



A Safety Module: Understanding Domestic Violence

Domestic Abuse: A Common Problem!

Because the vast majority of domestic assaults are committed by men, the U.S. government considers domestic violence a crime against women.



You've probably heard the terms "domestic abuse" and/or "domestic violence". But what do people mean when they talk about domestic abuse?

Domestic abuse is violence between adult intimate partners (people who are married, living together, dating or who have broken off a relationship).

Domestic violence is more than loud arguments and frequent fights. It is the chronic *abuse of power* by one partner over the other. The abuser (usually male) terrorizes and controls the victim (usually female) with threats, intimidation, and physical violence. Sometimes, the actual physical violence comes only after *months or years* of fear and manipulation.

So what does all of this have to do with your job as a nursing assistant? **There are two main connections:**

- First, you need to know that domestic violence has been identified as an *epidemic* throughout America and the world—a serious problem that affects millions of lives and consumes billions of healthcare dollars. Because it is so widespread,

it's likely that, at some point, one or more of your clients have been victims of domestic abuse.

- And, second, a large number of healthcare workers are women. Why is that an issue? Consider this fact: Most victims of domestic violence are *women*. Across the United States alone, one out of every four women will be a victim of domestic abuse at some point during her life. It doesn't matter if a woman is black or white, rich or poor, young or old—domestic violence affects people of all racial and social backgrounds and education levels. So, chances are, at least one of your coworkers has experienced domestic abuse.

It's crucial for all healthcare workers to be armed with some basic information about domestic violence. This knowledge will allow you to help people who have been abused by an intimate partner.

Keep reading to learn more about how to recognize and help victims of domestic abuse.

© 2011 In the Know, Inc.

May be copied for use within each physical location that purchases this inservice. All other copying and distribution is strictly prohibited.

The Cold Hard Facts

- In general, domestic abuse by an “intimate partner” is a crime against women. For every 100 cases of domestic abuse, 85 of the victims are women and 15 are men.
- Less than *half* of all domestic abuse incidents are reported to the police.
- Domestic violence is the leading cause of *injury* for women. Every year, 4 million American women experience a serious assault by a partner.
- Nearly a third of domestic abuse victims report that their offender threatened to kill them.
- Homicide is the second leading cause of *death* of females between the ages of 15 and 19.
- On average, four women are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends every day.
- For 30% of women who experience abuse, the first incident occurs during pregnancy.
- Every year, more than 300,000 American women experience domestic violence during their pregnancy.
- More than half of all female victims of domestic abuse live in households with young children.
- Across America, there are nearly 250,000 hospital visits every year because of domestic violence injuries. However, only one of every five victims seeks medical treatment.
- Three out of four murder-suicide situations involve a current or former intimate partner.
- If you get a group of 12 women together, it’s likely that at least one has been *stalked* at some point in her life. More than a million American women are stalked every year.
- Many men are victims of stalking, too. Every year, nearly 400,000 men report being stalked.
- More than half of all stalking victims are stalked by a current or former partner.
- Up to 15% of gay men, 11% of lesbian women and 8% of heterosexual men will be assaulted by a date or intimate partner at some point during their lives.
- Every year, more than 800,000 American men report being abused by their female partners.
- Did you know that there are more than 1.5 million incidents of workplace violence in the U.S. every year? Among those, nearly 20,000 are committed by an intimate partner.
- Homicide is the leading cause of death for women in the workplace.
- For every four women who attempt suicide, at least one of them is a victim of domestic abuse.
- Domestic violence is *not* just an American issue. It’s a worldwide problem. For example, studies have shown that up to half of all the women in the world will be beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused during their lives.



Across America, half of all homeless women and children are on the streets as a result of domestic violence.



