

a woman's handbook

a practical
guide to
discussing
relationship
abuse



LIZ CLAIBORNE
WOMEN'S WORK

"I want to stress how terribly important the role was that my friends and coworkers played. True, I got support from the counselors at the abused women's shelter. But it had even more impact on me when other people in my life gave me the same messages: that there was no excuse for my ex-husband's behavior—not our financial situation, nor being unhappy at school, *nothing* gave him cause to hit me. I never thought I would enjoy life as much as I do now, unhindered by the constant threat of violence." —Karen

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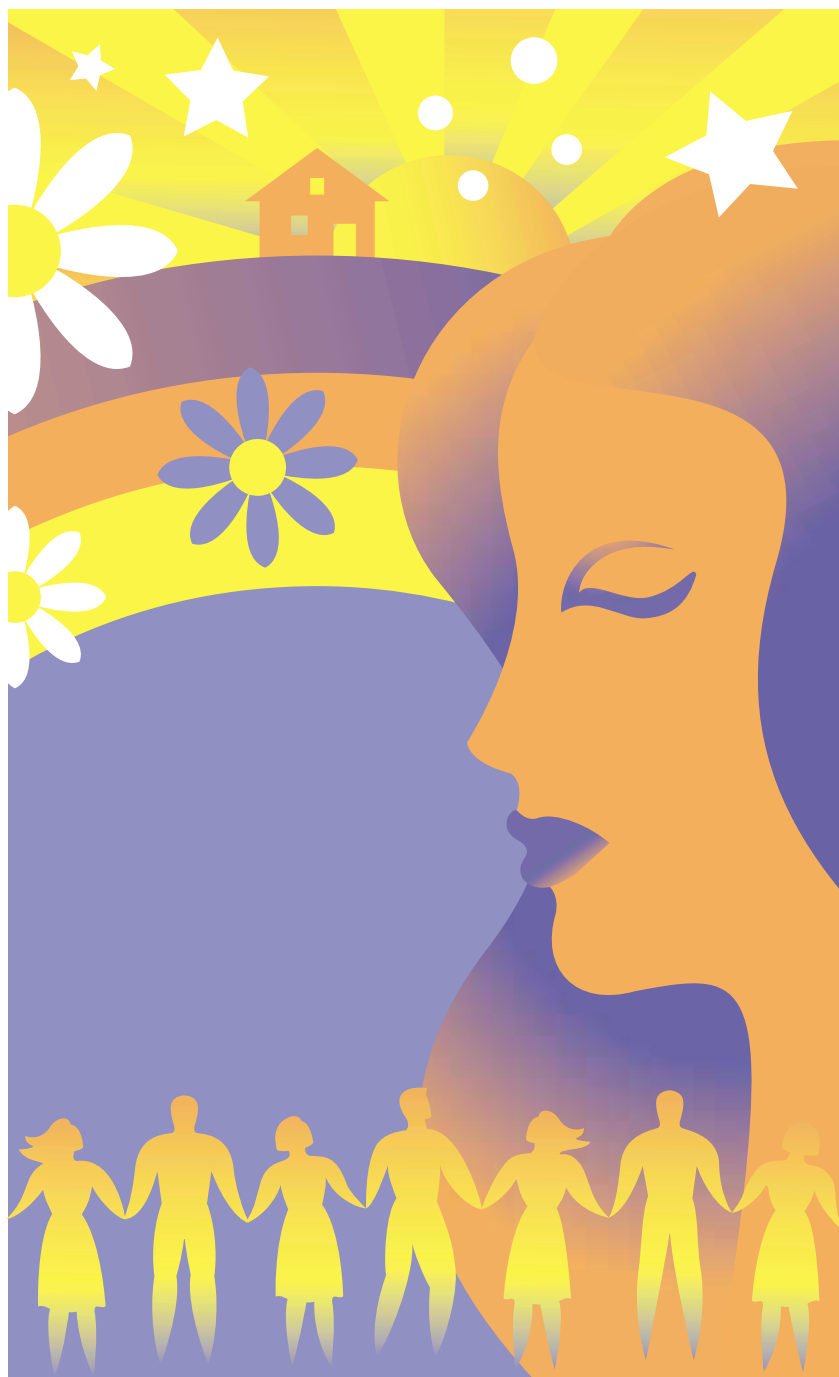
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dear friend,

Your sister looks at the clock and you see a panicked look cross her face. She says she is late to meet her husband, and she has to get home—now!

