

Myths and Facts About Domestic Violence

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October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM), but there is a lack of awareness of this event because domestic violence is a taboo topic in public forums. Unfortunately, this silence allows domestic violence misinformation to exist and spread without challenge. This DVAM, YWCA Hanover Safe Home is opening a discussion on myths and facts surrounding domestic violence.

Myth No. 1: Domestic violence is only physical abuse.

The truth: Domestic violence is a pattern of behaviors that an abuser uses to gain power and control over their victim. Domestic violence may occur in a relationship without a single blow being struck. Domestic Violence includes threats and intimidation, stalking, economic abuse (such as preventing the victim from working, or controlling access to money, bank accounts, or credit cards) emotional abuse (such as name calling, gaslighting, withholding affection), isolating the victim from friends or family, or even blaming the victim for the abuse. Any tactic used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner is domestic violence, even without physical violence.

Myth No. 2: If the victim really wanted to, they could just leave.

The truth: Many barriers prevent someone from leaving an abusive relationship. Lack of resources, societal stigma, and shame all contribute to a victim's decision to stay. Most importantly, ending or attempting to leave an abusive relationship represents a heightened level of danger to a victim. When a victim attempts to leave the relationship, the abuser fears losing power and control and may go to great lengths to maintain their control of the victim. According to the Domestic Violence Intervention Program of Iowa, women are 70 times more likely to be killed in the two weeks after leaving than at any other time during the relationship¹.

Myth No. 3: Domestic Violence is a private issue and does not affect society.

The truth: Not only does domestic violence result in millions of dollars in health and medical costs each year, but it is also a direct cause of homelessness for more than half of homeless women. Every year domestic violence impacts millions of children who are either subjected to or forced to witness violence in their own home. The federal government spends an estimated \$55 billion annually on dealing with the effects of childhood exposure to domestic violence, including the cost of social services and health care.² Domestic violence impacts nearly every sector and it will take a societal approach to combat the pandemic of violence.

YWCA Hanover Safe Home is dedicated to serving victims of domestic violence and human trafficking by providing comprehensive services 24/7. If you or someone you know is being impacted by domestic violence, please call our 24/7 confidential hotline at (717)632-0007.

¹ Myths & Facts about Domestic Violence | Domestic Violence Intervention Program. (n.d.). Retrieved August 09, 2016, from <http://www.dvpiowa.org/myths-facts-about-domestic-violence/>

² Case Western Reserve University. "Exposure to domestic violence costs US government \$55 billion each year: Exposure to domestic violence carries long-term consequences for both children and society." ScienceDaily. ScienceDaily, 25 April 2018. <www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/04/180425093846.htm>.