

There's No Excuse For Abuse: Raise Awareness about Domestic Violence

(Part 4 of a four-part series)

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You can help teach the next generation that abuse or violence is not acceptable and is not to be tolerated in relationships. You can help teach by speaking up every time you see inappropriate or abusive behavior displayed against anyone! You can help teach by being a role model. This can be done by the way you show respect, communicate and interact with others. You can be an important role model in the lives of children.

Teaching Children About Domestic Violence

Teach young girls that domestic violence or partner abuse is always wrong and never the abused person's fault. Teach them to be assertive, to voice their opinion, and to set limits with relationships. Teach young boys these messages too.

Teach young boys that it is never OK to hit a person, regardless of gender. Teach him that he will grow to be a man who is often stronger and bigger than most women. If he hits or threatens a woman it can hurt and scare her.

Teach girls and boys that it's a crime to hit a partner. Dominance and control used over other people are abusive behaviors that do not build mutual love and respect. Allow children to express emotions, including anger, while teaching them appropriate ways to express anger and other emotions without hurting others. Let girls know that if their boyfriends ever hit or hurt them or someone they know, it is not acceptable behavior, and they should end the relationship. It is also not acceptable for girls to hit boys. University of Nebraska–Lincoln professors

Xia and Bosch (2006) found that girls are physically aggressive as well as verbally aggressive in dating violence situations, and so it is necessary to teach young girls that aggression is not always the right way to respond to a situation, unless they are having to protect themselves against harm.

Invite community leaders, especially men, to speak out against domestic violence at schools, Girl and Boy Scouts, 4-H meetings, religious youth groups and other places where young boys and girls get together.

Raising Awareness About Domestic Violence

There are many ways you can help raise awareness about domestic violence or partner abuse. You can let women know you care about them and will support them.

- Put a bumper sticker on your car to tell the world domestic violence is **not** okay.
- Wear T-shirts expressing your opposition to partner abuse.
- Take domestic violence seriously at all times and ask your friends and coworkers to do the same.
- If you hear a joke about violence against women, or one that makes fun of women or puts them down, take a stand. Tell the person that it isn't funny and turn away. Body language can also communicate to people that you disapprove. Doing this sends a powerful message that the person should be ashamed for treating domestic violence as a laughing matter.

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- Hold abusers accountable for their abusive behaviors. Abuse is not to be tolerated.
- Ask men to speak out against domestic violence. Teachers, barbers, businesspersons, religious leaders, farmers, construction workers and others can use their positions to reach out to other men and let them know that domestic violence is wrong.
- Sponsor a community activity or event to raise money to support educational efforts against domestic violence.
- Ask a mental health worker, religious leader or family life educator to make domestic violence the subject of a presentation or class.
- Make a personal commitment to talk about domestic violence, whether with friends, family, coworkers or someone you suspect is either abused or a perpetrator.
- If you are a survivor of abuse, volunteer to be available in your religious institution or community to talk with women currently facing abuse in their intimate lives.
- Make sure that places in your community where women may spend time such as gyms, grocery stores, libraries, businesses, religious institutions and workplaces have information about domestic violence and where to go for help.
- Make sure you know where help can be found in your local community for women with abusive partners.
- Put up posters condemning domestic violence.
- Ask health care providers to include questions about abuse on all intake forms and medical history questionnaires. Ask them to ask patients if there is violence or abuse in their lives or if they've been hurt or threatened by their partner.
- Make domestic violence a workplace issue by letting others know there's no excuse for abuse. Post posters, distribute fliers and look for symptoms of domestic violence in co-workers. If you were abused by someone you loved, consider speaking out about how abuse impacted your life.
- Donate money to organizations and shelters which support abused women.
- Have a fund-raiser and send checks to the local domestic violence shelter.
- Help improve media coverage. When a story appears about domestic violence in your local media you can make a difference by writing or calling to let them know how much you appreciated coverage of the program or article. Positive feedback makes it much more likely that similar stories will be produced in the future.
- Ask your local media to run public service announcements about domestic violence or partner abuse to help raise awareness.

You can pledge to take action against domestic abuse or violence. You can choose how you'll get involved. There are no easy answers and no easy solutions to prevent partner abuse but by becoming more knowledgeable about domestic violence you can help to improve the quality of life for many women, men and families. One person can make a significant difference. You can make a difference.

In the event of an attack or immediate threat, call 911 or your local police.

References

Nebraska Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Coalition (NDVSAC)

Toll free crisis line 1-800-876-6238. Web site:
<http://www.ndvsac.org>

Kansas Crisis Hotline: 1-888-END-ABUSE

Outside Nebraska or Kansas, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-799-SAFE (7233) (voice) or
1-800-787-3224 (TDD).

Calkins, C., Xia, Y.R., Bosch, K., Todd, M., Garrett, A. (2006). *A youth perspective on adolescent dating violence: A qualitative study*. Peer reviewed poster presented at the National Council for Family Relations Conference, Minneapolis, MN.

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