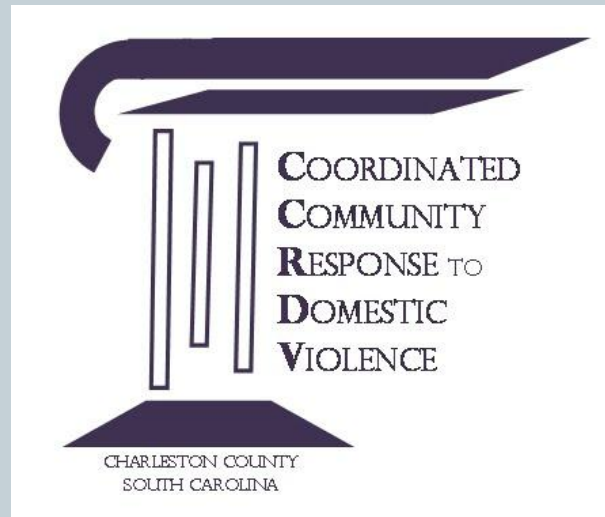


REACHING OUT TO VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE THROUGH FAITH COMMUNITIES



This presentation is a project of the Charleston County Coordinated Community Response to Domestic Violence (CCRDV)

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Introduction

Speaker & Participant Introductions

Exercise: Develop a profile

Victim

Abuser



Survivor to Survivor - Video

<http://www.survivortosurvivor.org/>



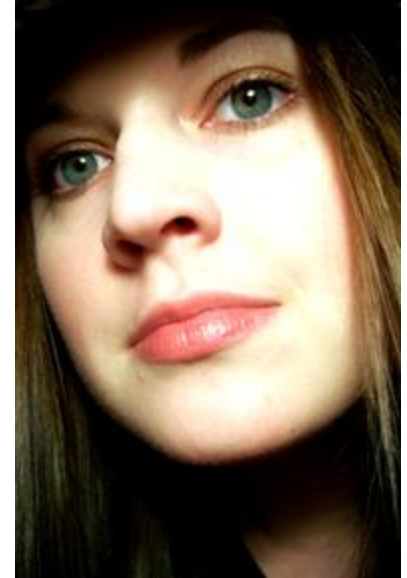
What is domestic violence?

A pattern of behaviors in partner relationships that incorporates a range of abusive tactics which serve to establish coercive control of one partner over the other.



Who are the victims?

- In South Carolina, only a “household member” can be a victim of criminal domestic violence. This includes: a spouse, a former spouse, persons who have a child in common, a male and female who are cohabiting or formerly have cohabited
- Of course there are many other victims of violence that do not meet this definition



But who are they really?

- **Anyone can be a victim!**
- Our society believes common myths about who may be a victim of domestic violence.
- Victims can be of any race, age, sex, culture, religion, education, employment, financial bracket or marital status



SC Statistics

- South Carolina ranks #9 in the nation in numbers of women killed by men (2009)
- There were 33 domestic homicide victims in SC during 2009
- According to SLED, about 35,000 reports of domestic violence are made to law enforcement each year
- SC Domestic violence programs answered 32,224 crisis calls in 2010



Characteristics of a Batterer

- Acts jealous and possessive, won't let partner have friends, checks up on partner, and won't accept breaking up
- Tries to control by being very bossy, giving orders, and making all the decisions; strict gender roles
- Frightens, threatens, humiliates victim, causing the victim to worry about how the abuser will react to things the victim says or does
- Often uses children as a weapon against victim

Characteristics of a Batterer

- Has a history of violence, and/or violent relationships (i.e. fighting, losing temper quickly, using weapons, bragging about violence.)
- Pressures partner for sex, or forces unwanted sexual activities
- May abuse drugs or alcohol and may pressure partner to do the same
- Blames partner and/or others for their abusive behavior and problems.

