safety.** Be a reality check and accurately reflect concerns for her safety. Ask her questions to better assess her safety needs, and help her safety plan. If the batterer remains in the church, plan

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- ways to allow her to maintain fellowship while preserving her safety. If she requests, help her find a safe place to go.
9. ***Tell the victim she is not alone.*** Let her know that the church is there to help her. DV crisis centers run support groups designed to educate and support the victim in making safe choices for herself and her family. Encourage and empower her to join a support group where she can meet other women who share her experiences.
 10. ***Respect and support her choices.*** The victim knows her relationship better than anyone else, and can make the right decisions at the right time to protect herself and her family, even if that means staying with the abuser. Don't pressure her to take any specific action; outline her options, and let her decide. Her power has been taken from her for far too long; letting her make her own decisions will help empower her. After all, only she and her children will have to deal with the consequences of her choices.
 11. ***Acknowledge her courage, and tell her she's not responsible for the abuse.*** The best way to keep communication open is to let her know that your church does not condone her abuser's behavior, she did nothing to deserve his abuse, and that she is doing right by herself and her children to find safety. Acknowledge her courage in coming forward; assure her that you will honor her disclosure and your church will do what they can to support her.
 12. ***Set boundaries, and know your limits.*** An abused woman is often in a very frightening and dangerous situation. If given the opportunity, she might take advantage of your time and your willingness to help her. You should set clear boundaries so that she knows what to expect from you. Let her know how often you are available to her to address her concerns. Be cautious in giving her multiple methods to reach you. If something is beyond your expertise, make appropriate referrals or seek help from community colleagues and resources. Let the victim know why you are making a referral so she does not feel rejected.
 13. ***Pray.*** Pray for the safety of the family, and for the victim's ability to make safe decisions. Pray for wisdom and discernment to respond to the family's needs. Pray for the batterer to repent and change, and pray for everyone's healing.
 14. ***Do not physically touch a victim without her permission.*** Many victims experience severe physical or sexual trauma, and can be triggered by touch. Ask permission to hug, hold a victim's hand, etc. Never become emotionally or sexually involved with a victim in crisis.
 15. ***Don't do nothing.*** Doing nothing sends a message to both the victim and the abuser that you and your church condone his abuse. When someone says, "We don't want to get involved," what the victim hears is, "You're not important enough to do something." Remember the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Guidelines for Ministering to the Partner Who Chooses to Abuse

There is no typical abuser, and you can't spot one by his looks. Abusers come from diverse socio-economic, racial, ethnic, religious, life-style and age groups. Many abusers are respected members of their community, without a criminal record. They are often well spoken, and present very well to professionals evaluating their family. They often will look calm and collected when the police arrive at their home, and convince the officers that the wife is the abusive one; then, *she* ends up being taken off to jail.

Because their power and control depends on the abuse being kept secret, abusers are vested in manipulating and controlling how you perceive them and their victims. They will disparage their victims, often in the guise of "just trying to help" because they are "mentally ill." They may deliberately manipulate or threaten their victims into a frenzied, panicked state. They may be quite charming. It is important that you recognize the various ways they will minimize, deny and blame the victim for what the abuser is perpetrating in their homes.

Ministering to an abuser is a difficult, dangerous and mostly unfruitful process. The statistics for reforming a confirmed abuser are very slim. His best hope is for loving, godly men to hold him accountable for his actions, while letting him know that they are committed to protecting his wife and children.

The first step to protecting his wife and children is to make the church a safe place for them. This means that:

- If he has any teaching or leadership position in the church, he should be asked to step down from this position.
- If you decide to work with him, (this will be discussed later), he should meet you at the church at another time, or in another public place.
- You can find another church for him to attend, perhaps the church that a friend pastors, provided the other pastor is aware of the circumstances, and is willing to help the abuser change his abusive ways.

Instituting these policies will require some strong men, both morally, and physically. Sgt. Stewart says that his biggest complaint with Christian men is that many of them are more concerned with being liked than they are with being right. However, if men in the church are willing to step up and do what is right, there is hope for the woman, and even at times for the relationship.

He gives an example in his book about a time when an abuser sat in church glaring at his wife during a church service after she finally took her children to a women's shelter. The Sgt. and a football player went to him on two different Sundays, and told him to leave. When the abuser realized that there were men in the church who were not afraid of him, and were committed to doing the right thing for his wife, he decided to get the counseling he needed, and his marriage was saved.³⁰

On another occasion, a woman who had recently been raped and beaten by her husband went forward for prayer one Sunday. During the prayer, her husband, who had just gotten out of jail and had been hiding in the back of the church, went up to her, laid his hands on her and said, "Honey, it's going to be okay." The terrified wife screamed at the top of her lungs in front of the entire church. Sgt. Stewart says that the husband could have just as easily walked up behind his wife and shot her and the men around her, and then killed himself. The world is full of unstable people. He says that in this day and age where

children are being killed in schools and men open fire in churches that every church should get a safety plan in place if they don't already have one. He also recommends that every church take out a liability insurance policy in the event an irate abuser, or even a disgruntled abuse victim sues you.³¹

In order to support the victim, you will probably want to ask the abuser not to come to the church, so that his partner and children can feel safe. However, this can be difficult if the abuser has the potential of being very violent. One thing about church is that it happens at the same time every week. If the abuser knows where she is every Sunday morning, he can find her there easily, or wait for her in the parking lot.

