



Signs of Domestic Violence/Intimate Partner Violence:

The first thing one must understand about domestic violence (DV) is that it is one of the most complex issues on planet Earth! It is no respecter of persons! No one is immune to it! It extends across ALL racial and ethnic groups; all socio-economic status levels; genders, all professions; all ages and disability groups (NCADV). What the data says:

- *Approximately 20 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner in the United States. This equates to more than 10 million women and men a year. And,
- *1 in 4 women and 1 in 9 men experience severe intimate partner physical violence.
- *After experiencing abuse and violence, many individuals experience mental health issues, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression, fear, thoughts of suicide, physical injury, and many other symptoms that are silent to the rest of the world.
- *Intimate partner violence accounts for 15% of all violent crime. This is a staggering statistic that we should not take lightly, since 19% of all domestic violence cases involve weapons.
- *The presence of a gun in a domestic violence situation increases the risk of homicide by 500%.

Anyone male or female can be a victim of DV/IPV... and 1 in 4 women and 1 in 9 men have been victimized in their lifetime. We focus on primarily violence against women/females also called gender-based violence (GBV) victims as they are the vast majority of victims seen in for example, Hospital ERs. The literature indicates that violence against women disproportionately effects women indicating it effects 25.3% to 49.1% of women in their lifetime.^[1] Some groups are impacted more so than others due to the effects of historical, racialized trauma and experiencing multiple forms of oppression. For example, the data indicates that 45% of Black women nationally experience physical violence, sexual violence and stalking in their lifetime.^[2]

Psychological and emotional health in Black women often goes misinterpreted, or undiagnosed as 53.8% of Black women have experienced psychological abuse and 41.2% have experienced physical abuse.^[3] And, in 2020 Black women were murdered at a rate nearly three times higher than white women.^[4]

The following signs listed below are characteristic to victimization. This document focus centers on female victims and male perpetrators. Women and girls by far comprise the largest group of victims at 87%, with males comprising the largest group of perpetrators including those who are male DV victims (Alexander, et al., 2019; Rada, C., 2014; Barros, C. R., & Schraiber, L. B., 2017).

Domestic violence (DV) is a **pattern** of abusive behaviors not a one-time push or shove. DV is about **Power** and **Control** (NRCDV). It is about the domination and oppression of one over another in such a way that the oppressor/victim has made it clear to the other that they are not safe! OR the oppressor has made it clear to the victim they are at risk of losing something that is important to them. It is not just about “anger” (Hanusa).

Risk Factors for lethal violence:

There is no prediction for lethal or non-fatal harms; however, homicide cases we see reflect the **risk factors that research has found to be associated with lethal or near fatal violence. These include, among other factors: *guns in the home *threats to use or actual use of a weapon, *threats to kill self, and/or both of you, *stalking, *strangulation, *obsessive jealousy, and *sexual assault.**

According to data from the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, **on average, nearly 20 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner in the United States. Annually, this equates to more than 10 million women and men experiencing this form of violence.**¹

Significantly, data indicates that women are at much greater risk of domestic violence when their partners experience job instability or when the couple reports financial strain.^[5] Abuse has also been found to be more common among young, unemployed urban residents—a large percentage of whom are racial minorities.^[6] These factors are all exacerbated by COVID 19.

For example, prior to the pandemic African American women faced high disparities in rates of severe IPV compared to white women and men (Taft et al., 2009). Correspondingly, ongoing data continues to indicate that many Black women’s exposure to IPV is not only at higher rates but also with more severe injuries including higher rates of homicide (Stockman, et. al, 2014; Tennakoon, Hakes, Knowlton. & Spain, 2020) and researchers suggest this increased exposure is due to structural and racial inequalities. Further, studies for example by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) argues the correlation of higher IPV effects on African American women victims are in part due to higher levels of economic distress and residence in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods (NIJ) and existing literature indicates that near death assaults of Black women are a significant contributor to not only physical injuries but as well, to the long-term health of Black victims that are often disabling.

Due to the effects of COVID-19, families are experiencing economic insecurity, food insecurity and poverty related stress as well as pandemic and conflict-related unrest and instability. These intersect with the emotional and psychological increases in major depressive disorders, depression, PTSD, anxiety, and fear as well as spikes in suicide completions and attempts. Correspondingly, End Domestic Abuse WI (EDAW) indicates, over the past 20 months (of COVID-19) Milwaukee has experienced the most DV-related homicides in its history. The End Abuse Annual Homicide report indicates, 68 people lost their lives to domestic violence in 2020 and Black and Native women are killed 3 times the rate of non-Hispanic white. Further, the City

Health Dept Office on Violence Prevention reports that DV, sexual assaults and sex trafficking incidents are up 32% and the Milwaukee Police Department (MPD) indicates that DV reported incidents are up 38% over pre-pandemic levels. (MPD City Maps) These are just the “reported” incidents; however, DV/IPV is significantly under reported.

