



## Spousal or Partner Abuse On-Line Continuing Education Program (7 CE Units)

According to the BBS, for renewals after January 1, 2004, licensees must complete a one-time course in spousal or partner abuse assessment, detection, and intervention strategies including community resources, cultural factors, and same gender abuse dynamics. There is no hour length specified for courses taken in 2004. If the spousal or partner abuse course is taken on or after January 1, 2005, it must be at least seven hours. Equivalent course work or experience may be substituted for this requirement, but will not count as continuing education.

### **DEFINITION**

#### **WHAT IS SPOUSAL ABUSE?**

"Spousal abuse" refers to the violence or mistreatment that a woman or man may experience at the hands of a marital, common-law or same-sex partner. Spousal abuse may happen at any time during a relationship, including while it is breaking down, or after it has ended.

There are many different forms of spousal abuse, and a person may be subjected to more than one form.

Physical abuse may consist of just one incident or it may happen repeatedly. It includes using physical force in a way that injures someone - puts them at risk of being injured- including beating, hitting, shaking, pushing, choking, biting, burning, kicking, or assaulting with a weapon. Other forms of physical abuse may include, for example, rough handling, confinement, or any dangerous or harmful use of force or restraint.

Sexual abuse and exploitation includes all forms of sexual assault, sexual harassment or sexual exploitation. Forcing someone to participate in unwanted, unsafe or degrading sexual activity, or using ridicule or other tactics to try to denigrate control or limit their sexuality or reproductive choices is sexual abuse.

Emotional abuse includes verbal attacks, such as yelling, screaming and name-calling. Using criticism, verbal threats, social isolation, intimidation or exploitation to dominate another person are other forms of emotional abuse.

Criminal harassment or "stalking" may include threatening a person or their loved ones, damaging their possessions, or harming their pets.

Economic or financial abuse includes stealing from or defrauding a partner. Withholding money that is necessary to buy food or medical treatment, manipulating or exploiting a person for financial gain, denying them access to financial resources, or preventing them from working (or controlling their choice of occupation) are also forms of economic abuse.

Spiritual abuse includes using a person's religious or spiritual beliefs to manipulate, dominate or control them. It may include preventing someone from engaging in spiritual or religious practices, or ridiculing their beliefs.

Abusive partners may use a number of different tactics to try to exert power and control over their victim. Abuse is a misuse of power and a violation of trust. The abuse may happen once, or it may occur in a repeated and escalating pattern over a period of months or years. The abuse may change form over time.

While domestic violence is usually regarded as men battering women, men can be battered too: See: Domestic Violence Against Men, and MAN2MAN: The Site For Battered Men.

## **ASSESSMENT**

It is stated that an abusive act is rarely an isolated event. Violent behavior usually recurs and tends to increase over time. It is rare to find partners who will share about their abuse freely. As clinicians it is important to ask questions and follow up on any visible injuries. Below are some assessment questions.

- How were you hurt?
- Has this happened before?
- When did it first happen?
- How badly have you been hurt in the past?
- Have you needed to go to an emergency room for treatment?
- Have you ever been threatened with a weapon, or has a weapon ever been used on you?
- Have you ever tried to get a restraining order against a partner?
- Have the children ever seen or heard you being threatened or hurt?
- Do you know how you can get help for yourself if you were hurt or afraid?

It is important to ask the right questions, because some questions can be frightening or intimidating. Certain questions can increase sense of humiliation and shame about the violence. Be aware of the following situations.

- Most battered people do not identify themselves as battered per se because of the perception of shame and worthlessness associated with such a value-laden term. Therefore, initially avoid using the words “domestic violence,” “abused” or “battered” when speaking with the victim. Instead, use words like “hurt,” “frightened,” or “badly treated?”
- Do not inquire about abuse in the presence of the partner, friends, or family members. This breaks confidentiality and it is also unlikely the victim will disclose any information in such a setting.
- Do not break client confidentiality by disclosing any information or discussing your concerns with the victim’s partner. In addition to being an ethics violation, this could put the victim at risk.
- Never ask your patient what she did to bring on the violence. This is shaming and puts the blame on the victim.
- Do not ask your patient why he has not left his partner. A person may leave their batterer only to later return. If this is the case with your patient, avoid asking why they have returned to the relationship.

