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Domestic Violence, What Can I Do?

Leader's Guide

It is hard to imagine that someone who is supposed to love and honor you, would hurt you. It is estimated that 2-3 million women are victims of Domestic Violence, each year. This figure does not include children, the disabled, the elderly, or men. In this lesson, we will learn what Domestic Violence is, and what victims can do to help themselves, and their families, get out of that situation. We will discuss what we can do as individuals and communities, to assist these victims? We will explore why victims stay in violent relationships. We will talk about, how advertising, and some of the media, encourage Domestic Violence. We would like this lesson to be a discussion group, as well as a lesson. Please feel free to speak up, at any time and add your feelings, opinions and experiences.

Domestic Violence is defined as follows: a family member or household member

- a. attempts to hurt you physically
- b. actually hurts you physically (intentionally, recklessly, or knowingly)
- c. intimidates, or makes you afraid of serious physical injury to you or your family
- d. makes you have sex against your will, by force or threat of force
- e. uses verbal threats and emotional abuse to coerce you or control you (threatens to hurt you or your family or friends, if you don't obey)

A family member or household member is defined as:

- a. a current or former spouse
- b. an adult related by blood, marriage, or adoption
- c. someone you live with or have lived with
- d. someone you have been in a sexually intimate relationship with
- e. roommates, caretakers or household members (nurses, maids, resident homeowner)

Ask for questions or comments**

Domestic Violence occurs in all cultures, to all ages, in all religions, in all races, to all educational backgrounds, and to all socio-economic statuses. Women, children, the elderly, the disabled, and men have all been victims. However, the majority of the victims are women. So, please do not take offence, if I refer to the abusers as “he” and the victims as “she”.

Domestic Violence comes in different forms, but the goal of the abuser is to gain power and control. The abuser does this by:

- a. physical pain or forced sex
- b. threats to hurt the victim or the victim’s family
- c. withhold money or take money belonging to the victim
- d. isolate victim from friends and family
- e. claims male privilege “I am the man of the house and therefore the boss.”

Many people, who have not experienced Domestic Violence, wonder why a victim does not just leave the abuser. Statistics show that a woman will return to the abusive partner 5-7 times before she permanently leaves. The answers to that question are varied and complicated. A few of the reasons are:

- a. have children and no means of support, except their spouse
- b. have no job skills/have never worked at a good paying job
- c. fear of losing custody of her children
- d. spouse threatens to hurt children or other family members if she leaves him
- e. victim does not believe in divorce and/or has religious convictions
- f. abuser is only violent when he is drunk or on drugs, otherwise he is a “nice guy”
- g. abuser promises “to change ” his behavior
- h. victim feels she has nowhere to go
- i. victim does not want to take children away from their home, friends, and their father
- j. victim feels she deserves it. “I should have obeyed him”
- k. victim is ashamed and humiliated that this has happened to her
- l. victim feels that her friends and family don’t believe her
- m. she loves him
- n. It is normal behavior for her family, and /or for her culture
- o. 75% greater chance of being killed, when leaving abuser, rather than staying

Ask for discussion and comments**

If you are in an abusive relationship, STOP BLAMING YOURSELF!
Here are some suggestions from experts in the field.

If you are in immediate danger:

- a. GET OUT, if you cannot get out, try not to get trapped. Go to a room that has an exit
- b. call 911
- c. the police can arrest your abuser and take him to jail
- d. police should give you a phone number for an agency that can help you
- d. the agency will help you obtain a Restraining Order and other assistance

Are you ready to leave your abusive situation? Make a plan.

