

The Dynamics of Domestic Violence

BY THE STATEWIDE OFFICE OF SUICIDE PREVENTION, FLORIDA OFFICE OF DRUG CONTROL

Domestic violence constitutes the willful intimidation, assault, battery, sexual assault, or other abusive behavior perpetrated by one family member, household member, or intimate partner against another. Domestic violence is about power and control. The abuser wants to dominate the victim, wants all the power in the relationship – and uses violence to establish and maintain that power. An abuser will often restrict a victim's outlets, forbidding the victim to maintain outside employment, friends and family ties creating a feeling of isolation and dependency. Perpetrators of domestic violence may criticize, belittle and



humiliate their partners, causing the victim to feel worthless, ugly, stupid, and crazy. This does not allow a victim to develop a healthy perception of oneself. Low self-esteem may contribute to victims feeling they deserve the abuse, affecting their ability to see themselves as worthy of better treatment. Domestic violence affects not only those abused, but witnesses, family members, coworkers, friends and the community at large. Children who witness domestic violence are victims themselves and growing up amidst violence predisposes them to a multitude of social and physical problems (ncvc.org). According to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting System an estimated 28,991 women were killed by a current or former partner between 1981-1998 (dvmhpi.org).

Co-Occurrence with Mental Illness & Suicide

Domestic violence victims are often exposed repeatedly to threats, violence, intimidation and physical, emotional, and psychological abuse. Constant, repeated exposure to violence has a profound effect on a victim's daily activities and functioning, thinking, interpersonal relationships, and sense of self. Some common reactions to domestic violence include: fear; nightmares and sleep disturbances; anxiety; anger; difficulty concentrating; shame and embarrassment; chronic physical complaints; substance abuse; social withdrawal; feelings of helplessness and hopelessness; self-blame; numbness; and hyper-vigilance (dvmhpi.org)

One out of every four women who are victims of domestic violence will attempt suicide.

Although, not all victims develop mental health conditions, current available data indicate that women who are being abused by a partner are at increased risk for developing certain mental health problems such as depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (ncvc.org). Substance abuse disorders, eating disorders, sexual difficulties, and psychotic episodes, have also been linked to adult and childhood abuse. In fact, one out of every four women who are the victims of domestic violence attempt suicide (suicide.org). For more information about the warning signs of suicide, please talk to your physician or call 1-800-273-TALK. Don't be afraid to reach out for help, no one deserves to be abused.