## **EDUCATION**

### **Dynamics of Domestic Violence – The Cycle of Violence: Lenore Walker**

Battering often occurs in the context of something that we call the Cycle of Violence. We have found that even though every relationship is unique, abusive relationships often follow similar cycles. In 1979, Lenore Walker interviewed 1500 battered women. She found that woman after woman described the same kind of cycle in her relationship. She identified this cycle of violence.

**TENSION:** We start the cycle in this relationship at the “okay” stage. The couple is basically okay, interactions are positive or close. Then, as “real life” sets in, tensions start building. We call this the tension building stage. These tensions may be anything from a bad day to major life changes like pregnancies or job loss. It’s good to note here that all relationships have periods of tension. In healthy relationships, the couple may disagree or argue, but both have equal power in the relationship. In battering relationships, the abusers need for power and control underlie anger and blaming. The tension continues to escalate. Survivors often describe feeling like they’re “walking on eggshells” during this time.

**EXPLOSION:** Ultimately, there is an explosion or battering incident. Abusers may hit, attack, verbally assault, threaten, or scream at their partners. Many people feel battering incidents occur because someone is so angry or so drunk that they lose control of themselves. We hear comments like, “if she hadn’t kept nagging me I wouldn’t have lost my temper,” or “I was so out of it, I didn’t know what I was doing.” Actually, abusers TAKE CONTROL when they batter. They take control of the immediate situation, their partner, their physical space and usually the outcome of the situation. Domestic violence is a crime of power and control not passion out of control.

**LOVING & CONTRITE:** After the explosion comes the honeymoon or loving and contrite stage. The batterer is likely to have actually experienced a physiological release of tension.

The batterer is frequently sorry, feeling guilty and willing to try anything to make up. There may be flowers or gifts, dates and romance as in the beginning of the relationship. The couple may even make love in an attempt to reestablish intimacy and security after the explosion. The batterer will also be blaming the victim for "having to hit her" and will minimize what just happened. The victim will be in shock, upset, possibly hurt. She or he will be confused and may feel guilty that somehow they may have caused it. The victim will want to believe the batterer's promises. Both partners deny how bad the abuse was and that it could happen again. We point out here that no one wants their relationship to end, they want the battering to end. In this loving and contrite stage, the increased intimacy and promises to get help or never do it again give the victim hope that things might change.

After a while, the loving stage fades again and we start around the circle once more. They both may believe that it will never happen again, that it was a one-time occurrence. The couple convinces themselves that each incident is isolated and unrelated to the next.

There are two things we know about the cycle:

1. Without intervention, this cycle does not get better; it actually becomes more frequent.
2. The violence escalates over time. Without intervention, the abuse gets worse, and the loving and contrite stages are less apologetic. Eventually the loving and contrite stage drops out entirely.

When crisis callers describe a cycle of violence with no loving and contrite stage, we know she is probably in a great deal of danger.

## RESOURCES

### Sample Personalized Safety Plan For Domestic Violence Survivors

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Review dates: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Personalized Safety Plan

The following steps represent my plan for increasing my safety and preparing in advance for the possibility for further violence. Although I do not have control over my partner's violence, I do have a choice about how to respond to him/her and how to best get myself and any children to safety.

**Step 1:** Safety during a violent incident. Violent incidents cannot always be avoided. In order to increase safety, battered people may use a variety of strategies.

I can use some or all of the following strategies:

**A.** If I decide to leave, I will \_\_\_\_\_. (Practice how to get out safely. What doors, windows, elevators, stairwells, or fire escapes would you use?)

**B.** I can keep my purse and car keys ready and put them (place) \_\_\_\_\_ in order to leave quickly.

**C.** I can tell \_\_\_\_\_ about the violence and request they call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from my house. I can also tell \_\_\_\_\_ about the violence and request they call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from my house.

