

## The American Counseling Association's "*Counseling Corner*" Weekly Columns

### **Spousal Abuse Should Never Be Tolerated**

from the American Counseling Association

Domestic violence is more common than many people realize. The National Coalition Against Domestic Abuse estimates that more than 10 million women and men are the victims of some form of physical violence from an intimate partner each year.

But while physical violence to a spouse or partner may be what most of us consider domestic abuse, the reality is that it can take many forms. Unfortunately, when the abuse is not physical there are many cases where the person being abused isn't aware of how unhealthy the relationship is and that help is needed.

If you are in an abusive relationship you probably feel like you're constantly walking on eggshells in the relationship, always afraid of voicing your opinions, worried about going home, and anxious about what will happen when you walk through the door or answer the phone.

There are a number of actions that indicate an abusive relationship. Hitting, pushing, slapping or shaking are types of physical abuse that are the easiest to recognize. But abuse can also take many other forms. If your partner calls you names, forces you to have sex you do not want, blames you for every little problem or makes you beg for money, you are being subjected to domestic abuse.

In abusive relationships there can also be threats of harm to you, your children, your family and friends and even to your pets. These types of domestic abuse take place because the relationship isn't based on love, but rather on the power and control one person has over the other.

Correcting or leaving such a relationship can be difficult, and sometimes even dangerous, but today there is a great deal of help available. Most communities have shelters for battered women that provide protection from the abuser as well as temporary housing, meals, clothing and safety. They also can provide medical help and counseling for the abused person.

There is also the National Domestic Violence Hotline which provides free, confidential information to help someone being abused on escaping from that relationship. The Hotline can be reached at 1-800-799-7233 (TTY number is 1-800-787-3224). Experts advise calling rather than going to an online website, since in many cases the abuser will be monitoring computer usage.

That phone call to either a national hotline or local shelter is an important first step in taking action to end an abusive relationship before it's too late.

*"Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to [ACAcornet@counseling.org](mailto:ACAcornet@counseling.org) or visit the ACA website at [www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org).*

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