

DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES  
*Our Lady of Good Counsel Society*



TO LIVE WITHOUT FEAR

**HELPLINE:**

LOCAL: 604.640.7549  
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WWW.DOMESTICABUSESERVICES.CA

FaithTrust INSTITUTE

Working together to end  
sexual & domestic violence

2400 North 45th Street, Suite 10  
Seattle, Washington 98103  
www.faithtrustinstitute.org

This brochure is also available in Spanish, Laotian,  
Korean, Vietnamese, and Traditional Chinese.

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What every  
congregation  
needs to  
know about  
domestic  
violence...

Information  
for clergy,  
members of  
congregations,  
battered women's  
programs, and  
human service  
providers.

**Q** What is domestic violence?

**A** Domestic violence refers to a pattern of violent and coercive behavior exercised by one adult in an intimate relationship over another. It is not "marital conflict," "mutual abuse," "a lovers' quarrel," or "a private family matter."

It may consist of repeated, severe beatings, or more subtle forms of abuse, including threats and control.

**Q** Who are the victims of domestic violence?

**A** Statistics reflect that 95% of domestic violence victims are women, although men may also be victims. But regardless of who is being victimized, domestic violence is a serious problem that needs to be addressed by religious communities.

**Q** How prevalent is domestic violence?

**A** Surveys from the U.S. and Canada indicate that domestic violence occurs in 28% of all marriages. Researchers believe this estimate is too low since most domestic violence incidents are unreported.

**Q** What are the four basic types of domestic violence?

**A** **Physical Assault**  
Includes, shoving, pushing, restraining, hitting or kicking. Physical assaults may occur frequently or infrequently, but in many cases they tend to escalate in severity and frequency over time.

**Sexual Assault**  
Any time one partner forces sexual acts which are unwanted or declined by the other partner.

**Psychological Assault**  
Includes isolation from family and friends, forced financial dependence, verbal and emotional abuse, threats, intimidation, and control over where the partner can go and what she can do.

**Attacks Against Property and Pets**

Destruction of property which may include household objects or treasured objects belonging to the victim, hitting the walls, or abusing or killing beloved pets.

**Q How do I know if someone is a victim of domestic violence?**

**A** Women who are being battered are as different from each other as non-battered women. They come from all walks of life, all races, all educational backgrounds, and all religions. A battered woman might be the Vice-President of your local bank, your child's Sunday school teacher, your beautician or your dentist. Anyone experiencing any of the patterns of abuse listed above is a victim of domestic violence.

**Q Why does she stay?**

**A** She stays because she is terrified that he will become more violent if she leaves, that he will try to take the children, that she can't make it on her own.

What should I do if I believe I am a victim of domestic violence?

- Trust your instincts and seek help from a domestic violence program in your community.
- Recognize that the abuse is not your fault.
- Know that you are not alone and that help is available.
- Talk in confidence with someone you trust: a relative, a friend, or, if you feel comfortable, a religious leader.
- If you choose to remain in the situation for now, set up a safety plan of action (for example, hide a car key and some money in a safe place, locate somewhere to go in case of emergency).

**Q Who are batterers?**

**A** Just as with battered women, men who batter fall into no specific categories. They also come from all class backgrounds, races, religions, and walks of life. They may be unemployed or highly-paid professionals. The batterer may be a good provider, a sober and upstanding member of the community, and a respected member of his congregation.

How do I know if I'm a batterer?

- If you are extremely jealous,
- If you control your partner's activities,
- If you use physical force to solve problems, and
- If you believe that you are the head of the household and should not be challenged,

then you are probably hurting the people you love and you should get help from someone who will hold you accountable. Acknowledge that the abuse is your problem and have the courage to seek help.

**Q What can I do to be helpful if an abusive situation is revealed?**

**A** • Listen to the woman and believe her.

Tell her that the abuse is not her fault, and is not God's will for her.

