

The Domestic Violence Crime Scene: The Silent Witness Screaming to be Heard

PRESENTED BY

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OBJECTIVES



THE COMMON WAYS CRIMES SCENES ARE OVERLOOKED

Overlooked

THE IMPACT OF

Corroboration

TOOLS & STRATEGIES TO IDENTIFY AND DOCUMENT

Evidence



We investigate these without a participating victim.



**Let's start investigating these the same way.
Even if she doesn't want to participate.**

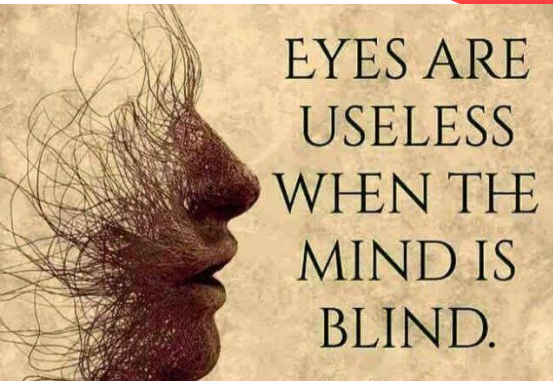
MINDSET CHANGE

~~No Witness
=
Weak Case~~

~~Investigation
limited to verbal
reports~~

~~He said

She said~~



THE COST OF MISSING EVIDENCE

**Diminished
Probable
Cause**

**Weak
Prosecution**

**Missed
Indicators
of Coercive
Control**

**Increased
Victim
Danger**

Even tiny observations can provide significant corroboration.

MANY DV CASE DON'T LACK WITNESSES

They lack
investigators
who know where
to look

&

They lack
investigators
willing to look

**Thorough is as
thorough does.**

MINDSET CHANGE

WE MUST INVESTIGATE BEYOND THE ELEMENTS OF THE CRIME

FEAR

POWER
&
CONTROL

DANGER

PROBABLE CAUSE



BEYOND REASONABLE DOUBT

**It's INSANE how some
people need NO EVIDENCE
to believe a LIE but
REQUIRE endless
EVIDENCE to BELIEVE the
TRUTH.**

CORROBORATION

evidence
of the crime

evidence
of the family
relationship

evidence
truthful
statements

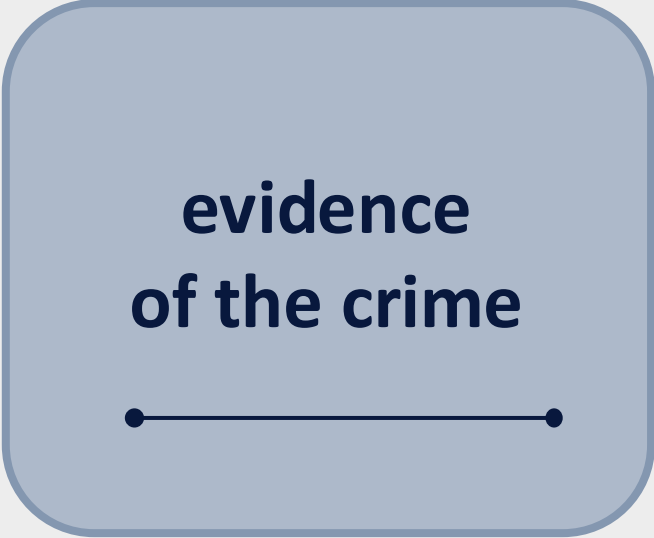
evidence
of the
untruthful
statements

PROBABLE CAUSE



BEYOND REASONABLE DOUBT

evidence
of the crime



She reported he punched her on the left side of her mouth with his right fist.

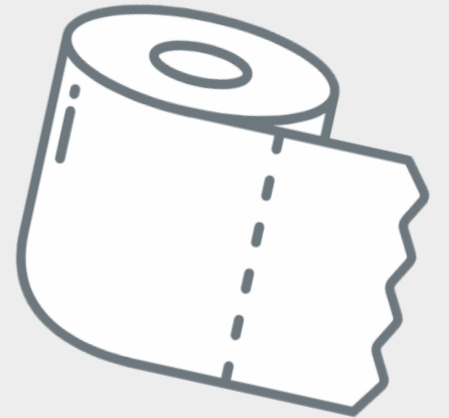
- ✓ **She has swelling & bruising to her left lip.**
- ✓ **She has cuts inside her lip to this area.**
- ✓ **You verify he's right-handed.**

The physical evidence is consistent with her reporting.

evidence
of truthful
statements

She said he struck her as she was getting out of the shower.

- ✓ **Her hair is still wet**
- ✓ **The shower is still wet**
- ✓ **A towel is still wet**



**evidence
of untruthful
statements**

He said she invited him over.

- ✓ **There's nothing on the call log.**
- ✓ **There's no text message.**
- ✓ **No carrier pigeons in sight.**

evidence
of the
family
relationship

Verbal declarations

- ✓ **Photos of them together**
- ✓ **Text messages**
- ✓ **Prior reports**
- ✓ **Other parties**



evidence
of the
family
relationship

Texas CCP 38.371

Domestic Violence is...