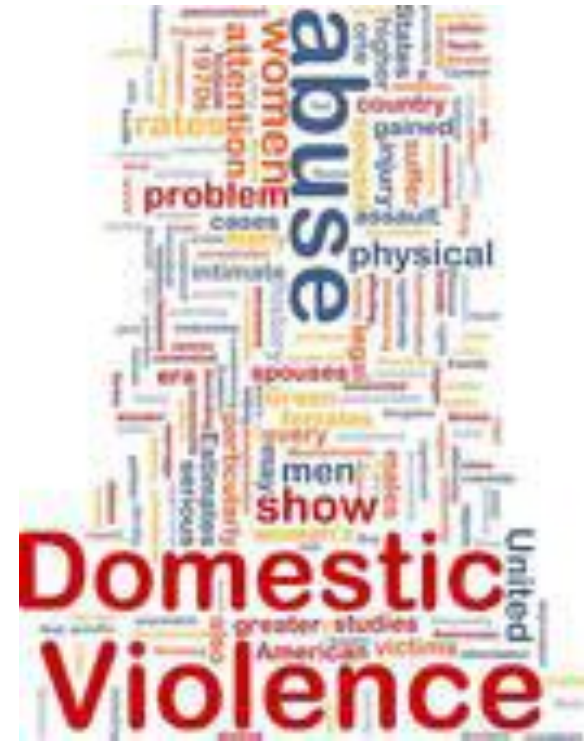


Why?

- Violence can be an effective strategy for creating and maintaining Power and Control
- Sense of entitlement, embedded in our social customs and institutions
- Learned behavior through observation, experience and reinforcement, culture, family and communities, schools, peer groups, etc.
- Reinforced via victim and social reactions

Types of Abuse

- Emotional Abuse
- Verbal Abuse
- Financial Abuse
- Destruction of Property
- Abuse of Pets
- Sexual Abuse
- Physical Abuse
- Neglect



What is Stalking?

- Stalking is one person's harassing, obsessive or threatening behavior that places another person in fear
- It may be motivated by an intense affection for or an extreme dislike toward a person



Stalking

- Stalkers believe:
 - their victims belong to them
 - their victims are theirs to control
 - they are justified in punishing their victim for trying to escape
- The majority of stalking takes place between people who have known each other intimately. Domestic violence stalkers are the most dangerous and potentially lethal group of stalkers.

High-Tech Stalking

Stalkers may misuse technology to:

- Send multiple emails or text messages a day
- Monitor a victim's computer activity through Spyware
- Track the location of a victim's vehicle using GPS
- Watch the victim through hidden cameras
- Intercept phone calls and messages
- Impersonate the victim
- It is not uncommon for a stalker to misuse multiple technologies at once while also using more traditional, non-technology tactics



How to Determine if a Domestic Violence Relationship is Lethal

Lethality Risk Factors

- Prior history of domestic violence (including police contact)
- An estrangement, separation, or an attempt at separation by the victim
- A display of obsessive-possessiveness or morbid jealousy (often accompanied by suicidal ideations, plans, or attempts; depression, sleep disturbances, and stalking)

Lethality Risk Factors

- Threats to kill victim; often providing details.
- A prior criminal history of violence
- Have (both) access to and a morbid fascination with firearms
- Victim has a restraining order or order of protection
- Batterer consumes large amounts of alcohol and/or drugs immediately before fatality

Victims' Emotional Reactions

- Low self-esteem
- Self-blame
- Hypersensitive
- Depression
- Self-doubt
- “maybe the abuser is right..”
- Self-medication



Mental Health

- Major Depressive Disorder
- General Anxiety Disorder
- Reactions to trauma and abuse
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Other related issues



Children & DV Statistics

- Children witness 68 to 80% of domestic assaults.
- As many as 10 million children are exposed to domestic violence each year.
- More than half of female domestic violence victims live in households with children under the age of 10.



Children and DV statistics

- 40 to 70% of men who abuse their wives also physically abuse their children.
- In 1/3 of homes where women are beaten by their partners, children are being sexually assaulted by that partner.
- In 80 to 85% of domestic violence incidents where police were called there were children in the home.

