

First Step



VICTIM BILL OF RIGHTS

You Have the Right to:

- Be safe and not be abused
- Be angry over past abuse
- Change the situation
- Have freedom from fear or abuse
- Request and expect assistance from police and social agencies
- Share feelings and not be isolated from others
- Want a better role model of communication for self and for the children
- Be respected and treated like an adult
- Leave the abusive environment
- Have privacy
- Express her/his thoughts and feelings
- Develop her/his individual talents and abilities
- Legally prosecute the abuser
- Make mistakes and not have to be perfect

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FIRST STEP









FOREWORD

The purpose of this booklet is to tell you about abuse. It also gives you some resources and ideas on what you can do if your partner is abusing you.

This booklet is dedicated to all the victims of abuse. They understand firsthand how scary and difficult it is to live in a home where they are afraid. They know what it is like when their number one concern is their personal safety and the safety of their children.

This booklet is made possible by a grant to The Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence from the Family Violence Prevention Fund. The Florida Department of Health is a partner on this project. The purpose of the grant is to help lessen and prevent abuse and domestic violence. Its second purpose is to provide help for victims of abuse.

The Florida Department of Health recognizes that domestic violence is a major healthcare issue. It affects the health and safety of families. Victims of domestic violence go for medical care eight times more often than people who have never been abused. Statistics also show that 2 out of 3 women who get general medical care are victims of abuse. Sadly, most victims (92%) who are physically abused by their partners do not talk about the abuse. They don't even talk about it with their doctor or nurse.

The Florida Department of Health cares about you and your family's safety. For this reason, we are making this booklet available to you through your doctor, nurse, health department, community health center or other places where you may seek help. We want to help you find the peace and safety that you and your children deserve.

We understand how hard it is to talk about this problem. It is especially hard to discuss it if your partner has told you that something bad will happen to you if you tell anyone. We know that your situation has to be kept very private. This is to help you keep



it a secret so your partner doesn't find out that you talked to somebody.

Our hope is that when you read this booklet, you will understand that abuse looks different for every person. Your abuse may not seem as bad as what is described in this booklet. Remember that this booklet lists all the possible types of abuse. No one has all of the things we listed happening to them.

You are not alone. You deserve to be treated with respect and kindness. We are here to help you. We want you to know that if someone is physically or sexually hurting you that it is a crime. It is a crime even if it happens in the privacy of your own home.



UNDERSTANDING ABUSE

If a current or former partner is hurting you, then you are a victim of domestic violence. It is very hard for most of us to look at ourselves and believe that we are being abused by a loved one.

What is domestic violence? Domestic violence occurs when one person does whatever is necessary to have power and control over his or her partner. It can happen to anybody, and it does. It doesn't matter if you are rich or poor, where you live, or whether you are educated or not. It doesn't matter what your age, race, culture or religion happens to be. It happens in both male and female relationships, and with partners of the same sex.

Who are abusive partners? Abusers may include your present or former husband, wife, boyfriend, or girlfriend. They may be someone who is the father or mother of your child or someone who you have lived with. Abusers may include gay or lesbian partners.

About 60% of men who abuse women also have a problem with drinking or drugs. Alcohol and drugs do not cause the abuse, but can make the abuse happen more often and make it worse. Many times your partner will tell you that he hurt you because he drank too much. He will say that he was out of control. This is not OK. There is NO excuse for hurting you. It is wrong. You did nothing to deserve to be hurt.

Strangely enough, abusers are often likeable, charming and fun. The hurtful things that your partner does to you are usually not seen by other people. This is one of the reasons you may not tell anyone, because you don't think they will believe you.

Who are victims of abuse? Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse. Victims will "take care of" and try to "fix" other people's problems. They will often try to rescue others from a bad life or a bad childhood. Sadly, though, their partner takes advantage of them, controlling them, and sometimes hurting them. If this



sounds like you, then **you** are a victim of domestic violence.

How does your partner control you? Your partner may try to control the way you act, the way you look, where you go, and what you do. Day to day, it may be hard to see the control that is actually being held over you. People around you may tell you that you are not acting like yourself. They can tell that something is wrong. All you know is that you feel stressed. You don't feel very good about yourself. You may feel like you are walking on eggshells. You feel helpless and "stuck."

You may think that your abuse isn't that bad. But any kind of abuse is bad. You are abused if you are afraid when he shouts or throws things even he if never touches you. You are abused if he yells at you, calls you bad names or makes you have sex when you don't want to.

You must remember that you are a good and strong person. It is not your fault. You are not alone.

It is important for you to learn as much as you can about what is going on. Then you can make smart decisions about what you need to do to help yourself. Always know that there are things you can do and people in your community who can help you.

What experts do know is that most "abuse" gets worse over time. Women are abused much more often than men are. **In fact, 75% of the time, the victim is a woman who is hurt by a man. For the purpose of this booklet, we will refer to the abuser as a man and the victim as a woman.** But, there are also women who abuse men, women who abuse other women, and men who abuse other men.

Abuse happens more often when the woman is pregnant. One of the reasons for this is that the abusive partner is jealous of the baby and the attention you are giving to your baby growing inside you.



Domestic violence happens a lot more often than you think. Most of the calls that the police receive from women are calls to report an act of domestic violence. In Florida, one woman is killed by her partner every three days. About one out of two women report that their partner has abused them at least one time in their life.

Will He Stop Abusing Me? It is very rare for an abuser to stop hurting his victim without the right kind of help. He probably won't stop until he gets arrested or put in jail. Until this happens, he doesn't believe he is doing anything wrong. His best chance for stopping the abuse is if he gets arrested and the judge orders him to enter and complete a special treatment program. This program is called the "Batterer's Intervention Program." It takes a long time for abusers to learn how to be nice to their partner and treat them with respect.

