

# FAMILY VIOLENCE GLOSSARY

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FV Specialist 12 Hour Certification Training



1

**LANGUAGE**

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The willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault and/or other abusive behavior as part of a systemic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another. The frequency and severity of domestic violence can vary dramatically, however the one constant component of domestic violence is one person's consistent efforts to maintain power and control over the other

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## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS



In the domestic violence service field we use the terms “domestic violence” and “family violence” interchangeably. Domestic violence refers to violence between people in a domestic situation and **can thus include siblings, parents, aunts, uncles etc.**

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## VS FAMILY VIOLENCE?



Specifically describes violence perpetrated by a partner in a romantic, or sexual relationship. Abuse occurs within a spectrum of relationships including sex trafficking or a relationship described as “hooking up”, “dating” or “friends with benefits” and other abusive relationships where there is a pattern of coercive behaviors or tactics utilized against the victim with the purpose of gaining and keeping power and control

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**VS INTIMATE PARTNER  
VIOLENCE?**

# VICTIM SURVIVORS

How do we describe individuals who seek help during or after they have left a violent relationship?

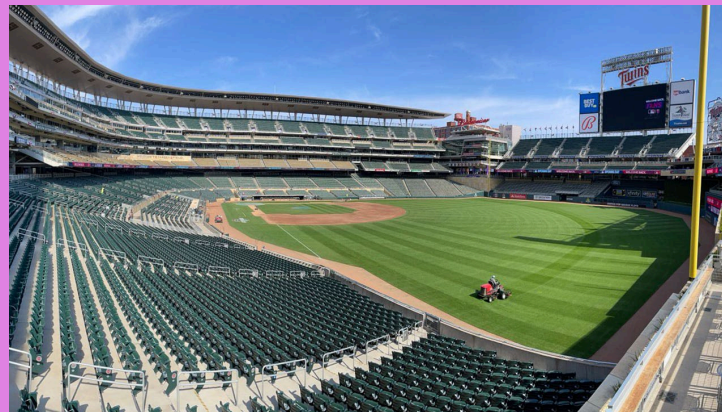
The word “victim” is used by members of law enforcement and within the context of courtroom proceedings

For many “survivor” speaks to the sense of empowerment our organizations coordinated response aims to encourage

It is imperative to follow the lead of the person seeking support, since the journey from victim to survivor is unique to each person

Many are beginning to use the term “victim/survivor (v/s)” to represent the continuum

If you're worried, I recommend using the word “participant”



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We could fill Target Field 17 times with just the women in Minnesota who have survived sexual and or domestic violence

1

# THE RELATIONSHIP SPECTRUM

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All relationships exist on a spectrum from healthy to abusive, with unhealthy relationships somewhere in the middle





# THE RELATIONSHIP SPECTRUM

1

## Healthy relationships are based on equality & respect

Partners make decisions together and can openly discuss whatever they're dealing with, like relationship problems and sexual choices. They enjoy spending time together but can be happy apart.

2

## Unhealthy relationships are based on attempts to control the other person

One person tries to make most of the decisions. They may pressure their partner about sex or refuse to see how their actions can cause hurt. In an unhealthy relationship, you feel like you should only spend time with your partner.

3

## Abusive relationships are based on an **imbalance of power & control**

One person is making all the decisions—about sexual choices, friend groups, boundaries, even what's true and what's not. You spend all of your time together and feel like you can't talk to other people, especially about what's really happening in your relationship.

# WHAT TO LOOK FOR

1

Checking a phone, email or social media accounts without permission

2

Using put downs and degrading language, especially in front of others

3

Isolating from friends and family (physically, financially, emotionally)

4

Extreme jealousy or insecurity



**Warning signs of abuse**

# WHAT TO LOOK FOR

5

Explosive outbursts, temper or mood swings

6

\*\*Any form of physical harm

7

Possessiveness or controlling behavior

8

Pressuring or forcing sexual contact



Warning signs of abuse

At the start of a new relationship, it's not always easy to tell if it will later become abusive. Many abusive people appear like *ideal partners* in the early stages

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# POWER AND CONTROL

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Understanding the fundamental dynamics  
and impacts of abuse



# At its core, relationship abuse is rooted in **power, control and oppression**

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Domestic violence is not about someone losing their temper, or “snapping” and lashing out at their partner physically or verbally: **it is about the need to control another person**





The lack of known physical violence does not make abusive relationships any less dangerous for victims. These forms of abuse can further trap a victim/survivor in their relationship in the same ways that physical violence does.

