

STEPS TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

INFORMATION PACKET

Our mission is to assist in the transition to a safe, independent life for all those who have been affected physically, sexually, emotionally, or economically by domestic abuse and to promote a culture that fosters justice, equity, and safety.

Hello,

Thank you for contacting us. Domestic violence is a difficult and complex issue. You are showing a lot of strength in reaching out to Steps to End Domestic Violence to talk and learn more about domestic violence. We hope that this information packet will be helpful to you. Please call us with any additional questions any time. We also offer a number of other services including emergency housing, legal advocacy, support for children and youth, a support group, educational workshops, and more.

Nobody deserves to be abused. We support you in your right to live free from violence of any kind.

Peace and courage,
Steps to End Domestic Violence

WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

- Domestic Violence is a pattern of behavior used by someone to establish and maintain power and control over an intimate partner.
- Domestic Violence is never an isolated incident. Abusers use a series of tactics to hold power and control over their victims. A person does not have to experience physical violence for there to be abusive power and control in a relationship.
- The power and control wheel is a general guide to these tactics. It is important to know that these tactics are strategies – not sudden flashes of uncontrollable anger. People who abuse **choose** to be abusive.

For more information contact:
Steps to End Domestic Violence
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Burlington, VT 05402
Fax: (802) 658-3832

24-Hour Hotline:
(802) 658-1996 (V/TTY)
or 1-800-ABUSE-95 in Vermont

TACTICS: A GUIDE TO THE POWER AND CONTROL WHEEL

Imagine that the power and control wheel represents the entire system of abuse. At the hub is the abuser's need to acquire and maintain power and control over their partner's life. Each spoke of the wheel represents one of the tactics that may be used to control someone. The rim of physical and sexual violence surrounds and supports the spokes. It holds the system together and gives the system strength.



Using Isolation: One of the most effective ways to gain power and control over another individual is to prevent them from having contact with others. By systematically severing their relationships with family, friends, and co-workers, the abuser ensures that their partner has little support. The abuser becomes their partner's only point of reference thereby defining and controlling their world. Abusers can isolate their partners in a variety of ways – from excessive jealousy to restricting their access to education and jobs, or controlling where they go and who they are with. For people with disabilities, LGBTQ individuals, older individuals, immigrants, or others who are marginalized by mainstream society, isolation takes on an increased potency.

Minimizing, Denying, and Blaming: Abusers often minimize or deny the abuse or blame their partners for provoking it. They minimize the severity of their partner's injuries, or outright deny that they caused them. Unfortunately, "victim-blaming" is prevalent in our society. Sometimes abusers play mind games with their victims trying to make them feel crazy. This tactic is called gaslighting. Often violent behavior towards their partner is justified by saying things like they "asked for it" or "needed to be put back in their place." In doing so, the blame and accountability shifts from the controlling behavior of the abuser to the "weakness" of the victim.

Using Children: Using children is yet another way that an abuser can instill feelings of guilt and incompetence in their partner. Some abusers will force children to turn against their other parent, or will threaten to take the children away if their partner were to try to leave. There is also evidence that in homes where there is abuse towards a parent, there is also increased likelihood of abuse towards the children.

Using Privilege: Frequently abusers use their privilege (racial, gender, and so on) as an excuse to be dominating and aggressive. Often this creates a dynamic where the abuser makes all the big decisions and defines their partner's place or duties in the relationship.

Using Economic Abuse: By controlling and limiting a person's access to financial means, an abuser can make it so their partner has limited resources, making it financially difficult to even think of leaving. The person experiencing the abuse may have to turn over their paycheck, leave their job, or account for every penny spent. Too often people have to choose between staying in an abusive relationship or being thrust into economic poverty.

Using Coercion and Threats: Threats are used to control by creating intense fear that can paralyze our ability to act, or keep us constantly "looking over our shoulder" to protect our lives or well-being. Some common threats are suicide, threats to kill their partner or their children, threats to damage property, etc. The person experiencing the abuse may also be coerced into doing acts which contradict their values, such as forced prostitution or fraud.