Your coworker usually does good work, but lately her performance has been spotty. Her boyfriend calls her every morning “just to make sure she got to work okay,” and she always seems jumpy and nervous.

Your best friend has a bruise on her wrist—again. This time she says she knocked it against a door.

With one in four American women reporting that they have been physically abused by a husband or boyfriend at some point in their lives, domestic violence might be closer than you think. Nearly one third of all Americans say they know a woman who has been physically abused by her husband or boyfriend in the past year.¹

Relationship abuse is a leading cause of injury to women. It sends thousands of women to emergency rooms every year, traumatizes children who witness their mothers being beaten by men who are supposed to love them, and takes a toll on every one of us.

The good news is that relationship abuse is a problem we can solve. This handbook was created to help you understand relationship abuse and give you some simple steps you can take to help stop it.

It's not hard to help. In fact, it's very easy. All it takes is overcoming your own discomfort with talking about a taboo subject and reaching out to someone who really needs your friendship and support. Just by letting your friend, family member or coworker know that you care about what is happening to her, you can help a woman who feels isolated, abandoned and alone realize that she has options and make her feel safe and supported. You don't need to have all the answers—we've provided a list of resources for that. It's more important that you let her know you care.

Thank you for taking your first steps toward stopping relationship violence.

Paul R. Charron
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Liz Claiborne Inc.

Esta Soler
Executive Director
Family Violence
Prevention Fund

what is relationship abuse?

Everyone has experienced tension in their relationships. Relationship abuse is not a disagreement, an anger management problem or a relationship “with ups and downs.”

Relationship abuse, or domestic violence, is a pattern of violent behaviors that adults or adolescents use against their intimate partners. Abuse can cause injury and even death, but it doesn't have to be physical. Domestic violence also includes sexual, verbal and emotional abuse, as well as economic control over another person.

Relationship abuse can happen to anyone of any race, age, sexual orientation, religion or gender. It can happen to couples who are married, living together or just dating. It affects people of all educational backgrounds and income levels. The U.S. Department of Justice estimates that more than 90 percent of all victims of domestic violence are women and most perpetrators are men.² Because of this, this handbook uses *she* when referring to victims and *he* when referring to abusers.

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ten warning signs of an abusive relationship

What do you do if you think your friend or family member is in an abusive relationship, but you're not sure? Go with your instincts—you probably wouldn't be concerned without reason. Here are some signs to look for that might indicate an abusive relationship:

1. When your friend and her husband or boyfriend are together, he acts very controlling and puts her down in front of other people.
2. He acts extremely jealous of others who pay attention to her, especially men.
3. She becomes quiet when he is around and seems afraid of making him angry.
4. She stops seeing her friends and family members, becoming more and more isolated.
5. She often cancels plans at the last minute.
6. He controls her finances, her behavior and even whom she socializes with.



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Relationship abuse is a crime, just like robbery or rape. If you see or hear an assault in progress, call 911. If you are outside when you see a woman being assaulted on the street or in a car, write down the license plate number and/or the location of the assault in progress and find the nearest phone to call the police. These situations can be dangerous, so whatever you do, be sure to keep *yourself* safe. But do something! Don't assume that someone else has already taken care of it. Survivors of relationship abuse say that when no one acknowledged that they saw the abuse or tried to help, it made them feel even more isolated and alone.