Prepare an "exit bag" that you can grab at a moment's notice or perhaps, leave it in your car. Items you may want to include are:

- a. Social Security cards for you and your children, birth certificates, Drivers License, passports, insurance papers, divorce papers, copy of Restraining Order, deed to house
- b. phone numbers of your doctors, lawyers, schools, family, and friends
- c. have an extra set of house and car keys
- d. take any cash you put aside, credit cards, checks, bank and investment information
- e. if possible, take out a credit card and bank account in your name only.
- f. pack a bag with clothes for you and your children
- g. pack some toys for the children, sentimental items, jewelry and photos
- h. take medications and medical records, including immunization records for your children
- i. consider opening a safe deposit box in your name only, to keep some of these important items in

Suggestions to increase your safety:

- a. think of places that you can go to, if you leave your home
- b. obtain a Restraining Order
- c. consider letting your family, neighbors, close friends and employer know that you have taken out a restraining order against your abuser
- d. give concise instructions to your children's schools, as to who may contact and pick up your children
- e. consider asking for an escort to your car, when you leave work
- f. BEWARE of your e mails, your abuser could know your password

Ask for Suggestions and Discussion**

What are the legal options available to a victim of Domestic Violence?

A Restraining Order can be filed with the Court. A Restraining Order is a legal order, signed by a judge. It orders the abuser not to contact the victim. A Restraining Order will be tailored to the needs of the victim. It may include:

- a. an order for the abuser to stay at least 50 feet away from the victim at all times
- b. an order for the abuser not to contact the victim, in person, by phone, or through a third person. (He cannot have someone else contact you for him.)
- c. it may give the abuser instructions on how he can visit with his children without putting the victim or the children at risk

If the abuser violates the Restraining Order, call 911. Law Enforcement will arrest him and take him to jail. Keep your copy of the Restraining Order with you at all times. If your abuser has not yet been served by the Authorities, with his copy of the Restraining Order, the Police should arrange for him to be served ASAP.

There is also a specific Restraining Order that is used for elderly victims (62 years old or older) and mentally or physically disabled victims. This Order is used, if the victim is abused or abandoned. It can include:

- a. an order for the caretaker to stop abusing, intimidating and molesting a victim
- b. an order for an abuser to relinquish the victim's money and property
- c. an order for an abuser to stay away from the victim, and prohibit them from contacting the victim in person, by phone, or through a third party
- d. the court can arrange for a temporary caretaker or a temporary home, where the victim can get the care he needs

A Stalking Protective Order may be appropriate If:

- a. a person makes you afraid for your physical safety by engaging in repeated and unwanted contact
- b. a person makes an immediate family (or household) member afraid for their physical safety by repeated and unwanted contact

Unwanted contact is defined as:

- a. comes near you or in your line of sight
- b. follows you
- c. waits outside your home, workplace, or school
- d. communicates with you in any way (mail, email, phone, or through another person)
- e. damages your home, workplace, or school

Ask for any questions or comments**

What can we do to help stop of Domestic Violence?

- a. Listen to victims and believe them (they need our support)
- b. Call police if you hear or see abuse (It is your business)
- c. Re-examine your attitude about Domestic Violence (the victim does not deserve to be hurt, and she did not ask for it)
- d. Volunteer in a Domestic Violence program

- e. Abusers need professional help to stop their behavior, they rarely stop on their own. Do not allow excuses such as:
1. "He can't help it."
 2. "It's in his culture."
 3. "He is really a nice guy, when he is not drinking."
 4. "It is how he shows he loves me."
 5. "He has promised to change"

Would anyone like to add anything?**

What about the Media and Domestic Violence? Movies, TV Shows, Electronic games, and Advertising exist to make money. If we don't watch them, they don't make money. They sell romance, sex, popularity, beauty and power. They also mold attitudes. Children are especially vulnerable to the influence of the Media. Here are examples of how men and women portrayed. We need to change these stereotypes.

- a. men are handsome, muscular, aggressive, successful, with no second thought about fighting or killing.
- b. women are thin, beautiful, big breasted, dumb, helpless victims, who are rescued by a man.

How can we change these stereotypes ?**

How can we prevent Domestic Violence? Start with the children.

