Domestic Violence - What You Should Know

for Certified Nursing Assistants

In-service Self-Study Packet & Test

Meets the Domestic Violence 1.0 In-service Hour required by the Florida Department of Health/Board of Nursing for Certified Nursing Assistants
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Domestic Violence - What You Should Know

Domestic violence can and does happen to people of all ages, races, and socioeconomic and educational backgrounds. Domestic violence happens to men and to same-sex partners, but most often domestic violence involves men abusing their female partners. In fact, the Department of Health and Human Services estimates that as many as 4 million women suffer abuse from their husbands, ex-husbands, boyfriends or intimate partners in the United States each year.

Domestic violence — also called domestic abuse, intimate partner violence or battering — occurs between people in intimate relationships. It takes many forms, including coercion, threats, intimidation, isolation, and emotional, sexual and physical abuse.

Without help, abuse will continue and could worsen. Many resources are available to help you understand your options and to support you. No one deserves to be abused.

The above is a sample questionnaire women can use to help them decide if they are indeed victims of domestic abuse. But the main issue is not that women don’t know that they are victims; it’s that they do not readily reveal their situation or leave it. There are many reasons for this, including the following:

- Fear and humiliation about being abused.
- Fear of being judged and losing the respect of others.
- Fear of losing economic support if the batterer is jailed.
- Belief the relationship or marriage is for better or worse.
- Becoming desensitized to the severity of the situation.
- Belief that the violence was her fault, and that she somehow deserves it.
- Lack of support from friends and family as a result of the isolation.
- Guilt about breaking up the family.
- Fear of physical, emotional, or legal retribution if the abuser finds out that she told someone or tried to leave.
- Belief that the victim can control the violence by changing her behavior or circumstances.

It is important to note that leaving does not solve everything. In fact, leaving does not always stop the violence. In a 1991 study of 218 women presenting at an emergency department with injuries due to domestic violence, one third of the victims were not living with their batterer at the time of the incident (Berrios, Grady, 1991). Violence often gets far worse when the victim tries to leave or leaves, making this an extremely dangerous time. Adding to the difficulty, getting the necessary resources to leave, including shelter and money, takes time and is not always possible. Special care to ensure the safety of victims should be taken if they decide to leave the abusive relationship.
If A Patient, Coworker, or Someone You Care About Is A Victim
Since each individual’s experience is unique, there is no one-size-fits-all remedy for victimized patients, friends or family. For those who care about a person who has experienced a violent trauma, finding ways to be helpful and maintaining a healthy relationship can be challenging. Following are some tips to help the one who has been victimized:

**Listen.** Talking about the experience, when the survivor is ready, will help acknowledge and validate what has happened to him or her and can reduce stress and feelings of isolation. Let your loved one take the lead, and try not to jump in with too many comments or questions right away.

**Research.** If the victim wants more information, would like to report a crime, or has other questions, you can help find answers and resources.

**Reassure.** As strange as it may sound, survivors often question whether an incident was their fault or what they could have done to prevent the crime against them. They may need to hear that it was not their fault and be assured that they are not alone.

**Empower.** Following trauma, victims can feel as though much of their lives is beyond their control. Aiding them in maintaining routines can be helpful, as can offering survivors options or possible solutions.

**Be patient.** Every journey through the healing process is unique. Try to understand that it will take time, and do what you can to be supportive. The healing process has no predetermined timeline.

**Ask.** Your loved one may need help with any number of things or have questions on many different topics. Even a favor as mundane as running a few errands or taking the dog for a walk can be a big help, so consider lending a hand.

**Recognizing & Overcoming Feelings, Perceptions, & Attitudes**
It is often helpful for caregivers to explore their own feelings, perceptions, and attitudes. Some of the barriers that prevent effectively caring for a victim of domestic violence is 1) the fear of offending the patient, 2) close identification with the patient, 3) feelings of being unable to help, 4) feelings of powerlessness, and 5) not enough time.