- Tell her she is not alone and that help is available.
- Let her know that without intervention, abuse often escalates in frequency and severity over time.
- Seek expert assistance. Refer her only to specialized domestic violence counseling programs, not to couples counseling. Help her find a shelter, a safe home, or advocacy resources to offer her protection. To suggest that she merely return home places her and her children in real danger.
- Hold the abuser accountable. Don't minimize his abusive behavior. Support him in seeking specialized batterers' counseling to help change his behavior. Continue to hold him accountable and to support and protect the victim even after he has begun a counseling program.
- If restoration of the relationship is to occur, it can be considered only after the above steps have taken place.

**Q How does religious doctrine address domestic violence?**

**A** Religious teachings can serve as either a roadblock or a resource in addressing domestic violence. There is nothing in Jewish or Christian teaching which can rightly be used to justify abuse. However, there are teachings which can be misused and distorted to suggest that domestic violence may be acceptable or even God's will. When these teachings or interpretations of scripture are misused, they become roadblocks to ending the abuse.

For example, an interpretation of Shalom Bayit, the Jewish teaching about peace in the home, which places sole responsibility on the woman to "keep the peace" and obey her husband, would be a

serious roadblock to addressing domestic violence for a battered woman. An understanding that Shalom Bayit is everyone's responsibility offers help for the woman and accountability for the abuser.

Likewise, the Christian teaching that husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church is a challenge to husbands to treat their wives with respect and love, not with violence or control. This teaching can serve as a valuable resource to challenge and prevent domestic violence.

As religious communities, our mandate is to minimize any roadblocks facing abused members of our congregations and to maximize the resources that exist within our religious traditions.

*"Have pity on me, O God, for I am in distress  
with sorrow my eye is consumed;  
my soul also, and my body.*

*I am like a dish that is broken...  
But my trust is in you, O God;  
I say, 'You are my God'".*

(Ps 31:10-15)

**Q What can the church or synagogue do to prevent domestic violence?**

- A** • Form a committee to address domestic violence issues.
- Encourage the clergy to speak out against domestic violence from the pulpit.
  - Invite staff from local domestic violence programs to make educational presentations.
  - Designate a day or month for educating and activating the congregation.
  - Offer pre-marriage counseling dealing with equality, conflict, violence and control.
  - Use available curricula for youth which encourage the values of gender equality and nonviolent conflict resolution.
  - Offer meeting space in your church or synagogue to the local domestic violence program.
  - Contribute financial support to local domestic violence programs.

**Q Where can I find more information?**

**A** CALL:  
For services for victims in the U.S. or Canada, look under "Abuse" or "Community Services" in the front of your phone book.

For services for victims in the U.S.:  
**National Domestic Violence Hotline**  
(800) 799-SAFE (24 hours)  
(800) 787-3224 (TDD)  
www.ndvh.org

Resources & tech. assistance in the U.S.:  
**National Resource Center on Domestic Violence**  
(800) 537-2238 / www.pcadv.org

For services for victims in Canada:  
**Assaulted Women's Helpline**  
(416) 863-0511 (24 hours)  
www.awhl.org

For French-speaking women in Canada:  
**SOS Femmes**  
(800) 387-8603 (in Canada, 24 hrs)

For educational materials in Canada:  
**National Clearinghouse on Family Violence**  
(800) 267-1291 (within Canada)

Information on religious issues and domestic violence:

**FaithTrust Institute**  
2400 North 45th Street, Suite 10  
Seattle, WA 98103  
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READ:

A Christian resource:  
**Keeping the Faith: Guidance for Christian Women Facing Abuse**  
by Rev. Marie M. Fortune  
(HarperSanFrancisco, 1987)

A Jewish resource:  
**Shalom Bayit: A Jewish Response to Child Abuse and Domestic Violence**  
by Ian Russ, Sally Weber and Ellen Ledley (The Shalom Bayit Committee, 6851 Lennox Ave., Panorama City, CA 91405, 1993)