

Domestic violence hurts the whole family.



If you think women are most at risk from violence out on the streets away from the safety of home, you'd be mistaken. Women are more likely to be attacked in their own houses by people they live with. Domestic violence, which affects women of all ages and from all countries, is a type of abuse that takes many different forms. Besides physical violence it can include threats, insults or sexual assault. It can also include interfering with someone's personal freedom by keeping them away from their family or friends, or withholding money to which they're entitled. These types of abuse have one thing in common - they're ways that someone (usually a man, but occasionally a woman) uses to control his partner and sometimes other members of the family.

Some people believe this abuse is a private matter to be dealt with by the family. But domestic violence is a crime and families have the right to be protected against it. Hiding it behind closed doors allows the abuse to continue, inflicting physical and emotional damage on family members. If nothing is done about it, the abuse usually gets worse, sometimes resulting in serious injury or death.

Even if only one person - often a man's partner - is the target of the abuse, it still affects others in the family. Children growing up in abusive families may develop problems themselves - they may feel that adults, especially males, can't be trusted; they may develop problems with alcohol or other drugs. When they grow up to have partners and children of their own they may become abusive towards them. This is why we can't say domestic violence is no one else's business - it's a problem affecting the whole of society.

Many women put up with domestic violence for years. Sometimes it's because they feel they "deserve" it, or they excuse it because of other problems such as gambling, alcohol or

relationship problems. But no one deserves this abuse, and there are no excuses for it. How can women protect themselves and their children from domestic violence? There are services that can help by offering counseling, legal advice or emergency accommodation. Seeking help can be a difficult step to take - but it's the first step towards a more peaceful family life.

People with a friend or relative experiencing domestic violence can help too. Not by telling her she must be exaggerating, or to "be more patient with him" or "try harder", but by believing her and offering support. The community can help by speaking out against domestic violence and saying it is unacceptable.



The National Domestic Violence Hotline



1-800-799-SAFE

1-800-799-7233

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