



How Existing Mental Illness Influences Domestic Violence

By: Bailey Nagel

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<https://www.thehotline.org/>

Domestic Violence

741.28

The 2024 Florida Statutes

[Title XLIII](#)
DOMESTIC RELATIONS

[Chapter 741](#)
MARRIAGE; DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

[View Entire Chapter](#)

741.28 Domestic violence; definitions.—As used in ss. [741.28-741.31](#):

(1) “Department” means the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

(2) “Domestic violence” means any assault, aggravated assault, battery, aggravated battery, sexual assault, sexual battery, stalking, aggravated stalking, kidnapping, false imprisonment, or any criminal offense resulting in physical injury or death of one family or household member by another family or household member.

(3) “Family or household member” means spouses, former spouses, persons related by blood or marriage, persons who are presently residing together as if a family or who have resided together in the past as if a family, and persons who are parents of a child in common regardless of whether they have been married. With the exception of persons who have a child in common, the family or household members must be currently residing or have in the past resided together in the same single dwelling unit.

(4) “Law enforcement officer” means any person who is elected, appointed, or employed by any municipality or the state or any political subdivision thereof who meets the minimum qualifications established in s. [943.13](#) and is certified as a law enforcement officer under s. [943.1395](#).

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Mental Health

- ❖ Emotional, psychological, and social well-being
- ❖ Affects thoughts, feelings, and actions
- ❖ Influences how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices

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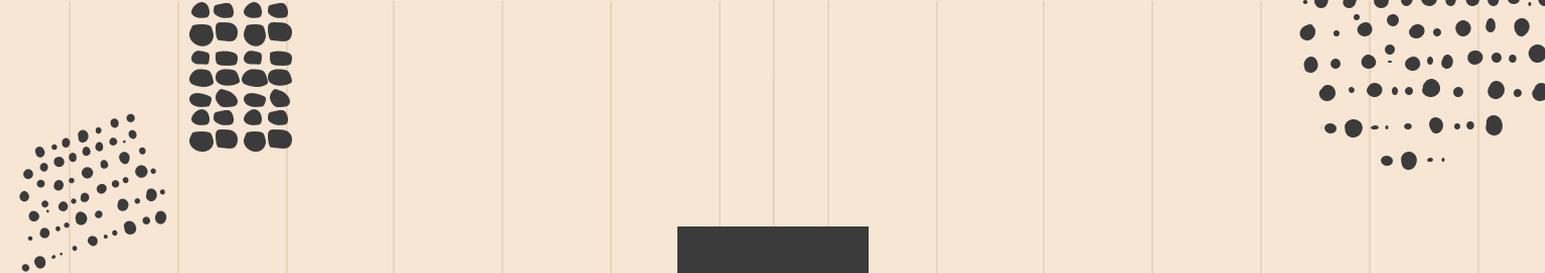
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Mental Illness

- ❖ Diagnosed conditions that affect thoughts, mood, and/or behaviors
- ❖ Statistics:
 - ❖ More than 1 in 5 adults live with a mental illness
 - ❖ More than 1 in 5 youth have experienced a debilitating mental illness
 - ❖ About 1 in 25 adults live with a serious mental illness
 - ❖ \$4.1 billion per year in healthcare in the U.S.



01

The Influence of Mental Illness on Becoming an Abuser

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True or False

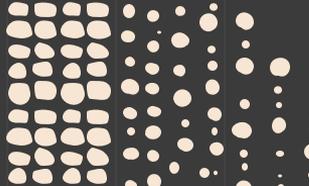
Abuse can be caused by a mental health diagnosis, such as bipolar disorder, depression, narcissistic personality, borderline personality, or antisocial personality.

FALSE

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How do we know

this? Mental illness tends to impact all areas of a person's life

- ❖ In contrast, abuse primarily impacts personal relationships and NOT the other areas of life
 - ❖ Abuser puts on “fake mask” that only comes off for the victim
 - ❖ If mental illness were the cause of the abuse, then the abuser would physically and/or emotionally abuse everyone around them, not just their partner
 - ❖ Abusers are in control of their behavior if they behave well in public or towards others and turn into a “monster” only in private or with the victim

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How they treat other people

vs.

How they treat their partner

- ❖ Does my partner yell or scream at others outside of our relationship?
- ❖ Does my partner make others check in to see where they're at and who they're with?
- ❖ Does my partner hit others outside of our relationship?
- ❖ Does my partner minimize or verbally tear down others?
- ❖ Does my partner pressure others to do things that they aren't okay with?
- ❖ Does my partner make threats to others when they say something my partner doesn't agree with?

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Mental Illness and Abuse

- ❖ People with depression and anxiety, panic, substance use, and personality disorders are more likely to abuse their partners than people without these conditions.
- ❖ However, these conditions do not cause them to strike out against their partners.
- ❖ Despite this, many domestic abusers want to blame their behavior on something they cannot control.