**D.** I can teach my children how to use the telephone to contact the police and the fire department.

**E.** I will use \_\_\_\_\_ as my code word with my children or my friends so they can call for help.

**F.** If I have to leave my home, I will go to \_\_\_\_\_. (Decide this even if you don't think there will be a next time.) If I cannot go to the location above, then I can go to \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.

**G.** I can also teach some of these strategies to some/all of my children.

**H.** When I expect we are going to have an argument, I will try to move to a space that is lowest risk, such as \_\_\_\_\_. (Try to avoid arguments in the bathroom, garage, kitchens, near weapons or in rooms without access to an outside door.)

I. I will use my judgment and intuition. If the situation is very serious, I can give my partner what he/she wants to calm him/her down. I have to protect myself until I/we are out of danger.

**Step 2:** Safety when preparing to leave. Battered people frequently leave the residence they share with their battering partner. Leaving must be done with a careful plan in order to increase safety. Batterers often strike back when they believe their partner is leaving a relationship.

I can use some or all of the following safety strategies:

**A.** I will leave money and an extra set of keys with \_\_\_\_\_ so I can leave quickly.

**B.** I will keep copies of important documents or keys at \_\_\_\_\_.

**C.** I will open a savings account by \_\_\_\_\_ (date), to increase my independence.

**D.** Other things I can do to increase my independence include:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**E.** The domestic violence program's hotline number is \_\_\_\_\_. I can seek shelter by calling this hotline.

**F.** I can keep change for phone calls on me at all times. I understand that if I use my telephone credit card, the following month the telephone bill will tell my batterer those numbers that I called after I left. To keep my telephone communications confidential, I must either use coins, purchase a phone card or I might get a friend to permit me to use their telephone credit card for a limited time when I first leave.

**G.** I will check with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to see who would be able to let me stay with them or lend me some money.

**H.** I can leave extra clothes with \_\_\_\_\_.

**I.** I will sit down and review my safety plan every \_\_\_\_\_ in order to plan the safest way to leave the residence. \_\_\_\_\_ (domestic violence advocate or friend) has agreed to help me review this plan.

**J.** I will rehearse my escape plan and, as appropriate, practice it with my children.

**Step 3:** Safety in one's own residence. There are many things that a person can do to increase safety in their own residence. It may be impossible to do everything at once, but safety measures can be added step by step.

Safety measures I can use include:

**A.** I can change the locks on my doors and windows as soon as possible.

**B.** I can replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors.

**C.** I can install security systems including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic system, etc.

**D.** I can purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows.

**E.** I can install smoke detectors and purchase fire extinguishers for each floor in my house/apartment.

**F.** I can install an outside lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to my house.

**G.** I will teach my children how to use the telephone to make a collect call to me and to (friend/minister/other) in the event that my partner takes the children.

**H.** I will tell people who take care of my children which people have permission to pick up my children and that my partner is not permitted to do so. The people I will inform about pick-up permission include \_\_\_\_\_ (school),

\_\_\_\_\_ (day care staff),

\_\_\_\_\_ (baby-sitter),

\_\_\_\_\_ (Sunday school teacher),

\_\_\_\_\_ (teacher),

\_\_\_\_\_ and (others).

I can inform: \_\_\_\_\_ (neighbor),

\_\_\_\_\_ (pastor), and \_\_\_\_\_ (friend) that

my partner no longer resides with me and they should call the police if he/she is observed near my residence.

**Step 4:** Safety with a protection order. Many batterers obey protection orders, but one can never be sure which violent partner will obey and which will violate protection orders. I recognize that I may need to ask the police and the courts to enforce my protection order. The following are some steps that I can take to help the enforcement of my protection order:

**A.** I will keep my protection order \_\_\_\_\_ (location). (Always keep it on or near your person. If you change purses, that's the first thing that should go in.)

**B.** I will give my protection order to police departments in the community where I work, in those communities where I usually visit family or friends, and in the community where I live.

