

*I*ntroduction—You are not alone!

Battering is never okay! Domestic Violence should not happen to anyone. Ever. Period. But it does—and when it does, there is help. Maybe you have lived with abuse, maybe experienced it just once. Maybe you work or live next to someone who is being abused right now. Whoever you are, this book can show you how and where to get help.

We have tried to include everything you might want to know, everything you will need to get help, get safe, even get out of an abusive relationship. If this book applies to you, call us. Help is yours for the asking.

You just need to remember two things: **first, battering is never OK; second, you are not alone.**

You are on a healing path when...

- you know that abuse from your partner is not your fault,
- you know that you have the right to live without violence,
- you know that your thoughts and feelings count,
- you find the time to care for yourself,
- you know you do not have to be perfect,
- you know you are not alone.

If you know someone who is in an abusive relationship—a friend, family member, coworker, client, patient or parishioner—please pass this book on or see that she or he gets a copy.

**The Polk County
Family Violence Center—243-6147
The Iowa Domestic Abuse Hotline—1-800-942-0333**

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Advocates are people who are trained to give you information, encourage you, help you explore your options and speak on your behalf. You will find advocates at the **Family Violence Center at 243-6147** and **Polk County Victim Services at 286-3600**.

Battered woman is any woman who is in physical danger or is controlled by the threat or use of physical force. She is a woman who finds herself living in a pattern that often combines emotional, physical and sexual abuse. Our primary focus is battered women because the overwhelming majority of people abused in this pattern are women.

Batterer/Assailant are terms for the person who does the pushing, beating, hitting, stalking, threatening, name calling, isolation and other abusive tactics to control his partner. We refer to assailants as “he” in this booklet, although in some cases the assailant is a woman.

Domestic assaults are the behaviors such as physical abuse, use of weapons or stalking that are crimes. Many other behaviors are abusive but not criminal.

Domestic violence, spouse abuse, partner abuse, battering, will all refer to the same thing in this booklet: a pattern of controlling behaviors (**see page 4**) that may include physical assaults, sexual assaults, emotional abuse, isolation, threats, stalking and intimidation. These behaviors are used by one person in an intimate relationship to control the other. The partners may be married or not married, heterosexual or homosexual, living together, separated or dating.

Survivor/victim are terms that refer to the person who has been hurt. “Victim” is often used by the justice system. The writers of this booklet see battered women as “survivors” who are going through, or who have gone through, terrible times with courage and hope.

*H*ow do I know if I am abused?

You may be in a relationship that hurts. You may have a loved one who is in a relationship that hurts. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, nearly four million women are abused annually by their partners or family members.

It is hard to accept that the person you love hurts you. Acknowledging your situation and seeking help may be the first step toward healing and safety.

Abuse is a pattern. It is a pattern of control where one person scares or forces another person into doing what he wants her to do.

Abuse can be physical, sexual or emotional. This booklet will show you checklists and charts to help you identify the different ways abusers control their partners. Look carefully at the Power and Control Wheel **on page 6**.

Physical violence is always a crime. It does not matter if you are related or in love or friends. It is against the law to punch or push or choke or burn or cut or slap someone. It is against the law to stalk someone. And, it is against the law for a man to force a woman to have sex, **even if they are married**.

Often the abuser will blame the victim and say, "You made me do that," or say he has a "right" in intimate relationships to keep you "in line."

Whatever his excuse, he is wrong. **Violence is never acceptable in intimate relationships.**

This booklet has information that will help you recognize abuse and find support, safety and resources that can help you deal with it. Please read on. There is help and there is hope.

Questions to ask yourself

Here are some questions that may help you determine if you are being abused.

- Has your partner pushed, shoved, pounded, slapped, bruised, kicked, choked or physically hurt you in any way?
- Has your partner threatened you with a weapon or threatened to kill you?
- Has your partner threatened your children, family or friends?
- Has your partner controlled your coming or going — taken your keys, isolated you from friends and family?
- Has your partner forced you to have sex or do sex acts against your will?
- Does your partner call you names or say you are “stupid” or “ugly” or a “whore”?
- Does your partner make you believe the abuse is your fault?
- Has your partner intentionally damaged your possessions, or threatened to do so?
- Do you feel like you are always walking on eggshells trying not to upset him?
- Are you afraid that if you left, you would be attacked, harassed, followed, spied upon or killed?
- Does your partner control all the money or take all your money?

If you have answered “yes” to any of these questions (or any parts of these questions), please know you are not alone. Abuse can happen to anyone. It happens to women of all backgrounds and all races: whether you are rich or poor; whether you have a lot of education or just a little; whether you live in the city, in the suburbs or on a farm; whether you are old, young or middle aged.

Battered women do not cause their battering or invite it by their behavior. It happens *to* them and the only thing they have in common is that they are battered. They are made to live in fear. Someone else is controlling their lives.

A Guide to Surviving Domestic Violence

If you are abused, it is important to know that **you cannot change your partner or his behavior**. In order for the abuse to end, he must take responsibility for it *and* be responsible for changing it.

Abuse takes its toll—physical pain, emotional stress, feelings of shame or no feelings at all. Once a pattern of abuse starts in a relationship it usually gets worse over time. For many women, the healing process cannot begin until the pattern is recognized and safety is restored.

You may not know what to do. Your partner may apologize after an assault and promise to never do it again. You may be afraid to take any steps that might make him angry. You may worry about how you would manage financially if the relationship ended. You may not know what course of action would be best for your children.

