
What Is Domestic Abuse?

Each day there are people of all ages, races, and income levels who are harmed by those close to them. Domestic abuse is known by several other terms, including relationship abuse, intimate partner violence, and dating abuse. It's when an abuser exerts power and control over a victim. Women and children are often the targets. If you are being abused, now is the time to plan and prepare for a new life. With information and support, you can begin the journey. If you, a friend, or family member are being abused, there is help.

- **National Domestic Violence Hotline**, 800-799-SAFE (800-799-7233) or TTY 800-787-3224. Or contact them online at www.thehotline.org This is free, confidential, and available 24/7.
- **National Coalition Against Domestic Violence** , www.ncadv.org
- **National Institutes of Health**, hr.nih.gov/working-nih/civil/domestic-violence-resources

How domestic abuse happens

- Bodily harm may be done to you. It can range from pushing or slapping to broken bones, strangulation, or forced sex.
- Your abuser may try to control you by isolating you. You may be kept away from friends and family members. You may not be able to access money.
- Your abuser may frighten or intimidate you. You may be threatened with bodily harm or the loss of your children. Your abuser may threaten to harm other family members or family pets.
- Verbal insults can damage your belief in yourself. You may be called names, put down, harassed, or blamed without cause. Your abuser may accuse you or your behavior as causing their violence. Your abuser may manipulate you to such a degree that you question your own feelings, instincts, and sanity (gaslighting). Emotionally breaking a victim in this way gives the abuser a great deal of power. For example, your abuser may question your memory of events, even when you remember them accurately, or deny things like promises made to you.

The pattern of abuse

If you are the target of abuse, days or weeks may pass between attacks. But you may see a dangerous pattern that repeats:

- Your abuser attacks with words or actions.
- Your abuser begs forgiveness and may promise to change.
- Your abuser starts acting tense, angry, or depressed. These are signs that abuse will start again.