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**Some abusers progressively escalate non-physical forms of abuse before killing their partners, even without a history of physical violence.**

**POWER AND CONTROL WAS  
PRESENT IN EVERY SINGLE  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
HOMICIDE THAT HAPPENED IN  
2022**

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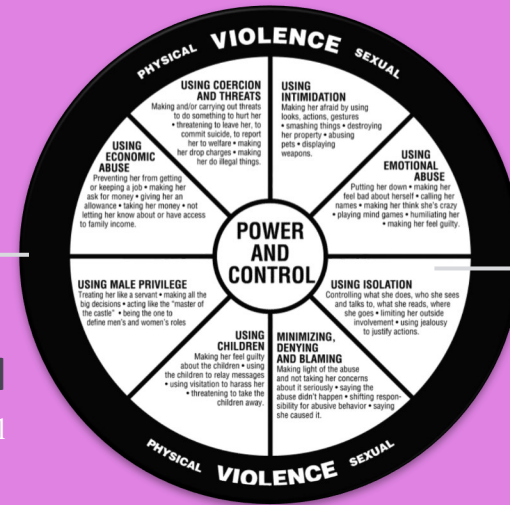
# THE POWER AND CONTROL WHEEL

Describes “battering” to victims, offenders and practitioners in the system

It serves as a diagram of tactics that an abusive partner may use to **keep** their victim in the relationship

The complexities of relationship violence could never be summarized by a single diagram, but the wheel presents a **useful lens through which to examine DV**

**Outer wheel**  
Physical and sexual violence



**Inner wheel**

Behaviors re-enforced by physical and sexual violence

# THE OUTER RING: USE OF PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Physical and sexual violence is differentiated from the other tactics on the wheel, as it is used to reinforce the others. Violence in whatever form is meant to cause fear and show domination. Just the threat of physical or sexual violence can be enough for abusers to get their victims to do what they want, as the victims know what their abusers are capable of and try to avoid it.

We remember Lissette Reinbold. Her husband accused her of being unfaithful to him and demanded sex from her in the weeks leading up to her murder. He continued pressuring her for sex through text messages the day prior to killing her. In this exchange he claimed “ownership of a part of her body.”

# INTIMIDATION

The abuser makes the victim afraid by using looks, actions, and gestures. It often involves violent acts to accomplish this, such as smashing or destroying things, abusing pets, or displaying weapons

The abuser demonstrates they are capable of violence, be it toward objects, animals, children, or the victim, and willing to use it. They are then able to remind the victim of that with solely an aggressive gesture or looming stance

We remember Taryn Baumgardner who followed in her father's footsteps to become a mail carrier. She was found shot by her boyfriend in her St. Paul home. Taryn's daughter, age 9, reported that her Mother's boyfriend would load and unload his shotgun in front of her.

# EMOTIONAL ABUSE

The abuser uses insults, name calling, and belittling to make the victim feel bad about themselves. Nothing is ever done correctly or good enough.

Abusers may invalidate victims' thoughts and emotions or merely refuse to engage with them, using the "silent treatment" to instill worry or devalue their importance

They want victims to feel that they are less than the abuser, that they are not capable of functioning or surviving without them

Aspects that others may differentiate as "psychological abuse" are also included in this tactic. These elements are mind games, making the victim feel humiliated, guilty, or even crazy.

# COERSION AND THREATS

Coercion involves discovering what the victim values most and offering to provide that in exchange for what the abuser wants, with the undertone that the victim won't get it if they don't do what the abuser wants.

**Threats are the stick to coercion's carrot.**

Abusers threaten to harm what the victim values if they do not do what the abuser wants. This is often a threat of harm toward the victim or toward someone or something they care about, such as children and pets.

**We remember Cynthia Hickman.** Cynthia was killed by her estranged husband. When Cynthia sought an Order for Protection two weeks prior to her death, she testified that she woke up next to a photograph of herself with a knife positioned over it.

# “I won’t be a problem for you much longer”

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Helping our participants know the difference between the warning signs of suicide and a pattern of threats as a method of manipulation or abuse can help you them feel more secure in setting boundaries. [1-800-273-TALK \(8255\)](tel:1-800-273-TALK)



# ISOLATION

The abuser taking control of the victim's life by separating them from family, friends, and community. They tell the victim where they can go, what they can do, who they can see and talk to, even what they can watch or read.

They may start an argument whenever the victim tries to interact with others, so that the victim starts to avoid these interactions in order to avoid angering the abuser.