Risks to Children

- Child maltreatment
- Child abuse and neglect
- Sexual abuse
- Homicide
- Child custody
- Child poverty
- Becoming victims or abusers later in life



What Children Experience

- Isolation
- Decreased parent availability
- Chronic, elevated level of tension and stress
- Violence is seen as normal
- Dysfunctional coping



Dating Violence

- Dating violence is a pattern of behaviors used to exert power and control over a dating partner. Includes: physical, emotional and sexual abuse.
- According to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey released by the SC Dept. of Education, 16.1% of students surveyed reported being physically assaulted by a boyfriend or girlfriend & 8.6% report being forced to have sexual intercourse
- 1 in 3 teens experience dating abuse (see "1 in 3 Campaign" at Dosomething.org)

Dating Violence & Technology

- 10% of teens claim they have been threatened physically by electronic means
- One in three teens who have been in a relationship (30%) say they've been texted 10 – 30 times an hour by a partner to find out what they are doing and who they are with.
- 19% of teens in a relationship say their partner has used a cell phone or the internet to spread rumors about them
- 18% say their partner used a networking site to harass or put them down

(From the Liz Claiborne, Inc. Love is Not Abuse.
"Tech Abuse in Teen Relationships Study." 2007)



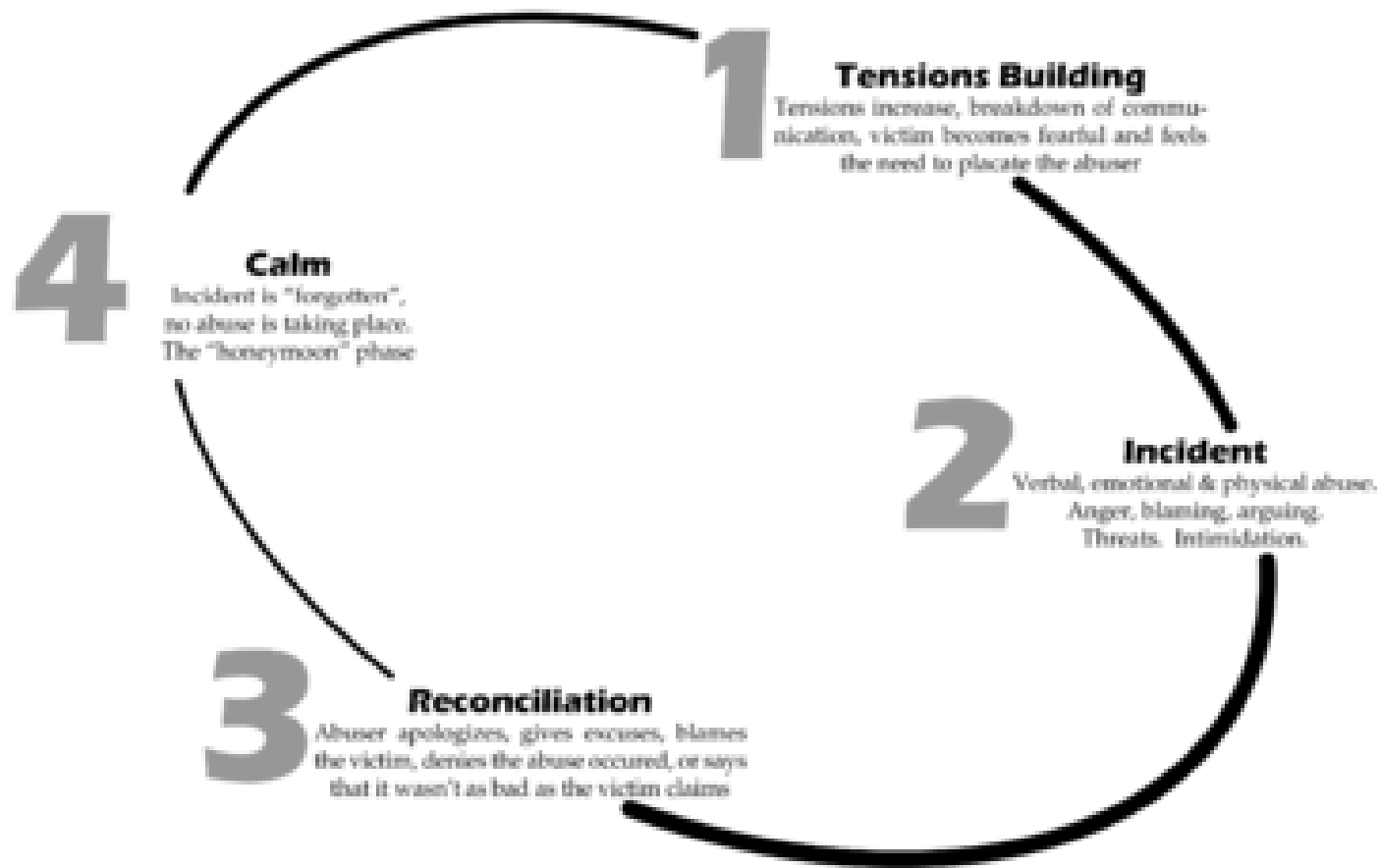
What Domestic Violence teaches

- No one can protect you
- Your family has a terrible, shameful secret that you cannot talk about
- There is no safe place
- You don't matter. Don't talk, don't feel, and don't get in the way. You're responsible for everything that is wrong
- Violence is a valid way to deal with others



Why does the Victim stay?

Cycle of Abuse



In the beginning...

- Victim believes the abuser will change
- Believes the abuse is the victim's fault
- Victim doesn't blame the abuser, instead the victim believes the abuse is caused by anger, alcohol, or other excuses
- Victim is committed to the marriage.
- Victim loves partner and wants to help abuser “get better”
- Victim may have strong religious background, beliefs








Later...

- Fear of losing child custody
- Lack of support system
- Lack of finances
- Lack of community resources
- Fear of deportation
- Learned helplessness
- Leaving the relationship does not mean safety



#1 reason...FEAR

How Can Faith Communities Become Part of the Solution?

abuse		community	peace	education		prayer	help	children
	spirit		clergy	ethics		justice	women	we
help	multicultural		trust	her	compassion		faith	trust
shalom		working	hope	wholeness	in	healing	hope	
faith		together			end	domestic	healthy	congregations
end	violence	us	multifaith		violence	prevention	religious	spirit

Susan's Story

- Susan's story
- Secondary victimization
- Susan's children
- Working with the CCRDV



Susan's "Do's" for the Faith Community

- Treat **victim safety** as the #1 priority
- Validate the victim's decisions
- Provide help such as: providing a place to transfer kids, accompanying the victim to court, providing household resources, child care, financial support if needed, and a non-judgmental listening ear