TYPES OF ABUSE

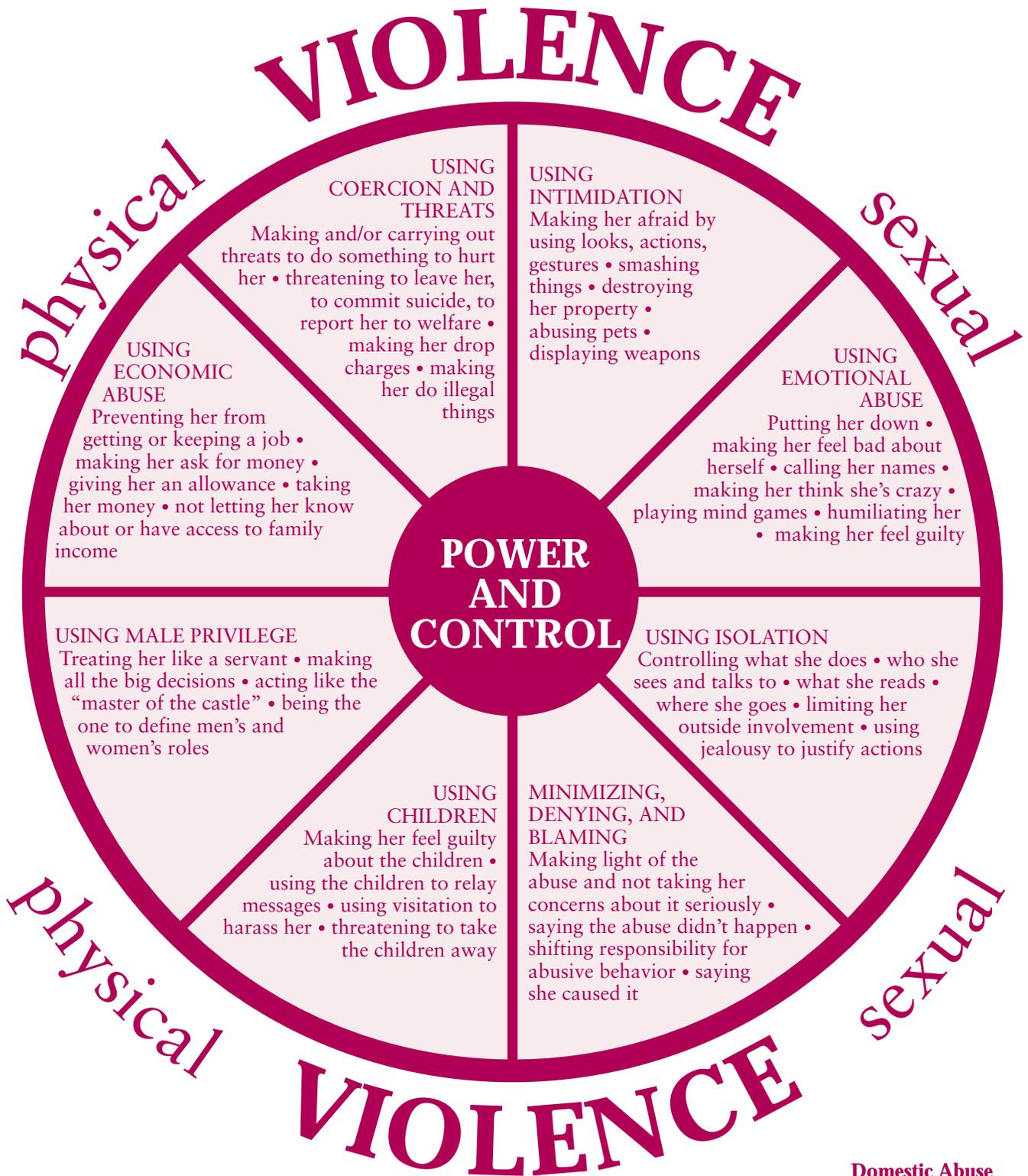
Domestic violence may include physical attacks like hitting, kicking, shoving, choking, stabbing, shooting, scratching, biting, or holding you down. But, there are many other ways that abusers hurt their victims. The best way to show you the different types of abuse is for you to look at the **POWER AND CONTROL WHEEL**.

Inside the spokes of the wheel you will see all the ways that a partner may control or hurt you. The types of abuse on the inside of the wheel are like the glue of abuse. They keep you stuck. Stuck with threats of what he tells you he will do to you if you tell anyone or try to leave. You are often "beaten down" long before you are "beaten up." Your partner becomes an expert at the "best" ways to hurt you. He learns how to hurt you the worst. It may not be by hurting you physically.

FIRST STEP



THE POWER AND CONTROL WHEEL



**Domestic Abuse
Intervention Project**
Duluth, MN



Many victims tell us that the worst abuse they remember is emotional and verbal. They tell us that this is the kind of abuse that tears apart their heart and soul. It damages their feelings of self-worth. The person who is supposed to love and protect them ends up hurting them. Victims often say that over time, they become numb to the emotional and physical abuse. This is the only way they can live with it. Even then, they often feel like they are going crazy.

The outside of the POWER AND CONTROL WHEEL stands for the sexual and physical violence. Many victims tell us that they have suffered from both physical and sexual abuse. Sexual abuse usually starts early in their relationship. Women that suffer from sexual abuse are often too shy to talk about it. The sexual abuse may include being forced to watch sex movies that make you uncomfortable. Sexual abuse is when you are forced to have sex when you don't want to or with other people. It means that you have to do things that you don't want to do. It's important to remember that many victims of abuse have suffered some type of sexual abuse.