7. You see him violently lose his temper, striking or breaking objects.
8. She often has unexplained injuries, or the explanations she offers don't quite add up. (Sometimes you won't see any bruises, as batterers target their blows to areas that can be covered with clothing.)
9. She has casually mentioned his violent behavior but laughed it off as a joke.
10. Her child is frequently upset or very quiet and withdrawn and won't say why.

a friend in need

Sarah and Jessica have been friends since kindergarten. Sarah was maid of honor at Jessica's wedding to David, and for a while it seemed like her friend was on cloud nine. But lately, Jessica seems tired and stressed out all the time. Sarah can't remember the last time she heard her really laugh like she used to. She always seems distracted and worries about making David angry if she is running late or doesn't call home when she is "supposed to." One day, when the two friends are shopping for clothes, Sarah is alarmed to see bruises on Jessica's back that look like fingerprints. Jessica laughs it off and says she bumped into a door, but Sarah is starting to get worried about her friend's safety.



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talking to a friend who is being abused

You might think that something as simple as talking to a friend about abuse couldn't possibly make a difference. But it really can.

Just knowing that someone cares enough to ask about the abuse

can break through the wall of isolation that can exist around victims of relationship abuse.

If you think a friend or loved one is being abused, talk to her about it. Listen to her. Let her know you care. You don't have to be an expert. You just need to be a friend.

- Gently ask direct questions about her situation. Give her time to talk. Ask again a few days later. Don't rush into providing solutions. (For some suggested ways to bring the subject up, see page 13.)

- Listen without judging. Often a battered woman believes her abuser's negative messages about herself. She may feel responsible, ashamed, inadequate and afraid she will be judged by you.
- Tell her the abuse is not her fault. Explain that physical or emotional abuse in a relationship is *never* acceptable. There's

no excuse for it—not alcohol or drugs, financial pressure, depression, jealousy nor any behavior of hers.

- Emphasize that when she wants help, it is available. Let her know that domestic violence tends to get worse and become more frequent with time and that it rarely goes away on its own.
- Explain that relationship abuse is a crime and that she can seek protection from the police or courts as well as help from a local domestic violence program. Suggest that she call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at **1-800-799-SAFE** for advice and referrals.
- Work with her to identify resources to help her take care of herself, get emotional support and build her self-esteem.
- If she is your neighbor, come up with a way she can signal you if she needs you to call the police, such as turning a porch light on during the day or lowering a particular window shade.
- If she decides to leave her relationship, she may need money, assistance finding a place to live, a place to store her belongings or a ride to a battered women's shelter. Think about ways you might feel comfortable helping her.



- If you want to talk with someone yourself to get advice about a particular situation, contact a local domestic violence program.

Once you have brought the subject up, bring it up again.

Try not to get frustrated if you reach out to a friend and she stays with her batterer or goes back to him. Ending any relationship is a process that takes time. Ending a violent relationship is even harder. Usually, the victim fears for her life. She may also want her children to grow up with a father. Perhaps her self-esteem is so damaged that she thinks she can't make it on her own or she believes her abuser when he tells her the violence is her fault. Or she just wants the violence to end, not the relationship.

if you are a survivor

If you have firsthand experience with relationship abuse, the best thing you can do is to tell your story to others. Let other women see you and the life you have built as a survivor, so they realize that they too can escape and that there is a better life to look forward to. Being open about what you went through or witnessed also helps remove the stigma of being abused.