How should you decide whether to ask the abuser to leave the church? It is best to ask the victim her opinion, as she is the best judge of her safety. If she feels she is in imminent danger, then she probably is. If she is in danger help her find a church where she can be comfortable, and allow the abuser to continue coming to your church. In this case, for the sake of her safety, no one should tell him where she is going to church. In cases where the man is not apt to be violent, and she wants to stay at your church, you should honor her wishes and ask him to leave.

In order to hold the abuser accountable, you as the pastor, and one or two other church leaders should talk to him together, (Matthew 18:15 - 17). When you first speak with the abuser, you should follow these guidelines:

Dos and Don'ts When Talking to the Partner Who Chooses to Abuse³²

1. ***Meet in a public place, with other people around.*** Most abusers will only focus their rage on their intimate partner, but you don't want to count on that. Ask the victim how violent he is. Has he assaulted anyone else? Under what circumstances? Take appropriate measures to keep yourself and the victim safe.
2. ***Do not disclose the victim's allegations to the abuser, and do not confront him. Do not ask him to confirm the victim's story.*** To confront him, even with the victim's permission, puts her at great risk for harm. Never speak to him unless she agrees, and you know she is safe. Confrontation should be avoided at all costs.
3. ***Be prepared for the abuser to confront you.*** If the abuser becomes aware that the victim has spoken to you, he may seek you out to tell his side of the story. He will want you to believe he is not at fault, and will try to deny any abuse, or will try to convince you that the victim has caused the abuse. Do not confirm or deny anything the victim has said to you. Instead, focus on how he perceives his relationship, and remind him of his obligations to provide a safe, loving home for his family.
4. ***If he is arrested, don't testify on his behalf in court.*** The abuser may ask you to be a character witness for him in court to help him avoid legal consequences for his behavior. This is very inappropriate. Being held accountable for his actions is his best hope for change. As Detective Sgt. Stewart says, "Jail is a good place for an abuser. He needs to hear in easy-to-understand terms that he has no right to control, terrorize, or abuse his wife. Let him feel what it's like to live in fear while he's locked up. I've seen jail do wonders for a lot of controlling men."³³

5. ***If he acknowledges any abusive behaviors, invite him to accept responsibility.*** He may say things like, “Yeah, I hit her, but she . . .” Let him know unequivocally that violence is never OK, and power and control have no part in a mutual, loving relationship. Ask him to take responsibility for his behavior and invest in the effort to change.
6. ***Beware if he claims to be a new convert to Christianity.*** Often an abuser will claim to have “found religion” in an attempt to gain access to his victim or make his pastor pressure the victim for reconciliation. Do not urge the victim to reconcile based on this claim, and don’t confuse his remorse for getting caught with true repentance. If his repentance is genuine, it will be a great strength and comfort to him as he continues the accountability process. If it is not genuine, he will seek to use this “conversion” as a way to avoid the consequences of his actions.
7. ***Beware of other manipulation tactics he might try.*** If he “confesses” and requests forgiveness, this may be another manipulative tactic to try make you a pawn in his campaign to get the victim back under his control. Underscore that the idea of repentance means turning from his abusive ways and that he can choose to change, whether or not the victim chooses to forgive.
8. ***Confront his religious rationalizations for his abusive behaviors.*** Just like the victim, the abuser’s faith can be either a resource for change, or a roadblock. Challenge any use of scripture that justifies him abusing his partner. Point out Bible verses that talk about the equality of women and his responsibilities to his family.
9. ***Challenge his excuses.*** He will use a number of excuses for his behavior: alcohol or drugs, an abusive childhood, low self-esteem, stress, unemployment, his partner provokes him, etc. He will minimize, deny, lie about, or blame his violence on others. Make no mistake—he is violent when he chooses to be. He does not abuse his boss when he is angry. Do not allow him to rationalize his behavior, or lay the blame on his partner. Let him know he is the only person who can change his behavior, and you are willing to help him find the help he needs.
10. ***Avoid labeling him.*** Calling him a “batterer” or “abuser” makes a statement about who he is, rather than confronts what he has done. Using terms such as “men who abuse” implies that he can choose his behavior, and thus make a choice to change.
11. ***Reinforce his love for his family.*** Someone who uses abuse in his personal relationships is attempting to meet his own needs in a way that is harmful to others. To help motivate him to stop his abuse, encourage him to consider how his behaviors affect his children and his partner.
12. ***Help him distinguish between his feelings and his behaviors.*** There is a difference between feeling angry and raging. No one can get hurt from another person feeling emotions; harm occurs when emotions are inappropriately expressed. Dispel the myth that his partner “makes” him feel certain emotions, thus “making” him hurt her.

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13. **Help him redefine masculine thinking.** Show him that real men don't use power and control within a relationship. Help him to understand that it takes as much strength to control his own behavior as it does to control his partner, and that rigid sex roles are as harmful to him as they are to his partner. Be a role model.
14. **Assess him for threats of suicide or homicide.** If the abuser makes threats against his partner, warn her immediately. Take threats to her safety seriously. If he threatens to kill himself, he might – but he will usually kill her first.
15. **Refer him to a batterer intervention program.** This is the most appropriate counseling to address his feeling of entitlement, black-and-white thinking, and his abuse tactics. Many of these programs also have parenting after violence programs that can help him recognize what effects his behavior has on his children.
16. **Pray.** Pray with the abuser that he will repent and change his behaviors. Pray that he achieves a clear understanding of love, and that abuse has no part in it. Pray that he learns his role as father and husband, and that he comes to view his partner as an equal.
17. **Do not reveal where his partner and children have gone for safety, and do not share her private contact information that would allow him to contact her.**

Should the Pastor counsel the abuser?

