



# Understanding Domestic & Sexual Violence

A Public Education Resource

## What You Need to Know

Domestic and sexual violence are pervasive issues that affect individuals across all demographics, socioeconomic backgrounds, and communities. Understanding the dynamics of abuse, recognizing warning signs, and knowing how to respond can save lives.

## Recognizing the Signs

### Physical Indicators:

- Unexplained injuries or frequent "accidents"
- Wearing clothing to cover bruises or marks
- Frequent absences from work or social activities
- Visible fear or anxiety around a partner

### Behavioral Red Flags:

- Isolation from friends and family
- Partner controls finances, communication, or movement
- Constant checking in or monitoring by partner
- Apologizing for the partner's behavior or making excuses

## The Cycle of Violence

Understanding the cycle helps explain why leaving is complex:

- 1. Tension Building:** Minor incidents, walking on eggshells
- 2. Acute Violence:** Physical, sexual, or severe emotional abuse
- 3. Reconciliation:** Apologies, promises to change, "honeymoon phase"
- 4. Calm:** Period of relative peace before the cycle repeats

## How to Help

### If someone discloses abuse to you:

- Listen without judgment
- Believe them—false reports are rare
- Avoid asking "why don't you just leave?"



- Provide resources, not ultimatums
- Respect their autonomy and timeline
- Document if they're comfortable sharing details

### **Safety Planning Essentials**

- Keep important documents in a safe, accessible location
- Establish a code word with trusted contacts
- Identify safe places to go in an emergency
- Keep emergency cash and supplies ready
- Document abuse (photos, messages, medical records)
- Know that leaving is the most dangerous time—plan carefully

### **Critical Resources**

**National Domestic Violence Hotline:** 1-800-799-7233 (24/7)

**National Sexual Assault Hotline:** 1-800-656-4673 (RAINN)

**Crisis Text Line:** Text START to 741741

**National Dating Abuse Helpline:** 1-866-331-9474

*These services are free, confidential, and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.*

**\*\*This resource is for educational purposes. If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 911.**

### **Professional Services Available**

Need training, consulting, or speaking services on this or other topics? I work with businesses, organizations, agencies, institutions, and places of worship. Contact me to discuss customized solutions tailored to your team's needs.