A Long History of Domestic Abuse

Domestic violence between intimate partners has been a problem throughout history. Here are some interesting historical facts:

- In Ancient Rome, a law was passed permitting a husband to beat his wife with a rod or a stick—as long as the stick was no bigger around than his right thumb.
- For well over a millennium, the same law was adopted in many countries throughout the world. Even the early American settlers passed a similar law.
- In England, the 1600-1700's were known as the "Golden Age of the Rod". During this time, women were taught that it was their *sacred duty* to obey the man of the house. Men were *encouraged* to be violent towards their wives.
- In 1824, a Mississippi judge ruled that a husband could beat his wife "only in case of emergency".
- In 1857, a Massachusetts court found a man innocent of raping his wife. The judge stated that, once married, a woman belongs to her husband and has no right to refuse sex.
- In 1871, Alabama became the first state to make it *illegal* for a man to beat his wife.
- Maine was one of the first states to open a battered women's shelter. The year was 1967.
- In the early 1970's, battered women who left their husbands were *denied* welfare if their husbands were employed.
- In 1972, the family of a California woman sued the police for wrongful death after her ex-husband killed her. The woman had called the police for protection against him 29 times. They refused to help her.
- Just 35 years ago, in Scotland, a husband was fined \$11.50 for hitting his wife in the face. The judge told the husband, "*Everyone knows you can strike your wife's bottom if you wish, but you must not strike her on the face.*"
- In 1976, the first Legal Center for Battered Women opened in Chicago.
- By 1981, there were about 500 battered women's shelters across the United States.
- Eight years later, the number of shelters had jumped to 1200. Those shelters helped more than 300,000 women and children.
- In 1992, the American Medical Association released guidelines for doctors suggesting that they screen their female patients for signs of domestic violence.
- In 1994, the Violence Against Women Act was adopted. This act promoted research into domestic abuse and provided both law enforcement and social services with the legal and financial support necessary to protect battered women.
- Even today, many people still believe that it is impossible for people in same-sex relationships to be victims of domestic violence. That is not true.



In 1866, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (the ASPCA) was formed. Unfortunately, many years went by before organizations were formed to protect women.



Who Is at Risk for Domestic Abuse?

As you've learned, victims of domestic abuse can be of any age, ethnicity, income level, or level of education. However, studies have uncovered one common denominator between most victims: they are in a relationship where their *partner* has all the power.

Women are *most* vulnerable to violence when separated from their intimate partner. The *second most* vulnerable time is right after a divorce.

In addition, people may be at risk for domestic violence if they:

- Are planning to leave or have recently left an abusive relationship.
- Struggle with poverty or a poor living situation.
- Are unemployed.
- Have a physical or mental disability.
- Are younger than 30 years old.
- Witnessed domestic violence as a child.
- Were victims of childhood and/or adolescent abuse.
- Are isolated socially from family and friends.
- Are pregnant, especially if it was unplanned.
- Have been stalked by a partner.

It is a myth that victims bring on the abuse by their behavior. Remember that no one asks or deserves to be abused—no matter what they say or do.



Why Do People Become Abusers?

Research has shown that domestic abusers share some common characteristics. The most significant one is that they seek all the *power* in a relationship and they use violence as a way to get what they want.

Why do some people choose this violent path? Researchers believe that, at some point in their lives, abusers:

1. Learn *how* to be abusive—either by watching someone else or by repeatedly getting what they want by being aggressive.

2. Have the *opportunity* to abuse someone.
3. Make the *choice* to be abusive.

There are certain risk factors that **may** indicate a tendency for domestic violence—whether it be in a same sex or heterosexual relationship.

Many (but not all) domestic abusers:

- Witnessed abuse as a child.
- Were victims of abuse as a child.
- Abused former partners.
- Were involved in aggressive or delinquent behavior in their youth.
- Are unemployed (or make less money than their partners).
- Dropped out of high school.
- Have different religious beliefs than their partners.
- Abuse pets.
- Abuse alcohol or drugs.
- Have poor communication skills.

Domestic violence is not about abusers simply losing control. Instead, violent behavior is a choice. It is the way abusers choose to act so they can maintain control over their partners.



Older Victims

While younger women have the greatest risk for domestic violence, it can happen to older men and women, too. Seniors can suffer physical, sexual, emotional, and financial abuse at the hands of spouses, partners, family members, and caregivers.

Some elderly victims have been with the same abusive partner for *decades*. In fact, they may never have lived on their own—and may be terrified to try it now or may believe it is too late to make a change or they may feel that living with abuse is “normal”.