**C.** There should be a county registry of protection orders that all police departments can call to confirm a protection order. I can check to make sure that my order is in the registry. The telephone number for the county registry of protection orders is \_\_\_\_\_.

**D.** For further safety, if I often visit other counties in my state, I might file my protection order with the court in those counties. I will register my protection order in the following counties:

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.

**E.** I can call the local domestic violence program if I am not sure about B, C, or D above or if I have some problem with my protection order.

**F.** I will inform my employer, my minister, my closest friend and \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ that I have a protection order in effect.

**G.** If my partner destroys my protection order, I can get another copy from the courthouse by going to [the office] located at \_\_\_\_\_

**H.** If my partner violates the protection order, I can call the police and report a violation, contact my attorney, call my advocate, and/or advise the court of the violation.

**I.** If the police do not help, I can contact my advocate or attorney and will file a complaint with the chief of the police department.

**J.** I can also file a private criminal complaint with the district justice in the jurisdiction where the violation occurred or with the district attorney. I can charge my battering partner with a

violation of the protection order and all the crimes that he commits in violating the order. I can call the domestic violence advocate to help me with this.

**Step 5:** Safety on the job and in public. Each battered person must decide if and when they will tell others their partner has battered them and that they may be at continued risk. Friends, family and coworkers can help to protect them. Each battered person should consider carefully which people to invite to help secure their safety.

I might do any or all of the following:

**A.** I can inform my boss, the security supervisor and \_\_\_\_\_ at work of my situation.

**B.** I can ask \_\_\_\_\_ to help screen my telephone calls at work.

**C.** When leaving work, I can \_\_\_\_\_.

**D.** When driving home if problems occur, I can \_\_\_\_\_.

**E.** If I use public transit, I can \_\_\_\_\_.

**F.** I can use different grocery stores and shopping malls to conduct my business and shop at hours that are different than those when residing with my battering partner.

**G.** I can use a different bank and take care of my banking at hours different from those I used when residing with my battering partner.

**H.** I can also \_\_\_\_\_.

**Step 6:** Safety and drug or alcohol use. Most people in this culture use alcohol. Many use mood-altering drugs. Much of this use is legal and some is not. The legal outcomes of using illegal drugs can be very hard on a battered person, it may hurt their relationship with their children and put them at a disadvantage in other legal actions with the battering partner. Therefore, battered people should carefully consider the potential cost of the use of illegal drugs. But beyond this, the use of any alcohol or other drugs can reduce a person's awareness and ability to act quickly to protect themselves from the battering partner. Furthermore, the use of alcohol or other drugs by the batterer may give him/her an excuse to use violence. Therefore, in the context of drug or alcohol use, a battered person needs to make specific safety plans.

If drug or alcohol use has occurred in my relationship with the battering partner, I can enhance my safety by some or all of the following:

**A.** If I am going to use, I can do so in a safe place and with people who understand the risk of violence and are committed to my safety.

**B.** I can also \_\_\_\_\_.

**C.** If my partner is using, I can \_\_\_\_\_.

**D.** I might also \_\_\_\_\_.

E. To safeguard my children, I might \_\_\_\_\_  
and \_\_\_\_\_.

**Step 7:** Safety and emotional health. The experience of being battered and verbally degraded by partners is usually exhausting and emotionally draining. The process of building a new life for oneself takes much courage and incredible energy.

To conserve my emotional energy and resources and to avoid hard emotional times, I can do some of the following:

A. If I feel down and ready to return to a potentially abusive situation, I can \_\_\_\_\_.

B. When I have to communicate with my partner in person or by telephone, I can \_\_\_\_\_.

C. I can try to use "I can..." statements with myself and to be assertive with others.

D. I can tell myself, " \_\_\_\_\_ " whenever I feel others are trying to control or abuse me.

E. I can read \_\_\_\_\_ to help me feel stronger.

F. I can call \_\_\_\_\_,  
and \_\_\_\_\_ as other resources to be of support to me.

G. Other things I can do to help me feel stronger are \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.

H. I can attend workshops and support groups at the domestic violence program or \_\_\_\_\_,  
or \_\_\_\_\_ to gain support and strengthen my relationships with other people.