CYCLE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

It's Not Bad All the Time. Much of the time your partner is really nice. The abuse comes and goes. There are three different stages that happen during the cycle of abuse. These stages go around and around like a circle. The denial happens in every stage. This keeps the cycle going. The violence probably won't stop on it's own.

Denial is pretending the abuse didn't really happen. **Rationalization** is making excuses for your abuser or blaming yourself.

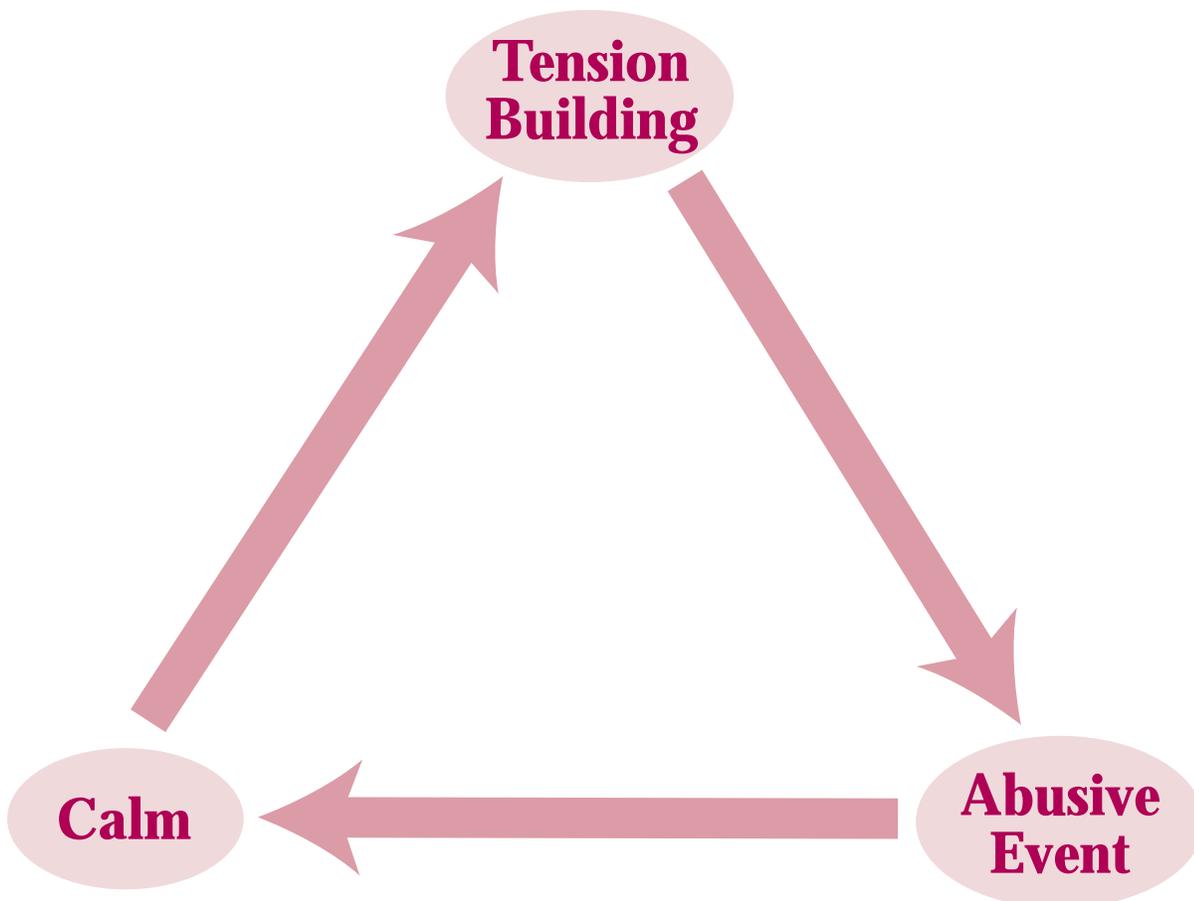
Minimization is pretending that the abuse is not as bad as it really is. All or any of these are ways we learn to live with abuse.



When you have been abused for a long time, you begin to think that this is just the way life is. You think that it's your fault and that you can't do anything about it. When you are always concerned with how to survive, you do not have the time to "feel your feelings." You may not feel the fear and pain in your life. Your body may become numb to physical pain in order to survive the beatings.

The stages usually get shorter and shorter and the abuse gets worse over time. You may not experience the stages like they are written here. This is the most common way the abuse happens. You may find that you don't experience all the stages.

Cycle of Violence





STAGE 1: TENSION-BUILDING

The first stage is tension-building. This occurs when the stress starts building and gets worse and worse. The abuser may start by being moody and picky about everything. He tells you that you can't do anything right.

As it gets worse, he may keep you from seeing or talking to other people. He may yell and swear at you, call you bad names, drink or use drugs. He may threaten you and destroy things in the house or things that are special to you.

During this time, you try to please him and keep him calm. You do everything you can think of to keep peace. You keep the children quiet, cook his favorite dinner, keep the house clean, or whatever you need to do.

You try to reason with him, but it doesn't work. He seems to get angrier. If he is using drugs or alcohol, he gets angrier quicker, and it is usually worse. You feel like you are in a pressure-cooker that is going to blow up at any time.

STAGE 2: ABUSIVE EVENT

The **abusive event** comes after the tension-building. It is when something bad happens. It can be verbal, emotional, physical or sexual abuse. He may put you down or make you look stupid in front of other people. He holds you down or won't let you go. He tells you he is going to kill himself. He doesn't let you leave your room or house. He forces sex on you. He chokes, hits, bites, or hurts you in some way.

