



Monthly Productivity & Balance Newsletter | May 2018

Recognizing and Preventing Domestic Violence

April was Sexual Assault Awareness Month; a time when many advocacy groups join forces to raise awareness and support for survivors of sexual abuse. This effort was created to bring attention to the prevalence of sexual assault and to remind everyone that domestic violence does not discriminate. Violence within relationships can occur within any community and may be present in relationships regardless of age, race, culture, financial status, or sexual orientation. Adults and teens alike may face physical or emotional abuse from a partner, ranging from controlling behavior to sexual assault.

While the topic of sexual abuse may be difficult to discuss, acknowledging its prevalence is the first step toward domestic violence prevention. Physical and sexual abuse often occur within the same relationship, as almost 50% of women in a physically abusive relationship also fall victim to sexual abuse. In the United States alone, 50% of women and 20% of men are sexually violated in their lifetime.

While physical abuse may result in injuries and bruises that can alert others of harm, emotional abuse may be more difficult to identify. Abusive individuals often treat partners poorly by minimizing their independence and feelings of self-worth. Emotional abuse may include yelling, name-calling, blaming, shaming, public humiliation, isolation, intimidation, manipulation and overall controlling behavior.

Recognizing Abuse

The first step to helping a loved one leave a violent relationship, or to leave one yourself, is to realize and accept that abuse is taking place. Knowing the warning signs of abuse can help you to remove yourself or a loved one from a dangerous situation.

If a loved one is being abused, you may notice that they:

- Act afraid or anxious around their partner.
- Receive harassing phone calls from their partner.
- Talk about their partner's temper or possessiveness.
- Excuse frequent injuries away as "accidents."
- Frequently miss work, school, or social occasions, without explanation.
- Dress in clothing designed to hide bruises or scars (e.g. wearing long sleeves in the summer).
- Rarely leave home without their partner.
- Have limited access to money or transportation.

Helping Abuse Victims

While it may be difficult to speak up when you realize a loved one is being abused, they may feel alone, afraid and unable to leave on their own. If you suspect a friend or family member is in a violent relationship, be sure to speak with them privately. Don't judge or give an ultimatum in an attempt to force them to leave their partner. Instead, assure them that you will help and support them. If they are willing to leave the relationship, offer to help them find resources or let them stay with you until they can find a more permanent residence.

If you are the parent of a teen in a violent relationship, focus on being a safe presence in your child's day. The first steps to supporting



your child are to ensure that they feel safe at home and connect them with additional support such as a school social worker or a licensed counselor. Pressuring your teen to leave their partner before providing a supportive environment for them may cause them to feel more alone and unwilling to move forward.

Helping Yourself

It is often difficult to recognize and acknowledge abuse when you are the victim. If you are in a relationship with someone who belittles you, controls you, hits you or forces you to perform sexual acts against your will, you are a victim of domestic violence. You deserve respect.

If you do not feel comfortable approaching a friend or family member for help, a vast number of resources are available to you 24/7 to support you. You can contact **eni** at any time to receive confidential, in-the-moment support and referrals to counselors that will guide you through the process of safely leaving your partner. The following national hotlines are also available round-the-clock to provide support, resources and guidance to you or your loved ones.

National Domestic Abuse Hotline: (800)799-7233

National Sexual Assault Hotline: (800)656-4673

National Teen Dating Abuse Hotline: (866)331-9474

For more information about domestic violence resources or to reach a Behavioral Health or Work/Life Expert, contact

eni by calling:

1.800.327.2255