- a. Many abusers were abused themselves, or watched one parent abuse the other parent. Often this teaches the child that violence is normal. This is a cycle that must be broken.
- b. Teach boys to respect women and see them as valuable, as partners, not as sex objects or subordinates.
- c. Teach girls that women are not subservient to men. Give girls strong role models, women who are intelligent, successful and accomplished.
- d. Help girls and boys become independent thinkers

- e. Encourage girls to obtain job skills and job experience. This will help them gain self confidence, and give them more control over their lives.
- f. Teach boys and girls to respect others and physical violence is wrong.

Who do you see as a strong role model for girls?**

We have defined Domestic Violence and discussed why it is difficult for a victim to leave that situation. We have made suggestions on how a victim might plan her escape, and we have explained the legal options that are available. We have talked about what can be done to stop and prevent Domestic Violence. We have brought up how the Media plays a part, in the process of boys and girls becoming abusers and victims. Domestic Violence is a dark subject, but let me leave you with this bright note. We are making progress. Domestic Violence is no longer the secret that society ignored. Think about how Domestic Violence was handled, just thirty years ago. Many people thought it was a man's right to hit his wife. The laws allowing police officers to arrest abusers were not in existence. There were very few shelters for women to go to. Women of today, have more opportunities to get higher paying jobs, so they can support their families, if need be. The Media has changed, too. Many Movies, TV shows, and commercials, have strong, intelligent women in them. That wasn't true thirty years ago. We need to keep this trend going. If you see a TV show or advertisement that could encourage violence against women, write to the advertiser and complain. They are very interested in what female consumers have to say. Support laws that protect women from their abusers. If you see or hear a violent confrontation, call 911. Let's all be vigilant.

Bibliography

National FCE Hearth Fire Series

#29 Woman to Woman, "Why Should Love Hurt?"

#30 Woman to Woman, "Resisting the Deadly Triangle of Violence."

Womenslaw.org/Oregon

Oregon Dept of Human Services pamphlet # DHS7808

"Are You Being Hurt By Someone You Love?"

Directory of organizations in State of Oregon by county

state.or.us/cfl/domesticviolence

True Stories of Domestic Violence

The following are true stories of women, who experienced violent abuse at the hands of their partners. As the group leader, use these stories, in the lesson, as you see fit, or use stories from your own friends and family. You will be surprised at how many women have experienced Domestic Abuse. Be sure to get permission before you tell someone's story. I have changed the names in the following stories to protect the innocent.

Jane's Story

Jane Doe lived in a large city with her family. She had a good job and she was saving her money. She met a handsome and exciting young man. He had money and a nice car. He treated her like a queen. She fell in love. She became pregnant and they got married. He talked her into quitting her job, so she could take care of him and their home. He would give her a very small amount of money to buy groceries, and then get angry about the meals she served. He began to slap her around. When she fought back, he told her that he was a member of a gang and he could arrange to have her family killed. (He belonged to a real scary gang.) When the baby was born, she knew she had to get out. She moved back in with her parents. He had his gang members harass her family and their neighbors. She moved back in with him. Jane secretly moved in with other relatives. He used his gang to locate her. She moved back in with him. She moved into a Women's Shelter. Again, his gang found out where she was. The gang scared the people at the Women's Shelter, and they asked her to leave. She moved back in with him. Finally, she contacted a relative that lived out of state. She and her baby, quietly moved to another state. He never found her. She now lives in a small town with her little boy. She has a good job and she has a wonderful man in her life.