Things usually feel less confusing if you talk with someone who is trained to help. **See page 18** for services of the **Family Violence Center**. It is an emergency-safe shelter at a confidential location, provided by Children and Families of Iowa.

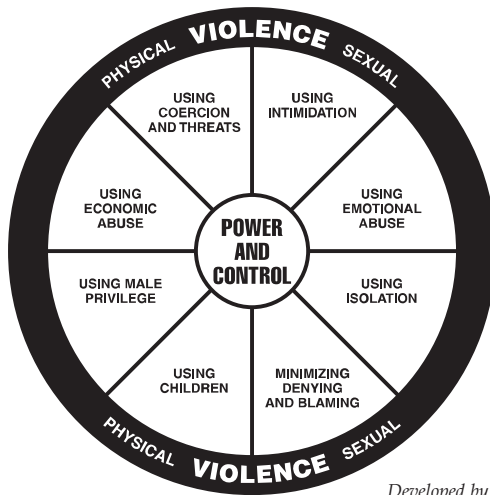


Children and Families of Iowa, 1111 University, Des Moines, Iowa

Power and Control

Battering is an act used by one person to gain power and control over another person.

The Power and Control Wheel shows the relationship of physical and sexual abuse to the other forms of abuse. Each spoke of the wheel represents a tactic used to control or gain power, which is the hub of the wheel. **The rim that surrounds and supports the spokes is physical and sexual abuse. It holds the wheel together and gives it strength.** It was developed from the experiences of women who have been abused.



Developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project—Duluth, Minnesota

Usually all or some of the kinds of control you see in this chart form part of an abusive pattern. Take a closer look.

Using Physical Abuse

Slapping, pushing, kicking, biting, shoving, hitting, choking, using a weapon, punching, cutting or pulling hair.

Using Sexual Abuse

Physically attacking sexual parts of your body. Making you watch pornographic videos. Making you do sexual things against your will. Making you have sex after a beating. Treating you as a sex object. Making you feel you are nothing, nobody, only there for his use.

Using Intimidation

Making you afraid by using looks, actions, gestures. Smashing things. Destroying your property. Abusing pets. Displaying weapons.

Using Emotional Abuse

Putting you down. Making you feel bad about yourself. Calling you names. Making you think you are crazy. Playing mind games. Humiliating you. Making you feel guilty.

Using Isolation

Controlling what you do, whom you see and talk to, what you read and where you go. Limiting your outside involvement. Using jealousy to justify his actions.

Minimizing, Denying and Blaming

Making light of the abuse and not taking your concerns about it seriously. Saying the abuse did not happen. Shifting responsibility for abusive behavior. Saying you caused it.

Using Children

Making you feel guilty about your children. Using your children to relay messages. Using visitation to harass you. Threatening to take your children away.

Using Male Privilege

Treating you like a servant. Making all the big decisions. Acting like the "Master of the Castle." Being the one to define men's and women's roles.

Using Economic Abuse

Preventing you from getting a job. Making you ask for money. Giving you an allowance. Taking your money. Not letting you know about or have access to family income.

Using Coercion and Threats

Making and/or carrying out threats to do something to hurt you. Threatening to leave you, to commit suicide, to report you to welfare. Making you drop charges. Making you do illegal things.

Sexual abuse, marital rape and AIDS

Sexual abuse is common in violent relationships. It is often the most difficult aspect of abuse to admit to yourself or to talk about. Here are some examples of sexual abuse. See if any of them apply to you.

- Does your partner intimidate you so that you are afraid to say “no” to sex?
- Does your partner want to have sex after a beating?
- Does your partner force you to have sex or perform sexual acts against your will?
- Does your partner hurt you physically during sex by assaulting sexual parts of your body?
- Does your partner treat you like a sex object or call you sexually degrading names?
- Does your partner force you to have sex without protection against pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases?

Remember that forced sex is against the law whether or not the attacker is your husband.

Remember, too, that if your partner has sex with other people and then has unprotected sex with you, you are at risk of getting AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. If you think you may have been exposed, please consider being tested.

Should I get tested? What should I do? You should talk to a knowledgeable person for advice. After discussing your situation with a counselor, you may want to be tested to find out if you have HIV. To reach a sexual assault counselor, call the **Polk County Victim Services** at 286-3600 or the **Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault** at 244-7424.

The Public Health Clinic of the Polk County Health Department can also help you. **Phone 286-3798** or go to their office at 1907 Carpenter, Des Moines. You can schedule an appointment or get dates and times for walk-in testing. HIV/AIDS testing is free and is done anonymously. Results are available in two weeks.

Sexual assault counselors can help provide information, support and counseling about the sexual assault, whether or not you choose to report the assault to the police. A sexual assault counselor can listen to you, help you think through what you want to do, give you information or refer you to the nearest HIV counseling and testing site. All of these services are free and confidential.

HIV counselors can provide support and counseling, check your level of risk and make recommendations regarding testing. They can also refer you to other resources as needed. Anything that you can tell the counselor, either on the phone or in person, is confidential.

There are two ways to get tested: Anonymous and confidential.

Anonymous testing means the counselor will not have your name, address, or phone number and the test result will be reported only to you. Anonymous testing is done if you ask for it. An anonymous testing site will not bill your insurance company.

Confidential testing means that the result may be recorded in your medical record. Your test result is private but there are others who may have access to your records such as insurance companies, etc. If you wish to create a record of your test results, you must be tested at a confidential site. You may need a record of your test results if you pursue any legal action based on exposure to HIV/AIDS. This issue is very complicated and should be discussed with a sexual assault counselor.