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"If someone had given me one of those little cards with phone numbers on it, I don't know. Maybe I would have called. I was so isolated, any friendship would have given me a little strength." —Karen

men have a special role

Most men are not violent. In fact, men can play an important part in helping to stop relationship abuse. Violence against women isn't just a women's issue—it's a men's issue as well. Your male friends can do more than just commit to never using violence against their partners. They can speak up and make it clear that they will not tolerate abusive behavior in others. Ask your male friends not to look the other way if their friend is abusing his partner. Tell them not to take a joke about domestic violence lightly, and let them know that violence against women is no laughing matter. Men speaking out against abuse can have a big impact.

teen violence

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Katie couldn't believe her luck when Jason asked her out. He was the student body president, and she was just a transfer student, new in town and trying to fit in. Once they started dating, she was invited to all the big parties and got to know a whole new circle of friends. The first time he made fun of her at school, she was taken aback. She shrugged it off, figuring he was having a bad day. But soon he began to criticize her clothes, her looks and the things that she said. He joked that she was stupid, and she thought maybe he was right. One night he said he wanted to "go all the way." When she said she wasn't ready, he held her down and forced himself on her. Afterward, Katie felt ashamed and didn't know where to turn.

Remember high school? Close friends, hanging out, summer vacation? Life seems to be a lot more complicated for teens these days. One survey found that 40 percent of teenage girls ages 14 to 17

report knowing someone their own age who has been hit or beaten by a boyfriend.³ Another survey revealed that eight percent of high school-age girls answered yes when asked if "a boyfriend or date has ever forced sex against your will."⁴



Adolescence can be tough. Bodies are changing,

hormones are raging. Teens crave independence from their parents and rely heavily on their peers for acceptance and approval. Not fitting in can seem disastrous, and public humiliation can feel devastating. Because teens are insecure about their own identities and prone to self-doubt, they are especially vulnerable to emotional and physical violence in their relationships.

How can you recognize signs of a potential abuser in your daughter's boyfriends? Surprisingly, it might be the boy who comes across as the "perfect boyfriend" in front of parents. Not every boyfriend is a potential abuser, of course. Pay more attention to how he treats your daughter and less attention to how polite or "smooth talking" he is with you.

Forty percent of teenage girls ages 14 to 17 report knowing someone their age who has been hit or beaten by a boyfriend.



recognizing signs of abuse in your teen

Does your daughter come home with injuries she can't explain?

Ask her what happened. If the explanation doesn't seem to make sense, or if she continues to get injured, keep asking her gently until she opens up. If she feels she can't talk to you, make sure she talks to another trusted adult, whether it's another family member, a school counselor or a family friend.

Does she ever seem afraid of her boyfriend or worried about making him angry? Does she seem overly deferential to him? Is she preoccupied with pleasing him? When you question their relationship, does she answer with excuses ("Everything is under control," "It's not your problem") that don't ring true to you? These could be important warning signs.

Does her boyfriend check up on her? Notice if he shows up at the house unexpectedly or if she constantly seems to be apologizing to him for where she has been, whom she has been with or what she has been doing. Does she make excuses for his behavior?

Does he say mean things to her? If you hear her boyfriend cutting her down, mocking her and insulting her, at the very least he is chipping away at her self-esteem. A healthy sense of self-worth can be a lifesaver to a girl as she grows up, helping her assert herself and her right to safe and healthy relationships.

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"My upbringing was stereotypical: my parents were together, I wasn't abusing drugs. I started dating my boyfriend freshman year. By sophomore year, he became really verbally abusive, saying things like 'You're stupid. No one likes you. Why are you wearing that?' Very gradually, the abuse became physical. At school, I felt a lot of pressure for us to stay together. Teachers would say, 'Oh, you guys are such a cute couple!' He was wealthy, he was good-looking, he was a good catch. People don't realize that the things that make you a teenager make it that much harder to get out of a violent relationship. They think, 'They're not married, they're not financially dependent on each other. How serious could it be?' In reality, teens haven't had a lot of relationships to give them perspective. They often don't have strong boundaries between where they end and the other person starts. Girls at that age gain a lot of status when they have a boyfriend. In high school, that can be so important, it can paralyze you. The degree to which that kind of feeling overwhelms teenagers should not be underestimated." —Rosalind Wiseman, Executive Director, The Empower Program, gender violence prevention for youth 10 to 18 years old

Does your daughter seem to be giving up things that used to be important to her? Is she isolating herself from her friends and family and losing interest in activities she used to enjoy? Has her appearance, weight or behavior changed dramatically? These could be signs of depression, which can be an indicator of abuse.