A **PATTERN** of abusive behaviors by one person to **gain or maintain control** over an intimate partner or family member.

**I DON'T TRUST WORDS. I EVEN
QUESTION ACTIONS. BUT I
NEVER DOUBT PATTERNS.**

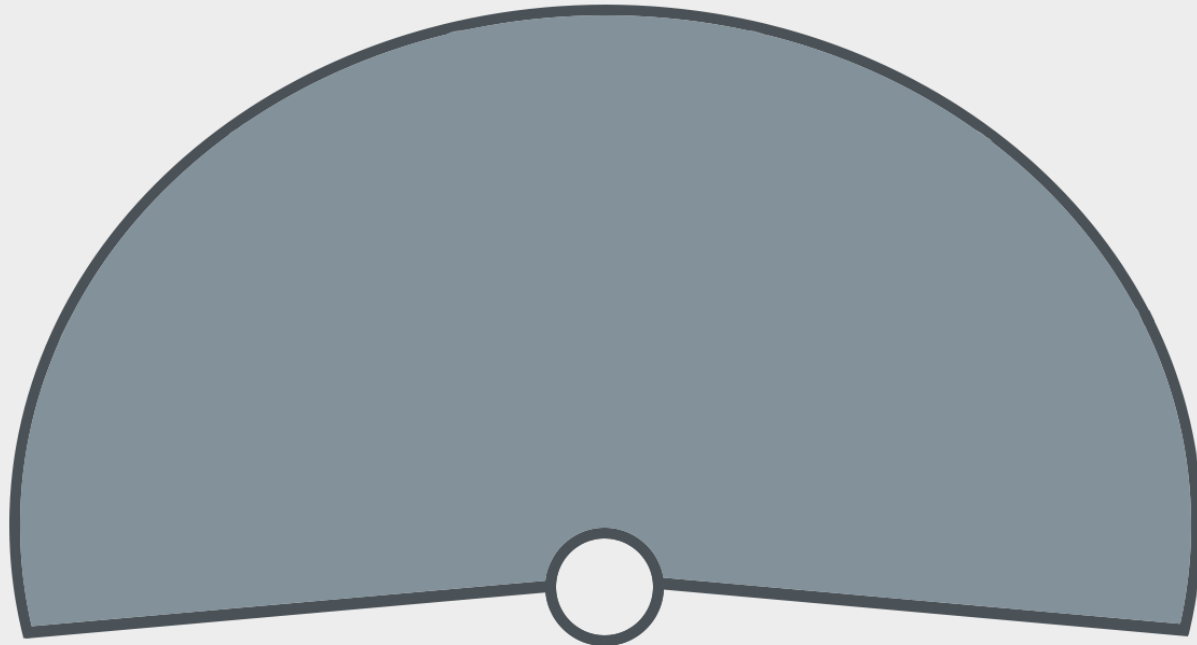
PROSECUTION

Some information may not be admissible for the guilt/innocence phase.

It could be great evidence for the punishment phase.

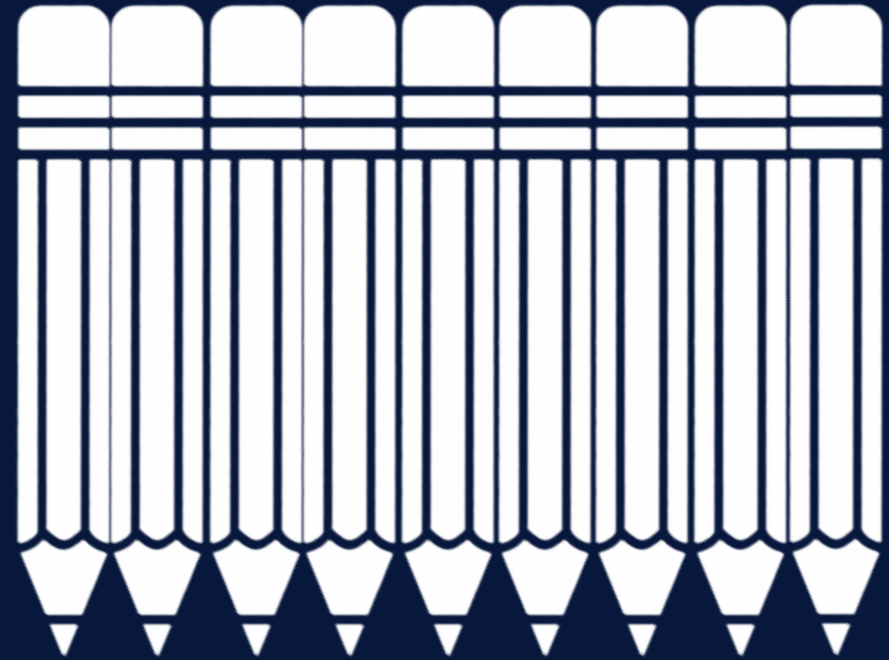
We may never know what information is going to be vital, so we treat it all as vital.

