



Enriching Lives

National Domestic Violence Month –Sadly, women ages 16 to 24 experience the highest per capita rates of intimate violence according to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (2008). Studies indicate that as a relationship becomes more serious, the potential for and nature of violence increases. There are serious repercussions that individuals and families face as a result of being in an abusive relationship.

General signs and symptoms of dating violence. Dating violence occurs when one partner attempts to maintain power and control over the other through one or more forms of abuse, including sexual, physical, verbal and emotional abuse. Abuse comes in many forms:

- Physical—Kicking, punching, shoving, slapping, pushing and any other acts which hurt your body.
- Sexual—Calling you vulgar names, criticizing your body parts or sensuality, forced or pressured sexual acts, including rape.
- Emotional—Assaults against your self-esteem.
- Verbal—Name-calling, threats, put-downs.
- Psychological—Causing you to feel as if you are “going-crazy.”
- Spiritual—Attacking your spiritual or religious beliefs.
- Financial—Controlling and manipulating you by threatening your economic status and basic needs.
- Homophobic—Threatening to “out” you to people who do not know your sexual orientation.
- Immigration—Using your immigration status and fear of deportation to control you.
- Destructive Acts—Actual or threatened assault of your property or pets to scare you.

Breaking the cycle of violence. Domestic violence is one of the nation’s best kept secrets. Myths and misunderstandings abound. Knowing the facts is an important step toward breaking the cycle of violence.

- First incidents of domestic violence may not be severe. However, once abuse begins, it tends to increase in severity and frequency, sometimes leading to permanent injury or death. What may begin as an occasional shove can turn into a punch in the face.
- Abuse is not about anger or losing control; it is an intentional choice focused on maintaining power and control in the relationship. Abusive partners manage to not attack their bosses or friends.
- The abusive party is responsible for the abuse—not the victim. People are battered for wearing their hair a certain way or dressing nicely, or any other number of excuses. These incidents do not warrant or provoke violence. Even when an individual disagrees, that person does not deserve to be beaten.
- Substance abuse is involved in about half of all domestic violence incidents. Substance abuse does not cause violence. Abusive partners use drugs or alcohol as an excuse or permission to batter and to avoid responsibility for their abuse.
- Abuse permeates all economic, educational, ethnic, sexual orientation, age and racial lines in equal proportions. There is no “typical” victim.

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Safety. It is a myth that people do not leave abusive relationships. Many leave an average of five to seven times before they are able to leave permanently. You are in greater danger from your partner's abuse when you leave. Only the victim can decide what is best for themselves and their families. Whether you decide to remain with your abusive partner or leave, it is important for you to plan for your safety. There are many resources available to assist an individual in an abusive relationship:

- **Shelters.** Shelters allow victims to have an alternative place to stay and receive support until they create a plan of action.
- **Therapist.** A therapist can assist a victim in strengthening their self-esteem and empowering them, developing a safety plan and directing them toward community resources.
- **Advocate.** A domestic violence advocate can assist a victim in knowing their legal rights and obtaining community resources.
- **Attorney.** Attorney services can provide you with legal assistance.
- **Criminal Justice System.** The criminal justice system offers protection.

A.C.T. will provide a safety plan to promote awareness and public education about domestic violence. For more information, please contact Dr. Drecun at Dr.Drecun@a4ct.com or (858) 792-3541.