Does your daughter's boyfriend break or strike things in anger? Does he get into fights with other people? If he can't control his temper around others, he probably can't control it around her either.



what schools can do

- See if your children's school has policies for relationship violence, just like they do for other kinds of violence. Make sure they take abuse seriously.
- Encourage teachers, parents and kids to talk about relationship abuse openly at school in order to take away the shame and secrecy.
- Ask the school to invite a speaker from a local domestic violence program to speak in the classroom. Awareness programs that help build self-esteem and teach healthy relationships can make a big difference. Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at **1-800-799-SAFE** for referrals to domestic violence programs near you.
- Make sure the teachers—and the school nurse—are educated about relationship abuse and its impact on teens, know how to recognize it and can access the resources that are available in the community.

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teens talking to teens

If you're a teenager reading this handbook, you know how hard it can be to admit that you've got a problem you can't handle by yourself. If you see your friend's boyfriend push her around, let her know she can talk to you about it. Tell her it's not okay for him to hurt her—that no boy is worth it. Encourage her to talk to an adult about what is going on. A parent, coach or school counselor can help her deal with the problem. She can call a local domestic violence program if she wants to keep it confidential. And you can talk to any of these people too, if you want advice on how you can best help your friend.

family ties

Maria sits at her daughter Corina's kitchen table and surveys the damage to the room. Broken dishes fill the waste-basket by the sink, and the spice rack has been pulled from the wall. "It's not as bad as it looks," says Corina apologetically.

"At least he didn't hit me this time." Maria gently squeezes her daughter's arm and looks up with tears in her eyes. "This is the last thing I wanted for you," she says. "I don't want you to go through what I went through with your father, Corina. I want your life to be better than this."



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in your family

Domestic violence is a learned behavior. It happens both in families with married parents and in today's less traditional or "blended" families. In a national survey of more than 2,000 American families, approximately 50 percent of the men who frequently assaulted their wives also frequently abused their children.⁵ Slightly more than half of female victims of relationship violence live in households with children under the age of 12.⁶

If someone in your family is being hurt, reach out and talk to her. Let her know that you care. Stand by her, and keep checking in. Call the

National Domestic Violence Hotline at **1-800-799-SAFE** for advice on how best to handle your particular situation.

"When I finally understood that my mom was being hit by my stepfather, I talked to her. She was at first ashamed, but then she opened up and told me how hard it was." —Doris

helping the children

Many children go to school exhausted every day. They have been up all night, hearing their mothers being hurt. All too often, they are being beaten themselves. They believe it's their family's "dirty little secret" and they must keep quiet. Children may not know that it happens in other families. Reach out to children in troubled families. They need help and someone to talk with.

It was so awful, the day I realized my sister was being beaten, just like our mother had been. But I wouldn't sit by. I called her every week for a year, and now she's out of the relationship!" —Georgia

Finding the right words to bring up a delicate subject like relationship abuse can sometimes be difficult. But once you break the ice and let someone know you are asking because you care about her and are concerned for her safety, she will probably appreciate it, even if she doesn't say so at the time.

Try not to put her on the spot. Bring it up gently, and don't force it if she doesn't want to talk. But keep coming back and checking in on her. Chances are, when she is ready, she will open up to you.

Tell her the reasons you are asking. Maybe you saw an incident, a bruise or dismissive treatment of her. Sometimes a concrete incident is easier to talk about than an entire relationship and its problems.

- "I noticed you had bruises last week, and you look upset and tense today. What's going on? Is someone hurting you? I'm worried about you."
- "The way Michael treated you really concerned me. It wasn't okay. You don't deserve to be treated like that—ever."
- "Does Joe ever lose his temper with you? Does he ever become physical? If you ever want to talk about it or need any help, I'm here for you."