EXPAND YOUR VIEW



Look beyond
PROBABLE CAUSE

Investigate to support
**BEYOND A REASONABLE
DOUBT**



TOTALITY OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES

CIRCUMSTANCIAL EVIDENCE

Proof of facts offered
as evidence from
which other facts may
be inferred.

=

Evidence that points to a
conclusion, **even if nobody
directly saw or heard** the
actual event.

HOMICIDE

EXPECT & ACCEPT

INVESTIGATION

Circumstantial Evidence

Fragmented Timelines

Indirect Witnesses

Offender Minimization

Victim Silence

NON-FATAL

EXPECT & ACCEPT

INVESTIGATION

Circumstantial Evidence

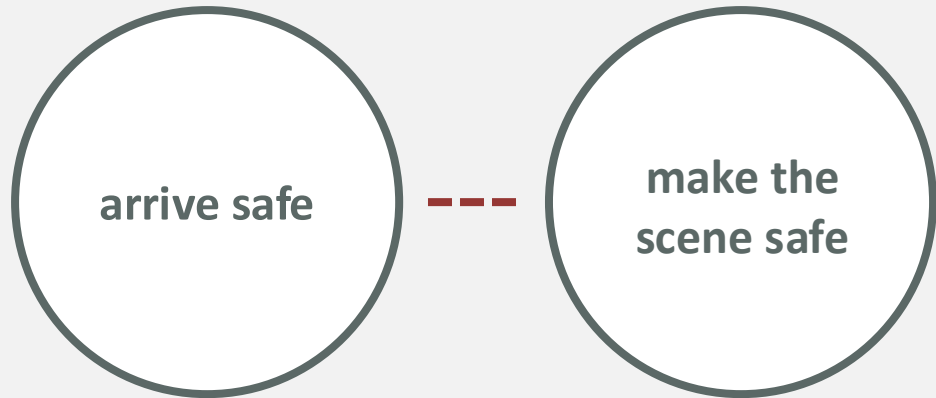
Fragmented Timelines

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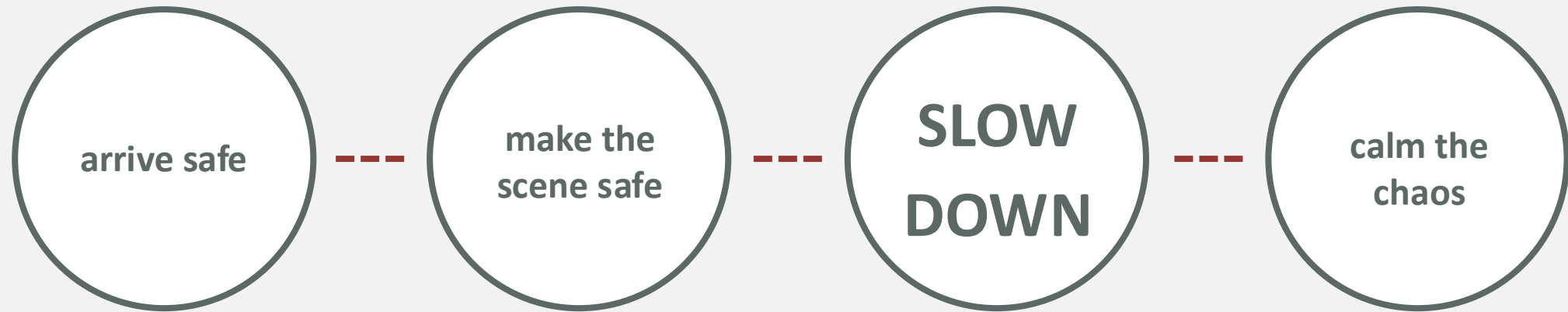
Victim Silence

