



I Believe You: Faiths' Response to Intimate Partner Violence

Domestic violence refers to a pattern of violent and coercive behavior exercised by one adult over another in an intimate relationship. It is not marital conflict, mutual abuse, a lovers' quarrel, or a private family matter. It may consist of repeated, severe beatings or more subtle forms of abuse, including threats and control.

The four basic types of domestic violence are the following:

Physical assault: Includes, shoving, pushing, restraining, hitting or kicking. Physical assaults may occur frequently or infrequently, but in many cases they tend to escalate in severity and frequency over time.

Sexual assault: Any time one partner forces sexual acts that are unwanted or declined by the other partner.

Psychological assault: Includes isolation from family and friends, forced financial dependence, verbal and emotional abuse, threats, intimidation and control over where the partner can go and what she can do.

Attacks against property and pets: Destruction of property that may include household objects or treasured items belonging to the victim, hitting the walls, or abusing or killing beloved pets. (Information retrieved from the FaithTrust Institute: faithtrustinstitute.org.)

Domestic violence may include not only the intimate partner relationships of spousal, live-in partners and dating relationships but also familial, elder and child abuse may be present in a violent home.

(See the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence: ncadv.org) help.”

To help

Share information and resources with victims so that they can make the best decisions for themselves. Walk with a victim—listen, believe, affirm, care for safety, provide education and wait to follow their lead in choosing what to do next. Here are some links to help:

Understanding safety issues

- First response: ncadv.org/protectyourself/GettingHelp.php
- Hotline: thehotline.org
- Helping a friend or family member:
thehotline.org/get-educated/how-can-i-help-a-friend-or-family-member-who-is-being-abused

Help for clergy

“Creating a safe space where people can ask for help.”

—The Rev. Dr. Marie Fortune of FaithTrust Institute

Clergy and people of faith need to respond to domestic violence. For training and resources go to faithtrustinstitute.org.

- Addressing domestic violence at work:
endabuse.org/content/features/detail/1596
- Addressing domestic violence in health care facilities:
endabuse.org/content/action_center/detail/805
- Help for public health professionals:
endabuse.org/content/features/detail/1526
- Teen dating violence:
<http://www.pcusa.org/resource/2009-domestic-violence-congregational-packet/>

Faiths' response to domestic violence:

- Jewish: Jewish Coalition Against Domestic violence at jcada.org or Jewish Women International at www.jwi.org
- Christian: National Council of Churches at nccusa.org/womensministry/domesticviolence2.html
- Muslim: Peaceful Families Project:
<http://peacefulfamilies.org/>

Additional assistance

If someone you love has been killed by domestic violence, include him or her in the “Remember My Name Project” to continue to raise awareness and help future victims:
ncadv.org/programs/RememberMyNameProject.php

Cosmetic and reconstructive surgery for victims of domestic violence:
ncadv.org/programs/CosmeticandReconstructiveSupport.php