

# “The Faith Community’s Biggest Secret”

Informational Presentation on Addressing Domestic Violence  
and the Faith Community

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# Resources

- RBC Ministries (Discovery Series) 800.653.8333
- When Violence Comes Home
- God's Protection of Women
- When Words Hurt
- When Trust is Lost
- Office For Victims of Crime - DOJ  
Faith Based Responses to Crime Victims 800.851.3420
- National Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
1.800.799.SAFE (7233)

# A Few Starting Questions

- What messages do you remember hearing about domestic violence or sexual assault from your childhood faith community?
- What do you recall learning about domestic violence or sexual assault in Bible Study, Sunday School, or Seminary ?

# Prevalence

- 24.8% of women report being physically or sexually assaulted by a partner at some time.\*
  - 1-2% report experiencing violence within the last 12 months.
- 7.6% of men report the same.\*
- Each year, about 6%-8% of all pregnant women are battered by the men in their lives.

\* National Violence Against Women Survey, 2010

# Domestic Violence Is

- A pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors, including:
  - Physical Abuse
  - Sexual Assault/Sexual Abuse
  - Verbal & Psychological Abuse
  - Economic Coercion



# Physical Abuse

- Hitting, slapping, shoving, grabbing, pinching, biting, hair-pulling, etc. Physical abuse also includes denying a partner medical care or forcing alcohol and/or drug use.

# Sexual Assault/Sexual Abuse

- Coercing or attempting to coerce any sexual contact or behavior without consent. Sexual abuse includes, but is certainly not limited to marital rape(\*\*), attacks on sexual parts of the body, forcing sex after physical violence has occurred, or treating one in a sexually demeaning manner.

# Sexual Assault/Sexual Abuse

- **Sexual assault** is an assault of a sexual nature on another person, or any sexual act committed with out consent. Although sexual assaults most frequently are by a man on a woman, it can occur between any two (sometimes more) individuals.

# Sexual Assault/Sexual Abuse

- Every year, an estimated 300,000 women are raped and 3.7 million are confronted with unwanted sexual activity. It has been estimated that one in six American women have or will be sexually assaulted during their lives.

# Verbal & Psychological Abuse

- Causing fear by verbal intimidation; yelling; threatening physical harm to self, partner, children, or partner's family or friends; destruction of pets and property; and forcing isolation from family, friends, or school and/or work.

# Economic Abuse

- Making or attempting to make an individual financially dependent by maintaining total control over financial resources, withholding one's access to money, or forbidding one's attendance at school or employment.

# Domestic Violence Is

- One partner gaining and maintaining power and control over the other
- A CHOICE made by the abuser
- All About Behavior

# Abuser Behavior Patterns

- Knows intimate details of his partner's life (in order to control).
  - Where she works and how she travels
  - Who & when she sees, her colleagues, etc.
  - What scares her, what she values and believes
- Uses her culture/past problems against her.
  - Including religious beliefs or teachings.
  - She's Crazy



# Lead to Survival Behavior Patterns

- Are actions taken to protect themselves and their children - based on the behavior of the abuser
  - rushing to the jail to pay bail after an arrest
  - refusing to give a statement to law enforcement
  - refusing to testify as a witness against the abuser
  - repeatedly attempting to reconcile the relationship
- These are actions that people outside of the relationship may not understand, but are very clear to the victim.

# Why Victims Don't Do What We Think They Should Do

- Perpetrator's Behavior
- Lack of Safe Options
- Overwhelmed by Crisis
- Lack of Community/Family Support
- Leaving is a process
- Shame\*

# Powerful Myths and Messages

- Domestic violence doesn't happen in my congregation.
  - It couldn't involve the minister's family!
  - Church Officers

# Powerful Myths and Messages

- Theology has little relevance to domestic violence.
- The Biblical record of the rape of Tamar shows God's intention to make sexual abuse a subject for public discussion.
- II Samuel 13:1-20

# Powerful Myths and Messages

- The power of God or Jesus will change the situation.
- Suffering is redemptive - Glorification of suffering

# Scripture

- Ephesians 5:22-25
- Malachai 2:16, 17
- Isaiah 58:4-6
- Romans 12:9,10
- Matthew 19:14, 15
- Matthew 15:18-20
- Micah 6:8

# Misuse of Scripture

<sup>22</sup>Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

<sup>23</sup>For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

<sup>24</sup>Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

<sup>25</sup>Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;



**What You Can Do!**



# What Can You Do?

## Create a Ministry of Presence

- Engage in active listening (LE)
  - Take cues from the client about the issues they are facing.
- Respond without judgment
  - Do not ask “why are you still there?”
- Redirect spiritual messages that are harmful
  - Take her beliefs seriously

# If a Victim Engages You

- Know that they have made a choice to seek help.
  - Not an easy choice.
  - May not have decided to leave, talk to law enforcement, & etc. but are beginning to reach out.
  - May or may not be ready to talk about religious issues – Don't force them.

# Create a Ministry of Presence

- Be with the victim, wherever they are
  - Others have probably been directive and judgmental.
- Emphasize support and concern
  - It's not fair.
  - Nobody deserves to be treated like that.
  - I am concerned about you (and your children).

# Avoid

- “Fixing”
  - “Some things just don’t fix”
- Do not bring up religious issues if the victim does not.
- Do not make assumptions about the client’s:
  - Specific situation or desired outcomes
  - Religious beliefs or myths they may hold onto

# Avoid

- Judgmental language
  - “Why haven’t you left yet?”
  - “You are putting your children in danger.”
  - “You are a victim” (even though they are).
- Do NOT suggest:
  - Couple’s counseling
  - Anger management for the perpetrator
  - Individual therapy or pastoral counseling for the perpetrator

## Become a Safe Place

- Make your place of worship a safe place where victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and dating violence can come for help and healing. Display materials that include local and state hotlines for domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and dating violence victims.

# Practical Steps

- 800 – 799 – SAFE (Bulletin)
- Pray from the Pulpit
- Speak about Violence Against Women
- Recognize DV Awareness Month
- Get to know community DV Program

# Educate the congregation

- Provide ways for members of the congregation to learn as much as they can about domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. Include information in newsletters, on bulletin boards, and in marriage preparation classes. Sponsor educational seminars for your congregation on violence against women.



# Speak Out & Seek Out

- Ask the Pastor to use the pulpit to talk about domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and dating violence. Faith Leaders can have a powerful impact on people's attitudes and beliefs. Prepare to **be a resource**. Seek out training from professionals in the fields of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and dating violence. Partner with a local Shelter.

# Intervene

- If you suspect violence is occurring in a relationship or in a family, speak to each person separately. If you suspect an individual is being or has been victimized, speak to them privately. **Refer individuals to the community resources available to assist them.**

# What You Need to Know

- Domestic violence not only affects those who are abused, but also has a substantial effect on family members, friends, co-workers, other witnesses, and the community at large. Children, who grow up witnessing domestic violence, are among those seriously affected by this crime.

# What You Need to Know

- Frequent exposure to violence in the home not only predisposes children to numerous social and physiological problems, but also teaches them that violence is a normal way of life - therefore, increasing their risk of becoming society's next generation of victims and abusers.

# What You Need to Know

- Domestic violence can happen to anyone regardless of race, age, sexual orientation, religion, or gender. Domestic violence affects people of all socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels.

Peace and Blessings

● SHALOM

# When Love Hurts

- Video Presentation - Understanding and Healing Domestic Abuse