Others are starting new relationships following a death or divorce—and may suddenly find themselves living with an abuser.

When abuse begins or gets worse in old age, it may be because of stressful life changes such as:

- Retirement
- Disability
- Sexual changes

Among elderly domestic abuse victims, injuries tend to increase in frequency and severity over time. Also, elderly victims often become intensely confused and withdrawn.

There are many reasons older victims find it difficult or impossible to leave their abusers. **For example, they might:**

- Be afraid of involving the authorities because they may end up being taken from their homes or being placed in a nursing home.
- Have no source of income and/or health insurance other than through their partner.
- Feel responsible for “keeping the family together”—even when the children are grown and on their own.



Domestic violence can occur anywhere someone lives—including nursing homes, assisted living facilities and rest homes.

Children Are Victims, Too!

Every year, millions of children are exposed to domestic violence. Researchers guess that children witness at least 60% of all domestic violence episodes.

Some of these children are physically abused along with their parent and some get hurt while trying to protect their abused parent. But, the problem goes beyond the physical.

Children who witness regular acts of violence

have greater emotional and behavioral problems than other children. Some of the immediate effects may include nightmares, anxiety, withdrawal and bedwetting.

Even very young children can be deeply frightened and suffer from long term effects.

Unfortunately, children who grow up witnessing domestic violence are more likely to become abusers themselves.

They learn early on that violence is an acceptable way to cope with stress or to gain control over another person.

Parents who seek help and take action against their abusers demonstrate to their children that abuse is not acceptable and can be stopped.



Early Warning Signs of Domestic Abuse

There are many ways that abusers can reach their "goal" of isolating, intimidating and controlling their partners. In the beginning, their behavior may seem too good to be true; they may be extra attentive, loving, generous and protective. Later, those same behaviors can become frightening and controlling.

A relationship may become abusive if your partner:

- Keeps track constantly of what you are doing and who you are with.
- Demands that you spend all your time together and tries to cut you off from your family and friends.
- Tells you how to dress.
- Accuses you of flirting with other people.
- Tries to make all your decisions for you.
- Becomes angry easily but blames others for his/her temper.
- Pressures you into doing things that make you feel uncomfortable.



Does the Person You Love Ever...?

- Make you feel afraid?
- Cause you to worry about how his/her mood will affect your day?
- Try to control where you go, what you do and who you see?
- Put you down in public or keep you from contacting family or friends?
- Accuse you of having affairs?
- Threaten to hurt you or your children?
- Throw you down, push, hit, choke, kick, or slap you?
- Blame his/her temper on alcohol or drugs?
- Force you to have sex when you don't want to?
- Say it's your fault if he or she hits you, then promises it won't happen again (but it does)?
- Threaten to kill him/herself if you leave?

If you can answer "yes" to most of these questions, you are involved in an abusive relationship.

At first, abuse happens just once in a while and the abuser apologizes and promises never to do it again—or claims that his/her partner did something to bring it on.

Domestic Abuse Tends to Escalate Through Four Stages:

1. Pre-Battering Violence: verbal abuse, threats of violence, hitting or breaking objects.
2. Beginning Violence: pushing, restraining, holding down, shaking, blocking doorways.
3. Moderate Violence: slapping, punching, kicking, pulling hair, spanking.
4. Severe Violence: choking, beating with objects, sexual abuse, threatening with (or using) weapons.



Types of Domestic Abuse

Domestic violence is made up of a number of different types of abuse, such as:

Physical

This includes any action that causes physical pain to the body. For example:

- Pinching.
- Biting.
- Tripping.
- Beating.
- Punching.
- Grabbing.
- Pulling hair.
- Slapping.
- Arm twisting.
- Shoving.
- Kicking.
- Choking.
- Restraining or locking a person up.
- Refusing to let a person eat or sleep.
- Denying a person medical attention.
- Using a weapon.

Psychological

This type of abuse might be in the form of words or actions. For example, the abuser might:

- Threaten to harm the children or other family members.

