

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
BY: Melissa Jeremiah, RN
Director of Hoosier Uplands Home Health and Hospice

I'm sure that everyone reading this article has been affected by Domestic Violence in one way or another. You may be a past victim of abuse, a current victim of abuse or you may be the friend or loved one of someone that has or continues to be abused. This article is being written in an attempt to educate the public on domestic violence, as knowledge is power.

Red Flags that may indicate abuse. You or someone you know may be in an abusive or potentially abusive relationship if your partner:

- Grew up in a violent family.
- Uses force or violence to solve their problems. Hits, slaps or kicks you, the children or pets. Uses or threatens to use a weapon against you. Treats you roughly. Forces you to have sex. Destroys personal property or sentimental items.
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs. Angers easily when drinking or using drugs.
- Thinks a woman should stay at home, take care of her husband and follow his wishes and orders.
- Is jealous of your other relationships, even with family and friends of the same sex. Discourages your relationship with family and friends. Accuses you of being unfaithful. Prevents you from working or attending school. Keeps track of your time.
- Becomes angry if you do not fulfill their wishes or you cannot anticipate what they want.
- Goes through extreme highs and lows, almost as though they are two different people. May be extremely kind one time and extremely cruel at other times.
- Makes you fear them, when they are angry. You find not making them angry has become a major part of your life. You do what they want to do rather than what you want to do.
- Criticizes you for little things, calls you names and blames you for the abuse. Humiliates you in front of others or refuses to talk to you for long periods of time.
- Controls all finances & forces you to give a detailed account of your spending.

Why Do Women & Men Stay?

It is a myth that women or men stay with an abusive partner because they like or need such treatment, they love the person too much to leave or they have low self esteem. The fact is no one enjoys being beaten. The following are reasons why people stay in an abusive relationship:

- They realistically fear that the batterer will become more violent & maybe even kill them if they attempt to leave.
- Friends and family may not support them leaving.
- Since many are isolated from friends and families, either by the jealous and possessive abuser, or to hide signs of abuse, they feel there is nowhere to turn.
- Many rationalize their abuser's behavior by blaming stress and other factors for the abuse. They may feel that the abuser is basically good until something bad happens to them and they have to let off steam.
- Counselors are often trained to see only the goal of saving the marriage at all costs, rather than the goal being to stop the violence.
- Many do not see divorce as a viable alternative.
- Many believe that a single parent family is unacceptable and that a violent mother or

father is better than no mother or father at all.

- **Many people are socialized to believe that failure to make a marriage work makes them a failure.**
- **They know the difficulty of single parenting in reduced financial circumstances. This is especially true if they are not employed outside of the home.**
- **They may lack access to cash or bank accounts.**
- **They fear being charged with desertion and losing their children & joint assets.**
- **There is a mix of good times, love and hope along with the manipulation, intimidation and fear. The abuser rarely is abusive all the time. During the non-violent times, they may be very romantic. They lead the abuse victim to believe they are basically good and reinforces her decision to stay.**
- **They may not know about or have access to safety and support.**

Safety Planning, if you are still in the relationship:

- **Think of a safe place to go if an argument occurs - avoid rooms with no exits (bathroom) or rooms with weapons (kitchen).**
- **Make a list of safe people to contact.**
- **Keep change with you at all times.**
- **Memorize important numbers.**
- **Establish a code word or sign so that friends, family, neighbors & coworkers know when to call for help.**
- **Think about what you will say to your partner if they become violent.**
- **Remember you have a right to live without fear and violence.**
- **Have a packed bag that includes: extra clothes for yourself and your children, an address book with phone numbers of friends, relatives, doctors, shelters, lawyers, etc., money, extra keys to the house and car, emergency medicines, important papers such as checking/savings account numbers, protective order papers, birth certificates, social security numbers for you, the children and your partner, marriage license and any documentation of past abuse.**

If you fear that someone you know is the victim of abuse, talk to them about it. You may be just what they need to empower them to leave the situation. Remember most abused persons feel they have nowhere to turn.

If you are a victim of abuse you may call the following numbers to get help, 24 hours a day: Police Emergency - 911, Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence hotline 1-800-332-7385, National Domestic Violence hotline 1-800-799-7233, Salem Women's Shelter 883-1959, Ruthie's Place @ Bedford 278-9433 or Michael's Haven @ Bedford for men 279-3039.

Information for this article was obtained from the Indiana State Medical Association and the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Their websites are www.ismanet.org and www.ncadv.org.