Key Acronyms, words, phrases:

DV = Domestic Violence/Abuse

IPV = Intimate Partner Violence

SA = Sexual Assault

GBV = Gender-Based Violence

HT/ST = Human Trafficking or Sex Trafficking

VAWA – Violence Against Womens Act

DOJ – Department of Justice

OVW – Office on Violence Against Women

What does DV look like?

Acts of PHYSICAL ABUSE: (not an exhaustive list)

***Denotes critical element.**

- Threatens to hurt or kill you*
- Threatens you with a *weapon (access to a gun puts victim at a 500% increase of getting shot- regardless of who owns the weapon)
- Pushes or shoves you with hands or body
- Holds or Blocks you to keep you from leaving or locks you out of the house
- Slapping, biting or kicking you
- *Choking or *Strangulation (Simplistic: one cuts off air flow while the latter cuts off blood flow)
- Punches you; Bear hugs you or throws objects at you
- Abandons you in dangerous or unfamiliar places
- Refuses to help you when you are sick, injured or pregnant
- Subjects you to reckless driving and speeding
- Rapes you or has sex with you when you do not want to

- Forces you to drink alcohol or take other drugs and you don't want to
- Threatens to kill themselves and you or a loved one*

Acts of EMOTIONAL ABUSE (Verbal/Psychological) ARE: (not an exhaustive list)

- Forces you to sit in their presence
- Isolates you from friends and family
- Plays “Mind” games e.g. Gaslighting – says they told you something you know they did not.
- Attacks you verbally for asking questions
- Responds with negative body and facial expressions
- Ignores your presence
- Controls where you go and how long you stay
- Questions you about where you go, asking why, whose there, etc.
- Calls and/or texts you repeatedly throughout the day to keep tabs on your whereabouts
- Gets angry when you fail to answer their calls immediately
- Responds furiously at small trespasses of daily life (reacts in ways that are out of proportion to what's going on)
- Deliberately does things such as throw or drop papers, food or clothing on the floor and walks off, for you to pick them up
- Ridicules or insults women as a group
- Insults your values, beliefs, religion, race, heritage or class
- Criticizes you, calls you names and speaks to you in harsh tones
- Insults your family or friends (when they are not around)
- Makes insulting inferences of you to friends or family
- Elicits support from family or friends to shun you
- Becomes sneaky and secretive

- **Humiliates you – e.g. call you “stupid” publicly or privately**
- **Refuses to socialize with you and your family or friends**
- **Hinders or keeps you from working or going to school**
- **Controls your money or makes you pay the bills**
- **Makes all important decisions with no discussion**
- **Refuses to share money or refuses to work**
- **Takes car keys or money away**
- **Goes through your phone**
- **Regularly threatens to hurt you or your family***
- **Punishes the children or family pets when they are angry at you***
- **Threatens to kidnap the children if you leave***
- **Hides or destroys your personal property**
- **Threatens to call authorities on you e.g. Child welfare, Immigration, etc.**
- **Manipulates you with lies and contradictions – Gaslighting is the most serious as it causes you to question yourself, your sanity.**

***Denotes critical element**

Acts of SEXUAL ABUSE: (not an exhaustive list)

- **Rapes you***
- **Forces you to have sex with others and you don't want to**
- **Makes demeaning sexualized remarks about women**
- **Treats women as sex objects**
- **Is extremely jealous***
- **Insists you dress in more sexual ways than you want or insists you tone down your dress**

- Gets angry at you if you don't have sex when they want it
- Minimizes the importance of your feelings about sex
- Criticizes you sexually
- Insists on unwanted touching
- Insists on sex when they are aware that it is not convenient for you
- Withholds sex and affection
- Calls you names like "Slut", "Whore", "Hoe" or Bitch or refers similarly to other women
- Forces you to strip when you don't want to
- Publicly shows sexual interest in other women in your presence
- Has multiple affairs after agreeing to monogamy
- Forces unwanted sex acts including the use of objects or pornography
- Forces or insists on sex after a beating or emotional abuse

Signs to look for when the woman victim is silent:

The following are signs (out of the norm for the victim) to look for when a victim is silent:

Note: Each alone is not necessarily a sign of victimization; however, multiple items in combination maybe signs of victimization:

- Do you see or hear from her less and less?
- Does she abruptly hang up the phone when she says her guy is coming in?
- Does she suddenly miss work or other places she says she will be at?
- Does she seem to use more alcohol or other drugs more than she use to?
- Does she suddenly say she's sick but seemed fine hours or the day before? Or was she fine that morning and says she's sick that evening?
- Does she whisper in the phone saying she can't talk?
- Does she not respond to your calls/texts as she use to?
- Are there longer periods of time you do not see or hear from her, and you now have a hard time reaching her?
- Is her phone turned off more?
- Does she seem more anxious or nervous or depressed?
- Does she not participate in social media posts or responses as she use to?

- Does she call you in fear or frantic only to later tell you it was nothing or it was her fault; she overreacted
- Is her affect depressed? Does her mind seem to wonder?
- Has he ever put her down in your presence?
- Has he ever grabbed her or made an aggressive action toward her that you witnessed?
- Has she ever become restrained as a result of a glance or the way he looked at her?
- Does she look to him first before she answers or engages in conversation?
- Does she seem very unhappy, while trying to appear upbeat?
- Does she focus on her phone awaiting texts/calls when her guy is not around?
- Does she receive text after text over a short period of time from her guy when he is not around?
- Does she wear dark shades indoors?
- Does she appear nervous or anxious and looks around as if she's fearful he will show up?
- Does she wear long sleeves or has a scarf tied around her neck and its 80-degree weather?
- Does she not show up to family or other gatherings she committed to with weak or no excuses?
- Has she ever mentioned he has a gun?
- Has she ever said, I think he's going to kill me?
- Has he ever shown up unexpectedly to places she is at?
- Does she complain of somatic symptoms (that are in her head) – excessive focus on physical symptoms: reactions to headaches, chest pain, back pain, nausea, stomach problems or fatigue and seeking medical attention repeatedly where no medical diagnosis is found.

Typical Characteristics of Abusers:

1. Narcissistic or Low self-esteem
2. Very Self-focused/selfish
3. Believes men are valued over women
4. Feels entitled to possess/own his woman
5. Believes myths about battering relationships
6. BLAMES OTHERS (including childhood) FOR THEIR ACTIONS
7. Has severe stress reactions when they use alcohol and other drugs to cope
8. May use sex as an act of aggression * wants/demands it when they want it. *
9. Has mental health challenges (depression, anxiety, personality changes, manic, etc.)
10. Follows/stalks victim*
11. Gets angry if woman does not answer their calls or texts immediately
12. Gets angry if a woman talks to or looks in the direction of another man
13. Gaslights (form of psychological manipulation) making the victim question their own sanity or memory. Denying a conversation, blaming someone else for their own actions or lack of actions.
14. Will embellish to others what he perceives “she did” to them and not or minimize what they themselves did to precipitate.
15. Suffered from child abuse and traumas or neglect.

16. Enlists women in his family against the victim to support or cover up his wrongdoing.
17. Sees or portrays himself as a victim of his partner.
18. Does not believe their violent behavior should have negative consequences.
19. Jealousy, and often imagining partner is having affairs
20. Efforts to isolate victim from friends and family
21. Tries to control victim's behaviors and dress
22. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde's personality
23. Problems with authority and the law
24. May have an explosive temper flies into a rage without provocation at minor slights
25. Projects own faults onto mate; tells mate it is all their fault
26. Assaults verbally as well as physically; insults, name calling
27. Comes from a family where violence and abuse against women is practiced.
28. Maybe more violent when a female is pregnant or soon after she has given birth
29. Denies beatings or the severity of it and seems not to remember.
30. Will do whatever it takes to drive victim away, then, do whatever it takes to get them back: e.g., takes the kids, apologizes profusely, sends flowers, cries real tears, promises anything (and knows exactly what victim wants to hear, "I'll go to church with you", "I'll go to a counselor", "I'll stop drinking", "I'll never hurt you again", etc.) Once the victim returns, the performance is repeated: whatever it takes to drive victim away, followed by whatever it takes to get the victim back. (Wetzel, 1980).

What Medical people need to know:

- *Be engaging
- *Approach things as teachers.
- *Give them tools to advocate for themselves – what to say specifically to insurance companies.
- *Provide literature on where help is available

[1] Center for Disease Control, National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2021 Summary Report, https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_report2010-a.pdf (April 15, 2022).

[2] Smith, S.G., Chen, J., Basile, K.C., Gilbert, L.K., Merrick, M.T., Patel, N., Wailing, M., & Jain, A. (2017). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS); 2010-2012 State Report. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[3] The National Center for Victims of Crime, National Crime Victims' Rights Week Resource Guide: Crime and Victimization Fact Sheets, 2017, https://www.ncjrs.gov/ovc_archives/ncvrvw/2017/images/en_artwork/Fact_Sheets/2017NCVVRW_IPV_508.pdf

[4] Violence Policy Center (2022). When men murder women: An analysis of 2020 homicide data. Retrieved from <https://vpc.org/studies/wmmw2022.pdf>

[5] MICHAEL L. BENSON & GREER LITTON FOX, U.S. DEP'T OF JUSTICE, NAT'L INST. OF JUSTICE, WHEN VIOLENCE HITS HOME: HOW ECONOMICS AND NEIGHBORHOOD PLAY A ROLE 2 (2004).

[6] R. Hampton et al., *Violence in Communities of Color*, in FAMILY VIOLENCE AND MEN OF COLOR: HEALING THE WOUNDED MALE SPIRIT 1-30 (Richard Carrillo & Jerry Tello eds., 1998); C. M. West, *Domestic Violence in Ethnically and Racially Diverse Families: The "Political Gag Order" Has Been Lifted*, in NATALIE SOKOLOFF, *supra* note 20.