During this time you usually try to protect yourself any way you can. You scream and fight back. You call the police or try to leave. Many victims tell us that they know when this is about to happen because they can see the "look in his eye." They tell us they know by the way he talks or acts.



Sometimes you may say something that triggers the abusive event. But you NEVER ARE THE CAUSE of the abuse. You do this to “get it over with” because you know it will happen anyway. Then you feel guilty because you think, “you made him do it.” This is a reason why you make excuses for his abusive behavior. You think it is your fault. It is NOT your fault.

STAGE 3: CALM

The calm stage is when he acts like the man you met and fell in love with. He is kind and charming. He gives you gifts. He tells you he is sorry. He tells you he can't live without you. He tells you that he knows he has a problem. He says he will go to counseling or church. He tells you he will never hurt you again. He cries. He wants to have sex. He wants to make-up.

You may not have this calm stage. If you do, it may go away after a while. You feel relief because you know THIS is really the person you love. You tell yourself that the person you love would never hurt you. You want to believe his apology. You want to believe his promises so much because you love him.

All you want is for the abuse to stop. These promises are very hard not to believe. This is because you are now being given what you have wanted all along—someone to love you and care about you.

You want to believe that he has really changed this time. It is important to remember that he has already hurt you. But, you tell yourself that the “abuse” didn't happen because he is nice to you now. It is very confusing. Sometimes you may feel like you are going crazy.

GETTING UNSTUCK

It is very hard to believe that you are being abused. Sometimes it takes a lot of things happening to you before you see you are being abused.



It may take someone else seeing something before you believe it. They see your black-eye. They know he is calling you at work all the time. They know that you are often late to work. They see that you miss a lot of work. They tell you that they see these things.

Or, your child's teacher tells you that your child is not doing well in school. He is being mean to the other kids. You notice that even when you make your partner's favorite meal, he still yells or hurts you.

You still don't want to believe you are being abused. Then you tell yourself that you can't live one more day with this abuse.

As hard and as scary as it is, talk to someone you can trust. This is the **FIRST STEP** to getting help for you and your children. It is the **FIRST STEP** to getting free.

Once you face reality, you can begin to make changes in your life. Once you can listen to and feel your feelings, you can begin to take action. You cannot wait for him, hoping that he will change. As we said earlier, he will only get better when he gets treatment for his problems.

HEALTH EFFECTS

Many things happen to your body during and after abuse. There are the injuries that happen when there is physical abuse. These injuries may include:

- bruises
- black eyes
- cuts
- hair pulled-out
- scratches
- broken bones
- burns
- bites
- being knocked out
- stabbed
- hurt with a gun



There are many health problems you may have from the stress of being abused. These problems may include headaches, depression, or feeling tired all the time. You can have sexually transmitted diseases, trouble eating or an unwanted pregnancy.

Other conditions that you may experience include:

- Arthritis
- Depression
- Chronic pelvic pain
- Eat too much
- Bladder infection
- Anxiety disorders
- Post-traumatic stress disorders
- Indigestion, diarrhea or constipation
- Chronic neck or back pain
- Visual problems
- High blood pressure
- Trouble sleeping
- Ulcers
- Sick frequently with flu/cold

Things that may happen when you are pregnant:

- Hit or blow to stomach
- Infections
- Miscarriage
- Baby born dead
- Not enough prenatal care
- Not eating well
- No prenatal care
- Baby born too early
- Bleeding

As you can see, you can get very sick when you live with abuse. Your nurse, doctor, health department and community health centers understand abuse and are there to help you. They can help you with your health problems. They can also help you get to the right people who will help you deal with the abuse.



ABUSERS

- Usually a man
- Grew up in a family where women were beaten or treated badly
- Gets mad easily. . .bad temper
- Acts like he is the only person who knows anything
- Gets depressed, but the victim is the only person who may see or know it
- Wants his way all the time and wants it ‘now’
- Makes a lot of promises for the future but doesn’t keep them
- Jealous. Accuses her of cheating on him or ‘coming on’ to other guys
- Demanding and bossy
- Tells her he is going to kill himself or kill her
- Blames everyone else for abuse
- He believes it’s his job to keep her in line, no matter what
- He believes he has the right to make her do what he says
- His fear is stronger than his love and respect for her, so the abuse continues and gets worse

VICTIMS

- Female
- Is a loving, caring person who rescues, fixes, helps, and takes care of other people
- One half of abused women lived in a home as a child where abuse was happening
- Low self-esteem and feeling worthless



- Believes that she cannot do better or make it on her own
- Feels powerless and hopeless
- Cannot make simple decisions without asking someone else for help
- Depressed
- Uses drugs or alcohol
- Sick a lot
- Doesn't believe or trust other people
- Nervous, unable to relax
- Doesn't eat or sleep very well
- Tries to keep the home calm so he doesn't get mad and hurt her
- Takes blame for the abuse

She believes that:

1. He can't help it that he gets mad
2. A man is the boss and the head of the house
3. No one else will want her
4. The good times make up for the bad times
5. Maybe he'll change next time. She really loves him.
6. The children need a father
7. He really loves her and doesn't mean to hurt her
8. No couple is really happy. If they seem to be, they are either lying or faking it
9. The way he acts is my fault
10. It is her duty to stay with him.



ABUSE IN GAY AND LESBIAN RELATIONSHIPS

Domestic violence, including the list you just read, happens just as often in same sex relationships as it does with straight men and women. This way of life is not why you are being abused. In addition to other types of abuse, your partner may threaten to tell others that you are gay or lesbian. It is especially hard to get out if you feel oppressed about being gay or lesbian. This adds to the oppression of being abused by your partner.