Other obstacles include:
- Fear for their personal safety.
- Lack of awareness of the problem.
- Belief that domestic violence is a private matter.
Guidelines For Interacting With A Victim of Domestic Violence

1. Be non-judgmental. Do not alienate the victim by demeaning or judging here or the abuser. Be clear that it is the behavior of the batterer, and not the batterer himself, that you are evaluating as unacceptable.

2. Validate the victim’s experience. Supportive statements, when appropriate, can help validate the patient’s experience and make talking easier. For example:
   a. “No one deserves to be beaten or threatened with violence.”
   b. “No matter what happened, it’s not okay to be harmed.”
   c. “You didn’t deserve this.”
   d. “You don’t have to live like this.”
   e. “I’ll be here for you. You are not alone.”

3. Recognize the victim’s strength. Commend her for talking about the abuse and assure her that it is the first step in changing. Tell her you recognize her strength and her courage.

4. Respect the victim’s rights. It is the victim’s right to make her own decisions about her health and safety. This may include a decision to stay in the situation and a decision not to report the incident.

5. Provide non-judgmental support. Victims will sometimes choose to return to the batterer for a variety of reasons. Letting them know that you will support whatever their decisions are can build a relationships for further discussion with you or someone else at a later time.

6. Be realistic in your expectations. Victims sometimes go back into abusive relationships many times before they leave. Helping a victim become aware that she has options is an important step.

Characteristics of Batterers
Batterers who accompany victims in need of medical care may seem overly concerned, protective, or possessive; they may seem enraged, lashing out at staff; they may seem just like everybody else. However there are some behavioral and psychological factors, some relationship distress symptoms, and some family factors that are often present.

- Controlling behavior towards wife: excessive jealousy, over-possessiveness, and intrusiveness.
- History of alcohol and/or drug abuse.
- Minimization or denial of domestic disputes or violent behavior.
- Family history of violence including spousal, child and/or elder abuse.
- Frequent verbal arguments with spouse.
- Lack of assertive communication skills.
- Difficulty in negotiating interpersonal conflict.
Where to find help: Options abound

In an emergency situation, call 911 or your local law enforcement agency. If you aren't in immediate danger, consider contacting one of the following resources:

- **National Domestic Violence Hotline: (800) 799-SAFE or (800) 799-7233.** Provides crisis intervention and referrals to in-state or out-of-state resources, such as women’s shelters or crisis centers.
- **Your doctor or hospital emergency room.** Treats any injuries and refers you to safe housing and other local resources.
- **Local women’s shelter or crisis center.** Typically provides 24-hour, emergency shelter for you and your children, advice on legal matters, advocacy and support services, and evaluation and monitoring of abusers. Some shelters have staff members who speak multiple languages.
- **Counseling or mental health center.** Most communities have agencies that provide individual counseling and support groups to women in abusive relationships. Be wary of anyone who advises couples or marriage counseling. This isn’t appropriate for abusive relationships.
- **Local court.** Your district court can help you obtain a court order, which legally mandates the abuser stay away from you or face arrest. These are typically called orders for protection or restraining orders. Advocates are available in many communities to help you complete the paperwork and guide you through the court process.

Web Resources

- National Domestic Violence Hotline
- United States Department of Justice: Domestic Violence
- National Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Are you Being Abused? A Questionnaire......

Does the person you love...

- Threaten to hurt you or your children?
  - [ ] Yes  [ ] No

- Say it's your fault if he or she hits you, then promises it won't happen again (but it does)?
  - [ ] Yes  [ ] No

- Put you down in public or keep you from contacting family or friends?
  - [ ] Yes  [ ] No

- Throw you down, push, hit, choke, kick, or slap you?
  - [ ] Yes  [ ] No

- Force you to have sex when you don't want to?
  - [ ] Yes  [ ] No

Just one "yes" anwer means you're involved in an abusive relationship. If so, you're not alone and you have choices. **No one deserves to be abused.**

"There are many resources available to help you if you are being abused. You can have and you deserve a peaceful life."
**Frequently Used Terms**

**ABUSE.** Controlling, dominating or harming another person. The five most common forms of abuse are physical, sexual, economic, emotional, and psychological.