ARRIVING ON SCENE



**A thorough
investigation can't
happen until the
SCENE IS
SAFE!**

THE APPROACH

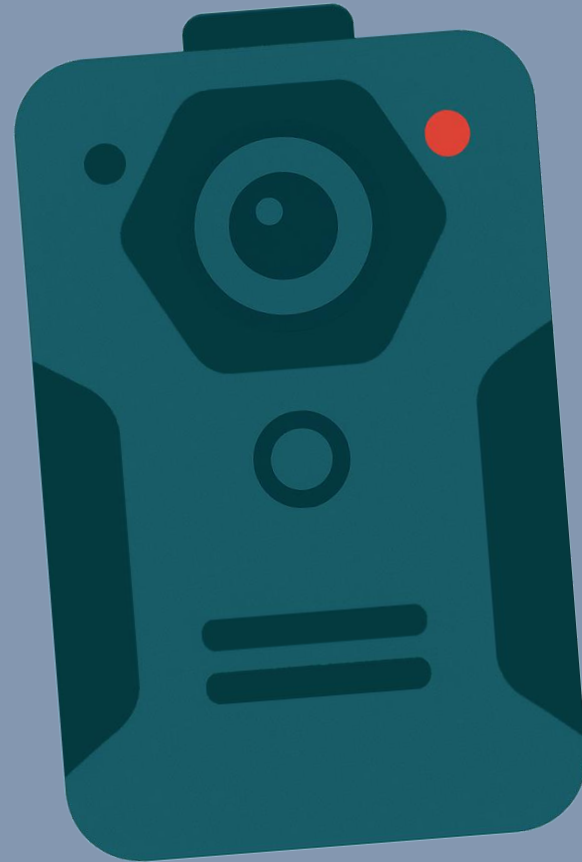


SAFETY is **ALWAYS** the **PRIORITY!!**

Preserve the scene

Safety Sweeps

**Maximize Legal
Authorities**



You only get one chance at a fresh scene, so make it count.

We should constantly be reevaluating - Do we need a search warrant?

OBSERVATIONS

What do you
hear?

What do you
see?

Tactile
observations

Notable
smells

OBSERVATIONS

What do you
hear?

What do you
see?

Tactile
observations

Notable
smells

CAPTURE THE EXPERIENCE

OBSERVATIONS

What's
significant?

What's out of
place?

What's
inconsistent?

What's
corroborating?

CAPTURE THE EXPERIENCE

OBSERVATIONS

Broken household items

Broken phones

Broken cherished items

Wall damage

Overturned items

OBSERVATIONS



Broken household items

Broken phones

Broken cherished items

Wall damage

Overturned items

Bedding disturbances

Displaced furniture

Hidden phones/keys

**Signs of
isolation/confinement**

(locks – keep folks out and keep folks in)

OVERLOOKED EVIDENCE

Hair

Blood transfer

Broken nails

Damaged Jewelry

Torn clothing

Smearred makeup

Notes

Written Instructions

COLLECT EVIDENCE

Collect all physical evidence at the scene

Remember to photograph evidence before moving it.