EFFECTS ON CHILDREN

Over one half of the men who abuse women will also hurt the children that are living in the home. All children who live in a home where abuse happens experience emotional abuse.

Children know what's going on, even if you don't think they do. They see it, hear it, feel it and sense it. Some children never see it but still know it's there. They may get hurt trying to protect you. They may get hurt because they get in the way of something being thrown.

Children know who to be afraid of in their home. They are afraid of the abuser. They must stay on the abuser's "good side" in order to stay safe. The children may act like the abuser. They may act like they like him better than you. Remember that these children are acting out of fear, even if it's their father. They will do everything they can to please him.

Children who live in an abusive home have problems growing up. Some children have bigger problems than others.

Mental Signs:

- Depression
- Low self-esteem
- Fearful
- Angry



- Nervous
- Feels guilty about abuse
- Few friends
- Doesn't trust others

Physical Signs:

- Headaches
- Eating problems
- Tired, sleeping problems
- Problems at school
- Nightmares
- Bedwetting
- Violent with others
- Alcohol/drug use

Boys may hurt their mother and are likely to grow up to abuse women. Girls are more likely to be depressed.

As children grow up and learn about right and wrong, they learn the most from the people who are closest to them, usually their parents.

Children who grow up with abuse may believe that:

- Abuse is normal
- Adults change the way they treat others. Sometimes they are nice and sometimes they are mean.
- Men and women are NOT equal
- It's OK to abuse someone when you are mad or to get what you want
- Asking for what you want can be dangerous
- Children's needs are not important
- The ones you love will hurt you



If you are being abused, the best thing you can do for your children is to be honest with them. Talk to them about the abuse. The domestic violence shelters often have special counselors and programs that help children talk about and deal with the abuse.

WHY VICTIMS STAY

Fear. Fear is very real for victims of abuse. If you stay, you know what to expect. Leaving can be very dangerous for you, your children and anyone who is helping you. If you leave, you don't know what you will do or where you will go. You may be afraid of being alone. You don't know where your partner is and what he is doing.

His purpose is to keep control over you. So when you try to leave him, he will often get meaner and more dangerous. He tells you things like: "If you leave me I will kill you"..."I will hurt your family"..."I will abuse your pets"..."I will take the children away forever". He makes other horrible threats. You know he can do these things. You have seen how mean he gets when he's mad. And, you believe that he will find you no matter how far away you go or where you hide.

Church. Some pastors, priests or rabbis tell you that you cannot leave him because it is God's will, even if he is abusing you. You are told that you have to do everything your partner says because he is the "head of the house." He is "in charge" of you. You are told that the Bible says that you must obey him.

Promises. Your partner feels bad and tells you he is sorry for hurting you. He promises that he will stop. He says he will never hurt you again. You want to hear this so badly, that you believe him.

Isolation. You feel so alone that you don't think you have any place to be safe or to get help. Your partner keeps you away from



your family and friends. You are not allowed to talk to or be with your family. If you do, you get in more trouble.

Your partner may move you and your children to another city or state, a place where you don't know anybody. This way he can better control you and whom you see and talk to. You may have only one car so that he controls where you go and how long you can be there.

It is Normal. You believe that the abuse is normal. You may have grown up in an abusive home as a child. If you grew up in a healthy and happy family, he may control you long enough that it becomes normal. He brainwashes you or plays mind games so you think you are going crazy. You don't believe you have any choice but to live this way.

Shame. You feel disgrace and shame. It is very hard to tell anyone that the person who is supposed to love you is hurting you.

It's Your Fault. You believe that your partner is sick and needs help. You believe that it is your job to help him. You feel you are a failure if you break up. You believe it is the woman's job to keep the family and marriage together. You believe you must have done something wrong or bad if he hurts you. He blames you for his abusive behavior and tells you it is your fault.

Love. Your partner tells you that he 'loves' you. Love doesn't go away just because he abuses you. All you want is for the abuse to stop. You love him and want to stay together.

He is part of your dreams of happiness and of having a happy family. It is hard to turn your back on him. You know it isn't bad all the time. You stay because you made promises and wedding vows and you cannot break them.

Money. You need your partner for food, a home, a car, and basic things to live. You have children to care for. You think you do not



have the schooling and work experience needed to get a good job. You don't think you can support yourself and your children. You may not know where to get help.

Low Self-Esteem. You think you deserve the abuse. He says "you are lucky to be with me" and "no one else would want you". Your self-esteem or self-confidence may be low. Your ability to make decisions is poor, especially in your personal life. You feel helpless or trapped. You feel that there is no hope for a safe, peaceful or happy life.

This is hard to understand, because you may be in control and good with your job, at church, or doing other things.

Pride. You may have been told by your family or friends that "he is no good for you." You stayed with him anyway. You don't want to tell them that you made a mistake.

CHOICES AND OPTIONS

Getting Help. Only you can decide when to get help, who to talk to, and who to ask for different kinds of help. Sometimes, very nice people try to help you in ways that aren't always helpful.

You may want to ask for help from someone you already know. This could be someone at work or church. It's your decision. There are a lot of people who want to help you and your children to be safe. These people will listen and support you and your decisions.

You can find help in a domestic violence shelter, police department, your doctor, hospital, health department or a community health center. Make a list of all the people who might be willing and able to help you. Write down their phone numbers and put it in your safety plan. You want it to be handy.

The BEST place to learn about your choices is to call a domestic violence center. There is a list of Florida's centers in this booklet. The person who answers the phone is a trained counselor and



understands what you are going through. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness or failure. Once you learn about the choices you have, you can make the best decision for you and your family.