Sgt. Stewart recommends a pastor *not* try to single-handedly counsel a violent abuser for the following reasons:

- 1) The issues that the abuser has are very complex, and will require a lot of time and skill to work through. He needs specialized help that you cannot provide.
- 2) The abuser will likely try to manipulate his wife by relaying messages to her through the pastor if she is in hiding or protected by a protection order. If the pastor refuses to cooperate, he could be in danger.

Sgt. Stewart writes, "If I were a pastor and I was asked to make a decision as to whether or not our church should minister to an abuser during an ongoing incident of family violence, my decision would probably be not to."³⁴ Note that many areas have state approved treatment centers for batterers. Trained counselors that have experience working with abusers staff these centers. Sgt. Stewart *might* suggest a pastor work with a batterer if there were the following circumstances:

- 1) "If the offender is a younger male who is a member of the congregation and you have a close relationship with him.
- 2) If you feel he will submit to your instruction and is teachable as to the proper way to handle conflict resolution, and he admits he was wrong and says he is sorry.
- 3) If his history of abuse is very short and is primarily due to a lack of maturity and communication skills.
- 4) If he has not committed an act of sexual violence or used a weapon during the abuse.

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- 5) If based upon the partner's input, you feel the incident of abuse is totally out of character for him and may have been triggered by other factors such as the loss of a job or death of a loved one.
- 6) If his partner was not physically injured during the assault."³⁵

Whether or not you decide to work with the abuser, contact the Department of Criminal Justice's DV Offender Management Board for a list of approved treatment providers who are trained in this area, and can help advise you.

If you do decide to minister to a young man such as this, it should be a group of men that have had considerable training in domestic violence, and a lot of time to devote to the abuser. These men should be interested in understanding his emotional needs, unafraid of confronting his bad behavior, able to hold him accountable for his progress or lack of it, and have a willingness to help him get his marriage and life back on track.

Keep in mind that once the abuse problem is resolved and the crisis is over, there is a high probability that the couple will stop attending the very church that got them through their struggle. This is because family violence creates such a sense of shame, even after the abuse has ended and the situation is resolved, most couples can't get beyond the shame, and find it easier to go somewhere else where they are not known.

Counseling Cautions

You may be tempted to send an unhappy couple to **couples counseling**. However, at least 20 state standards and guidelines expressly prohibit couples counseling for abusers.³⁶ Domestic violence is all about the abuser having power and control over his victim – it is not a communication issue. In order for couples counseling to be effective, equality is needed between the partners involved. Unfortunately, when there is power and control in a relationship, there can be no equality in the communication process during the sessions. This is because the victim will fear future retaliation for her honesty. This not only makes the marital counseling process ineffective; it also places her life at risk.

The following types of counseling that are often prescribed to help in domestic violence cases are also **ineffective**:³⁷

- **Assertiveness training:** This is inappropriate for the victim. The abuser has worked hard to remove his victim from support systems, and she is not permitted to have any viewpoint other than his. For her to express any independent thought or actions can put her at risk for assault. This type of program does not address the real problem—*the partner's willingness to use abuse*—and sends the message that if the victim would just change, so would the abuser.
Recommending assertiveness training for the abuser is equally inappropriate. The abusive partner has no difficulty in asserting his desires (in fact, his desires are the only ones asserted), and the techniques he learns will underscore the power and control he maintains—this time justified by him having to “successfully” learn these methods.
- **Conflict resolution:** This type of program is only viable for two individuals who have equal power and equal opportunity to express their opinions and concerns. Domestic violence is not about irresolvable conflict, it is about one person exerting power and control over another; equality is not possible in an abusive relationship.

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- ***Stress/anger management:*** Both of these programs take the focus off of the real problem—*the abuser's choice to use violence*—and make excuses for his behavior. One of the results is that abusers become more emotionally and psychologically terrorizing towards the victim.
- ***Substance abuse programs:*** Because substance abuse does not cause domestic violence, it is not enough for an abuser to receive only substance abuse treatment. He must also be held accountable through a program that will address his entitlement and use of violence toward his partner.
- ***Mental health/psychological evaluations:*** It is important to remember that tests currently used in psychological testing are not capable of determining an abusive personality. Just because a person tests well through a psychological evaluation does not mean that he is not an abuser. One major flaw in psychological evaluations is that evaluators must rely on the people being evaluated to tell the truth about themselves, which abusers are not likely to do.

Again, remember that mental illness does not cause domestic violence. Therefore, even if an abuser is faithful in following through on recommended treatment for a mental illness, he must still be held accountable through a program that will address his entitlement and use of violence toward his intimate partner.

Therefore, the **only type of counseling recommended** for abusers is:

- ***Batterer's intervention programs:*** Good programs hold abusers accountable for their actions, and refuse to allow victim-blaming, minimizing and denying behaviors that are their trademarks. These programs will help him understand why he seeks power and control over his partner, which is the major issue in domestic violence. He will learn that power and control have no place in a relationship.

Individual counseling can be helpful for victims if the counselor is trained in trauma and domestic violence and trauma. In addition, many crisis centers offer:

- ***Support groups for victims:*** Good support groups will teach victims the dynamics of domestic violence, and help them realize that they did not cause it. They will also help increase their self-esteem, and their ability to stand on their own as they move forward in their lives.