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it's everyone's business



Jocelyn was relieved to finally get a good job. She had left her abusive husband three months ago and was nervous about making ends meet on her own. So when he started calling her at work every day to harass her, she was really concerned. One day he slashed her tires in the company parking lot. Another day, he waited for her outside and threatened her in front of her supervisor. He broke into her home one night and beat her so severely that she missed work the next day. When she returned to the office, she was so stressed and distracted that her work began to slide. If she lost her job, she didn't know what she would do.

Domestic violence doesn't stay home when women go to work. It can follow them, resulting in violence in the workplace. Or it can spill over into the workplace when a woman is harassed by threatening phone calls, absent because of injuries or less productive from extreme stress.

If your coworker has unexplained bruises or explanations that don't seem to fit the injuries, is distracted, has trouble concentrating, misses work often or receives repeated upsetting telephone calls during the day, she may be getting hurt when she goes home at night. She may appear anxious, upset or depressed. The quality of her work

may fluctuate for no apparent reason. Or she might have a high absenteeism rate, due to frequent medical problems or fears about leaving children at home alone with the abuser.

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"I remember the first coworker who asked me if my fat lip was caused by my ex-husband. He may have felt that it didn't do any good, or that he was wrong to ask. But by asking that question, he planted a seed in my mind that what was happening to me wasn't right." —Karen

talking to coworkers about abuse

You may hesitate to talk about abuse with a coworker because you see domestic violence as a personal matter. Besides, what goes on away from work isn't your business. But many battered women find it hard to ask for help and are truly relieved when someone reaches out to them. Let your coworker know that you are there if she wants to talk about it.

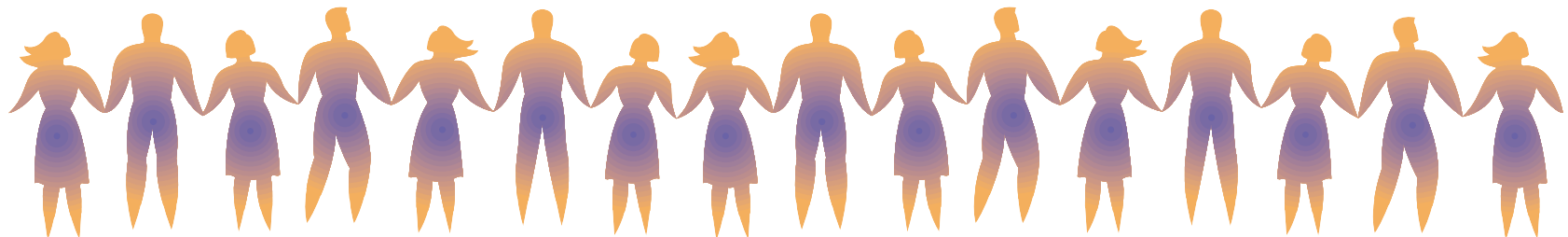
Encourage your coworker to talk to someone at work whom she trusts, such as a supervisor, human resources manager or employee assistance counselor. The Security Department may also be a useful resource for her. She can give Security and/or reception areas a photograph of the batterer, along with a copy of a protective order, if there is one. Security may also be able to help her create a Workplace Safety Plan that takes additional steps, including an escort to her car and priority parking near the building if she fears an attack at work. She may also want to ask about flexible or alternate work hours, as well as relocation of her work space to a more secure area.

Offer to screen her phone calls, or suggest that her incoming calls go through the receptionist. Harassing calls should be transferred to Security. She may also want to remove her name and number from automated phone directories. If her partner threatens or harasses her at work, suggest that she call the police.



"My coworker screened my calls when my ex-husband was harassing me. She volunteered to change her shift so that I could go to a support group, and was always there for me if I just needed to talk. The support I got at work made the whole process so much easier for me."
—Monica

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what if you are her supervisor?