It's important for you to know that going to counseling with your partner does not work. Why? Your partner will control what you say so you can't be honest about what is really going on. If you say something "wrong," he is likely to take it out on you after you leave the counselor. Why? Because he is afraid you will tell the counselor about your secret of abuse.

To Stay or To Leave. Making the decision to stay or to leave your partner is very difficult. You may go back and forth between wanting to leave and wanting to stay. A counselor can give you an idea of what to expect if you choose to stay with him. You may choose to stay for now and give yourself a little more time to decide.

Remember that the abuse usually gets worse over time. Remember that you didn't make him hurt you and you probably cannot stop him from abusing you. For this reason, you may, at some point, have to leave him in order to have a chance to live safely.

Making a safe home for you and your children may seem like the impossible dream. It is hard, but not impossible. You can do it, one step at a time. Do not let your hope that he may stop hurting you get in the way of doing what you have to do to protect yourself. You are an expert at your own survival. Only YOU can make the decision if and when the time is right to leave him.

Every time you get help and try to leave, you get a little stronger. It is a slow process and may take more than one time to be able to do it for good. That's OK.

The average victim leaves seven times before leaving for good. Victims know that leaving is the most dangerous time. For this reason, it is so important that you get the help you need to make this decision very carefully.



WHEN WILL YOU FEEL BETTER

It may take some time for you to feel safe and feel good about yourself. The answer is to never give up! Get help by calling, toll-free, the counselors at the domestic violence centers. You can also get free counseling and support groups. If you are able to leave your abuser for good, these resources can help you. They will help you understand how you got into an abusive relationship and why you were stuck. They will help you learn to avoid getting into another bad one.

You cannot start healing your fear, anger and pain until you feel safe.

Survivors of domestic violence have told us that they found peace by:

- Continuing counseling
- Getting support and help from family and friends
- Reaching out to God or their higher power
- Prayer and meditation
- Forgiveness
- An attitude that they are going to be survivors

FLORIDA LAW HELPS VICTIMS

Domestic violence is a crime. When the police get a call for domestic violence, they have to check into it and make a report. Florida law encourages the police to make an arrest when they can see that domestic violence has happened. After an arrest is made, the State Attorney may press charges. He can do this with or without your help or approval. Why? Because domestic violence is a crime. It is against the law.



MAKING YOUR SAFETY PLAN

Safety Plans will help you be as safe as you can be from future abuse. They are used by people who:

- Want to leave, but it is not safe
- Are not sure about leaving, but need help in case he gets violent
- Have left and the threat of violence is still there

A safety plan may help you:

- Get help in an emergency
- Get safely away
- Keep children safe
- Safely get your clothes, pets or other personal items

Plan Ahead

You don't have to wait for an emergency to ask for help. In fact, it is best to talk to people who can help you before there's a bad emergency. Each person's abuse and situation is different. You can't always tell when your partner is about to abuse you.

Safety plans should be made ahead of time with the help of a domestic violence counselor or advocate. They know of a lot of resources. They can tell you things to think about. They tell you what you would not have thought about by yourself. Review and update your safety plan often. Keep your safety plan for as long as there is contact with your partner and longer.

Review this safety plan with your children. To reach a counselor or advocate in your area (24 hours a day) you may call 1-800-500-1119.

Be Aware of the Danger

Be aware of the danger you may still face. **If you are planning to or**



have already left your partner, remember that he is likely to get more violent. This greatly increases your chance of getting seriously hurt or even killed.

Use What You Already Know

If you are abused, you probably know more about safety planning than you think you do. You have already learned how to best protect yourself and children by knowing what to say or do and what not to say or do. This has been your way of looking at your danger and doing a safety plan. You probably do it all the time.

This safety plan has more details and things for you to think about. There is no right or wrong way to do a safety plan. Check off the things on this list that work for you. Or, you can change it. Make it your plan. Review it often. Make changes as you need to.

Keep Your Safety Plan in a Safe Place

Make several copies. Find safe places to keep them where your partner won't find them. You can keep one at work, with a friend, a neighbor and a family member. Be sure you only leave copies with people you trust who won't tell your partner about it. Try to always have a copy close to you.

PLANNING AHEAD

Ten things to include for good safety planning:

1. How to get away—if there is an emergency
2. How to get help—if leaving is not a choice
3. Where to go—if you leave
4. How to be safe at a new place
5. How to keep in touch with people who will help you
6. How to get around—your car, family, friend



7. Keeping your children and pets safe
8. Protecting “what is yours”
9. Safety at work & in public
10. Guessing when your partner will get abusive and being ready to do what you need to do to be safe

Put together and hide an escape bag. This bag should have items you need the most or are hard to replace. Hide this bag with someone you trust who won't tell your partner. Make sure you can get to it safely if you have to leave home in a hurry. You can give it to a co-worker, person from church or a friend that your partner doesn't know.