The abuser does not want others to influence the victim's opinion of them or their relationship.

Systematically limiting the victim's experience outside of the relationship makes them more dependent on the abuser, more compliant to their desires, afraid of seeking support from others, and reluctant to leave.

# MINIMIZING DENYING AND BLAMING

This tactic has to do with how the abuser represents the abuse itself. If the victim tries to discuss what happened or is happening, the abuser may play it down and laugh at or brush off their concerns, saying it was not that serious, that intense, or deliberate

They may contradict the victim's interpretation, refute the abuse, or even flat-out deny that it happened at all

**We remember Renee Brown**, whose frozen body was found outside the home of her boyfriend. He had ignored Renee's pleas to let her inside on a night when the temperature dropped to 23 degrees below zero



# COMMON JUSTIFICATIONS

1

**“I was drunk.”/ “I was using drugs.”**

Although substance use and domestic abuse often co-occur, it is not a causal relationship

2

**“You got me wound up on purpose”**

We’ve all heard that “it takes two to tango” or “there are two sides to every story.” These sayings make sense in relationships where both partners have equal power. They do not apply in relationships where one partner uses coercion and fear to limit their partner’s rights.

3

**“I’m possessive because I care about you”**

One person is making all the decisions—about sexual choices, friend groups, boundaries, even what’s true and what’s not. You spend all of your time together and feel like you can’t talk to other people, especially about what’s really happening in your relationship



Substance abuse is a risk factor for more severe domestic violence. However, **substance abuse does not cause domestic violence.** Most abusers do not have substance use problems, and of those who do, many continue to abuse their partners even after they have stopped using drugs and alcohol

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**Additionally, most persons who abuse substances are not violent toward others**



Survivors sometimes react to abuse by defending themselves or by trying to reclaim their basic rights. At first, this may look like the survivor is “just as bad” as their partner, but we must look at the overall power dynamic and intent behind each action. Many survivors make numerous attempts to change their partner’s behavior, hoping to stop the abuse

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This approach usually does not work in the long run, because the person choosing to abuse is the only one who can stop the violence

# ABUSE IS A CHOICE

1

## **“The abuser had a bad childhood”**

We need to hold people appropriately accountable for their abusive actions, regardless of past experiences. We can acknowledge the impact of childhood trauma and a person’s need to get appropriate support for healing without excusing away their poor choices.

2

## **“Abusers just need help learning to manage their anger.”**

**Domestic abuse is not a crime of passion.** Many people who abuse their partners admit to calmly planning violent incidents. They also decide who, when, and where to engage in abusive behavior and the parts of the body to hurt, often those hidden by clothing or hair.

3

## **“Lack of communication, conflict resolution skills, stress”**

People who abuse their partners do not experience more stress than others do. The difference lies in the abusive person’s beliefs regarding what they are entitled to in their relationships and who they are entitled to have power over.

Survivors often marvel at how composed their partner can be in public. This carefully-constructed public persona is another tactic of control. Again, domestic abuse is caused by the abusive person believing that they have the right to scare or intimidate their partner

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# USING CHILDREN

**We remember Lisa Kathleen Peterson.** Lisa was killed in a hotel room while her three children were present. After she died, Lisa's boyfriend and his family exerted their power and control over the couple's children by coaching them on what to say about the night their mother was killed. Over time, the family stopped allowing the children to speak to child protection workers and prevented them from seeing therapists.

As the most precious thing(s) to a victim, there are many ways abusers can use their children to cause the victim to submit or comply.

They may make the victim feel guilty that they are not providing adequately for the children or parenting them properly. They can threaten to take away the children, physically and/or legally.



We remember **Latifa Tasha Brown** who had her “miracle baby” after suffering 5 miscarriages due to abuse from the boyfriend that killed her. Her child was 1 when she was killed.

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**Reproductive coercion is a common tactic in abusive relationships.** Those who abuse may control and limit their partner’s reproductive choices through violent means such as forcibly ending pregnancies

# USING SOCIAL PRIVILEGE

Abusive partners from dominant groups benefit from privilege and systems of oppression while victims from marginalized groups may be punished and disempowered by the criminal legal system, the child protective system and educational institutions that funnel abused children into the juvenile justice system.

These systems, just as abusive partners, wield control over victims. We cannot address nor prevent domestic violence without also addressing all forms of oppression and the ways in which they are leveraged to further trap, marginalize, and harm victims.