Photograph vs. collect – consider consulting with the prosecutor

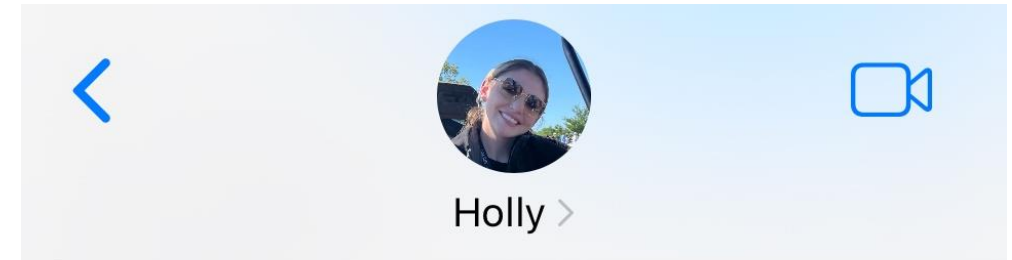
EVIDENCE OF LEAVING

Packed bags

Go-bag

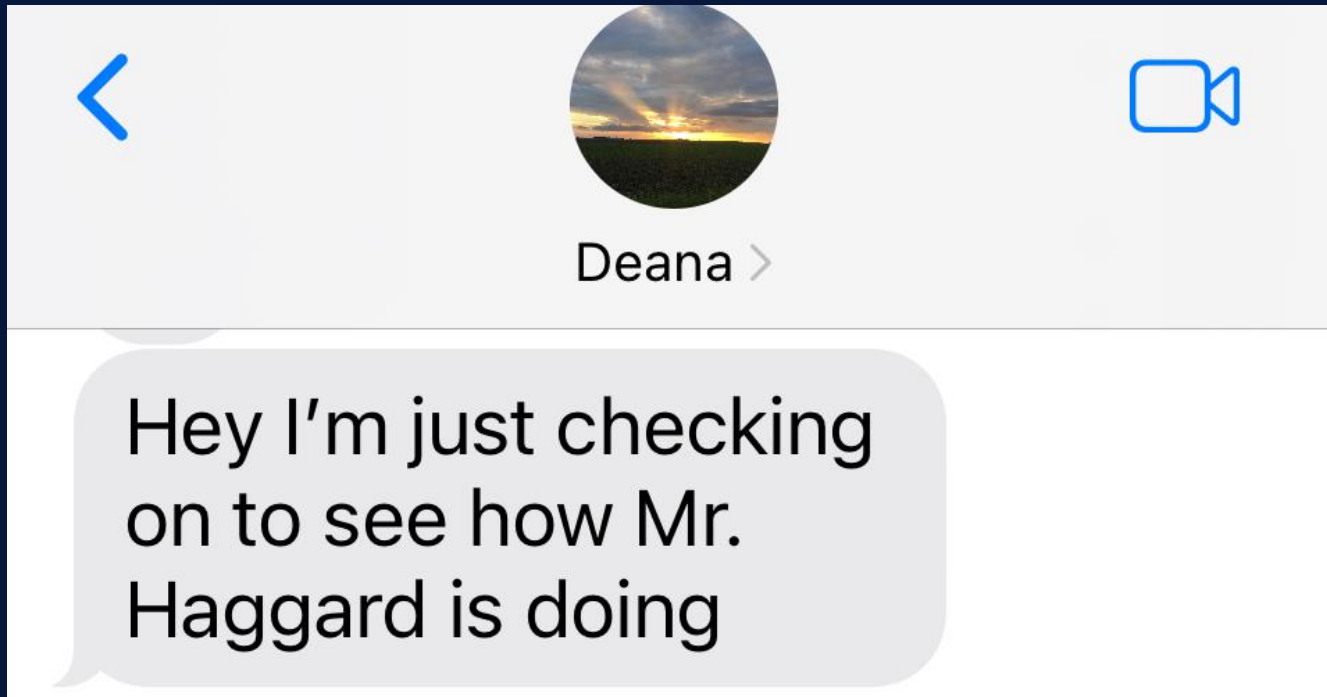
Safety planning

Interference with attempts
to leave.



First hearts meant come get me. Second hearts
acknowledged I'm on my way.

CODE WORDS



Commonly referred to as Merle or Merlito. Mr. Haggard meant send the police.



DOCUMENTATION

INVESTIGATIVE GUIDE

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIM STATEMENT

Case # _____ Today's Date: _____
 Completed by: _____ # _____

Incident Date/Time: _____ Location: _____

VICTIM Name: _____ R/S: _____ DOB: _____
 Home Address: _____ State: _____ City: _____
 DL #: _____ Cell Phone: _____ Email Address: _____ Alternate Phone: _____
 Employer: _____ Employer Address: _____
 Emergency Contact: _____ Relationship: _____ Phone: _____
 Home Address: _____ Email Address: _____

Are you planning to relocate? No Confidential Yes Address: _____

SUSPECT Name: _____ R/S: _____ DOB: _____
 Home Address: _____ State: _____ City: _____
 DL #: _____ Cell Phone: _____ Email Address: _____ Alternate Phone: _____
 Employer: _____ Employer Address: _____
 Vehicle Year: _____ Color: _____ Make: _____ Model: _____ LP: _____
 Military? N/A Branch: _____ Rank: _____ Stationed: _____ Active Yes No
 Probation/Parole: Yes No Probation Officer Name: _____ Location: _____
 Arrested Not Arrested Photo Obtained Scan/Marked/Seized

RELATIONSHIP (Married) _____ years _____ months Blood Relative Date relationship ended: _____
 Former or Current Engaged/Partner _____ years _____ months Household Members
 Former Household Members Biological Parents of the Same Child (if of children _____)

VICTIM'S PHYSICAL CONDITION	SUSPECT ACTIONS	WEAPONS
<input type="checkbox"/> Abrasions (—) <input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Old	<input type="checkbox"/> Striking - Open Hand	<input type="checkbox"/> Strangling
<input type="checkbox"/> Swelling	<input type="checkbox"/> Striking - Closed Hand	<input type="checkbox"/> Suffocating
<input type="checkbox"/> Bruises (—) <input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Old	<input type="checkbox"/> Grabbing	<input type="checkbox"/> Stomping
<input type="checkbox"/> Cuts (—) <input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Old	<input type="checkbox"/> Pushing	<input type="checkbox"/> Throwing
<input type="checkbox"/> Scrapes (—) <input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Old	<input type="checkbox"/> Pulling	<input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol
<input type="checkbox"/> Bite Marks (—) <input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Old	<input type="checkbox"/> Throwing	<input type="checkbox"/> Drugs
<input type="checkbox"/> Bleeding	<input type="checkbox"/> Biting	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Loose Hair	<input type="checkbox"/> Sexual Violence?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Complaint of Physical Pain _____ (if minimal / 24-hour)	Within 120 hours? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	Do you want this investigated? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
<input type="checkbox"/> Pregnant _____ weeks		
<input type="checkbox"/> Does the suspect know? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		

MEDICAL TREATMENT None Declined Self - Basic First Aid _____
 EMS - Personal _____
 Transported - Hospital _____
 Sought/Will seek own doctor - Physician: _____ Location: _____

Has she ever threatened you if you call the police? No Sometimes Always

Have you contacted your employer or a family member for assistance? No Sometimes Always