- Extra money
- Identification: driver's license, passport, greencard, work permit
- Birth certificates for self and children*
- Social Security cards for self & children*
- Checkbook, bank book, ATM card, credit cards
- Extra keys: house, car, storage
- Medicine—prescription and over the counter, copy of prescriptions, if needed*
- Address book, important phone numbers*
- Car registration*
- Car, health, life insurance papers*
- School & medical records*
- Medicaid or Food Stamps cards*
- Divorce, custody, injunction (restraining order) papers*
- Copy of family bills*

FIRST STEP



- Lease, rental agreement or house deed*
- Car or mortgage payment book
- Proof of income (pay stub)* and recent picture ID of partner
- Information on your partner's car/truck: make/model, year, color, tag number
- Pre-paid long distance card
- Home calling card
- One or more changes of clothes
- Personal items: toothbrushes, tampons, etc
- Children's favorite toys, books, blankets
- Special personal items: pictures, jewelry, keepsakes
- Recent picture of children

**If your partner notices these missing items, he may think you are trying to trick him. He may think you are leaving him without him knowing about it. This may put you in more danger. You may want to make copies of the original papers and keep copies only.*

MY ACTION PLAN

List of Things I May Do:

- Call a domestic violence program to help me make my safety plan. Phone number: _____.
- Keep important numbers and change for phone calls with me at all times.
- Get a post office box so my partner won't see my mail coming to the house. Only go to it during busy times of the day when it is safest. Where to go: _____.
- Open a checking account in my name at:

FIRST STEP



Make an escape plan from my home and practice it with my children. When I think abuse is going to happen, try to stay away from rooms that I can't get out of, like a bathroom. Also, try to stay out of rooms that have things he can use to hurt me like the kitchen or garage.

Teach my children:

1. When and how to call 9-1-1
2. Where to go to be safe and to get help when abuse is about to or is happening.

Let someone know if abuse is about to happen.

Call: _____ or _____.

Keep my purse and car keys ready for a quick getaway.

Put them: _____.

Tell neighbors about the abuse and to call 9-1-1 if they see or hear any fighting or if the children go to them for help

Use my judgment and common sense. If things get bad, I can give my partner what he wants to try to calm him down.

What is the best time and day for me to leave:

Where can I stay: _____ and _____.

How will I get there: _____.

How do I get the children: _____.

Who will help me: _____ and _____.

What will I do if my partner surprises me: _____.

Change the locks on my doors and windows and make sure they are working. Add additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, etc.



- Replace wood doors with metal ones
- Get a rope ladder to be used for escape from second-floor windows
- Get caller ID on my phone, arrange to block calls, or get a recorder to screen all the phone calls. Record calls he makes to me when he is not supposed to be calling me.
- If I move, put the rent, phone, and utilities in the name of someone else
- Teach my children:
 1. How to answer the door or phone in case it is the abuser
 2. Who they can call, be with, and get picked up from at school or events
 3. How to use the phone to make a collect call to me if they are concerned about their safety.
- Arrange for people to pick up my children if I'm not available. Tell people who take care of my children which people have permission to pick them up
- Give the people who take care of my children copies of custody and restraining orders, as well as emergency numbers.
- Tell schools or people caring for my children to call 9-1-1 if they notice my partner is threatening or acting strange.
- Change my phone number. Get a new unlisted phone number
- Have another person deliver and pick up my children if a judge orders visitation.
- Restraining order:
 1. Get a restraining order (injunction for protection)
 2. Make several copies and keep it in different safe places. Always keep it on or near me.

FIRST STEP



3. Give copies to my employer, my church, my friends, my children's school and day-care center and
4. If my partner destroys my order or if I lose it, I can get another copy from the court that issued it.
5. If my partner disobeys the order, I can call the police and report that he did this.
6. I can call a domestic violence program if I have questions about how to enforce an order or if I have problems getting it enforced.

If not included in the above plans, include these in my Safety Plan:

- Unwanted abuser calls or visits at home: _____.
- Unwanted abuser calls or visits at work: _____.
- Unwanted abuser calls or visits at schools: _____.
- Threats in public, especially in cars or parking lots: _____.
- Abuser shows up at events such as church, concerts, parties with family or friends: stalking (if the abuser has done this before)
- Abuser contacts my family or friends
- Contacts by friends or family of the abuser

Preparations at Work and in Public

- Inform my boss, the security supervisor and the employee assistance program, if available, about my situation.
- Give security a recent picture of my partner and a copy of the restraining order
- Move my office or desk to a private location
- Ask to have someone screen my calls at work: _____.

FIRST STEP



- Ask someone to watch out for me: _____.
- Have an emergency plan at work if he shows up: Plan an escape route: _____
_____.
- Plan the way to come and leave work each day.
- Change my routine.
- Ask security or a co-worker to walk me to my car.
- If there's trouble when traveling to and from work, I can:
_____.
- Change the way I do things—avoid stores, banks, doctors, and _____, places where my partner might find me.

Taking Care of Myself

- If I am feeling down, lonely or confused, I can call _____ or the domestic violence hotline at 1-800-500-1119 for help.
- If I have left my partner and am considering returning, I will call _____ or spend time with _____ before I make a decision.
- Remind myself daily of my best qualities. They are _____ and _____.
- Attend support groups, counseling or workshops at the local domestic violence program or _____, so I can build a support system, learn skills or get information.
- Look at how and when I drink alcohol or use other drugs. If I am going to drink or use other drugs, I will do it in a place where people will make sure I stay safe.
- Take care of my health by seeing my doctor when I need to. My doctor's phone number is: _____.
- Be around positive people and avoid negative people.



Understand that I am not responsible for my partner's health and happiness.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS IF I LIVE IN A RURAL AREA:

- It is more likely that my abuser and I are known. Who can I trust who will not share information with the abuser?
_____.
- Is it possible to get transportation that will not be easily recognized? _____.
- If I use an escape plan, will a packed car/truck bring enough notice that someone will alert the abuser? Can I get away without being followed? _____.
- Is it possible to receive safe or confidential services close to home? _____.
If not, go to another county or state for help. The abuse hotline can help me 1-800-500-1119
- Is it possible to move out and be safe within my local community? Rent? Live with family? Have a "safe" job? _____.