Managers and supervisors face one of the most challenging aspects of domestic violence in the workplace: what to say to an employee who you believe is being abused, and how to say it in a way that respects her privacy.

If an employee you supervise voluntarily discloses to you that she is struggling with relationship abuse, let her know that you are concerned and will support her. Refer her to appropriate in-house resources, such as an Employee Assistance Program. Keep the information in the strictest of confidence, telling only those who need to know, such as Security, if there is a direct threat of violence at work. Work with her to adjust her schedule or workload to increase her safety, if needed.

If you believe that your employee is facing abuse in her personal life but she does not disclose

this to you, you must respect her privacy. If there are performance issues that result from the abuse, such as reduced productivity or excessive absences, you may offer help to her by focusing on the performance problems in an empathetic and caring manner and by referring her to appropriate company resources.

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Domestic violence affects women's work, reduces productivity and increases absenteeism and turnover.

56% of working battered women who sought counseling report having lost at least one job, and 54% report missing an average of three days of work per month, due to domestic violence.⁷

94% of corporate security directors rank domestic violence high as a security problem at their company.⁸

37% of women personally affected by domestic violence report that the abuse has had an impact on their work performance in the form of tardiness, missed work, a lost job or missed career promotions.⁹

Nearly three quarters of battered women surveyed in one study report that their abusers harassed them at work.¹⁰

"After getting help from my supervisor, I worked so hard. I think I gave back as much as I could to her. The fact that they had been there for me through the rough stuff gave me a sense of commitment to the work. If you just stick it out, what a loyal employee you get in the end." —A survivor

spreading the word at work

Employee training, brown-bag seminars, newsletter articles, posters and brochures on domestic violence are all ways that an employer can create an environment in which employees feel safe and comfortable talking about relationship abuse. Talk to your Human Resources Department or Employee Assistance Program about education efforts they can undertake. The National Workplace Resource Center on Domestic Violence (415-252-8900) offers technical assistance and materials on domestic violence in the workplace, including sample workplace policies, fact sheets and awareness materials.

"Molly was part of our team. She was shaken up by the harassing phone calls. We found them intolerable in a business and made it clear to the caller that he'd never get through to her. We twice gave Molly extra paid leave to sort things out. The threat to her was a threat to everyone in the building, so we distributed a warning flyer with his picture. We introduced her to a counselor, and we cooperated with the police and courts in her attempts to file and enforce a protective order. In the end, Molly's harasser learned that his actions had consequences, Molly learned that she could rely on a network of support and we learned that you can step forward and make a difference." —Mike

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planning for safety

If your friend, family member or coworker is thinking about leaving an abusive relationship, it's a good idea for her to make a safety plan ahead of time. There are several key things she may want to consider. In helping her plan for her safety, suggest that she may want to:

- Call a domestic violence program for help and advice on what is best for her specific situation. The National Domestic Violence Hotline, **1-800-799-SAFE**, can provide help and referrals to local programs.
- Think about the safest time to get away, if she chooses to leave.
- Hide an extra set of keys, some money and clothes at work or a friend's house, and collect important papers, such as passports, birth certificates, checkbooks and identification, for herself and her children.
- Tell her doctor about the abuse and ask him or her to document it in her medical file.
- Keep any evidence of abuse, such as photos of bruises and injuries, or ripped clothing—all of this will be helpful if she decides to take legal action in the future. She may want to consider documenting the abuse with police as well.
- Open a savings account in her own name and begin to establish a credit history independent of her partner.