- Help a victim even if they decide not to leave
- Try to refer both the man and the woman to separate competent counseling services

Susan's "Do's" for the Faith Community

- Help the victim with things such as packing and getting a house ready to sell
- Help with changing locks and house repair
- Provide a temporary place to stay if needed
- Follow up – if you say you are going to do something – do it! Victims have had enough disappointment in their life

Susan's "Do's" for the Faith Community

- Reach out and be a presence in their lives. Victims often feel isolated. (But your presence has to be agreed to by them)
- Care for and mentor children
- Provide positive summer diversions for kids
- Prepare of a list of resources and people willing to help within your faith community so when the need arises, these people can be called on to help

Susan's "Do's" for the Faith Community

- Encourage strong couples in the faith community to step up and take victims and their children under their wings
- Encourage men in the faith community to show boys who may be in a violent home, everything from basic skills to how to treat a woman with respect
- Get to know the resources in the community that you can call if you are confronted with domestic violence in your faith community

Susan's "Don'ts" for the Faith Community

- Don't blame or abandon a victim if they decide not to leave
- Don't blame a victim for the break up of the marriage as the abuser has already broken the bond
- Don't try to provide couple's counseling, especially if violence or "power and control" are evident in the relationship
- Don't handle everything yourself. Get to know and refer to experts in the community who regularly work with these issues

Megan's Story

- A life unraveled
- Stalking explained
- Long term effects
- A child to consider
- The ongoing nightmare
- Life restarted



Megan's Experience with her Faith Community

- Her new faith community welcomed Megan and her son with open arms
- Megan realized God had a greater purpose for her life
- Faith leaders listened and expressed compassion.
- Faith leaders prayed with Megan
- Faith community invited Megan to join groups and to grow in her faith so she could be better equipped to deal with future difficulties

Megan's Experience with her Faith Community

- Megan wanted to make a difference for other victims
- Work with Liza's Lifeline – a local domestic violence agency in Charleston
- The faith community's reaction to a victim can be the defining moment for how a victim gets to the other side of abuse
- God wants victims to be safe
- God does not like our suffering
- God is an advocate for victims



Megan's tips for how a Faith Community can be helpful for victims

- It is okay for victims to fight hard for safety and justice
- God wants good to win over evil. Victims are not alone in this struggle. God is with them.
- Connect victims with a strong support network
- Be careful about what you preach. Some can twist the message to their own ends, especially when it comes to gender roles.