Has she ever threatened to harm household pets? No Sometimes Always

Has she ever hurt you before? No Sometimes Always

Has this happened before? No Sometimes Always

Charges filed? No Yes

Do you want an Emergency Protective Order? No Yes

Current/previous protective orders? No Yes

LETHALITY SCREENING

- Has she ever threatened you a weapon? No Sometimes Always
- Has she ever used a weapon against you? No Sometimes Always
- Has she ever threatened to kill you? No Sometimes Always
- Has she ever threatened to kill your children? No Sometimes Always
- Do you think she might try to kill you? No Sometimes Always
- Does she have a gun? No Yes
- Can she get a gun easily? No Yes
- Does she ever try to choke/strangle you or out of your breathing? No Sometimes Always
- Is she violent or constantly jealous? No Sometimes Always
- Does she control most of your daily activities? No Sometimes Always
- Has she ever forced you to have sex when you did not wish to do so? No Sometimes Always
- Have you ever left together or separated after living together or being married? No Yes
- Is she unemployed? No Yes
- Has she ever tried to hit herself? No Sometimes Always
- Has she ever threatened outside? No Sometimes Always
- Do you have a child that is not father's? No Yes
- Have you ever been beaten by his/her while pregnant? No Sometimes Always
- Does she follow you? No Sometimes Always
- Does she spy on you? No Sometimes Always
- Does she leave threatening messages? No Sometimes Always
- Is there anything that worries you about your safety? No Sometimes Always

see written statement (if) Y declined written statement
 NOTE: MANDATORY YOU RESPONSE

PERSON Name: _____ R/S: _____ DOB: _____ DL: _____
 Home Address: _____ Email Address: _____
 Cell Phone: _____ Alternate Phone: _____ Other: _____

CHILDREN

1) Name	R/S	DOB	Witness
School/Days: _____	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
2) Name	R/S	DOB	Witness
School/Days: _____	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
3) Name	R/S	DOB	Witness
School/Days: _____	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
4) Name	R/S	DOB	Witness
School/Days: _____	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
5) Name	R/S	DOB	Witness
School/Days: _____	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

CRIME SCENE OBSERVATION (photograph and detail in report)

Photos by: # _____ taken

Signs of Disturbance Yes No
 Clumps of Hair Yes No
 Broken Furniture Yes No
 Blood Yes No
 Broken Phone Yes No
 Hole(s) in Wall Yes No
 Broken Glass Yes No
 Children Crying Yes No
 Weapons Yes No
 Other: _____

EVIDENCE

Photos taken of: Victim Suspect Crime Scene Broken Furniture Hole(s) in Wall Broken Glass Children Crying Weapons Other: _____

Evidence Collected: Yes No
 List: _____

VICTIM REMAINS

Found Yes No
 Clothing Yes No
 Personal Effects Yes No
 Blood Yes No
 Other: _____

SUSPECT DEMANDS

Food Yes No
 Clothing Yes No
 Personal Effects Yes No
 Blood Yes No
 Other: _____

VICTIM Front Back

SUSPECT Front Back

CRIME SCENE OBSERVATIONS

(photograph and detail in report)

- Signs of Disturbance
- Clump(s) of Hair
- Broken Furniture
- Blood
- Broken Phone
- Hole(s) in Wall
- Broken Glass
- Children Crying
- Weapons
- Other: ~~Clothing scattered under carport~~
V & S verbally arguing

Capture the Current Event

Capture the Relationship Dynamics

DON'T GET DISTRACTED

Drugs / Alcohol / Sex

Unless relevant

Victims are not perfect

They may voluntarily participate in “bad behaviors”