Helping the Victim with Her Response to Her Abuse

Anyone who has been abused may experience mental health problems. This does not mean she is crazy, or unable to parent her children. However, it may mean she needs help to get past her problems.

As stated earlier, abusers will often force their victims to use drugs or alcohol to help get control over them. Other victims will turn to drugs or alcohol to deal with the pain they've lived with. In this case, she will need help to find substance abuse treatment.

Victims (and their children) also frequently experience Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression and anxiety and panic attacks. Each person's response to her domestic violence will vary. You can be a great help to her if you can help her get (and pay for) a quality mental health therapist. If you do, look for one that is capable of handling trauma.

Protection Orders

Community agents may recommend that a victim of domestic violence obtain a protection order. The victim of abuse should carefully consider various issues before attempting to obtain a protection order, such as:

- Is her abuser likely to abide by the restraints in the order?
- Is she risking making her abuser angrier by obtaining a protection order?
- Is she looking for long-term or short-term relief from her abuser?
- Has he threatened to hurt her if she obtains a protection order?
- How does she view her past experiences with the local police department (i.e., were they helpful to her)?

In order for the victim to have an understanding of all options available to her, encourage her to contact your local crisis center. An advocate can discuss with the victim all of her safety concerns and legal options and can help her through the process of obtaining a protection order if she chooses to do so.³⁸

SAFETY AND SUPPORT—beyond the crisis

Goals in Working with Families Living Domestic Violence

The short-term goal in a Domestic Violence situation should **NOT** be reconciliation of the relationship, but rather safety for the woman and her children. The following should be the goals of working with a family living with Domestic Violence:

- **SAFETY and SUPPORT** for the victim and her children;
- **ACCOUNTABILITY** for the abuser; and
- **RESTORATION** of the individuals, and the relationship (*if possible and the victim wishes*); **OR MOURNING** the loss of the relationship.³⁹

If these goals are not met, the most likely outcome will be a **DEATH** of some sort:

- Of the relationship,
- The victim's faith in God,
- The victim herself,
- The abuser,
- And/or their children.

Sgt. Stewart writes, "An abuser needs to hear that his behavior is sinful and is a crime against God and the church. Tell him he is not to attempt to move back into the house with his wife until he has satisfactorily completed a batterers intervention program and his wife agrees to it, (without being coerced). That may take up to a year or even longer, depending on how motivated he is to change and how badly he has abused his wife. It also depends on whether or not his wife wants him back. The church does not have the right or the spiritual authority to try to pressure, coerce, or convince an abused woman to go back to her abuser. ***You may be sending her back to her death!***⁴⁰ When working with an abuse victim, help her focus on her safety, and the safety of her children.

Forgiveness

You will notice forgiveness is not listed as a goal for working with families living with domestic abuse. Too often Christian leaders advocate for the victim to forgive without any repentance from the abuser. This lays the burden on the victim's shoulders to fix a relationship she is powerless to fix. Reconciliation should be a two-person process begun by the abuser, not a single event on the part of the victim.

Some victims won't be able to forgive until after they have experienced justice for the wrongs they have suffered. If she chooses to hold the abuser accountable through the criminal system, support her. It is a sign of emotional health that the victim is no longer denying the family's problems, and is facing them head-on.

She will already be facing many pressures to forgive her partner and take him back. Victims hear the phrase "forgive and forget" over and over, but remember that forgive and forget is found nowhere in the bible, and forgiveness is rarely that simple. Forgiveness is not about pretending the violence never took place, and it is impossible for her to do so. The violence she has experienced has been permanently etched into her psyche, and has likely created trauma triggers that will follow her for a long time.

The act of forgiveness, for the victim, should come from her need to release the terror of the trauma and allow her to move forward in her spiritual and emotional life. It is recognition that she will no longer allow the experience and memory of the abuse to dominate her life.

Reconciliation of the relationship should not be the goal of forgiveness; that is a separate matter entirely, and the victim should know that she could forgive her abuser without remaining in relationship with him. If and when the victim chooses to forgive her abuser, it should be her timing for the purpose of bringing healing and wholeness to her spirit.

The Elements of Justice-Making—Steps to Reconciliation

Most victims do not want to leave their partners; they simply want the abusive behaviors to stop. Many will express the desire to save their relationship. They often will endure to the point of death, if given the hope that their abuser will change. Premature recommendations for reconciliation will dissolve the abuser's motivation to change and put the family at risk for retaliation and further abuse.

For any hope of *safe reconciliation*, the abuser must at least:

- Honor all legal restrictions and orders placed on him;
- Participate willingly, and complete a batterer's intervention program;
- Willingly remain separated for an extensive period of time that allows the victim, their children and the community to witness his change;
- Maintain a reasonable amount of financial support for his family,
- Patiently wait for the victim to: 1) find healing from his abuse, 2) be able to trust him again, and 3) be willing to reconcile.

It is not appropriate for us to put a victim and her children at risk by encouraging her to return to her abuser before she feels safe and is ready. We might be sending her home to her death.⁴¹

Helping the Children Involved in a Violent Home

As a church, you can be a place of safety for children living with domestic violence. Children are the silent witnesses—the forgotten victim of domestic violence. Like adult victims of domestic abuse, they are powerless to change their circumstances without coordinated community help. Additionally, just as an abuser pressures his adult victim into keeping “the secret,” children may also be frightened or intimidated into hiding what is going on at home. Someone needs to break the silence, and bring to light the shame that has been kept in the dark. You can be the agent that disrupts and breaks this destructive generational cycle.

