



What is Domestic Abuse?

Domestic abuse is when someone hurts or manipulates their relationship partner to gain power and control over them. It is a pattern of behavior that often escalates over time, and the damage it causes can hurt children and other family members as well. Domestic abuse can happen to people of all races, religions, cultures, and backgrounds—and *it is never okay, justified, or acceptable.*

There are many **types of domestic abuse.**

Emotional or verbal abuse: Using threats, intimidation, mean and humiliating comments; blaming and shaming; isolating the victim from friends and family; gaslighting (manipulating the victim into questioning their own sanity); or brainwashing (manipulating the victim into changing their beliefs against their will).

Financial Abuse: Controlling access to money or information about finances; not allowing the partner to get a job; or controlling spending on household necessities such as food, rent, monthly bills, and school tuition.

Electronic Abuse: Using email, cell phones, text messages, social media (such as Facebook), GPS tracking or “smart home” devices, computer spyware, or webcams to harass, control, or embarrass the victim.

Physical Abuse: Hitting, shoving, kicking, biting, slapping, or choking; damaging the partner’s personal property or pets; or hiding/withholding necessities such as food, medication, sleep, or transportation.

Sexual Abuse: Forcing the victim into sexual activities against their will; bragging about or flaunting extramarital affairs (cheating); trying to guilt you into sex, refusing to use birth control, asking for sex repeatedly or withholding sex or affection.

Stalking: Following, watching, and/or surveilling the victim in a way that serves no legitimate purpose and causes the victim to fear for their safety.

Spiritual Abuse: Undermining the victim’s religious needs and spiritual beliefs, using religious texts to give commands or punishment, isolating from faith community, or blaming for not being religious enough.

Domestic Abuse is Not Normal

All couples disagree at times, but most do so without resorting to the behaviors described above. When a partner repeatedly displays these behaviors, that’s abuse. If you think you or someone you know may be in an abusive relationship, call our free and confidential 24/7 Help/Crisis Line at 1-773-583-HOPE (4673).