

# What is Domestic Abuse?

Abuse between romantic partners—known as **domestic abuse** or **intimate partner violence**—can take many forms. It can be overt, such as physical violence, or subtle, such as controlling a partner through emotional, financial, or other forms of manipulation.

## Common Reactions to Abuse

depression, including suicidal thoughts	resentment, anger, and aggression	fear of the abusive partner	uncertainty about how to escape abuse
denial that abuse is occurring	substance use	anxiety, shame, and self-blame	social withdrawal

## Why People Stay in Abusive Relationships

### Fear

The abuser may threaten suicide, or threaten to harm children, pets, or property, if the victim leaves. The victim may fear more severe abuse if they are caught trying to leave.

### Rationalization

The victim may believe they deserve the abuse, tell themselves it's "not so bad", feel the relationship is otherwise good, or believe the abuser will someday stop their abusive behavior.

### Financial Limitations

Abusers may prevent the victim from working, control their money, or threaten to steal their possessions. Many victims face homelessness, or may struggle to support children, if they leave.

### Cultural Stigma

The victim may be part of a culture in which abuse is accepted or divorce is strongly discouraged. They may risk losing friends and family if they attempt to leave an abusive relationship.

## Abuse Facts

**Abuse is widespread, and both men and women may be victims.** About 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men report experiencing severe physical violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime.

**Abuse is never the victim's fault.** Though the abuser may try to blame the victim, the abuser is responsible for their actions. Anger issues or a desire for power and control may lead to abuse.

**Domestic abuse doesn't require marriage or cohabitation.** It can also happen among those who are dating, divorced, have a child together, or live separately.

**Abuse doesn't discriminate.** People of any race, gender, or economic status can commit or experience abuse.

For confidential help available 24/7 in the United States, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at **1-800-799-7233** or visit **www.thehotline.org**.