Using Emotional Abuse: Emotional abuse is the most common form of control and can often exist in relationships where there is no physical violence. This includes put-downs and insults to one's intelligence and abilities, name-calling, and so on. In doing so, the abuser systematically breaks down their partner's spirit and self-esteem. The person experiencing the abuse may begin to feel as if the abuse is their fault, or that they must deserve it.

Using Intimidation: Abusers will often commit terrifying acts in order to keep their partner in a state of continuous fear. This may include smashing things, killing pets, harassing friends and family, setting fires, driving recklessly, threats of suicide, and homicide. Intimidation, periodically reinforced with assault, makes someone easier to control.

Physical and Sexual Violence: Involves pushing, shoving, hitting, slapping, punching, throwing a person down, biting, strangling, stabbing, sexual coercion and rape, etc. Abusers may choose certain parts of the body to hurt, often sexual parts, and are likely to inflict injuries which won't be visible to others.

THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

Individuals who have experienced abuse often report a pattern of escalation and de-escalation which exists in many abusive relationships. The cycle has three primary phases:

1. **The Tension Building Phase:** This phase is marked by verbal arguments or a feeling of nervousness. Many people describe this phase as “walking on eggshells,” acting compliant and nurturing, doing everything possible to avoid a violent episode. The psychological tension may be so great that some people may even provoke their abuser into a violent episode. One does this in order to get the inevitable “over with.”
2. **The Explosive Phase:** This is the violent stage, which follows the tension stage, in which emotional, physical, or sexual violence occurs. The violence may continue even after someone is severely injured. When the violence does stop, the abuser is likely to experience a drop in tension, which is psychologically reinforcing.
3. **The Honeymoon Phase:** After an abusive incident the abuser will often apologize for what they have done. They may promise to change – to “never do it again.” Then, there may be a period in which things appear to be back to “normal” – a partner may believe the abuser’s promises to change, thereby making it even more difficult to try to leave the relationship.

It is important to know that not every abusive relationship will follow this pattern and that this cycle can happen several times a day or take years to begin and to resolve.

A note on alcohol and drug use:

"They are only physically violent when they are drinking. Would the abuse end if they stopped drinking?"

- Alcohol and drug use/abuse is **no excuse** for domestic violence.
- Abuse is about having power and control over another person. Although alcohol use can escalate the abuse, it does **not** cause the violence.
- One survivor told us, "When they stopped drinking, they stopped physically hurting me, But the emotional abuse continued..."

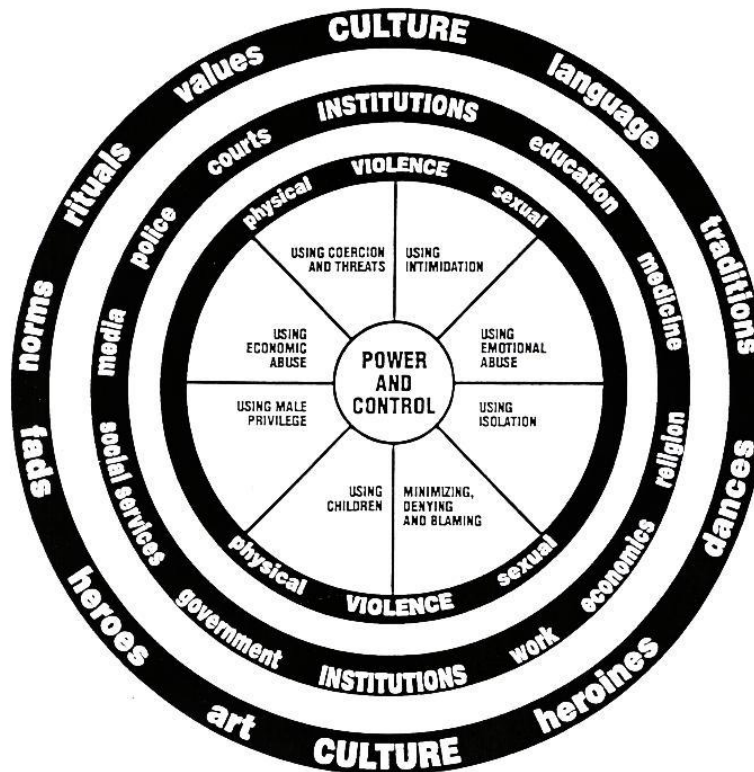
WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO LEAVING AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP?