What can you do to counter the effects of domestic abuse?

- Be a positive, non-violent role model.
- Communicate clear and consistent rules and limits.
- Break the silence and talk about the violence. Tell children clearly that abuse is not OK.
- Help children name and express their feelings. Validate and encourage the expression of those feelings.
- Be honest. Children may want to fix their family problems. Let them know what they can and can't do to help.
- Build self-esteem. Let children know how valuable they are, and that they are worthy of safety and security, not abuse.
- Teach self-control. When they are angry, help children find constructive, non-violent outlets and expressions (e.g., taking time-outs, counting to 20, breathing deeply).
- Help children create a safety plan.
- Know your community resources.
- Place accountability on the offending person(s).

Dos and Don'ts—when a child discloses:

- **DO** let the child know you believe her/him and are glad s/he told you.
- **DO** acknowledge that you know that events s/he has witnessed are scary and hurtful. Tell the child you are here to help, and s/he is not alone.
- **DO** *reassure the child it is not her/his fault.*
- **DO** tell the child s/he does not deserve the abuse.
- **DO** acknowledge how brave the child is for telling the secret.
- **DO** tell the child steps will be taken to make her/him safe.
- **DO** tell the child the church loves her/him.
- **DO** keep proper emotional and physical boundaries, especially with teenagers.
- **DO** REPORT ANY SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE and/or NEGLECT to Child Protection Services in your county.
- **DON'T** ignore it and assume someone else will get the child help.
- **DON'T** jeopardize the child's safety by confronting the abuser without having first gone to the non-offending parent and putting a safety plan in place.
- **DON'T** make promises to a child that you can't follow through with.
- **DON'T** tell the child that s/he shouldn't feel a certain way (especially anger or rage at either parent for letting the abuse happen).
- **DON'T** tell the child that s/he shouldn't talk about the abuse to anyone.
- **DON'T** minimize the child's experience and hurt.

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Provide a safe adult who can privately check-in with the child. Help the child choose a time and place when they can freely relate what is going on at home, and her/his feelings about the abuse. Children need to know that a trusted adult is listening and cares. Be sure the designated adult is aware of the responsibility to report suspected child abuse and neglect, and has some training in domestic violence.

Working to *Prevent* Domestic Violence in Your Church

Marriage preparation is one area where your church can begin to help prevent Domestic Violence proactively. Statistics show that marriages are in crisis in the United States. Almost fifty percent of all first-time marriages end in divorce, and the rate increases for remarriages. When 1 out of 4 women experience domestic violence sometime in their lifetime, and 60% of all divorces are initiated by women, it is time for churches to recognize that domestic violence plays a large role in the failure of marriages. Statistics also show that Christian marriages fail at about the same rate as that for non-Christian marriages. This suggests that churches have a lot of work to do in order to more effectively prepare couples for marriage.

Any marriage preparation your church provides is an excellent place to present domestic violence prevention and education. Having open and honest discussions about domestic abuse will provide valuable resources for all individuals in the event they, or someone they know, find themselves married to a violent partner.

Assessing the Relationship

Premarital counseling is a valuable opportunity for a pastor to assess how well each partner deals with feelings of anger, fear, disappointment and frustration. It is also the time to detect warning signs such as alcohol or drug abuse, physical and non-physical abuse, power and control, and cruelty to animals. Possessiveness and jealousy, history of violence, an inflated sense of entitlement, beliefs about patriarchal rigid gender roles are other red flags to assess while working with a couple.

Interviewing the Couple Together

It is good practice to meet with the couple several times before agreeing to perform the wedding. Domestic violence and sexual assault should be discussed as part of this preparation phase. At sessions where both parties are present, discussions about general issues are appropriate. These issues include:

- Education about domestic violence;
- Teaching about healthy relationships;
- The couple's families of origin, except issues relating to violence and child sexual abuse – discuss these topics privately with each individual.
- Roles and expectations.

Interviewing the Individuals Separately

Pastors should always meet with each individual alone before agreeing to marry the couple. This way, if you do suspect there is abuse in the relationship, you can more gracefully bow out of performing the wedding ceremony.

This gives each person an opportunity to talk with the pastor freely. If domestic violence is an issue, the victim will have a safe place to discuss concerns about her future.

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Encourage the victim not to speak about these issues with her partner, as that puts her at risk for more abuse.

Opening your door to each person individually lets both partners know that, should your time and assistance be needed in the future, you are available. Topics for individual discussion include:

- Current physical violence or other forms of abuse;
- Warning signs of potential abuse;
- Any history of abuse in this relationship, or either party's previous relationships.

Counseling the Couples

Premarital counseling should include an assessment for and discussion of domestic violence. Do not recommend couples counseling where violence or the threat of violence exists. (See Counseling Cautions) Despite your efforts to educate or intervene, a victim of domestic violence may still choose to marry her abuser at another church. But do not abandon her for her decision to stay in the relationship--she needs to depend on your unconditional support in the future.

Premarital Questionnaires

Premarital questionnaires can help assess current attitudes and behaviors of both parties regarding domestic violence. They also provide a framework for prevention and education about domestic abuse, and the church's teaching about domestic violence.