**Male Privilege** builds on centuries of traditional gender roles where men maintained power in society and the legal entitlement to control all aspects of the lives of their wives, daughters, sisters, mothers who are relegated to meek and subservient positions and often seen as incapable of more.

The abusive male delineates the role of their female partner, often treating them like a servant. Men and women are not equal in his eyes, and it doesn't make sense for him to behave toward her as though she is a peer who could even match, let alone surpass, him in anything

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**\*\* Abuse can and does  
happen in relationships of all  
gender identities**

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# ECONOMIC ABUSE

The abuser may take the victim's money and/or property. They may restrict knowledge of their own earnings or access to bank accounts. Alternatively, they can monitor bank accounts closely and use other tactics to enforce their displeasure if the victim's spending does not fall in line with their ideas.

Beyond direct control of finances, some abusers control their victim's ability to earn. They may prevent them from getting or keeping a job, or perhaps interfere with their ability to do their work, causing them to lose their position.

Physical and mental effects of other abuse tactics can also bleed into economic abuse, as they hinder victim's professional proficiency

# (HORRIFYINGLY CREATIVE)

We remember Jodi White, who died early Christmas morning after an 8-year battle with HIV/AIDS. Jodi's abusive ex-husband knowingly infected her with the HIV virus and told her, "No one else will ever want or love you because of your being HIV positive."

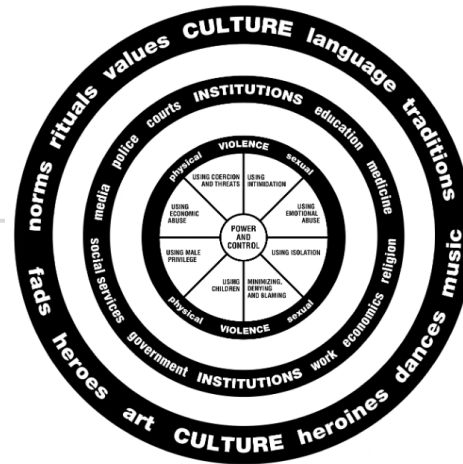
After Jodi obtained an order for protection against him, her ex-husband broke into her second-floor apartment and sexually assaulted her, causing additional pain and stress that ultimately affected her health and worsened her condition. Until his incarceration for other crimes, he continually harassed Jodi. Documented messages stated "you know I'll never let you go. You can't get rid of me that easily."

# THE CULTURE WHEEL

Just as “Violence” reinforced the eight more continuous tactics used to maintain power and control, so a ring of “Institutions” reinforces that violence, and an outer ring of “Culture” further reinforces the institutions

All of these things bolster and fortify the abuse at the center, while also somewhat obscuring and minimizing it into the “hidden epidemic” domestic violence is often referred to as

**Outermost wheel**  
societal establishments plus more intangible foundations



**Outer Wheel**  
The “Cultural” ring is composed of more abstract customs and creative cores of culture



**“There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives”**

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**- Audre Lorde**

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# RISK FACTORS

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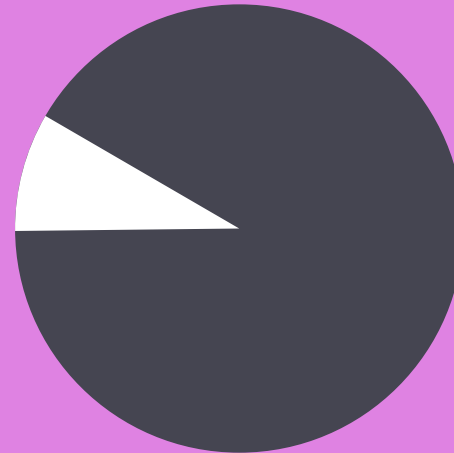
Information we can use to craft intervention strategies



# RISK FACTOR: ECONOMIC ABUSE

**Economic abuse is one of the most commonly used power and control tactics** and occurs in 98% of abusive relationships.

It destabilizes victims' access to basic human necessities like employment, housing, food, transportation, and child care



**90%**  
Of **houseless women** have experienced physical or sexual abuse at some point in their lives



# ECONOMIC ABUSE

1

Prohibiting a victim from working or forcing a victim to work and taking their paycheck.



2

Using tactics that cause a victim to lose their job or public benefits.



3

Denying child support or making it too dangerous to pursue child support.