- Threaten to harm pets.
- Injure or killing pets.
- Use insults and name calling to make a partner feel bad.
- Play “mind games” or brainwashing.
- Smash things in front of a partner.
- Control a partner’s activities outside the home.
- Use child visitation as a way to harass a partner.
- Isolate a partner from family and friends.
- Make a partner think he/she is going crazy.
- Treat a partner like a servant or a child.

Financial

Some abusers use money as a way to control their intimate partners. For example, they might:

- Prevent a partner from getting or keeping a job.
- Stop a partner from going to school.
- Take all their partner’s money.
- Force their partner to beg for money for basic necessities.

- Give their partner an allowance.
- Get into debt using credit cards in the partner’s name.
- Refuse to work and demand to be supported by their partners.

Sexual

Sex can also be used as a form of control. For example, an abuser might:

- Insist on sex after a violent episode.
- Force a partner to perform sexual acts.
- Treat a partner like a sex object.
- Attack the sexual parts of a partner’s body.
- Refuse to allow birth control to be used.
- Force a partner to have sex with other people.



The lists on this page are only examples. There are many other ways in which domestic abusers can behave in order to maintain control over their partners.

In general, when domestic abuse happens later in life, it tends to be in the form of psychological or financial abuse— however physical and sexual abuse cases still occur.



The Emotional Effects of Domestic Abuse

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Feeling hopeless about the future
- Nightmares
- Nervousness
- Eating disorders—either eating too much or too little
- Sleep problems
- Panic attacks
- Distrust of others
- Avoidance of friends and family
- Aggressive behavior
- Suicide attempts
- Alcohol and drug abuse



Battered Person Syndrome

The Battered Woman (or Person) Syndrome is a psychological condition similar to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). People with this syndrome have been the victim of repeated and/or severe domestic violence and they:

- Believe that the violence is *their* fault.
- Are unable to place the responsibility for the violence on the abuser.
- Fear for their lives and/or their children's lives.
- Have an irrational belief that their abusers are “god-like” and can find them no matter where they hide.

The syndrome, like PTSD, can be treated with individual therapy, group therapy and/or medications.

About half of abuse injuries tend to be in places that are usually covered by clothing. The other half are on the head and neck.

The Physical Effects of Domestic Abuse

- Cuts and scrapes
- Bruises
- Burn marks
- Rope burns
- Broken bones
- Broken or loose teeth
- Ruptured ear drum
- Vision loss
- Hair loss (from hair pulling)
- Vaginal or anal injuries
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Pelvic pain
- Bladder infections
- Unwanted pregnancy
- Miscarriage
- Chronic headaches
- Neck pain
- Exhaustion
- Problems managing chronic conditions such as diabetes or high blood pressure
- Permanent disability
- Permanent disfigurement
- Death



Domestic Violence & the Workplace

Domestic violence can affect your workplace in several ways:

1. When an abuser comes to your workplace and harasses (or hurts) one of your coworkers.
2. When a coworker is absent from work because of injuries.
3. When a coworker is less productive on the job due to the stress of being abused at home.

Did you know that three out of four battered women who work are harassed by their partners while on the job? In addition:

- 96% report that they experience problems at work because of their domestic situation.

- More than half of them are late for work at least 60 times in a year—and at least a third leave early at least once a week.
- The majority of women who are being battered miss at least 18 days of work every year and one out of five lose their jobs altogether.
- An estimated one million American women are stalked each year and about one-fourth of them report missing an average of eleven days of work as a result of the stalking.
- One study of female domestic violence victims found that more than 40%percent were left without a way to get to work

when their abusers disabled the car or hid the car keys.

- The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that workers miss a total of 8 million days of work each year. That number equals 32,000 full time jobs!
- Domestic violence costs American workplaces nearly \$800 million annually.
- Battered workers tend to avoid asking their employer for help—usually because they fear that talking about the abuse will cause them to lose their job. And, for many abuse victims, a job is the only independence they have from the batterer.



Nursing assistants need to be able to recognize the signs of domestic abuse in others and to know what to do about their suspicions.