The FaithTrust Institute in Seattle has a tool called 'Opening the Door: A Pastor's Guide to Addressing Domestic Violence in Premarital Counseling'. This is an excellent resource. This brief book describes ways that a pastor can determine whether there might be domestic violence in the relationship of an engaged couple. The 'Opening the Door' Pastor's Guide lists questionnaires that are available as well.⁴²

Another resource is a questionnaire called FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study). This tool has been developed for a range of churches, and all versions are available online at www.foccusinc.com. It is a useful tool to help couples evaluate their relationships, identify their strengths and challenges, and address areas of concern. It does require someone from the church to go through a brief training course first.

Premarital Preparation Groups

If your church is large enough, you might consider having your premarital classes in a group. If so, you could use portions of this Guide and its accompanying videos to educate your groups. Your groups should cover:

- The nature of domestic violence and warning signs;
- Clear condemnation of violence in or out of marriage;
- Accepting responsibility for one's own feelings and behaviors;
- The impact on children of witnessing domestic violence;
- Assertiveness training and conflict resolution, (though this type of training is inappropriate in a relationship with known DV, teaching these skills in advance could help prevent DV in the relationship);
- Stress management skills;
- The importance of social support from family, friends and church;
- A listing of resources for victims and perpetrators of abuse.

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Pastors and leaders should facilitate a discussion about domestic violence, giving special attention to the misuse of the bible, and the bible's true teachings about marriage and the responsibilities of both partners.

Information should be openly distributed to all participants, and it should be explained that all materials are distributed to all couples as a matter of practice. This is a safety precaution, as some abusive partners may think they are the only ones receiving the information, causing suspicion that their partner divulged abuse in the relationship.

Invite participants to address any concerns privately, and promise to provide confidentiality and assistance for those seeking help. Be sure to be sensitive to those who may be in an abusive relationship or who are in fear of violence. Individual, confidential sessions to facilitate referrals to domestic violence services should be provided.

Marriage preparation programs should include opportunities to present information and to lead discussions with groups of women separately from groups of men. For instance, the men's group can include a discussion of male response to anger, social conditioning, entitlement and the perceived need to dominate in a relationship. Men may feel less defensive when having these discussions with their peers.

Follow-up

Follow-up and aftercare are important parts of marriage preparation, and where you can contact and support newly married couples during the first years of marriage. Continue to share information about domestic violence, what healthy relationships look like, how to handle conflict and anger, and how to recognize warning signs of violence. Ask about how each person is adjusting to married life.

Develop monthly support groups for newly married couples as part of the mission of the church, to give couples an opportunity to discuss topics that will help strengthen their relationship. Information and resources about family violence and healthy relationships should continue to be disseminated, so that possible victims have continuous access to available help. Underline again that the abuser is accountable for his actions, and DV is not to be tolerated in a relationship.

Appendix A – Resources

National Domestic Violence Hotline (800) 799-SAFE (7233) or (800)787-3224 (TTY) or www.thehotline.org

Domestic Shelters.org to search for local shelters and crisis centers.

www.domesticshelters.org

The State of New Hampshire Governor’s Commission on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Attorney General’s Office Faith Communities: Domestic Violence Protocol 2007, <http://doj.nh.gov/criminal/victim-assistance/documents/faith-communities-protocol.pdf>

Books

Caroline Abbott & Debbie Stafford, *A Journey through Emotional Abuse: from Bondage to Freedom* (Franklin TN: Carpenter’s Son Publishing, 2013).

Caroline Abbott, *A Journey to Healing After Emotional Abuse* (Franklin, TN: Clovercroft Publishing, 2015).

Jay Adams, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980).

Lundy Bancroft, *Why Does He DO That? Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men* (New York, NY: Berkley Books, 2002).

Jeff Crippen & Anna Wood, *A Cry for Justice: How the Evil of Domestic Abuse Hides in Your Church* (United States: Calvary Press Publishing, 2012).

Patricia Evans, *The Verbally Abusive Relationship: How to Recognize It and How to Respond* (Avon, MA: Adams Media Corporation, 1996).

Marie M. Fortune, *Keeping the Faith: Guidance for Christian Women Facing Abuse* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1987).

Patricia Riddle Gaddis, *Battered but Not Broken: Help for Abused Wives and Their Church Families* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1996).

Detective Sgt. Donald Stewart, *Refuge: A Pathway Out of Domestic Violence and Abuse* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishers, 2004).

Appendix B

Safety Planning

A victim's safety is not an event—it is a process. She should be evaluating and rehearsing her safety plan on a regular basis, in order to be best prepared for an emergency. When working with a victim to create an effective safety plan, here are some things to discuss:

