

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

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

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

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

## **DEFINITION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

**By: Jan Biresch**

**Domestic violence (DV)** is a pattern of verbal, emotional, physical, sexual and economic abuse sometimes used in combination so that one adolescent or adult family member or partner can gain **power and control** over another.

Legally within the State of PA., domestic violence includes current or former spouses or partners, those related through blood or marriage including in-laws.

---

## **ADULT VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

**By: Stacy Sweinhart**

Many people have in their head, a picture of a "typical" victim of domestic violence. This woman is "typically" a minority, she is uneducated, she is poor, and she comes from the wrong side of town. But this is not always the person who comes through the front door of a domestic violence agency. When domestic violence affects one out of every four women, it begins to paint a picture of how widespread the problem is and who it actually affects. It is an **equal opportunity crime** that can happen to anyone, anywhere. Domestic violence does not discriminate. It can happen to a person regardless of sex, race, religion, socio-economic status, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 1.3 million women are victims of domestic violence each year. Without a doubt, these 1.3 million women will all be different from each other and they will all come from different life circumstances and experiences. Women, who experience this horrific problem, do not fit

into a mold of any kind. Each year hundreds of women come through the doors of domestic violence shelters throughout the country. Some arrive with nothing but the clothes on their backs, while others walk through the doors in Jimmy Choo shoes and carry Coach Luggage.

In order for communities to continue to fight against domestic violence and continue to serve victims, people need to open their eyes to those who desperately need the help of a domestic violence agency. If we can break the silence about who this dreadful crime takes as its victims, we can truly begin to face the issue and begin to make an impact for victims of domestic violence throughout our community.

**MAKE THE CALL TO  
STOP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

---



## WHO IS AN ABUSER by Lillian Sulliman

In the world of Domestic Violence, the abuser is he or she who creates fear within the heart, mind and soul of the individual considered to be the victim, a fear crafted through physical, emotional/mental, psychological, verbal, economic, or sexual abuse or a combination thereof. It is a systematic pattern of behaviors in a relationship that are used to gain/or maintain **power and control** over another.

The overall characteristics of the abuser as well as the abused are not readily identifiable by physical or mental impairments or behavioral disorders. Abusers cross all socio-economic lines. Abusers cross all socioeconomic lines, demographics, ethnicity, color of skin, religious affiliations, sexual orientation, age and or gender. However there are a cluster of behaviors which may appear among the severe abusers, as noted below:

1. Frequent physical assaults of partner and/or other family members
2. Excessive alcohol or drug usage (often used as an "excuse") exacerbating the level of violence
3. Frequent sexual assault of partner or family member
4. Violence either threatened or direct
5. Threats to kill self, others, or family pets
6. Mental illness may play a substantial part in the overall scheme of things, but is not necessarily present.

Statistics state that both abuser and "victim" are likely to have been subjected to or witnesses of familial abuse during a time in their childhood.

Batterers often escalate their abusive behavior when there has been a threatened or actual separation or when a female partner is pregnant, whereby there is a purported fear of loss of power and control, of feeling replaced, on the part of the batterer.

The essential factor in battering behavior is **power and control** and the excessive need for its presence within any and all relationships. Understand its perpetration within society at every level of being.

## DYNAMICS OF ABUSE by Jan Biresch

Domestic violence takes many forms, from physical abuse, to emotional, financial, and sexual abuse all with one goal in mind. It is important to remember that the goal of the abuser is to establish and maintain **power and control** over the victim. Abuse incorporates the following behaviors; sometimes alone and sometimes in combination.

Types of abuse include, but are not limited to the following:

**Isolation**-controlling and limiting where the potential victim goes, who she/he sees, and limits contact with friends and family.

**Intimidation**-making her/him afraid by using looks, actions, gestures; destroying property or displaying weapons.

**Emotional Abuse**-humiliation, degradation, financial or emotional blackmail, threats of harm or of taking children away.

