

What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence stems from a desire to gain and maintain power and control over an intimate partner. Abusive people believe they have the right to control and restrict their partner's lives, often either because they believe their own feelings and needs should be the priority in the relationship, or because they enjoy exerting the power that such abuse gives them.

Tactics of abuse (in any form) may be aimed at dismantling equality in the relationship in order to make their partners feel less valuable and undeserving of respect.

Abuse is a learned behavior. Some people witness it in their own families growing up; others learn it slowly from friends, popular culture, or structural inequities throughout our society.



Understanding Relationship Abuse

To understand relationship abuse, we must recognize that it is more than just physical violence. Domestic violence can happen in different ways, so it's important to understand the behaviors that define it.

Ending the harm and stigma of domestic violence requires a nuanced understanding of what abuse is, as well as examples of healthy relationships.

Types of Abuse

People often assume physical violence when they hear about abuse, but that's not always the case. Dating abuse is a pattern of behaviors used to gain or maintain power and control over a partner. Here are some examples of other forms of abuse:

- ▷ Physical
- ▷ Emotional and Verbal
- ▷ Sexual
- ▷ Financial
- ▷ Digital
- ▷ Stalking

Native Women have a higher risk of being victims of violence.

More than four in five American Indian and Alaska Native men and women (83 percent) have experienced a form of violence in their lifetime.

However, it is important to recognize that the continued effects of historical trauma contribute to the high rates of violence experienced by Natives, particularly women.

Domestic violence is associated with a range of physical and mental health effects.

Being a victim of domestic violence is linked to increased risk for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and suicide.

Exposure to traumatic events can lead to stress, fear and isolation, which may lead to depression and suicidal thoughts or behavior

Tips for supporting someone in an abusive relationship

Avoid focusing on why the individual has stayed in the relationship or come back to an abusive relationship, remember it usually takes multiple attempts at leaving before they leave for good.

Leaving is not easy, trust that the person experiencing the abuse is an expert regarding their safety and their family's safety.

Believing them if they confide that they are being abuse. Your role is to listen and take it seriously. Let them know you are there to listen and not judge. Allow them to share what they are willing to share.


Understand they did not intentionally choose a partner who hurts them. You can't tell if a relationship will become abusive. This behavior can begin at any time in the relationship.]

Trust in their ability to do what's best. Share that you care and support them no matter what. Share your concern and offer resources but allow them to decide what they need


Find support yourself, it can be difficult to know and offer support to someone who is experiencing abuse by their partner. Speaking with someone may help you cope and navigate difficult conversations.

Resources

StrongHearts Native Helpline

 (844) 762-8483

National Domestic Violence Hotline

 (800) 799-7233