4

Ruining a victim's credit or preventing them from having a credit history



Unique forms of abuse

**Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness for women and their children. According to data collected by the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), between January 1, 2005 and September 4, 2019, 46,961 individuals who had experienced homelessness in Minnesota had also experienced domestic violence.**

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### **Abuse can escalate during or shortly after pregnancy**

Victims who are pregnant or who have recently given birth are more vulnerable and isolated, and often depend on their partners for financial, emotional, and physical support for themselves and their children

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## **RISK FACTOR: PREGNANCY**



Exposure to domestic violence can increase risk for physical, mental health, and substance abuse conditions. The impact of chronic domestic violence exposure in childhood was found to have long-term effects throughout the life span

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## **RISK FACTOR: CHILDREN**

**Safety of children is  
directly linked to the  
safety and support of  
victim-parents.**

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Communities of color and Native communities are disproportionately represented within the criminal justice system. Victims' personal experiences with the criminal justice system, and those of the communities they belong to, can dictate whether or not they will reach out to systems for help

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## **RISK FACTOR: RACIAL DISPARITY**

## RISK FACTOR: LGBTQ+

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LGBTQ+ individuals report abuse at rates that are equal to or higher than those reported by heterosexual and cisgender individuals. Due to barriers to accessing services and hetero- and cisnormative frameworks of abuse, LGBTQ+ victims are often not taken seriously and the abuse may be characterized as “mutual abuse”



# RISK FACTOR: LGBTQ+

Coming "out" is a personal decision and is not always public; abusers whose victims identify as LGBTQ+ may threaten to "out" the victim as a way to harm them

Some abusers may also try to undermine victims' identities and exploit their vulnerabilities to achieve power.

Abusers may also use the close knit size of their LGBTQ+ affirming community to ostracize, isolate, and monitor the victim, as well as leveraging institutional discrimination as a tool of control





Individuals with disabilities experience disproportionately high rates of relationship violence, as well as unique barriers and challenges to accessing services. Women with disabilities have a 40% greater likelihood of experiencing intimate partner violence than women without disabilities.

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## **RISK FACTOR: DISABILITY**

# RISK FACTOR: DISABILITY

1

Removing or  
destroying a  
mobility device



2

Denying access to  
or taking  
prescribed  
medication



3

Inappropriate  
contact while  
assisting with  
bathing/dressing



4

Perpetrating  
violence against  
service animals



Unique forms of abuse

# RISK FACTOR: CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

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Abusive partners may use the immigration status of victims as a control tactic by threatening to get them deported or separated from their children if they reach out for help. Immigrant victims may also be hesitant to work with law enforcement and may face cultural and linguistic barriers in accessing information about domestic abuse services. They may also be unfamiliar with the resources available or their rights in Minnesota.





Survivors are often labeled as both victims and offenders within the criminal-legal system. Victims are criminally charged for using retaliatory violence, acting in self defense, or engaging in criminal behavior due to addiction - which may be a coping mechanism to survive the abuse they have experienced - as well as for criminal acts coerced by abusive partners.

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## **RISK FACTOR: CRIMINALIZATION OF VICTIMS**



77%

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Of **incarcerated women** have experienced intimate partner violence

14 x

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**Native people** are incarcerated at over 14 times the rate of white Minnesotans

45%

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Of **adult women murdered** by a current/former partner in 2022 had a criminal history

**Victims do not just experience violence, power and control within their relationships. They also navigate systemic barriers and violence beyond the abuse they face in their relationships. Victims facing racial disparities, economic instability, and criminalization experience compounding traumas**

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**The effect intimate partner violence has on victims/survivors does not **cease** once the relationship ceases.**

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## RISK FACTOR: ATTEMPTS TO LEAVE

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More information we can use to craft  
intervention strategies





# “Why didn’t they just leave?”

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Is still a commonly asked question when there is a domestic violence homicide. The answer is never that simple 😊



**77% of domestic homicides occur  
upon the partners separation.  
There is a 75% increase of violence  
after separation for at least two  
years.**

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# ATTEMPTS TO LEAVE THE ABUSER

## Fear

Leaving an abusive relationship greatly increases the risk of further violence and homicide

Abusive partners often view any attempts by the victim to leave the relationship as a loss of the abuser's power and control

They may go to great lengths to prevent the victim from leaving. These lengths may include escalating or initiating violence as a means of regaining control.

## Isolation

Isolation is a common tactic in domestic violence.

Abusers may further isolate their partners to prevent them from leaving, limiting their options for safely exiting the relationship.

# ATTEMPTS TO LEAVE THE ABUSER

## Economic Factors

If an abuser controls finances, the victim/survivor may not have the economic necessities to leave, which can greatly affect their housing options.