(Parts of the SAFETY PLAN are taken from the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the Florida's Governor's Task Force on Domestic Violence)



RESOURCES

Domestic Violence Centers Services Local domestic violence programs are life-saving resources that provide free and private help to you and your children. These programs have victim advocates who know about domestic violence and can help you make plans for your future.

Florida has 38 licensed programs or shelters. They are also called domestic violence or battered women's shelters or centers. They can help you in a lot of ways.

- A safe place to live, usually in a house, while you get some rest, some help and get your energy back. Living with an abuser makes you very tired. It wears you out. Going to a shelter gives you a chance to think more clearly and make some decisions while you are living in a safe place.
- 24-hour hotline help in emergencies
- Counseling and emotional support
- Help with your Safety Plan
- Support groups
- Guidance and referrals
- Help with getting a restraining order. This order is made when you go to a courthouse and ask a judge to make an order keeping your partner away from you at home or at the office. This way if he comes near you, he can be arrested.
- Help if you need to go to court.
- Help with transportation, food, clothing, jobs and finding a place to live.
- Medical care, if needed.



Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence The Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence is an organization that supports the 38 Florida shelters. They maintain Florida's 24-hour hotline, help write laws to give victims more protection, and provide training to communities and professionals whom work with domestic violence victims.

308 E. Park Avenue, Suite 201-213

Tallahassee, FL 32301

Administration phone: (850) 425-2749

FAX: (850) 425-3091

Toll-free phone: 1-800-621-4202

**Florida's
Domestic Violence
Toll-Free Hotline**

1-800-500-1119

*Emergency telephone help
24 hours a day and 7 days a week*



**Florida's Certified
Domestic Violence Centers**

Abuse Counseling &
Treatment, Inc.
Ft. Myers
(941) 939-3112

Aid to Victims of
Domestic Assault
Delray Beach
(561) 265-2900
(800) 355-8547

Another Way, Inc.
Chiefland
1-888-453-0747

C.A.R.E. of Charlotte
County, Inc.
Punta Gorda
(941) 627-6000

CASA
St. Petersburg
(727) 898-3671

Citrus County Abuse
Shelter Assn.
Inverness
(352) 344-8111

Dawn Center of
Hernando County
Brooksville}
(352) 799-0657

Domestic Abuse Council, Inc.
Daytona Beach
(352) 255-2102

DeLand
(352) 738-4080

Domestic Abuse Shelter
Marathon Shores
(low keys) (305) 294-0824
(mid keys) (305) 743-4440
(upper keys)(305) 852-6222

Family Life Center/SafeHouse
Women's Center
Bunnell
(386) 437-3505

FavorHouse of NW
Florida, Inc.
Pensacola
(850) 434-6600

Harbor House
Orlando
(407) 886-2856

Haven of Lake and Sumter
Counties
Leesburg
(352) 748-5069

FIRST STEP



Help Now of Osceola County Kissimmee (407) 847-8562	PRC – Domestic Violence Shelter Lakeland (863) 413-2707
Hope Family Services, Inc. Bradenton (941) 755-6805	Sebring (863) 386-1167
Hubbard House Jacksonville (904) 354-3114	Quigley House, Inc. Orange Park 1-800-339-5017 or 284-0061
Martha’s House Okeechobee (863) 763-0202	Refuge House, Inc. Tallahassee (850) 681-2111
Metro-Dade Advocates for Victims Safespace (North) Miami (305) 758-2546 (Homestead) (305) 247-4249	Safe House of Seminole Sanford (407) 330-3933
Ocala Rape Crisis-Spouse Abuse Center Ocala (352) 622-8495	SafeSpace Domestic Violence, Svcs. Ft Pierce 1-800-728-1609 Stuart: (561) 288-7023 Vero Beach: (561) 569-7233
Peaceful Paths Gainesville (352) 377 8255 1-800-393-7233	Safety Shelter of St John’s County (dba Betty Griffin House) St Augustine (904) 824-1555

FIRST STEP



Salvation Army
Domestic Violence Program
Panama City
1-800-252-2597

The Haven of R.C.S.
Clearwater
(727) 442-4128
Outreach (727) 441-2029

Salvation Army
Domestic Violence Shelter
Cocoa
(321) 631-2764

The Spring of Tampa Bay
Tampa
(813) 247-7233

Salvation Army Domestic
Violence Program of
West Pasco
Hudson
(727) 856-5797

Women in Distress/Broward
County
Ft Lauderdale
(954) 761-1133

Serene Harbor, Inc.
Palm Bay
(321) 726-8282

YWCA Harmony House
West Palm Beach
(561) 655-6106

Shelter for Abused Women
Naples
(941) 775-1101

Shelter House, Inc.
Ft Walton Beach
(850) 863-4777

SPARCC
Sarasota
(941) 365-1976

Sunrise of Pasco County, Inc.
Dade City
(352) 521-3120



Internet Sites:

Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence www.fcadv.org

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence www.ncadv.org

Family Violence Prevention Fund www.fvpf.org

U.S. Department of Justice—Violence Against Women Office
www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo

If you would like information on this booklet, please contact:

Family Health Services
Florida Department of Health
(850) 245-4100

HOPE FOR TOMORROW

Reading this booklet is the first step in helping yourself. Things may be hard and you may have a long way to go. Know that you are not alone. There are many people that care about you and are here to help you. We want you to live a life with peace and freedom from abuse. You deserve to be happy and be treated with respect.

It is important that you know you don't have to always be a victim, You can survive. There are many domestic violence survivors that are now leading happy and safe lives. It is possible.

You do have choices. You are a strong and powerful person. You can do what you need to do!

**Florida's Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-500-1119**

**Florida Department of Health
Maternal and Child Health Services**

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