

## **More Myths about Domestic Violence**

**MYTH: Domestic violence happens only in low-income families.**

FACT: Domestic violence happens in all kinds of families, rich and poor, urban, suburban and rural, in every part of the country, in every racial, religious and age group.

**MYTH: Alcohol and drugs cause domestic violence.**

FACT: Alcohol and drugs do not cause domestic violence. Domestic violence is a choice. Many abusers will make sure they have alcohol or drugs on hand, in order to use them as an excuse for their actions. Abusers will also claim their actions resulted because they could not have the alcohol or drugs.

**MYTH: Domestic violence is an anger control issue.**

FACT: Domestic violence has nothing to do with anger. Anger is a tool abusers use to get what they want. We know abusers are actually very much in control because they can stop when someone knocks on the door or the phone rings; they often direct punches and kicks to parts of the body where the bruises are less likely to show; they abuse everyone who makes them "angry," but waits until there are no witnesses and abuses the one they say they love.

**MYTH: Abusers and/or victims have low self-esteem.**

FACT: Abusers do not have low self-esteem. They believe they are entitled to have power and control over their partner. Abusers will pretend to have low-self esteem, if it will make others believe the violence is not their fault.

Survivors of abuse may have had great self-esteem at the beginning of the relationship, but the abuser uses emotional abuse: calling her names, putting her down, telling her it is all her fault, in order to destroy her self-esteem. Some abusers look for women with low self-esteem, as they believe she will be more likely to blame herself and less likely to report his behavior. Other abusers will seek women with high self-esteem, as they may represent a greater challenge to control over time.

**MYTH: Most assaults are really just a couple of slaps and they are not really harmful.**

FACT: More than 30 percent of hospital emergency-room admissions are women who have been abused. Domestic violence is the single greatest cause of injury to women in the United States.

**MYTH: Domestic violence happens only once or twice in a relationship.**

FACT: Abusers usually escalate violent behaviors in frequency and intensity over time.

**MYTH: Some women want to be beaten. They ask for it. They deserve it. Some women go from abuser to abuser---it must be something about them.**

FACT: No one deserves to be abused. Everyone has the right to live free of violence. No one would want to have their partner be abusive. Women who find that their second or third partner are abusers will often be blamed by others for the violence: "It must be something about her," or she will blame herself: "I always seem to pick abusers." In reality, the abuser uses the tactic of charm early in the relationship to find out that she was previously abused. He uses this information to blame her for the violence: "See? It must be something that you are doing wrong, or there would not have been two of us," or to silence her: "You are not going to tell anyone, because if you do they will never believe you because you said that before."

**MYTH: Children aren't aware of the violence in their home.**

FACT: Studies show that most children are aware of the violence directed at their mother.

**MYTH: Children are not at risk for being hurt or injured.**

FACT: Men who abuse their partners are more likely to abuse the children in the home. Domestic violence is the number one predictor for child abuse. Subjecting children to an environment full of violent actions and hateful words is not being a "good dad."

**MYTH: Boys who witness violence will grow up to be abusers.**

FACT: Studies have found that 30% of male child witnesses choose to become abusers as adults. This means that 70% do not become abusers and are committed to ending the cycle of violence in their lives. The majority of children, male and female, who witness domestic violence become advocates for children when they grow up;

committed to raising their children without the use of violence and going into professions where they work to end violence against all children.

Young men in our society must never feel they are destined to become violent. We send a dangerous message to young men and boys when we imply they are fated to become violent and we give abusers an excuse for their behavior.

**FACT:** Domestic violence is a crime. It is against the law for anyone to physically harm or harass another person.

**FACT:** Domestic violence may lead to murder. Three-quarters of all women who are murdered are murdered by their husbands, ex-husbands or domestic partners.

**FACT:** Domestic violence costs the U.S. economy an estimated \$3 to \$5 billion annually in job absenteeism and another \$100 million annually in medical expenses.