**AGGRAVATED BATTERY.** 1) An act of battery in which the offender, intentionally or knowingly, causes great bodily harm, permanent disability, permanent disfigurement, or uses a deadly weapon, or 2) The victim of the battery was pregnant at the time of the offense and the offender knew or should have known that the victim was pregnant.

**AGGRAVATED STALKING.** 1) Any person who willfully, maliciously and repeatedly follows or harasses another person, and makes a credible threat with the intent to place that person in reasonable fear of death or bodily injury, commits the offense of aggravated stalking. 2) Any person who, after an injunction for protection against domestic violence toward the subject person or person’s property, knowingly, willingly, maliciously and, repeatedly follows or harasses another person commits the offense of aggravated stalking.

**ASSAULT.** An intentional, unlawful threat by word or act to do violence to the person of another, coupled with an apparent ability to do so, and doing some act which creates a well-founded fear in such other person that such violence is imminent.

**BATTERER.** One who violates Florida Statute 741.28, by assaulting, battering, sexually assaulting, sexually battering, stalking or aggravated stalking a family or household member, or committing any criminal offense resulting in physical injury or death of a family or household member.

**BATTERY.** 1) Actually and intentionally touching or striking another person against the will of the other, or 2) Intentionally causing bodily harm to an individual.

**DOMESTIC ABUSE.** Behavior of one partner towards another that is intended to assert power and control. It includes physical abuse along with sexual, psychological, emotional, and economic abuse.

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.** According to Florida Statute 741.28, “Domestic violence means any assault battery, aggravated battery, sexual assault, sexual battery, stalking, aggravated stalking, or any criminal offense resulting in physical injury or death of one family or household member by another who is or was residing in the same single-dwelling unit.”

**ECONOMIC ABUSE.** Making or attempting to make the victim financially dependent, for example forbidding employment or attendance at school, running up bills for which the victim is responsible for paying, and maintaining total and sole control over all financial resources.

**EMOTIONAL ABUSE.** Undermining or attempting to undermine victim’s sense of self worth, for example constant criticism, belittling the victim’s abilities and competency, name calling, insults, etc.

**FAMILY OR HOUSEHOLD MEMBER.** Spouses, persons related by blood or marriage, persons who are presently residing together as if a family or who have resided together in the past as if a family, and persons who have a child in common regardless of whether they have been married or have resided together at any time.

**INJUNCTION.** An order issued through the court system, providing victims of domestic violence with legal protection from the abuser. An injunction can also be called a restraining order, an injunction for protection, or an ex parte relief. Injunctions can proscribe that the batterer not commit any acts of violence, immediately leave the home they share, stay away from the victim’s home if they’re not living together, and/or receive counseling.

**PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE.** Instilling or attempting to instill fear: for example, intimidation, threatening physical to self, victim, and/or others, threatening to harm and/or kidnap children, menacing, blackmail, harassment, destruction of pets and property, and mind games. Also isolating or attempting to isolate the victim from friends, family, school, and/or work.

**PHYSICAL ABUSE.** 1) Inflicting or attempting to inflict physical injury and/or illness; for example grabbing, pinching, shoving, slapping, hitting, hair-pulling, biting, arm-twisting, kicking, punching, hitting with blunt objects, etc. or 2) withholding access to resources necessary to maintain health, such as medication, medical care, food, fluids, sleep, or forcing alcohol or drug use.

**SEXUAL ABUSE.** Coercing or attempting to coerce any sexual contact without consent; for example forced sex after physical beating, attacks on the sexual parts of the body, bestiality, forced prostitution, unprotected sex, sodomy, sex with others, and use of pornography. This also includes attempting to undermine the victim’s sexuality by treating her in a sexually derogatory manner.

**SEXUAL BATTERY.** Oral, anal, or vaginal penetration by, or union with, the sexual organ of another, or the oral, anal, or vaginal penetration by any other object.

**STALKING.** Willfully, maliciously, and repeatedly following or harassing another person.