**Psychological Abuse**-minimizing, denying, blaming; making light of the abuse and not taking victims concerns seriously; denying abuse; shifting blame to the victim as cause for the abuse.

**Using Children**- having children convey messages from abuser to victim; using visitation to harass and further abuse victim; threats to take children away; threats to, or actual harm the children.

**Economic Abuse**-create financial dependency, not allow victim to work or keep a job, making victim ask for money whenever it is needed, turn over paychecks.

**Privilege**-treat partner or family member like a servant; having the last word in every discussion or argument, "king of the castle" mentality.

**Physical abuse**-physically frighten or injure, slap, kick, shove, bite, burn, hair pulling, limiting victim's ability to move. Forced use of IV needles with others.

**Sexual abuse**-forcing or pressuring victim into sex acts, birth control sabotage, sexually transmitting disease, and attacks to intimate body parts.

*(Excerpted from Casa Myrna Vazquez, Inc. Power and Control Wheel)*

## POWER AND CONTROL WHEEL



## CYCLE of VIOLENCE

By Denise Flynn & Annelise Bloch

Perpetrators generally follow a pattern of behavior to gain **power and control**.

**Tension Building**-where minor incidents of physical abuse such as pushing/slapping occur. In this phase the perpetrator increases the threat to the victim, causing the victim to feel nervous and fearful of further threats. The abuser starts to get angry; abuse may begin; there is a breakdown of communication; victim feels the need to keep the abuser calm. Tension becomes too much, Victim feels like they are 'walking on egg shells.' When the victims reach out for help at this point, they are often told the violence needs to escalate for legal action to be taken.

**Incident**-known as **acute abuse phase**. Any type of abuse may occur alone or in combination (physical/sexual/emotional). It is when violent and severe injury takes place. In this phase the victim feels helpless, trapped and traumatized.

**Honeymoon phase**-where the perpetrator is apologetic, manipulative and promises to change. This leaves the victim considering reconciliation and feeling guilty. The perpetrator uses these feelings to perpetuate the abuse and start the cycle over again. Abusers may apologize for abuse; Abusers may promise that it will never happen again; Abusers may blame the victim for causing the abuse; Abusers may deny the abuse ever took place or say that is was not as bad as victim claims; Abuser acts like the abuse never happened; Promises made during the honeymoon period; Give gifts; Victim may hope that this time the abuse is over.

The cycle can happen repeatedly in an abusive relationship. Each time the duration of each stage can change but it is important to know that as the cycles continue they can become more pronounced, escalate and be more dangerous.

*Adapted from the original concept of: Walker, Lenore. "The Battered Woman". New York: Harper and Row, 1979. <http://www.domesticviolence.org/cycle-of-violence/>*

## INTIMATE PARTNER SEXUAL ASSAULT

Annelise Bloch & Denise Flynn

Intimate partner sexual assault exists whenever sexualized violence or unwanted sexual contact is present along with any form of abuse within an intimate relationship. This can include married partners, unmarried partners, people in dating relationships, people of all genders and sexual orientations, and teens (Winters, 2008). The role of threats, coercion and mental abuse in perpetrating sexual violence by intimate partners is often overlooked but crucial to intimate partner sexual assault. Sexual coercion means acts

such as telling lies to your partners, threatening to end the relationship and threatening to spread rumors ( Logan, T., Walker, R. & Cole, J., 2013). In abusive relationships these behaviors can be used to coerce sex out of partners.

Marital and Intimate Partner Rape/Assault is very traumatic. As well as the physical injuries, it is a violation of trust from someone who is "supposed to" love you, respect you; keep you safe, to whom you have entrusted your life. It is a betrayal of the very essence of marriage or intimacy, every part of relationships; it is VERY personal attack. Many victims suffer Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Vaginal, oral and/or anal rapes are used to humiliate, embarrass, and punish the victim.