- Consider obtaining a protective order.
- Review the safety of her childcare arrangements. She may want to give a picture of her batterer and a copy of her protective order to the day-care provider. If necessary, she may consider selecting a new day-care site.
- Save any threatening e-mails or voicemail messages. She can use these to take legal action in the future, if she chooses to. If she already has a protective order, the messages can serve as evidence in court that the order was violated.



women's resource guide

*If you are in an abusive relationship and need help or referrals to resources near you, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at **1-800-799-SAFE (1-800-799-7233)** or TTY **1-800-787-3224** for the hearing impaired.*

*For more information about talking to women about relationship abuse or speaking out in the community and workplace, call the Family Violence Prevention Fund's Action Line at **1-800-END-ABUSE (1-800-363-2287)**.*

Family Violence Prevention Fund
383 Rhode Island Street, Suite 304
San Francisco, CA 94103-5133
415-252-8900
Fax: 415-252-8991
www.fvpf.org
E-mail: fund@fvpf.org

National Workplace Resource Center
on Domestic Violence
A Project of the Family Violence Prevention Fund
415-252-8900

Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic
Violence and National Resource Center
6400 Flank Drive, Suite 1300
Harrisburg, PA 17112
1-800-537-2238
Fax: 717-545-9456

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence/Teen Dating Violence Project
P.O. Box 18749
Denver, CO 80218
303-839-1852
Fax: 303-831-9251
www.ncadv.org

Girls Incorporated
National Resource Center
441 West Michigan Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202
317-634-7546
www.girlsinc.org

The Empower Program
1312 8th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001
202-882-2800
Fax: 202-234-1901
www.empowered.org
E-mail: empower@empowered.org



other resources

fiction

Big Girls Don't Cry by Connie Briscoe
Black and Blue by Anna Quindlen
The Color Purple by Alice Walker
I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings
by Maya Angelou
If She Hollers Let Her Go by Chester Hines
Jazz by Toni Morrison
The Joy Luck Club by Amy Tan
Rose Madder by Steven King
Sassafras, Cypress & Indigo
by Ntozake Shange
Tar Baby by Toni Morrison
This Boy's Life: A Memoir by Tobias Wolff
The Woman Who Walked into Doors
by Roddy Doyle

nonfiction

The Burning Bed: The True Story of Francine Hughes—A Beaten Wife Who Rebelled by Faith McNulty
Community Secret: The Story of Two Filipinas by Jaqueline J. Agtuca
Deals with the Devil and Other Reasons to Riot by Pearl Cleage
I, Tina: My Life Story by Tina Turner
Living with the Enemy (photographs)
by Donna Ferrato

endnotes

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8. Charlene Marmer Solomon, "Talking Frankly About Domestic Violence," *Personnel Journal*, April 1995.
9. EDK Associates for The Body Shop, *The Many Faces of Domestic Violence and Its Impact on the Workplace*, New York: EDK Associates, 1997.
10. Lucy Friedman and Sarah Cooper, *The Cost of Domestic Violence*, New York: Victim Services Research Department, 1987.

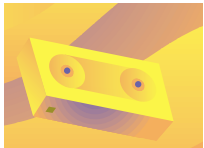


Next Time, She'll Be Dead: Battering and How to Stop It by Ann Jones
The Stalking of Kristin: A Father Investigates the Murder of His Daughter
by George Lardner
To Have or to Harm: True Stories of Stalkers and Their Victims
by Linden Gross

videos

Bhaji on the Beach
The Burning Bed
The Color Purple
Defending Our Lives
Fried Green Tomatoes
The Joy Luck Club
Ladybird, Ladybird
Mona Lisa
Once Were Warriors
The Piano
Raging Bull
Sleeping with the Enemy
Sling Blade
This Boy's Life
What's Love Got to Do with It?

"I am no longer a victim of domestic violence. I am strong, no matter what others may think. I am a good person. I am scared, and I am not scared to admit that. I have courage, even if I don't think so all the time. I have feelings, even though many days I can't feel. I get angry. I get upset. I have cried many sleepless nights. I have taken many beatings. I have been called many unacceptable words. I have needs. I have dreams. I have hopes. I am a survivor."—Cyndie





love is not abuse

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