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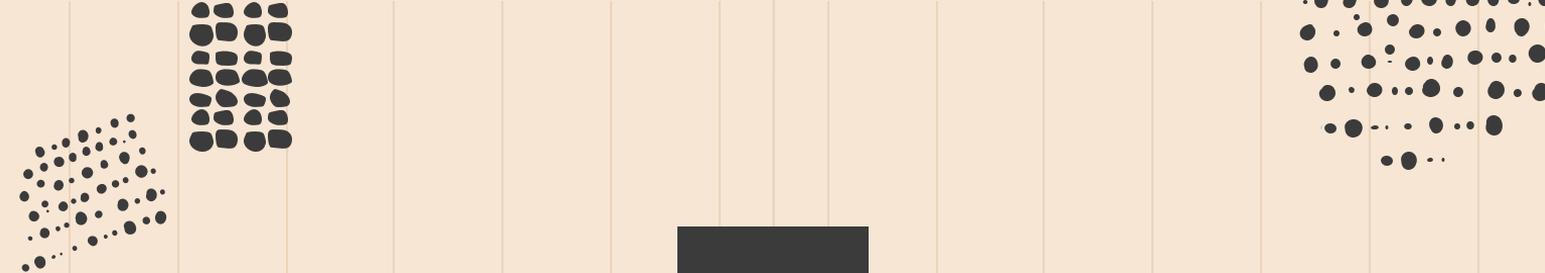
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Examples

Abusing alcohol and drugs can make abusive episodes worse and more frequent. Abusers who complete substance abuse treatment may become less violent, but they are not apt to become less controlling.

“Over and over again in my clinical work I see victims yearning for a simple solution. ‘If he would just stop drinking or drugging, the abuse would stop.’ Unfortunately, even when perpetrators complete treatment, the abuse rarely stops.”

– Christine Cocchiola, DSW



02

The Influence of Mental Illness on Becoming a Victim

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Heightened Risk of Domestic Violence Among People With a Mental Illness

01

Depressive
Disorder

2.5 times more likely

02

Anxiety
Disorder

3.5 times more likely

03

PTSD

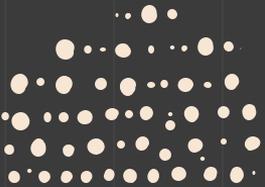
7 times more likely

04

Eating Disorders, OCD,
Schizophrenia, Bipolar
Disorder, and Others
Increased risk

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Why?

Studies/Research

- ❖ Unknown
- ❖ Insufficient data to draw conclusion about causality
- ❖ Data only measured the relationship between mental illness and domestic violence

Discussion

Why do you think someone with an existing mental illness has a significantly higher risk of becoming a victim of domestic violence compared to a person without a mental illness?

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What can be done?

- ❖ Professionals trained to understand domestic violence
- ❖ Clear referral and care pathways
- ❖ Partnerships

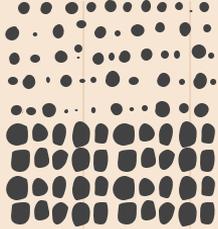
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- ❖ Empathy, self-esteem, emotional regulation, resilience, and stress management = critical protective factors
- ❖ Addressing poor mental health is strategy under United Nations framework to reduce violence against women (RESPECT) and United Nations strategy to reduce violence against children (INSPIRE)





Questions



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Resources

- ❖ *Mental Health*, CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION (2024), <https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/index.htm> (last visited Sep 26, 2024).
- ❖ Taylor Counseling Group, *The difference between Mental Health & Mental Illness*, TAYLOR COUNSELING GROUP (2023), <https://taylorcounselinggroup.com/blog/mental-health-vs-mental-illness/> (last visited Sep. 26, 2024).
- ❖ *The relationship between domestic violence and mental health*, HIGH COUNTRY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH, <https://www.hcbh.org/blog/posts/2022/october/the-relationship-between-domestic-violence-and-mental-health/> (last visited Sep 26, 2024).
- ❖ Piccolo Marketing, *How does domestic abuse affect mental health?*, BRIDGES DVC (2021), <https://www.bridgesdvc.org/how-does-domestic-abuse-affect-mental-health/> (last visited Sep 26, 2024).

Resources Continued . . .

- ❖ *Abuse and mental illness: Is there a connection?*, *The Hotline* (2023), <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/abuse-and-mental-illness-is-there-a-connection/> (last visited Sep 26, 2024).
- ❖ *Healthy Mind, healthy life*, UTEP, <https://www.utep.edu/healthy-mind/articles/mental-illness-abuse.html#:~:text=It%20is%20assumed%20by%20many,must%20be%20treated%20as%20such> (last visited Sep 26, 2024).
- ❖ Lisa Aronson Fontes, *Abuse cannot be blamed on alcoholism or mental illness*, *DomesticShelters.org* (2024), <https://www.domesticshelters.org/articles/identifying-abuse/abuse-cannot-be-blamed-on-mental-illness> (last visited Sep 26, 2024).
- ❖ Kylee Trevillion et al., *Experiences of domestic violence and mental disorders: A systematic review and meta-analysis*, *PLOS ONE*, <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0051740> (last visited Sep 26, 2024).
- ❖ *Addressing poor mental health*, *PREVENTION COLLABORATIVE* (2024), <https://prevention-collaborative.org/prevention-strategies/addressing-poor-mental-health/> (last visited Sep 26, 2024).