

It can happen to anyone.

Domestic violence, also known as intimate partner violence, is a serious and widespread problem. In the United States, **1 in 4 women** and **1 in 9 men** experience contact sexual violence,* physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime and report negative impacts such as injury, fear, concern for safety, and needing services.¹ Domestic violence can happen to anyone regardless of employment or educational level, race or ethnicity, religion, marital status, physical ability, age, sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation. However, the burden of domestic violence is not shared equally across all groups, with women and many racial/ethnic and sexual minority groups being disproportionately affected.²

It is not your fault.

If you are being abused by your partner, you may feel confused, afraid, angry and/or trapped. All of these emotions are normal responses to abuse. You may also blame yourself for what is happening. However, please know that abuse is a purposeful and deliberate behavior where one person uses abusive tactics to gain power and control over another person. Abuse is never the victim's fault.

Citations

¹ Smith, S.G., Chen, J., Basile, K.C., Gilbert, L.K., Merrick, M.T., Patel, N., Walling, M., & Jain, A. (2017). *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010-2012 State Report*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

² Niolon, P. H., Kearns, M., Dills, J., Rambo, K., Irving, S., Armstead, T., & Gilbert, L. (2017). *Preventing Intimate Partner Violence Across the Lifespan: A Technical Package of Programs, Policies, and Practices*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

³ ACLU Foundation. (2015, October). *Responses from the Field: Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, and Policing*. New York, NY: National Domestic Violence Hotline. (2015). *Who Will Help Me? Domestic Violence Survivors Speak Out About Law Enforcement Responses*. Washington, DC.

*Contact sexual violence includes rape, being made to penetrate, sexual coercion, and/or unwanted sexual contact.

Help is available.

Without help, domestic violence often continues to get more severe over time. It can sometimes become deadly. Please know that you have options.

- **Domestic violence programs.** These organizations offer free and confidential help to individuals in abusive relationships, including crisis intervention, safety planning, emergency shelter, advocacy and other supportive services. Contact information for your local program is on the back of this brochure.
- **Community support.** Friends, family, women's and community groups, places of worship, and service providers (such as legal, health, counseling centers) can also provide a variety of resources, support, and assistance.
- **Criminal charges.** If you or other loved ones have been physically injured, threatened, raped, harassed or stalked, consider reporting these crimes to the police. Criminal charges may lead to the person who is abusing you being arrested and possibly imprisoned. Some survivors, however, cite fear of retaliation from the abuser, as well as police inaction, hostility, and bias against marginalized groups as key barriers to seeking criminal justice intervention.³
- **Restraining/protective orders.** Even if you don't want to file a police report, you can file for a civil court order that directs your partner to stop abusing or to stay away from you. In many states, restraining/protective orders can also evict your partner from your home, grant support or child custody, or ban him or her from having weapons.

Safety planning is key.

Many survivors find it helpful to implement concrete safety plans in the case of emergency, whether they are planning to leave or stay in the relationship. Here are some suggestions:

- Consider telling others you trust, such as friends, family, neighbors and co-workers, what is happening and talk about ways they might be able to help.
- Memorize emergency numbers for the local police, support persons and crisis hotlines. For example, the National Domestic Violence Hotline number is 1-800-799-SAFE (7233).
- Identify escape routes and places to go if you need to flee from an unsafe situation quickly.
- Talk with your children and/or other household members about what they should do if a violent incident occurs or if they are afraid.
- Put together an emergency bag with money/checkbooks, extra car keys, medicine, and important papers such as birth certificates, social security cards, immigration documents, and medical cards. Keep it somewhere safe and accessible, such as with a trusted friend or at your place of work.
- Trust your instincts – if you think you are in immediate danger, you probably are. If you are afraid for your safety and want the police to come to where you are now, call 911.

Please contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 to develop a detailed, safety plan that is specific to your unique situation.