For their pleasure

For coping

DON'T GET DISTRACTED

They may INVOLUNTARILY participate
when

They are fearful

They are trying to survive

DON'T JUDGE

Document the scene

Collect evidence

Be thorough & methodical

**They owe you
NOTHING.**

**You owe them EVERY
effort**

COERCIVE CONTROL

A pattern of behavior by an abuser to

DOMINATE, ISOLATE, & INTIMIDATE

an intimate partner

Achieve power through

FEAR

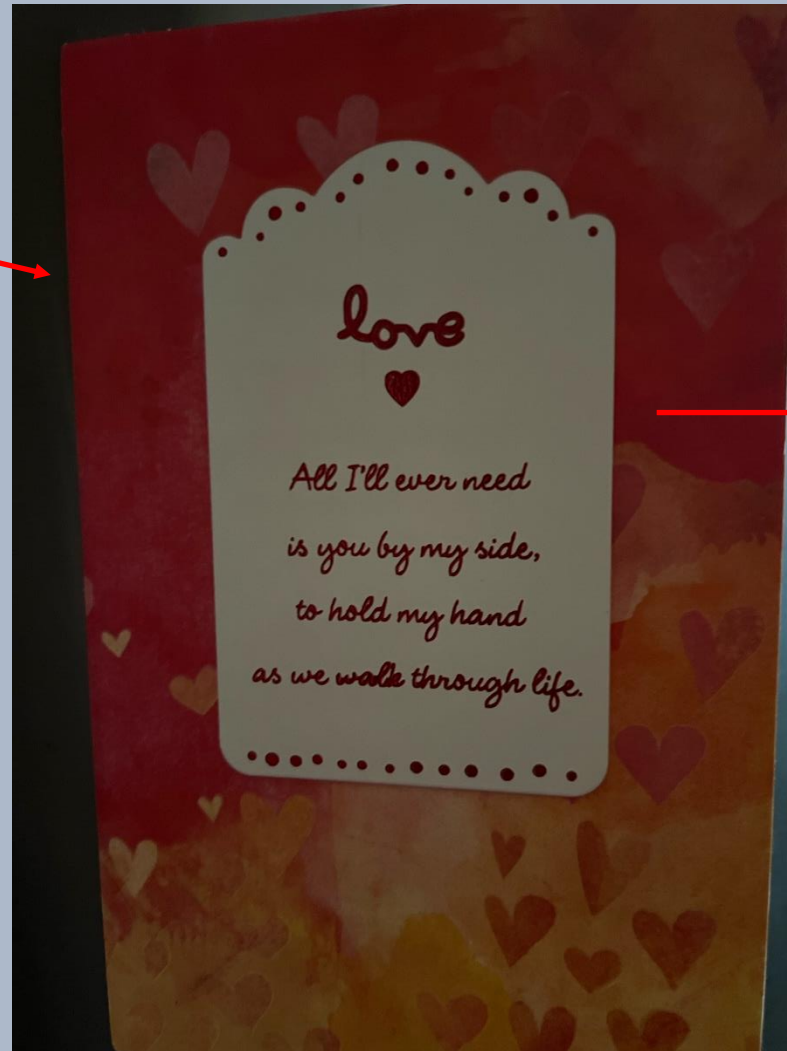
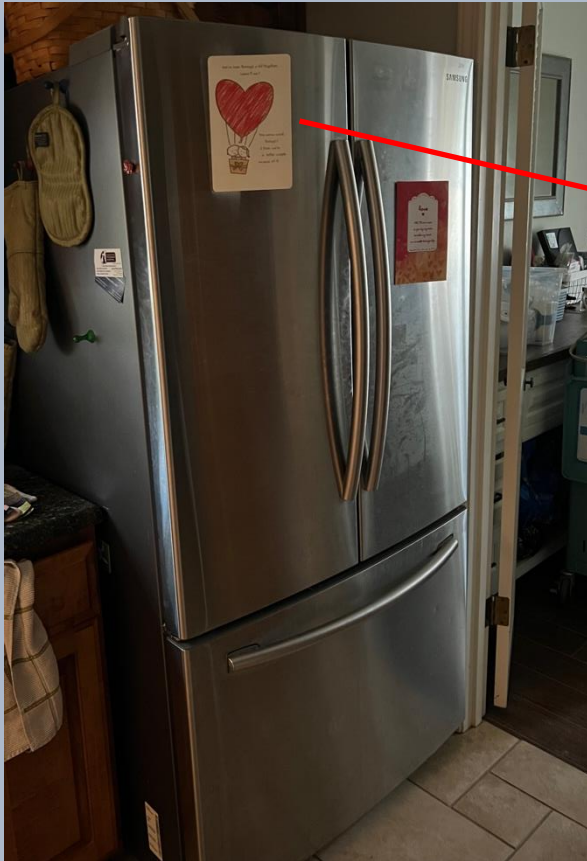
but also through

**CONFUSION, HUMILIATION &
DEPRIVING FREEDOM**

An “invisible cage” that keeps victims trapped,
even when there are no visible bruises.



LOVE BOMBING



Love

All I'll ever need is you
by my side, to hold my
hand as we walk
through life.

To laugh with
me when
things are easy
and encourage
me when times
are hard.

To tell **me** that
either way you'll
always love **me** –
that's all **I'll** ever
need.