**Step 8:** Items to take when leaving. When battered people leave their partners, it is important to take certain items with them. Beyond this, they sometimes give an extra copy of papers and an extra set of clothing to a friend just in case they have to leave quickly.

Items with asterisks(\*) on the following list are the most important to take. If there is time, the other items might be taken, or stored outside the home. These items might best be placed in one location, so that if we have to leave in a hurry, I can grab them quickly.

When I leave, I should take:

- \*Identification for myself
- \*Children's birth certificates
- \*My birth certificate
- \*Social Security cards
- \*School and vaccination records
- \*Money
- \*Checkbook, ATM (Automatic Teller Machine) card
- \*Credit cards

\*Keys-house/car/office  
\*Driver's license and registration  
Medications  
Welfare identification  
Work permits, Green card  
Passport(s)  
Divorce papers  
Medical records-for all family members  
Lease/rental agreement, house deed, mortgage payment book  
Bank books  
Insurance papers  
Small saleable objects  
Address book  
Pictures  
Jewelry, Items of special sentimental value  
Children's favorite toys and/or blankets

**Telephone Numbers I Need to Know:**

Police department-home \_\_\_\_\_  
Police department-school \_\_\_\_\_  
Police department-work \_\_\_\_\_  
Battered men/women's program \_\_\_\_\_  
County registry of protection orders \_\_\_\_\_  
Work number \_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor's home number \_\_\_\_\_  
Minister \_\_\_\_\_  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

Reproduced with permission from Barbara Hart and Jane Stuehling, Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 1992.

Adapted from "Personalized Safety Plan," Office of the City Attorney, City of San Diego, California, April 1990.

## Additional Resources

Rent a video about abusive relationships; watch and discuss it with your friend.

What's Love Got to Do With It  
Dolores Claiborne  
The Burning Bed  
Sleeping with the Enemy  
Once We Were Warriors  
Enough

Books that offer options for getting out of an abusive relationship.

Ginny NiCarthy. Getting Free: You Can End Abuse and Take Back Your Life.  
Ginny NiCarthy. You Can Be Free (an abridged version of Getting Free)  
Barrie Levy, ed. Dating Violence: Young Women in Danger  
Kerry Lobel, ed. Naming the Violence: Speaking Out About Lesbian Battering  
Claire M. Renzetti and Charles Harvey Miley (eds.) Violence in Gay and Lesbian Domestic Partnership  
Lenore Walker. The Battered Woman  
Evelyn C. White. Chain Chain Change: For Black Women Dealing with Physical and Emotional Abuse  
Myrna Zambrano. Mejor Sola Que Mal Acompañada: For the Latina in an Abusive Relationship/Para la Mujer Golpeda

For those who want to stop battering (written with a bias toward men):

Paul Kivel. Men's Work  
Daniel Sonkin & Michael Durphy. Learning to Live without Violence: A Handbook for Men



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(7 CE Units)**

To receive a certificate of completion for this course, please print this page. Answer each True/False question by circling the appropriate answer. Then, fill out the form below and mail it along with a \$50.00 check (payable to The Marina Counseling Center.)

**True or False Test**

1. Spousal abuse never happens after the relationship has ended. T or F
2. Domestic violence is a crime of passion out of control. T or F
3. Violent behavior usually tends to decrease over time. T or F
4. Threatening to harm your partner's dog is criminal harassment. T or F
5. Yelling, screaming and name calling are abuse. T or F
6. Criticism is not a form of abuse. T or F
7. A woman is never the batterer. T or F
8. A man can be the victim of abuse. T or F
9. Abusive relationships have a honeymoon stage after a cycle of tension and explosion. T or F
10. The battered individual is in real danger if they describe a cycle of violence with no loving and contrite stage. T or F

Please provide the following information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

MFT/LCSW License Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail along with \$50.00 payment to:      The Marina Counseling Center  
Attn: Syntha Lorenz, MFT, Program Director  
2137 Lombard Street  
San Francisco, CA 94123