Conversely, if the victim/survivor is the financial supporter in the relationship, the danger of them leaving is increased due to the abuser no longer having financial backing

## Lack of Resources

The resources available to victim/survivors, especially those of color and/or those who identify as LGBTQ+, are often located in densely populated metro areas.

This leaves those in rural areas without necessary resources, or requires them to travel long distances to access

# ATTEMPTS TO LEAVE THE ABUSER

## Racial Inequities

Victim/survivors of color face a unique set of barriers due to societal and institutional racism and colonialism.

Implicit and explicit bias in systems, lack of culturally responsive domestic violence services, and cultural stigma around intimate partner violence all contribute to inequities victim/survivors of color face that create further barriers to achieving safety.

## Status/Language

Victim/survivors may also experience difficulties tied to immigration status and language access, further limiting their support options.



*“It is when my head makes contact with the wall that I freeze, though his fist is coming towards me again. I have not yet taken behavioral psychology and do not know that some animals flee when attacked. **It would take me yet another year of planning, forgiving, calling, reaching for help, before I could leave.”***

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- Dr. Sarah M Buel “Fifty Obstacles to Leaving, aka Why Abuse Victims Stay”

# VS

## Housed and unsafe

- Familiarity and Routine
- All of the survivors belongings are there
- “You can’t let others see that our marriage is a failure”
- Controlled by someone they know and have a relationship with
- Potential access to resources like food and money
- “This is your fault, you made your bed now lay in it”

## Homeless and *often* unsafe

- Rules defined by someone you do not know
- Having to navigate complicated systems
- Need to ensure that survivor and children have a place to stay each night
- Must factor in parking, access to school, access to work
- Sacrificing a lifestyle once lived
- Having only what can fit into a duffle bag
- Being exposed to other threats from strangers

# Reasons to Stay

## Children's best interest

A victim may believe the children will benefit from being raised in a household with two parents

## Children's pressure

Children may desire and encourage a victim to keep their family together

## Cultural differences

Traditional customs or beliefs may influence someone's decision to stay in an abusive situation, whether held by the survivor or by their family and community

**Denial**

**Excuses**



# Reasons to Stay

## Family Pressure

A victim's family may believe there is no excuse for leaving a marriage, or have been duped by a charismatic abuser

## Losing Custody

The abuser may threaten to take the children away from them if the victim leaves.

## Guilt

A victim may feel their behavior warrants violence

## Hope

A desire to see the violence cease often inspired by an abuser's promises to recover

## Incarcerated or Newly released

Fear that police or court involvement could result in a violation of parole

# Reasons to Stay

**Law Enforcement  
Officer**

**Low Self Esteem**

Verbal abuse accompanies violence. A victim may be convinced they are unable to survive alone

**Mentally Ill**

**In Love**

Experiencing abuse and feeling genuine care for a partner who is causing harm are not mutually exclusive.

**Shame**

It can be difficult for someone to admit that they've been or are being abused. They may feel that they've done something wrong

# Reasons to Stay

## Undocumented

may fear that reporting abuse will affect their immigration status

## Lacking

## Transportation

## Substance

## Abuse

## Prior Negative Interactions

Unencouraging or traumatic experiences with law enforcement or court systems

## Gratitude

For financial support, or fear they wouldn't be loved by anyone else

# How domestic abuse hides in plain sight: **Author and Survivor Leslie Morgan Steiner**

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“Leslie Morgan Steiner was in "crazy love"-- that is, madly in love with a man who routinely abused her and threatened her life. Steiner tells the story of her relationship, correcting misconceptions many people hold about victims of domestic violence, and explaining how we can all help break the silence”

1

**(Another year of  
grief and sadness)**

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Domestic Violence in Minnesota



# 39 homicides

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29 Minnesotans were killed by a current or former intimate partner,  
10 were bystanders or intervenors

# 39 children

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At least 39 minor children are left without a parent due to family  
violence in 2023

# 386,000 km

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Distance between Earth and the Moon





**80%**

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It is estimated that 80% of domestic assaults go unreported

**70,000**

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Last year in Minnesota nearly 70,000 victims received services from domestic violence agencies

**25%**

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DV victims account for one quarter of violent crime in our state

1

# RECLAIM POWER REGAIN CONTROL

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Briefly: Steps to healing from family violence





# Healing After Abuse

## Acknowledge

Recognition of the abuse is essential for moving forward. It's important for survivors to understand that what happened to them was not their fault; abuse is always the responsibility of the abuser. Emotional scars, much like physical ones, require attention and care to heal.