Victims are told to put up with it or just deal with it because it's her duty to submit to the demands of her husband (especially from the abuser, some clergy or some religious family/friends). When the abuse includes sexual assault the victim may be reluctant to come forward and receive the necessary support out of embarrassment or even lack of awareness that sexual assault occurs within "loving" or committed relationships.

## IS YOUR CHILD BEING HURT?

By Michele Kristofco

It is hard to determine exact numbers, but research has shown that in households where there is domestic violence, children living in those households are at increased risk for being victims of violence themselves.<sup>1</sup>

**Some children are directly abused.**<sup>2</sup> Children may be beaten, punched, slapped, kicked, and more by an angry abusive adult, some children may be injured while trying to protect a parent from violence, and some children may be sexually assaulted or violated by an angry or hostile adult in the home.

**Some children are neglected.**<sup>2</sup> Children may be left alone or unsupervised when there is ongoing violence in the home, some children may be left without adequate food, clothing, or necessary healthcare as a result of domestic violence, and some children may be left in deplorable conditions or inadequate housing arrangements due to violence at home.

**Some children are emotionally damaged.**<sup>2</sup>

## IS YOUR CHILD BEING HURT? (cont.)

Children exposed to traumatic events may have low self-esteem, increased fear and anxiety, or depression, some children may have problems with school performance, peer relationships or problem-solving skills, and some children grow up and become violent themselves.

**Are you concerned about your child?** Children have a right to a life free of violence and to a home that is safe and secure. Children do best in a home environment where there is a sense of routine and normalcy.<sup>3</sup> Children need adults in their lives who value them, listen to them and protect them. Our youngest children are the most vulnerable victims.

If you are concerned for the health and safety of your children, you are not alone. Many adults struggling with domestic violence have these concerns. Take steps to protect yourself and your children.

1. Make a plan
2. Gather resources
3. Seek out community supports and the assistance of family and friends
4. Consider whether formal child protection services are needed

Remember, this is not a problem that only exists in your household. There are many other people dealing with issues of violence. Domestic violence is a local, national and global problem in our society today.<sup>3</sup> We must work together and support each other in order to be safe and free of violence and to keep our children safe, happy and healthy. What we do for our children today helps them develop into the adults and the leaders they will become tomorrow.

1. Edleson, J. L. (1999). The overlap between child maltreatment and woman battering. *Violence Against Women*, 5(2), pp. 134 to 154.
2. Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, Children's Bureau, Caliber Associates. Bragg, H. Lien. (2003) Child Welfare Information Gateway, The Overlap Between Child Maltreatment and Domestic Violence
3. Unicef, (2006). Behind closed doors, The impact of domestic violence on children

**New articles will be published by The Domestic Violence Legal Network TEACH Committee every three months and can be accessed at:**

[www.montcopa.org/DVLN](http://www.montcopa.org/DVLN)

## MAKE THE CALL TO STOP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



**For confidential domestic violence, sexual assault, or child abuse help or resources:**

***Laurel House Hotline: 800-642-3150***  
***Women's Center Hotline: 800-773-2424***  
***Victim Service Center: 888-521-0983***  
***Office of Children and Youth***  
***PA Child Abuse Hotline: 800-932-8313***  
***Montgomery County Domestic Relations:***  
***610-278-3646***  
***(Child support issues)***

**Contributors are all members of the  
Montgomery County Domestic Violence Legal  
Network/TEACH**

Denise Flynn, MHS, Legal Advocacy Project, Director, Women's Center-TEACH Committee Co-Chair; Jan Biresch, Domestic Violence Literacy-TEACH Committee Co-Chair; Annelise Bloch, MSW, Victim Advocate, Victim Services Center; Michele Kristofco, Community Relations Administrator, Office of Children and Youth; Lillian Sulliman, MS, Victim Advocate, Women's Center; Stacy Sweinhart, Manager, Domestic Abuse Response Team, Laurel House.

