

Prevention Pathways

Online Courses

Feelings You May Have and Things You Should Know

- **I should not get involved in a private family matter.** Domestic violence, intimate partner violence, wife beating, and woman abuse are not just family issues. They are crimes with serious consequences and repercussions for your friend, her children, and the entire community.
- **The violence cannot really be that serious.** Domestic violence includes threats, pushing, punching, slapping, choking, sexual assault, and assault with weapons. It rarely happens only once. It can become more frequent and more violent. Battering can be deadly. Husbands or boyfriends kill almost one-third of women murdered in the United States.¹
- **She must be doing something to provoke his violence.** A victim of abuse is not to blame for another person's choice to use violence. Problems exist in any relationship, but the use of violence to resolve them is the abuser's choice. It is never acceptable.
- **If it's so bad, why doesn't she just leave?** For most of us, the decision to end a relationship is not easy. For battered women, it is even harder. Besides the emotional bond with her partner, she may not have enough money to leave. She may not know what help is available for her. Religious, cultural, or family pressures may make her feel it is her duty to keep her marriage together. When she has tried to leave in the past, her partner may have used violence to stop her.
- **Doesn't she care about what is happening to her children?** Your friend is probably doing all she can to keep her children safe. She may feel that the abuse is only directed at her and does not fully realize its effects on her children. She may believe her children need a father or she might lack the resources needed to raise them on her own. The children may beg her to stay, not wanting to leave their home or friends. The abuser may threaten to take or hurt her children if she leaves.
- **I know him. He could not hurt anyone.** Many abusers are not violent anywhere else but in the privacy of their own home. Many are charming in outside social situations.
- **He must be sick.** It is most important to understand that violence is a learned behavior, *not* a mental illness. An abuser's experience as a child and the message he gets from society tells him that violence is an easy way to get what he wants and the way to get power and control over his partner. Many abusive men learned violent behavior from their own families. They saw that violence worked in controlling their own mother or aunt. Abusive men *choose* this behavior. Viewing them as "sick" excuses them from taking responsibility for it.

- **I think he has a drinking problem. Could this be the cause of the violence?** Alcohol or drug use may make the violent behavior worse, but it does not cause abuse. Abusive men typically make excuses for their violence, claiming a loss of control due to alcohol or drug use or extreme stress. Abuse is not the loss of control. It is an attempt to achieve it.
- **If she wanted my help, she would ask for it.** Your friend may not feel comfortable confiding in you, feeling you may not understand her situation. She may be feeling scared and ashamed.

References

United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Intimate Partner Violence and Age of Victim (1993-1999)," October 2001.

<http://www.samhsa.gov/preventionpathways>