## Seek Professional Support

Professional support provides a safe space for survivors to express their feelings and begin to work through their trauma. Therapists specializing in domestic violence and trauma can offer strategies to cope with anxiety, depression, and PTSD, which are common among survivors. Therapy can help in rebuilding self-esteem and trust, which are often eroded in abusive relationships.

# Healing After Abuse

1

## Establishing Safety and Stability

For healing to truly begin, survivors need to be in a safe and stable environment, free from the threat of further abuse.

2

## Exploring Healing Pathways

Recovering from violence is a highly individual journey that may involve various therapeutic approaches and healing modalities. Some survivors find solace in creative expression, such as art or writing, which can serve as powerful outlets for processing emotions. Others may discover strength in physical activities, mindfulness practices, or spiritual exploration.

3

## Rebuilding

Recovery from domestic violence involves not just healing from past wounds but also rebuilding one's life and identity beyond the abuse. This can include pursuing education or **career goals**, developing new hobbies, and forming healthy relationships. Empowerment comes from recognizing one's own strength and resilience, and from making choices that affirm one's worth and potential.

2

# TRAUMA INFORMED CARE

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Work with victims must consider the effects of trauma and  
the accumulation of stress



It is not an Employment Counselor's job to solve all of a participant's problems. People in crisis often feel hopelessness and despair. Remember that they will not always feel this way. Each time you treat a survivor with dignity and respect, *you make it easier for them to reach out to you or others in the future.*

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# ASSUMPTIONS FROM WHICH TO BEGIN

1

## **Believe the survivor**

A survivor may have had the experience of talking to others about the abuse and not being believed.

2

## **Condemn the abuse, not the abuser**

If you attack the abuser, the survivor may feel they need to defend their partner. Focus on concrete emotional support and problem solving instead of subjective interpretations of behavior

## **When appropriate, express your concerns for the survivors safety**

3

Take all violence and threats seriously. Try to help the survivor understand the danger and repetitiveness of the violence

# ASSUMPTIONS FROM WHICH TO BEGIN

4

## Respect the survivors right the self determination

Avoid talking the survivor into a specific court of action, or forcing their hand. I like the sentence: "You know your situation better than anyone, you will decide what is best for you"

5

## Let the survivor decide their own pace for change

Do not get impatient with the survivor if it appears they do not to want to take immediate action. Remember they have already taken an enormous risk by disclosing the abuse to you.

6

## Understand that the only things you know about the survivor's life are what they tell you

Only ask for a level of trauma detail that is critical to the services, do not request more than is needed unless it is voluntarily offered

# ASSUMPTIONS FROM WHICH TO BEGIN

7

## Have empathy

Being vulnerable, open and honest will encourage survivors to do the same if it is safe for them. *“I noticed that you’ve had a hard time focusing, is there something you want to talk about?”*

8

## Practice calm centeredness and gentle breathing

You can model it for the survivor you are working with. *“Have you hear of 4-7-8 breathing? We can try it together. The longer exhale helps activate the rest and digest part of a nervous system”*

9

## Understand that the only things you know about the survivor's life are what they tell you

Only ask for a level of trauma detail that is critical to the services, do not request more than is needed unless it is voluntarily offered . *“It seems like this particular aspect of your experience really bothers you. Would it be helpful to write out a short, specific trauma narrative for it?”*

# ASSUMPTIONS FROM WHICH TO BEGIN

10

## Know that the survivor does not need rescuing

Help them assess their own resources and support system. Help the survivor get in touch with their own strengths and emotional resources and the decision they make will be their own. Remember, you help the survivor define the problems, not solve them

11

## Respect the cultural values and beliefs which affect behavior

Know these beliefs may have been a source of security for the survivor and their importance to them should not be minimized

12

## Understand the dynamics of domestic violence



**Be aware of your own attitude, experiences and reactions to abuse. It is appropriate to disagree with the victim's behavior and/or attitude while remaining objective, empathetic and understanding**

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# “BELIEVE SURVIVORS”

It's important to understand that survivors are telling the truth the vast majority of the time. **Statistics show that 90-98% of reports of sexual assault are found to be true,** which is the same for other violent crimes. Meeting a survivor's story with empathy and belief is a valid response

Telling survivors that they are believed has less to do with the perpetrator's "guilt" and more to do with supporting the survivor.

Whether someone is found guilty or innocent in the criminal justice system does not reflect whether or not a survivor's story is true.