People stay in abusive relationships for a multitude of reasons. It is important to remember that most people eventually **do** leave – and that leaving is sometimes the most dangerous time for a person. For some people leaving won't necessarily end the abuse. Here are some common reasons why people may be trapped in abusive relationships:

1. Abuse causes isolation – no support systems, friends or family
2. Limited consequences (no jail time) for the abuser
3. Self-blame, low self-esteem
4. No financial support
5. Children
6. Religion
7. Social expectations
8. Denial and minimization
9. Fear of escalated violence
10. No treatment for the batterer
11. Abuser promises to change
12. History of child abuse or witnessing abuse as a child. For those who grew up in violent homes, abuse may become an expected part of adult relationships. Despite this, many survivors of childhood abuse go on to have healthy relationships later in life.

THE CULTURAL CONTEXT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Throughout the ages, society has reinforced the ideology that some partners have a right to use physical force on their families. The cultural context wheel outlines the cultural institutions that have perpetuated domestic violence in some manner. It is important to remember that domestic violence is a violation of human rights and it is our culture that has allowed that violation to continue unchecked.



We know that domestic violence does not discriminate. It can happen to anyone regardless of race, gender identity, religion, socio-economic level, sexual orientation, etc. However, when a victim experiences further oppression from society as a whole (i.e. racial discrimination or homophobia) it makes it even more difficult to break the cycle of abuse.

CHILDREN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Children who witness domestic violence have their own barriers and needs specific to their situation. The effects of witnessing abuse depends on a variety of factors such as the child's age, gender identity, the duration and severity of the violence, the presence of substance abuse, the parent-child relationships, and whether the child was a direct victim of violence.

Here is just a partial list of the many ways that witnessing abusive behaviors may affect children – it is important to remember that each child is unique and the experience of witnessing their parent's abuse has a different impact on each child.

Physical and Emotional Effects

- Headaches, asthma, intestinal difficulties, ulcers, eczema, diarrhea and sleep difficulties including nightmares and bed-wetting
- Actual physical abuse resulting in broken bones, bruises, sprains, and lacerations
- Feelings of separation and loss, anger, emotional pain, fear, anxiety, guilt and confusion

Behavioral Effects

- Difficulties in identifying and expressing feelings in appropriate ways
- Withdrawn or passive, depression, anxiety
- Aggressive and destructive behaviors
- Difficulty trusting, difficulty with intimate relationships
- Isolated from family members and community
- Excessive crying, dependency, impulsivity, tantrums, self-mutilation

Cognitive and Social Effects

- Violence becomes a means to solving problems
- Insensitivity to others
- Affects school success: truancy, poor performance, fatigue, school phobias

We offer a variety of services for children including child care at support groups, advocacy, recreational activities, and playgroups held at shelter for children. Our playgroups employ the tools of creative play, arts and crafts, games, and drama to address issues of violence, feelings identification and expression, problem solving skills, and safety issues. Witnessing abusive behaviors does not mean that all children will grow up to be violent. We are dedicated to working with parents and their children to ensure that they get the support they need to break the cycle of abuse.

TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

Early Warning Signs:

Sometimes the signs of abuse can be very subtle. The same strategies that are used in adult domestic violence are used in teen dating violence as well. If you or someone you know is experiencing dating violence, Steps to End Domestic Violence can help. Here is a partial list of some of the early warning signs of teen dating violence:

1. You see their partner put them down or call them names in front of other people.
2. Their partner acts extremely jealous when they talk to other people..
3. They apologize for their partner's behavior and make excuses for them.
4. They frequently cancel plans at the last minute for reasons that sound untrue.
5. Their partner loses their temper, maybe even breaking or hitting things when they get mad.
6. They seem worried about upsetting their partner or making them angry.
7. They are giving up things that used to be important to them, such as spending time with friends or other activities, and are becoming more and more isolated.
8. Their behaviors, appearance, or grades have changed dramatically.
9. They have injuries they can't explain or the explanation they give does not make sense.