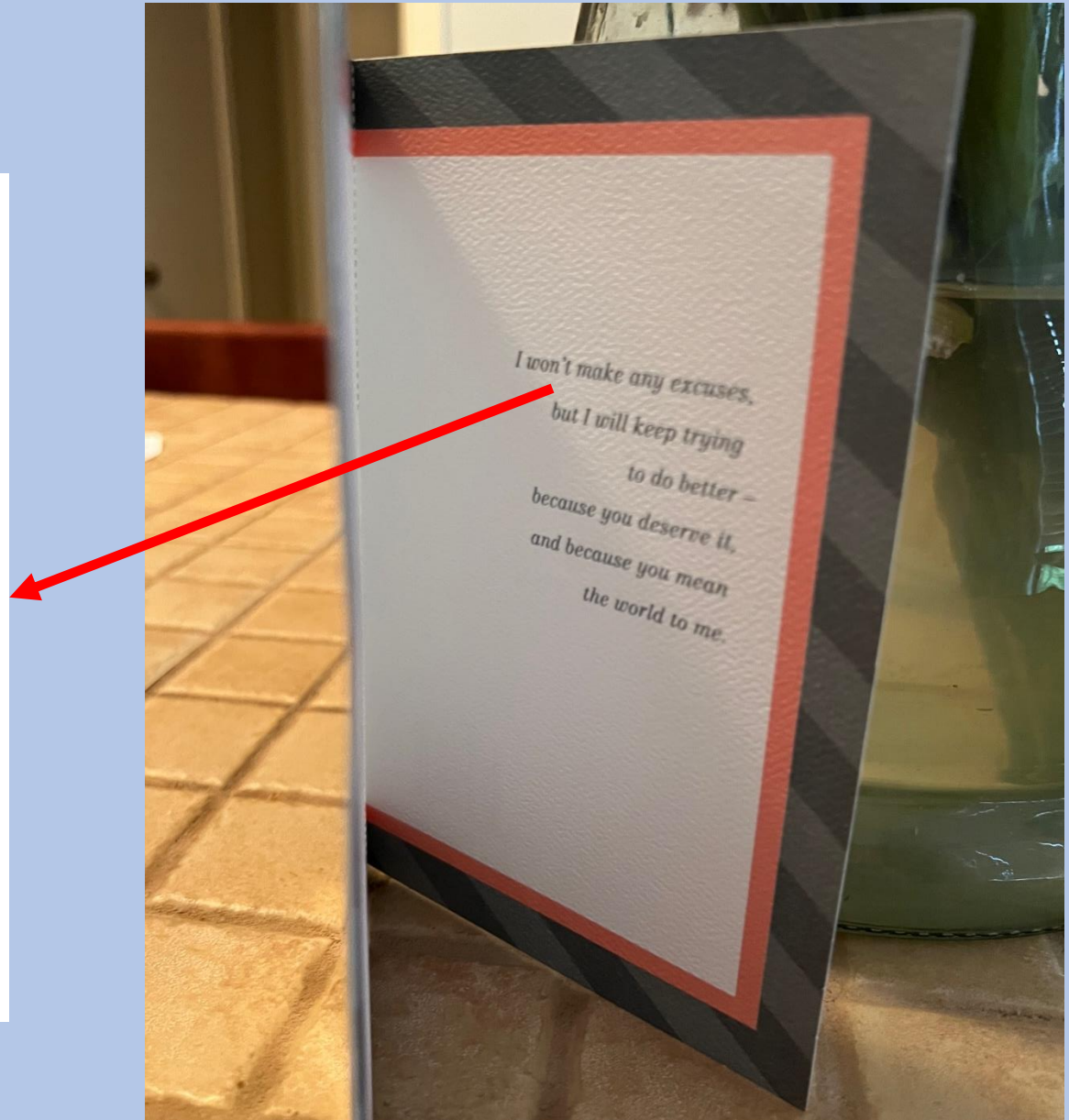


Because
all **I've** ever
needed,
I've found
in you.

APOLOGIES



I won't make any
excuses, but I will
keep trying to do
better – because you
deserve it and
because you mean
the world to me.



PHOTOS

YOU ONLY GET
ONE CHANCE AT A
FRESH SCENE

“FOUR CORNERS”
PHOTOS

PHOTOGRAPH
EVIDENCE IN PLACE
BEFORE MOVING

PHOTOGRAPH
EVIDENCE IN
CONTEXT

RECORD THE
SCENE DOCUMENTATION

PHOTOS

Wide

Establishing

Room orientation

Entry/exit points

Mid-range

Relationship
between
evidence items

Close Up



INJURIES

Delayed bruising

Progressive photos during healing stages

Alternative light sources

Defensive injuries

Absence of injury

Absence of something could be something



2 days



4 days



6 days



8 days

ELECTRONICS

Look for & identify electronic evidence sources.

Security cameras

Alarm systems

Smart Assistants – Alexa, Google Assist

Other....

ELECTRONICS





- WiFi
- Phones
- Computers/Tablets
- Garage door openers
- Alarm systems

SEARCH.ORG

History
Alli's Home

Video Access Activity

Sunday, October 5

-  Garage Door Remote Opened 10:36 AM
-  Garage Door Opener Opened 10:40 AM
-  Garage Door Opener Opened 10:40 AM
-  Garage Door Remote Closed 12:55 PM

Home History Discover Shop Menu

Activity

No Activity 11:04 PM - 9:57 AM

OCTOBER 5

Back Door Open 9:57 AM

Laundry Door Open/Closed 10:39 AM

Back Door Closed 10:40 AM

Laundry Door Open/Closed 10:40 AM

Laundry Door Open/Closed 10:44 AM

Laundry Door Open/Closed 10:46 AM

Laundry Door Open/Closed 11:35 AM

Home Activity More

Collect
app-based
logs.

DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

**Text
Messages**

Email

**Voice
Messages**

**Social
Media**

**Video
&
Photos**

These give direct insight into the abuse.

They often hold evidentiary value.

BEHAVIORAL EVIDENCE

- Repeated calling
- Monitoring
- Forced Communication
- Harassment Patterns
- Threat escalation

**One piece may not
prove the case.**

**Multiple pieces
may reveal the truth**

**They can tell the story when the survivor
is not in a place to do so.**

**They can support her
when she is!**

Too often...

Verbal disclosures become the entire case.

A survivor's "cooperation" becomes confused with proof.

Investigators stop at "uncooperative".

**A living victim should not reduce
the quality of an investigation.**

We have to work harder...

SURVIVORS DESERVE

SAFETY

**OFFENDER
ACCOUNTABILITY**

Do the best you can
until you know better.
Then when you know better,
do better.

-Maya Angelou

**PLEASE
REACH
OUT**

**If I can ever
assist you.**



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