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# VICARIOUS TRAUMA

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Impacts to the worker





Vicarious trauma is experienced when a person is continuously exposed to other people's traumatic experiences by hearing a survivor's story and thereby standing witness to the fear and terror the survivor felt.

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**Vicarious trauma can even lead to symptoms of post-traumatic stress.**



“The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet.”

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- *Naomi Rachel Remen, MD*

# WARNING SIGNS OF VICARIOUS TRAUMA



## Increased Anger

Rage, sadness,  
hopelessness, pessimism,  
cynicism



## Hypervigilance

Increased startle  
response



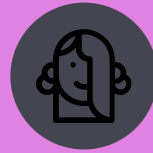
## Bystander Guilt

Feelings of shame or self  
doubt



## Intrusive Thoughts

Of victims outside the work  
situation



## Distancing

Numbing, detachment,  
cutting survivors off,  
staying busy



## Overextending

Trying to do more than is in  
the role to help the victim

# WARNING SIGNS FOR BURNOUT



## Cynical

Critical mood that won't go away



## Dragging

Trouble getting started  
at  
work



## Low Energy

Difficulty concentrating



## Lacking satisfaction

From achievements or  
work tasks completed



## Sleep

Changes in sleep habits



## Physical Complaints

Unexplained head aches  
etc

## While organizations are responsible for providing a safe workplace to enable workforce sustainability, there are also steps you can take to priorities and protect your own health and wellbeing.

- Actively engage in regular supervision and collective reflective practice.
- Reach out to someone. This could be your manager, a trusted friend or colleague, a counsellor or another support person. You could also access your employee assistance program (EAP), if you have one.
- Find a way to escape physically or mentally including rest, reading, days off, holidays, walks, seeing friends, having fun and doing things that make you laugh, playing with children and pets, and creative activities.
- Take your scheduled workday breaks and annual leave.
- Evaluate your workspace to ensure it is conducive to wellbeing.
- Be kind and supportive to your co-workers and celebrate achievements.
- Practice self-compassion. In bearing witness to stories of abuse and violence, it's good to remember that an emotional response is also a human one. While it is important to maintain professional composure with your clients, emotional responses related to abuse and violence are natural and appropriate.
- Staying connected with how you feel and having self-compassion will help you to be resilient and sustain your work.



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## PRIVACY AS A BASIC VICTIM NEED

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At its most basic level, confidentiality equals safety



# KEY CONSIDERATIONS: DISCLOSURE

1

**The privilege belongs to the victim – it is their information.**

Remember that the information belongs to the victim and, subject to limited exceptions specified by law, it is best practice to have them consent before their information is shared.

2

**The victim chooses what information to share with you, and other system actors**

We can remind participants that they have the right to refuse to provide any personal, confidential information about themselves to police, hospital staff, prosecutors, other counselors, coworkers, family members, and friends.

3

**The victim chooses what information *not* to share**

We can discuss with the victim the possible consequences of sharing or not sharing information (for example, how this could be used in court proceedings) so that the victim can make informed decisions.

## **Advocates can release information only with the *informed consent* and authorization of the victim**

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(or the legal guardian). **Informed consent** means that the victim has been fully informed of the potential benefits and risks of releasing confidential information and the victim fully and freely consents to do so. The victim's authorization to release information should be made in writing. The authorization should be time-limited and specific regarding the information to be shared and with whom that information will be shared.



# TRAUMA INFORMED REPORTING

Begins with recognizing that a report made against a participant's wishes may lead to feelings of **helplessness and frustration**.

Employment Counselors should inform participants about the process of reporting, to help them understand what to expect and involve them in making the report. These actions can minimize the untoward effects of reporting and give a patient more of a sense of control through the process.

Telling survivors that they are believed has less to do with the perpetrator's "guilt" and more to do with supporting the survivor.

Whether someone is found guilty or innocent in the criminal justice system does not reflect whether or not a survivor's story is true.

# KEY CONSIDERATIONS: EXPOSURE TO IPV

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## Are you required to report exposure

Unless your role requires you to report that a child was exposed to DV, consider unintended consequences. It may prevent a parent from seeking help. It may result in a child being unnecessarily removed from a parent's care.

5

## Victims can be charged with failure to protect

Non-abusive parents may be charged with failure to protect, if reporting exposure to domestic violence as child abuse

6

## If a report has to be made to CPS

Inform the participant of your requirement to report and explain what is likely to happen when the report is made. Consider safety planning around a mandated report in case of retaliation