STALKING

Stalking is a series of actions that make you feel afraid or in danger. Stalking is serious, often violent, and can escalate over time.

Some things stalkers do:

- Follow you and show up wherever you are
- Repeatedly call you, including hang-ups
- Damage your home, car, or other property
- Send unwanted gifts, letters, cards, or e-mails
- Monitor your phone calls or computer use
- Use technology, like hidden cameras or global positioning systems, to track where you go
- Drive by or hang out at your home, school, or work
- Threaten to hurt you, your family, friends, or pets
- Find out about you by using public records or online search services, hiring investigators, going through your garbage, or contacting friends, family, neighbors, or co-workers

Stalking is a crime

It is against the law in every state. Stalking across state lines or in federal territories is illegal under federal law. Every year 1.4 million people are stalked in the United States.

Stalking can be very dangerous and is harmful and intrusive

Stalking victims often lose time from work or never return to work, and some even relocate to regain a sense of safety. Many suffer from anxiety, insomnia, and severe depression as a result of being stalked.

Stalking can occur during a relationship, after a relationship, or in the absence of a relationship

Stalking often begins during a relationship. Stalkers make keep the victim under surveillance or threaten them. Others begin stalking after the victim has ended the relationship, and the stalker feels desperate to maintain or regain control. Still others become fixated on a victim without ever having had any relationship with the person. All forms of stalking are unpredictable and all should be considered dangerous.

Technology is commonly used as a way to stalk others

Although newly-developed technology enhances our lives, it can also make stalking easier. Cell phones, computers, and surveillance equipment are just some of the technologies stalkers now use.

SAFETY PLANNING

Though it is not the person's responsibility to stop the abuser's behavior, they can work on ways to increase their safety. Having a plan in place can help keep them, their children, and/or their pets safe before, during, and after leaving an abusive relationship. A safety planning document can be found on our website at stepsVT.org/printables.

LEGAL OPTIONS FOR THOSE EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE

Vermont Legal Options

Police: Assault is a crime, even if you are married to or living with the person who is abusing you or your children – so are threats of harm, damage to your property, stalking or other harassment. The police who serve your area are there to help you – call them anytime that your safety is in jeopardy. The police will take steps to ensure your protection and help you contact other agencies.

Relief from Abuse Orders: Relief from Abuse Orders place restrictions on the abuser's behavior.

- Protection orders are called Temporary Relief from Abuse (TRA) and Permanent Relief from Abuse (PRA) orders.
- The conditions of the protection order are requested by the person experiencing violence, and approved by the court. For instance, a person might request that the abuser leave the home and remain 300 feet away from them and their families at all times. You can also request temporary custody of children when seeking a TRA or PRA.
- TRAs are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- TRAs are available through the Family Court at Costello Court House, 32 Cherry Street in Burlington, Monday-Friday 8:00am-4:30pm (or through your local Family Court system). After 4:30 p.m. and on the weekends, an emergency TRA can be obtained at the local police department. Upon receiving a TRA, a PRA hearing at Family Court will be scheduled within 10 days.
- TRAs and PRAs can be obtained without a lawyer and are free.

- Steps to End Domestic Violence and other domestic violence programs offer assistance and advocacy to individual's seeking a protection order. An advocate will be present at the Family Court for all PRA hearings and can offer support and assistance.
- A violation of a TRA and PRA in Vermont can result in a maximum sentence of 180 days and/or a fine of \$1,000 for the abuser.
- In applying for a TRA or PRA, it is not necessary for a person to reveal their immigration status (this is also true if they go to the emergency room or call the police).
- Remember to plan for your safety! Always have your Order with you and give a copy to a trusted neighbor or a relative.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP A FRIEND IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

It can be difficult to be a **secondary survivor**. Secondary survivors are friends, family members, co-workers, or loved ones; someone who is aware the abuse is happening to someone they know and love. As a secondary survivor you may feel helpless, but there are important things you can do to support someone experiencing violence. Always remember to practice self-care for yourself. Our hotline is always available to secondary survivors to provide information and support.

Help your friend recognize the abuse

Validate their experiences. Acknowledge the injustice – no one deserves to be abused under **any** circumstances. Point out the different types of abuse – that emotional abuse can be just as destructive as physical or sexual assaults. Explain that abuse often escalates over time and that the attacks can become more frequent and severe.