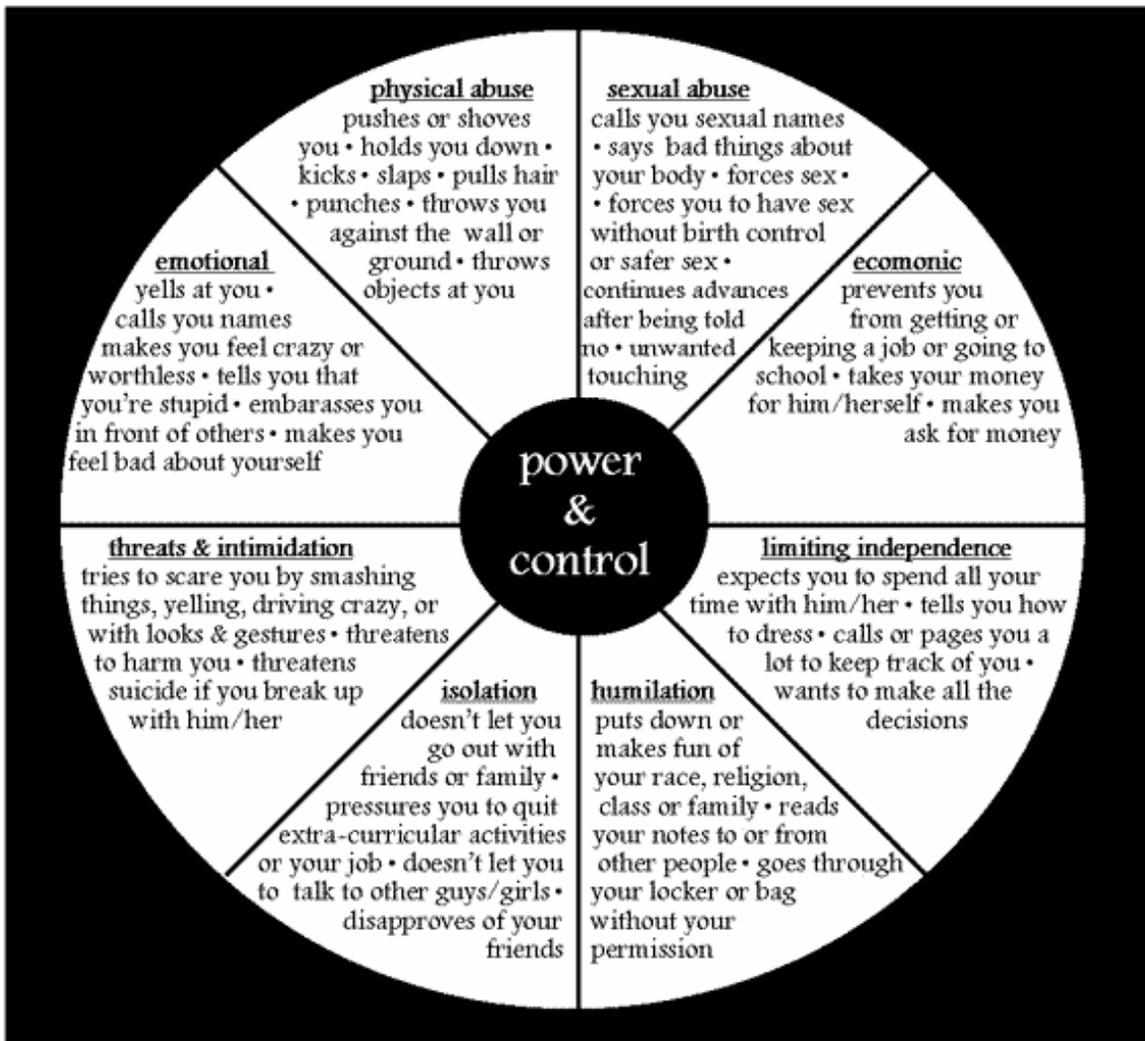
- Because domestic violence is cyclical in nature, the abuser often puts out cues that warn the victim that violence may be coming, such as his tone of voice, gestures or body movements. Ask her to identify at what point she should leave a situation to avoid a violent outbreak.
- She may be unable to leave a violent situation (for example, she does not have transportation, or it is not safe to leave the children behind.) Help her identify the safest room in the house for her to go—preferably one without weapons, and with an exit or phone so she can call or run for help. Have her contact the local crisis center for an emergency, or call '911.'
- If she has children who are able to follow instructions, talk about safety planning with her children:
 - Is there a neighbor within a short distance they can run to for help?
 - Is there a safe space they can block themselves in and call '911'?
 - Have her decide upon a code word or phrase for the children to take action when she says it.
 - The children should be told to never physically interfere in the event of an assault.
- Encourage her to put together an emergency bag. The bag should be stored in the trunk of her vehicle or at a friend's house, and should include:
 - Cash, including change for a payphone;
 - List of emergency phone numbers of friends, family, shelters, etc. Note: she should leave her cell phone behind, her abuser can use it to track her. She may be able to get a "burner" phone from her local DV crisis center.
 - An extra set of car and house keys.
 - Extra clothing for herself and her children;
 - Necessary toiletries and medications for herself and her children;
 - Any valuables that might be pawned for cash; and
 - Copies of important documents and papers, such as:
 - Social security numbers for all family members;
 - Birth certificates for herself and her children;
 - Passports and green cards;
 - Pay stubs for herself and her partner;
 - Bank account numbers, or the checkbook;
 - Insurance policies;
 - Marriage license;
 - Her driver's license;
 - Proof of ownership for any jointly-owned property; and
 - Monthly bills

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- Suggest that she back her car into her parking space, with the driver's door unlocked, so that she can leave quickly if necessary. She should park in a spot that can't be blocked in by her partner. Her car should always have a sufficient amount of gas to reach her shelter options.
- Remind her to not wear necklaces, scarves or other items that her partner could grab and use to strangle her.
- Discuss her options for shelter, should she need to leave for an extended period of time. Talk about safe places where she can go to call for help, such as a local convenience store or neighbor. Plan how she might get help, if she cannot drive. If she has pets, make sure you help her plan a safe place for them to go.
- Let her know that her abuser can use her cell phone to track her, and it should be left behind. However, she may be able to get a used phone for free through your local crisis center. In this case, her abuser would not know the number, and she could bring this with her.
- Let her know she should **not** tell her abuser beforehand that she is leaving. Because she is most knowledgeable about his cues, encourage her seek safety before a violent outbreak, preferably while her partner is absent from home.