Faith Community Do's and Don'ts

Do's

- Warn the victim if any threats are made
- Name the violence as abuser's not victim's
- Refer to a program that addresses abusers
- Assess for suicide or threats of homicide
- Collaborate with agencies for accountability

Don'ts

- Meet alone or in private.
- Approach abuser about the violence without the victim's permission, knowledge and certainty that they are safe
- Pursue couples counseling
- Give information about the victim
- Confirm victim's story with the abuser

Faith Community Do's and Don'ts

Do's

- Encourage the abuser in their faith
- Address any religious rationalizations used
- Work with others to hold abuser accountable
- Assure the victim of your support – and then follow through!

Don'ts

- Let the abuser rationalize behavior
- Allow religious excuses for behavior
- Advocate for the abuser, forgive easily, or send them home with “only” a prayer
- Be “taken in” by a sudden conversion experience

What Victims want to say to Clergy

- Listen to my doubt. It is only as I move through doubt that more meaningful faith will develop
- Be patient with me. Let me be weak around you & not strong. Healing may take a long time
- Remind me this isn't all there is to life. Speak to me to affirm life. I need God as a companion, not an aspirin.

("Out of the Depths" by Dr. Richard P. Lord, Rush Creek Christian Church, Arlington, Texas)

Checklist: Readiness for Faith Communities Responding to Domestic Violence

A Checklist for Readiness Policies

- Have written policies and procedures in place on how to respond to domestic violence to include:
 - Statement that safety for victims and their children is the number one goal for intervention.
 - Safety planning
 - Confidentiality

Checklist for Readiness

- Policies Continued:
 - Referrals to local domestic violence/sexual assault programs and shelters, batterer intervention programs, and other local agencies as needed
 - Accountability for batterers
 - Contact local programs and develop referral strategies for responding to domestic violence.
 - Encourage congregants to donate time and money to domestic violence services (e.g. adopt a room at the shelter, volunteer for crisis line).

Checklist for Readiness

- Train all staff, clergy, and key lay leaders about how to recognize and respond to domestic violence victims
- Utilize local domestic violence experts to assist with this
- Have counselors available to talk with individuals during and after presentations



Checklist for Readiness Awareness

- Display posters about domestic violence around your church, temple, mosque, or synagogue, including in restrooms and common areas
- Have materials such as brochures and business cards from local domestic violence programs available in places that congregants can take them anonymously

Checklist for Readiness

- Provide information about domestic violence and services in your faith community and on your website
- Purchase a video and other resources about domestic violence for your library
- Include an article about domestic violence in your congregation's newsletter or bulletin
- Discuss bullying in your Sunday school classes

Checklist for Readiness

- Discuss dating violence and healthy relationships in your youth program
- Discuss abuse and violence in pre-marital counseling sessions
- Preach a sermon on domestic violence that supports victims and holds perpetrators accountable



What Your Faith Community Can Do in Response to Domestic Violence

What Can Your Faith Community Do?

- Become a Safe Place
- Educate your congregation
- Speak out
- Hold a ceremony in remembrance of victims
- Lead by Example
- Offer Space or resources
- Partner with existing resources
- Engage in cross referrals



What Can Your Faith Community Do?

- Prepare to Be a Resource
- Intervene Responsibly
- Support Professional training
- Host support groups
- Provide opportunities for youth who may come from a home with violence
- Look for unique ways to raise awareness
- Support victims!



Resources

- Faith Trust Institute <http://www.cpsdv.org>
- MUSC Interpersonal Primary Care Toolkit
<http://www.musc.edu/nursing/pcp>
- My Sister's House <http://www.mysistershouse.org/>
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

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