How do you know if someone is in an abusive relationship?

Whether you know it or not, some of the people in your life may be facing violence at home – maybe a friend, a co-worker, or even a family member. For many reasons, it is often hard for victims to acknowledge they are being abused by the person who is supposed to love them.

Express your concerns

Tell your friend that you are glad they confided in you and that you are concerned for their safety and well-being. Let them know that you are here for them, that you will keep your conversations confidential, and that the abuse is not their fault. Support your friend's strengths and emphasize their positive attributes as an individual.

Be accepting

Be supportive if your friend is not willing to end the relationship. There are a myriad of reasons why they may wish to remain in an abusive relationship (financial, children, fear, low self-worth, housing, societal pressure, etc.). Though it may be difficult, it is important that they do not feel pressured to make decisions that are not their own. Instead, be patient, and re-affirm that they are not to blame but that they will not be able to end the abuse by placating the abuser or altering their behavior.

Work on a safety plan

Help your friend plan for their safety. Look for patterns in the abuser's behavior and plan accordingly – i.e. when an argument is about to escalate into violence, avoiding places where there may be potential weapons. Though it is not the person's responsibility to stop the abuser's behavior, they can work on ways to increase their safety. It is also important that they have a safety plan if they are thinking of leaving the relationship. Where will they go? How can they protect themselves if their abuser escalates the violence?

Be there, listen, and stay there

It may feel as if your message is not getting through, but it is important to keep supporting your friend. Isolation will only make their situation worse. Keep supporting your friend; it takes a while to get over any relationship, even one that is violent. Statistically it takes seven attempts at leaving an abusive relationship before someone is able to completely leave.

Reach out for help

Go to a trusted friend, call area resources for ideas and information. Many crisis lines are open for 24 hours a day and are confidential. Sometimes it helps to get an objective point of view. Steps to End Domestic Violence has a 24-hour hotline (V/TTY): (802) 658-1996 or 1-800-ABUSE-95 in VT.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

- Call the police when you see or hear someone being assaulted – you could be saving someone's life.
- Call your local domestic violence agency and offer to volunteer (in shelters, on hotlines, in court, or with children's programs, on committees, fundraising and outreach) or make a donation.
- Educate yourself about intimate partner violence as a human rights issue. Understand violence from a broader, socio-political perspective and its connection to other forms of oppression such as racism, heterosexism, and classism.

- Invite Steps to End Domestic Violence advocates to your class, civic group, workplace, or faith community. We offer a range of workshops (for all ages) that can be tailored to your group's needs.
- Dedicate time each month to writing letters to the editor, political officials, police chiefs, prosecutors, judges, and public defenders about violence issues.
- Encourage your local school to teach gender equity and violence prevention.
- Don't blame the victim, rather ask why someone is abusive, not why someone stays.
- During political campaigns, ask candidates what specific actions they will take to end intimate partner violence.
- Offer support to survivors of domestic violence by telling them: "No one deserves to be abused." Stress their positive attributes and strengths.
- Take domestic violence seriously.

HOW STEPS TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CAN HELP

All services are free and confidential. Steps to End Domestic Violence works with anyone experiencing domestic violence or has experienced domestic violence in the past as well as friends, family members, co-workers, and social service professionals seeking support and information.

Our Hotline:

24-hour phone service providing support, crisis intervention, information, and referrals.

802-658-1996 or call 1-800-ABUSE95 (800-228-7395) in Vermont

Please call the hotline to access the following services:

- **Legal Advocacy:** Assisting those experiencing abuse with legal information and court processes
- **Emergency Housing:** Safe, confidential emergency housing for survivors and their children as well as assistance in finding and accessing transitional and permanent housing
- **Economic Justice and Transitional Housing:** Assistance with helping regain confidence in personal finance, credit, budgeting and other financial issues, also finding and keeping permanent housing
- **Children and Youth Services:** Playgroups for children, support and advocacy for children, youth and parents
- **Community Education:** Providing education and training about domestic violence to the community and prevention workshops to students in Chittenden County