Once she has left a violent or threatening situation, she should not go back in for *any reason*. She should be encouraged to do everything in her power to make sure the children are not left behind, but acknowledge that she may need to leave them temporarily. If she must leave without the children, she needs to assess whether or not to call the police department for assistance to get them out. Going back into the home alone may trigger another assault. After some time passes, she might consider returning to get her children and/or belongings with a police escort depending on the situation.

teen dating violence power & control wheel



Adapted from:
Domestic Abuse Intervention Project 202 East Superior Street
Duluth, MN 55802
218.722.4134

Produced and distributed by:



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Endnotes

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- ¹ The State of New Hampshire Governor's Commission on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Attorney General's Office of Faith Communities: Domestic Violence Protocol 2007, <http://doj.nh.gov/criminal/victim-assistance/documents/faith-communities-protocol.pdf>.
- ² The State of New Hampshire Governor's Commission on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Attorney General's Office of Faith Communities, 4.
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- ⁴ Jeff Crippen and Anna Wood, *A Cry for Justice: How the Evil of Domestic Abuse Hides in Your Church* (United States: Calvary Press Publishing, 2012), 41.
- ⁵ The State of New Hampshire Governor's Commission on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Attorney General's Office of Faith Communities, 30-31.
- ⁶ Power and Control Wheel used by permission of the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, 202 East Superior Street, Duluth, MN 55802, 218-722-2781, <http://www.duluth-model.org>.
- ⁷ Description of Power and Control Wheel provided by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project.
- ⁸ KALI MUNRO, M.Ed., Psychotherapist, "Emotional Abuse: The Most Common Form of Abuse," <http://kalimunro.com/wp/artides-info/sexual-emotional-abuse/emotional-abuse-the-most-common-form-of-abuse> accessed 5/17/16
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- ¹⁰ Clare Murphy PhD, "How to Know if a Woman is in Danger of Being Killed and What You Can do About it," <http://speakoutloud.net/intimate-partner-abuse/homicide-suicide> accessed 5/16/16.
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- ¹² John Piper's sermon from June 11, 1989, "Husbands Who Love Like Christ and the Wives Who Submit to Them," <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/husbands-who-love-like-Christ-and-the-wives-who-submit-to-them>, accessed 05/13/16.
- ¹³ The State of New Hampshire Governor's Commission on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Attorney General's Office of Faith Communities: Domestic Violence Protocol, 3.
- ¹⁴ The State of New Hampshire Governor's Commission on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Attorney General's Office of Faith Communities: Domestic Violence Protocol, 4.
- ¹⁵ See <http://www.CDV.org> for their video entitled "10 Shocking Domestic Violence Statistics for 2011." Accessed 5/13/2016.
- ¹⁶ Robert Anda, Robert Block, Vincent Felitti, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Kaiser Permanente's Health Appraisal Clinic in San Diego, "Adverse Childhood Experiences Study - Major Findings." 2003. Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/ace/findings.htm>, accessed 05/13/16.
- ¹⁷ <http://www.CDV.org>, "10 Shocking Domestic Violence Statistics."
- ¹⁸ CDV.org, "10 Shocking Domestic Violence Statistics."
- ¹⁹ CDV.org, "10 Shocking Domestic Violence Statistics."
- ²⁰ Intermedia, Inc., "Hostages at Home."
- ²¹ Intermedia, Inc., "Hostages at Home."
- ²² Murray A. Stauss, Richard A. Gelles, and Christine Smith, *Physical Violence in American Families; Risk Factors and Adaptations to Violence in 8,145 Families* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1990).
- ²³ Teen Dating Violence Power and Control Wheel used by permission from the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence, 512-407-9020, www.ncdsv.org permission granted on 7/10/16.
- ²⁴ The State of New Hampshire Governor's Commission on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Attorney General's Office of Faith Communities: Domestic Violence Protocol, 6,7.
- ²⁵ The State of New Hampshire Governor's Commission on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Attorney General's Office of Faith Communities.
- ²⁶ The State of New Hampshire Governor's Commission on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Attorney General's Office of Faith Communities, 19-20.
- ²⁷ Detective Sgt. Donald Stewart, *Refuge: A Pathway Out of Domestic Violence and Abuse* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishers, 2004).
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- ²⁹ The State of New Hampshire Governor's Commission on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Attorney General's Office of Faith Communities, 9-10.
- ³⁰ Stewart, *Refuge*, 207 - 210.
- ³¹ Stewart, *Refuge*, 215 - 216, 219.
- ³² The State of New Hampshire Governor's Commission on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Attorney General's Office of Faith Communities, 11-13.
- ³³ Stewart, *Refuge*, 214 - 215.
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- ³⁶ K. Healey, C. O'Sullivan, and C. Smith *Batterer Intervention: Program Approaches and Criminal Justice Strategies* (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice, February 1998).

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³⁹ The State of New Hampshire Governor's Commission on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Attorney General's Office of Faith Communities, 44.

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⁴² Morris, Susan Yarrow, Anton, Jean, "Opening the Door: A Pastor's Guide to Addressing Domestic Violence in Premarital Counseling." [http://www.faihtrustinstitute.org/store/01tA000000M7rdIAC/?searchterm=pastor's guide to premarital](http://www.faihtrustinstitute.org/store/01tA000000M7rdIAC/?searchterm=pastor's+guide+to+premarital) accessed 5/24/16.