

# Understanding Domestic Violence

**MYTH: If they don't hit me, it's not abuse.**

**FACT: Domestic abuse is not always physical.**

Statistics show that 88% of those that experienced domestic abuse had primarily experienced non-physical abuse.<sup>1</sup> Non-physical abuse can include threats, insults, constant monitoring or “checking in,” excessive texting, humiliation, intimidation, isolation or stalking.



**MYTH: Domestic abuse only impacts the adults in a household.**

**FACT: Growing up in a house where domestic abuse is present can have lifelong negative health impacts.**

More than 15 million children in the U.S. live in homes in which domestic violence has happened at least once. These children are at greater risk for repeating the cycle as adults by entering into abusive relationships or becoming abusers themselves. Children who experience or witness emotional, physical or sexual abuse are also more likely to face health issues in adulthood.



**MYTH: It is easy to spot domestic abuse.**

**FACT: Abusers are terrific at keeping abuse secret.**

Sometimes victims that experience non-physical abuse in their relationship, such as economic or emotional abuse, may not easily recognize that they are in an abusive situation or that this behavior can escalate into physical or sexual abuse. Abusers often have a charismatic and friendly public persona. It is rarely obvious that someone is abusive in the early stages of a relationship.

**MYTH: Domestic abuse victims can easily leave.**

**FACT: There are numerous reasons why domestic abuse victims cannot easily leave their situations.**

Abusers often isolate their partners from potential support, and many survivors may not even recognize their situation as abuse. If children are involved, cutting ties can be even more complex, as survivors may face ongoing control tactics from their abuser. Cultural beliefs can also further complicate decisions to leave. Ultimately, the focus should shift from questioning why survivors stay to asking why perpetrators continue their abusive behavior, emphasizing the need for accountability.



**MYTH: It's fine for your partner to control your finances.**

**FACT: Controlling access to finances or a job is abuse.**

Statistics show that financial abuse is found in 99% of domestic violence situations.<sup>2</sup> Financial abuse is a potent tool for maintaining a survivor's entrapment in an abusive relationship and significantly undermines their capacity to remain safe after leaving their abuser. Some examples of financial abuse include the following:

- Giving you an allowance or monitoring what you buy.
- Forbidding you from working or limiting the hours you do.
- Spending money on themselves while preventing you from doing the same.
- Using financial circumstances to control you.

**MYTH: Domestic abuse does not impact me.**

**FACT: Domestic abuse is extremely common.**

Statistics show that 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime.<sup>3</sup> It is more likely than not that someone in your family or friend group will experience it in their lifetime.

<sup>1</sup> According to the Office for National Statistics

<sup>2</sup> According to the Center for Financial Security

<sup>3</sup> According to the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence