

Myths and Facts

One way to assess your attitudes toward domestic violence is to be aware of some common myths and misconceptions:

MYTH

Domestic violence occurs when men and women assault each other. Women are just as violent as men.

FACT

Abuse occurs in a relationship when one person coerces, intimidates or dominates another. The National Crime Victimization Survey of the Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that 85 percent of serious spousal assaults are perpetrated by men against women. Domestic violence can't be assessed by asking, "Who hit whom how many times?" You must ask, "Who is terrified, hurt repeatedly or afraid to speak out?"

MYTH

Stress causes abusive behaviors.

FACT

Most people who are living under severe stress do not abuse. Stress may be a contributing factor, but reducing stress will not necessarily reduce violence in the family. Psychological, physical and financial control of an intimate partner is a problem, not a symptom of stress.

MYTH

Drugs and alcohol cause batterers to abuse their intimate partners.

FACT

Domestic violence and substance abuse are two separate problems, however, they may occur simultaneously. Elimination of substance abuse doesn't necessarily eliminate physical, emotional or sexual abuse. Substance abuse is not an excuse for battering, but society often views it as a reason for the abuse.

MYTH

Survivors and victims of domestic violence (especially women) are masochistic; they provoke the violence.

FACT

Abused women are not a personality type. They don't enjoy being assaulted. Women may act in ways that their husbands or partners don't like. This should not be confused with provocation. Disagreement doesn't justify assault.

MYTH

Victims of domestic violence do not seek help and will not use it when offered.

FACT

A study of women in Texas family violence shelters found that most shelter residents had repeatedly sought various forms of help before entering the shelter. In many cases, women found that friends, family, the medical community or police often discounted their abuse, sided with their batterers or did not believe their stories.

MYTH

What goes on within a family is a private matter.

FACT

Domestic violence is a community problem. The harmful, hurtful and dangerous behavior that we have outlawed in public places should not be tolerated in our homes. Victims of domestic violence need support and assistance, and abusive people should be held accountable for violating criminal laws.

MYTH

Some religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam sanction violence or ill treatment of women.

FACT

According to scriptures in these religions, a woman should be respected and never ever abused.