



Healing from the Brokenness: Domestic Violence

■ by Debra A. Crockett, MSW, LSW

Any person who hits, chokes, kicks, threatens, harasses, or interferes with the personal liberty of another family or household member has broken Illinois Domestic Violence law. Intimate partner violence (IPV) is the intentional use of abusive tactics and/or physical force in order to obtain and maintain [power and control](#) over an intimate partner. Intimate partner violence is not limited to physical violence: emotional abuse includes verbal put-downs, name-calling, humiliation, intimidation, coercion and threats, economic abuse, and asserting male privilege. The need for power and control is at the center of domestic violence. The cycle of power and control is characterized by a pattern of actions that an individual uses to control or dominate his or her intimate partner.

In her book *Domestic Violence: Assault on a Woman's Worth*, June Hunt summarizes abuse using the following acronym:

- A** - Affects everyone in the family
- B** - Bridges all levels in society: religious, geographic, and economic
- U** - Undermines the value of others
- S** - Seeks to dominate others
- E** - Escalates in intensity and frequency¹

Childhood trauma exposure makes you vulnerable to abusive relationships. This exposure includes some of the following: physical and emotional abuse and neglect, alcoholism and drug addiction, sexual abuse, and witnessing domestic violence.

The “abuse affects everyone” statement is certainly true for me personally. One of my sisters was in an abusive marriage. The trauma from that relationship, as well as other factors, contributed to a mental health diagnosis and her inability to care for her children. I became the legal guardian for her two youngest children, who were five months and five years old at the time of her diagnosis. Sadly, I’ve watched how the trauma from exposure to domestic violence has adversely affected her older children.

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Christians are especially vulnerable to domestic violence because of the misapplication of scriptures, such as Ephesians 5:22: “Wives, submit to your husbands, as unto the Lord.” It’s exacerbated in Christian communities that emphasize male dominance in marriage and in the church. Sadly, many pastors are not properly trained to identify the signs of abuse, and, consequently, women are encouraged to stay in abusive relationships.

If you find yourself in an abusive relationship, you are encouraged to develop a safety plan, which includes some of the following: confiding in a trusted friend or family member; beginning financial preparations to leave, if necessary; contacting the police when physical violence is involved; obtaining an order of protection, if required; and seeking an experienced domestic violence counselor. If you are in immediate danger, you must dial 9-1-1. The National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-7233) can direct you to agencies in your area.

As believers, we must remember who we are in Christ: redeemed, chosen, beloved, heirs, adopted, accepted, royalty. As His image-bearers, we do not have to subject ourselves to abuse. Domestic violence violates societal laws, as well as God’s law. God commands us to “love your neighbor as yourself”, and He tells us that “love does no harm to a neighbor” (Romans 13:9b-10a).

You can heal from an abusive relationship. Know that God loves you. Remember that you are not alone in your struggle. The Lord is with you and will provide supportive relationships to see you through this trauma. ■

Help is always available.

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233

National Deaf Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-855-812-1001 (VP)

If you are in a life-threatening emergency, call 911.

Footnote: ¹Hunt, June (2013). *Domestic Violence: Assault on a Woman’s Worth*. Aspire PR.

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