

# Escape the Abuse

Each year, an estimated 2 million to 4 million women in the United States are abused by their male partners. Many of them are severely physically assaulted, and thousands are killed. Others are intimidated, isolated, humiliated, and controlled by their partners. Are you, or is there some one you know that may be a victim of domestic violence?

Many people wonder why it is so hard for people to admit that they are being abused. There are many reasons why people do not admit that they are in abusive relationships: fear, intimidation, shame, helplessness and dependence on the perpetrator. It is particularly difficult for people who have grown up in abusive situations or have been victims of abuse their whole lives to recognize that the abuse is not normal. Often, they just don't know anything different.

The dynamics of an abusive relationship do have certain characteristics. As reported by the Mayo Health Clinic, in 98 percent of domestic violence cases a male abuses a female partner, although women can also be abusers. Abuse can also happen in same sex relationships. In all cases, the abuser chooses to use a learned behavior to control his partner. Domestic violence is not about losing your temper; it's about controlling someone.

FBI statistics indicate that each year, about 1,400 women in the United States die as a result of domestic violence. Often the most dangerous time is when a woman tries to leave; this is when she is most at risk of being killed. However, there are many resources available to help people escape abusive situations permanently.

If you or someone you know is in an abusive situation, there are several resources that can help you. If it is an emergency situation, call 911. If there is no immediate danger, the best place to call is the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-SAFE (7233). This hotline is staffed 24 hours a day by people who can tell you where you can get help in your community. Your Employee Assistance Program or primary care physician should also be able to assist you. Local women's shelters are also excellent resources, both for immediate and long-term assistance.