Beverly's Story

Beverly was raised in a loving family. She was going to College when she met Joe. Joe was her brother's friend. The whole family loved Joe. He was smart and funny. When Joe and Beverly decided to marry, everyone was happy except Beverly's mom. Her mom took Beverly aside and told her that she was concerned about Joe's background. She was aware that Joe's father beat his mother, regularly. Her mom knew that this behavior is often passed down to the son. Rather than listen to her mom's warning, Beverly decided to elope with Joe. They drove off, in the middle of the night. When they were 1000 miles away, they found a Justice of the Peace and were married. Beverly began to cry because her family was not at her wedding. Joe grabbed her by the throat and slammed her against a wall. This was the first of many scary and painful experiences, Beverly would endure at the hands of Joe. Beverly says that she should have called her parents, who would have gladly sent her the money to come home. She says she was humiliated and embarrassed, and legally married, so she stayed. Soon, she had children. Joe earned a college degree, and moved his family, even farther away from Beverly's parents. Beverly endured the abuse, while the children grew up. Once, Beverly tried to tell her sister that Joe was abusing her. Her sister's reply was, "How could a great guy like Joe do something like that? Are you sure?" Finally, when Beverly discovered that Joe was having an affair, Beverly had enough. She kicked him out and divorced him.

Stephanie's Story

Stephanie was raised in a middle class family, and she worked in the family business. She met Bill when she was 18, and married him when she was 20. A year later, they had a son. Bill seemed to be a good husband and father. Her family thought of him as a son. All seemed to be good. Having seen her sister in an abusive marriage, Stephanie told Bill that if he ever laid a hand on her, she would leave him. Bill moved their family 150 miles away, to be near his parents and relatives. He became verbally abusive, and gradually became physically abusive to Stephanie. When her fourth child was born, a daughter, Stephanie decided that she did not want her daughter to grow up thinking that it was OK for girls to be abused, so she decided to leave Bill. When she told Bill that she was leaving, he became violent. She called her sister, who had since left her own abusive situation. Her sister took Stephanie and the kids to where Bill couldn't find them, camping in the woods. While they were gone, Bill burned down their house. The fire was set in the master bedroom and in the children's bedrooms. Grateful that they were not there, Stephanie took this as a warning of what he could do to them. She divorced him, and never looked back. Sometime later, she told her parents that she was too embarrassed for them to know that she had allowed this abuse to happen to her. Especially after she had seen what her sister had gone through, years before. After a lot of hard years of raising her four children and getting her life in order, Stephanie eventually married a great guy, who treats her with the respect she deserves.

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Student Handout

List of Services for domestic Violence Victims in Oregon

For an emergency, call 911

In immediate need of shelter, call 1-800-622-3782 or look under Crisis
In your phone book, or bring up their web site at:

state.or.us/cfl/domesticviolence

-this web site will give you a directory of organizations in Oregon by county

National and State resource phone numbers:

Oregon Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence 1-877-330-1951

Oregon Crime Victims Assistance 1-800-503-7983

Address Confidentiality Program 1-888-559-9090

-free mail forwarding service for domestic violence victims

Victims of Crime Compensation Program 1-503-378-5348

And Sexual Assault Victims Emergency Medical Response Fund

(or go to Local District Attorney's Victim Assistance Program)

-pays for sexual assault exam

Victim Information and Notification 1-877-674-8463

-monitors offenders in OR Dept of Corrections, Oregon Youth Authority,
and all County Jails in Oregon

-has Parole and Probation Information also

-it is anonymous, and available 24 hours a day/7 days a week

Are you ready to leave your abusive situation?
Make a plan

Prepare an “exit bag” that you can grab at a moment’s notice or perhaps, leave in your car. Items you may want to include are:

- a. Social Security Cards for you and your children, birth certificates, drivers license, passport, insurance papers, divorce papers, copy of restraining order, deed to house
- b. phone numbers of your doctor, lawyer, schools, family, and friends
- c. have an extra set of house and car keys
- d. take any cash you put aside, credit cards, checks, bank and investment information
- e. if possible, take out a credit card and bank account in your name only
- f. pack a bag with clothes for you and your children
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- i. consider opening a safe deposit box in your name only to keep some of these important items in

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- e. consider asking for an escort to your car, when you leave work
- f. BEWARE of your e mails, your abuser may know your password and be able to access them.

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- a. GET OUT, if you cannot get out, try not to get trapped. Go to a room that has an exit.
- b. Call 911 first, before you call anyone else
- c. the police can take your abuser to jail