Keeping a Workplace Safe

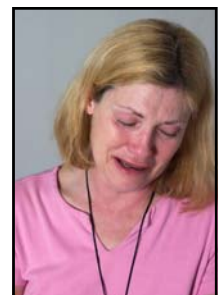
The administrators of your workplace can help protect an employee who is dealing with domestic violence by:

- Making sure that security staff (and/or key coworkers) have the information they need to best protect the employee at work

(copies of court orders, a photograph of the abuser, etc.).

- Checking that the employee's parking location is safe.
- Transferring the employee to another work location, if possible (and necessary.)

- Guarding the employee's home address—especially if it is a shelter or some other confidential location.
- Educating all staff members about the signs of domestic violence—and how to report their suspicions.



Is a Coworker Being Abused?

There is no way to know for sure that someone is being abused—unless you actually witness it happening. However, you can watch out for these warning signs:

Injuries and Excuses: People who are being abused may have frequent bruises or other injuries. Because they feel afraid or embarrassed, they may make up excuses about how the injuries happened.

Problems at Work: Victims of domestic abuse may be deprived of sleep and/or food—and you may notice that they can't seem to concentrate on their job. When the violence at

home reaches the severe level, people who are being battered may have to take time off from work.

Low Self-Esteem: Many battered women have low self-esteem—at least when it comes to their intimate relationships. You may hear domestic abuse victims talk about how they can't make it on their own and that they are so lucky to have partners to take charge of their lives.

Personality Changes: In general, people who live with an abuser learn how to act to avoid conflict with their partner. So, someone who is usually happy and

outgoing with you may become quiet and shy when around (or on the phone with) his/her partner.

Fear of Conflict: When people experience a lot of conflict at home, they tend to be anxious around any type of confrontation—with friends, relatives, neighbors and coworkers. They learn that it is easier to be *passive*, to give in to everyone around them rather than standing up for themselves.

Self-blame: Victims of domestic violence may take responsibility for *anything* that goes wrong—at work and at home.



Important! If you actually witness an assault—whether the victim is a coworker or a client—call 911 and/or the security for your facility. If you feel threatened, leave the scene.

Is a Client Being Abused?

Episodes of domestic violence can happen anywhere, including at health care facilities. You may have a client who is being stalked or harassed by an intimate partner—even in a hospital or nursing home.

If you work in home health or hospice care, you spend a lot of time in clients' homes. You may observe behavior

between partners that makes you suspect there is domestic abuse going on.

If you believe that your client is the victim of domestic violence, notify your supervisor immediately. Also, document as many facts as you can, such as:

"Client has multiple large bruises on her arms and

stomach. States she got them by bumping into a doorway."

"Heard client's husband calling her a 'useless cow'. He also said that he refused to spend any more money on her medications."

"Client stated she is afraid of her husband and that he recently bought a gun and pointed it at her."



Why Do People Stay with an Abuser?

Did you know that, on average, victims of domestic violence leave their abuser *seven times* before staying away for good? And, some victims never leave. Why? Who would want to stay with an abuser?

There are a number of reasons, including:

Infrequent Abuse. If the abuse happens only occasionally and the abuser says it won't happen again, the victim is more likely to stick it out.

Family History. If the victim grew up in a home where domestic abuse was "normal", he or she may simply accept it as a way of life.

Money. The abuser may control all the victim's

money so that the victim depends on the abuser for a place to live and food to eat.

Fear. Victims of domestic violence may be so afraid of their abusers that they don't dare leave. They may also be afraid of breaking up the family of being looked down upon by the community or of being alone without a partner.

Depression. Living with domestic abuse often leads to severe depression...and people who suffer from depression find it difficult to make decisions and take action.

Hope. Some victims may truly believe that their abuser will change and that the relationship will

improve. They hang onto this hope and see it as a reason to stay.

Love. Some victims love their partners in spite of the abuse. They don't want to end the relationship.

Strong Beliefs. If a victim doesn't believe in divorce—because of religious or cultural beliefs, she is more likely to stay in an abusive relationship.

Lack of Awareness. Many victims have been kept isolated by their abusers and are unaware of the different resources available in their communities that offer support to victims of domestic violence.



Assistance at the National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-7233) is available in English and Spanish with access to more than 140 languages through interpreter services.

Reporting Domestic Abuse

Less than *half* of all domestic violence episodes are reported to the police. There are many reasons for this, such as:

- Wanting to keep the episode private.
- A fear of making the abuser even angrier.
- Believing that the police can't do anything to help.

To report suspicions of domestic abuse involving clients, talk to your supervisor and/or follow your workplace policy for reporting abuse.

If you, or someone you know, is a victim of domestic violence, remember that help is available. A good place to start is the National

Domestic Violence Hotline: **1-800-799-7233**. Calls to this number are free and help is available to callers 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. They provide information, crisis intervention, safety planning and referrals to support agencies in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.



Supporting Victims of Domestic Abuse

If you know people who are still in an abusive relationship:

- Respect their confidentiality—unless the person is a client. Then, notify your supervisor.
 - Help them recognize that they are being abused and let them know that you are worried about their safety.
 - Assure them that they are not to blame for the violence.
 - Don't make judgments about their lives—even if they choose to stay with their abusers.
 - Don't make decisions for them or tell them what to do. Instead, help them realize that they have choices—and that there are helpful resources available to them.
- Do not confront an abuser yourself. If you feel a victim is in immediate danger, call 911.
 - Assist victims to develop a safety plan. For example, come up with a "code word" they can use if they ever need you to call the police for them.
 - Remember that adults have the right to make their own decisions. You cannot "rescue" someone who is not ready to make a change.
- If you know victims of domestic violence (clients, friends or coworkers) who have left their abusers:***
- Let them know you are willing to listen if they need to talk about the experience.
 - Help them maintain a normal day-to-day routine. This allows them to regain a sense of control over their lives.
 - Be patient, especially if they express their anger or frustration about what happened to them. It takes time to heal after being victimized.
 - If they seem to be struggling with their recovery (such as turning to drugs or alcohol to ease their pain), encourage them to seek help. For example, they could reach out to a physician, a minister or a domestic violence support group.
 - Remember that each person is an individual and will heal at his or her own pace. So, above all, be supportive!



Remember...domestic violence is a crime! No one "deserves" to be a victim of abuse, especially when it comes from an intimate partner.

REMEMBER:

- Domestic violence is *common*. Across the United States, a woman is battered every 15 seconds and the number of women who have been murdered by their intimate partners is greater than the number of soldiers killed in the Vietnam War.
- While the statistics are scary, victims of domestic violence do have choices and can get help. A great place to start is the National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233.





A Safety Module: Understanding Domestic Violence

Are You "In the Know" about Domestic Violence?

Fill each blank with one of the words from the list below.

Then check your answers with your supervisor.

(Hint: You will not use every word on the list.)

**Victim
Love
Routine
Severe
Retirement
Two**

**Moderate
Relationship
Intimate
Seven
Resources
Independence**

**Money
Epidemic
Blame
Pregnancy
Syndrome
Power**

EMPLOYEE NAME *(Please print)*:

DATE: _____

- ***I understand the information presented in this inservice.***
- ***I have completed this inservice and answered at least eight of the test questions correctly.***

EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE:

SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE:

1. Domestic abuse is violence between adult _____ partners.
2. Across America and throughout the world, domestic violence has been identified as an _____.
3. _____ and _____ are two of the riskiest times for domestic violence.
4. Domestic abusers seek _____ in a relationship and they use violence to get what they want.
5. The stage of violence is considered _____ if it includes slapping, punching, kicking and pulling hair.
6. Taking all of a partner's _____ is a form of financial abuse.
7. For many abuse victims, a job is the only _____ they have from their batterer.
8. Victims of domestic abuse tend to _____ themselves for the violence.
9. On average, domestic abuse victims leave their abusers _____ times before staying away for good.
10. By helping domestic violence survivors maintain a normal day-to-day _____, you allow them to regain a sense of control over their lives.

Inservice Credit:

<input type="checkbox"/> Self Study	1 hour
<input type="checkbox"/> Group Study	1 hour

File completed test in employee's personnel file.