

## FAMILY ADVOCACY DOMESTIC ABUSE MYTHS AND FACTS

### DISCUSSION LEADER'S OUTLINE

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Good morning my name is \_\_\_\_\_. Today we will be talking about domestic abuse myths and facts.

The **ground rules** for this discussion are:

- (1) No personal attacks on anyone's opinions
- (2) Allow each participant to express themselves
- (3) Make head calls at your leisure, just don't interrupt the group
- (4) Keep your language clean as not to offend others
- (5) PARTICIPATION BY ALL!!!!!!

#### **Gain Attention**

"I told her not to go out." "I made it clear dinner should be ready by 5." "I told him not to talk to other women in front of me." "She made me do it. What choice did I have?"

**Key points** for this discussion will be:

- (1) Know the myths and facts related to domestic abuse.
- (2) Know when to seek assistance.

**Learning Objective:** After this guided discussion, you will have a better understanding of myths and facts related to domestic abuse.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

Domestic abuse doesn't discriminate. Anyone can be a victim. The causes of domestic abuse include deeply held beliefs about gender roles and societal expectations. Domestic abuse is not a single occurrence rather; it is a "pattern" of behaviors. Such behaviors are neglect, verbal, sexual, and emotional abuse designed to exert power and control over an intimate partner or family member. Abusive individuals tend to blame other people, alcohol or circumstances for their violent outbursts. It is commonly assumed that domestic abuse is caused by alcohol abuse. This isn't true. The perpetrator is sober in about half of domestic abuse cases where the police are called. Also, not all individuals diagnosed with an alcohol disorder or individuals who binge drink resort to abuse when angered or frustrated. Assaultive behaviors include physical abuse, sexual assault, verbal abuse, psychological abuse, and economic coercion.

Let's take a look at some myths and facts related to domestic abuse.

#### **THE VICTIM**

**Myth:** Domestic abuse only happens to poor, uneducated women and women of different race or color.

**Truth:** Persons of any class, culture, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, age, and sex can be victims or perpetrators of domestic abuse. Because women with money usually have more access to resources, poorer women tend to utilize community agencies, and are therefore more visible.

**Myth:** Some people deserve to be abused; they are responsible for the violence because they know how to provoke it.

**Truth:** No one deserves to be abused. The only person responsible for the abuse is the individual who is abusing others. Physical, abuse even among family members, is wrong and against the law.

**Myth:** If the victim didn't like it, they would leave.

**Truth:** There are many reasons why a victim may not leave, including fear for self, their children and even pets. Not leaving does not mean that the situation is okay or that the victim wants to be abused. The most dangerous time for a victim who is being abused is when they try to leave. On average, it takes seven attempts before a victim can leave permanently.

**Myth:** Men cannot be abused.

**Truth:** Men can be, and are, abused. Ten percent of all reported domestic assaults occur to men.

### **THE OFFENDER**

**Myth:** Most people who commit abuse are under the effects of alcohol or drugs.

**Truth:** Although many abusive partners also abuse alcohol and/or drugs, this is not the underlying cause of the abuse. Many individuals who abuse, use alcohol/drugs as an excuse for their behavior.

**Myth:** Stress and anger lead to abuse.

**Truth:** Abusive behavior is a choice. Perpetrators use it to control their victims. Domestic abuse is about individuals using their control, not losing their control. Their actions are very deliberate.

**Myth:** Individuals who abuse are violent in all their relationships.

**Truth:** Individuals who abuse choose to be violent to their partner and hurt them in ways they would never hurt someone else. Their abuse is about power and control of the person.

### **THE VIOLENCE**

**Myth:** Domestic abuse is a personal problem between two people in a relationship.

**Truth:** Domestic abuse affects everyone.

**Myth:** Domestic abuse occurs in only a small percentage of relationships.

**Truth:** Domestic abuse occurs in up to 1/3 of all relationships, including same sex relationships. One in four women and one in seven men will report abuse from a spouse or partner in their lifetime.

**Myth:** Domestic abuse is usually a one time, isolated occurrence due to anger or stress.

**Truth:** Abuse is a pattern of power and control that includes the repeated use of a number of tactics including threats, intimidation, isolation, economic and financial control, and psychological and sexual abuse. Physical abuse is only one of the tactics used to control another person.

### **KEY POINT 1**

1. Domestic abuse is a social, economic, and health concern that does not discriminate.
2. The types of domestic abuse include neglect, physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, and psychological tactics.

**KEY POINT 2**

1. If you are experiencing abuse there are resources available to you.
2. Do not be fooled into thinking you can change the abusive individual by “pleasing,” “avoiding,” and getting it “right” so as not to anger them. Seek assistance as soon as possible.

**SUMMARY/CONCLUSION****Closing Statement:**

Domestic abuse cuts across every segment of society and occurs in all age, racial, ethnic, socio-economic, sexual orientation, and religious groups. Domestic abuse is a social, economic, and health concern that does not discriminate. Acknowledging the warning signs and symptoms of domestic abuse is the first step to ending it. No one should live in fear of the person they love.

*Facilitator Note: Reference Marines back to Family Advocacy Program (FAP) for more info.*

**END OF DISCUSSION****RESOURCES**

1. MCO 1754.11, Marine Corps Family Advocacy and General Counseling Program
2. National Domestic Violence Website: Facts & Figures: <http://www.thehotline.org/resources/statistics/>
3. [http://www.villagelife.org/news/archives/DV\\_coverstory/DV\\_menjustified.html](http://www.villagelife.org/news/archives/DV_coverstory/DV_menjustified.html)
4. [http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Domestic\\_violence\\_why\\_men\\_abuse\\_women](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Domestic_violence_why_men_abuse_women)
5. [http://www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/hr/hrdepts/asap/Documents/Domestic\\_Violence.pdf](http://www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/hr/hrdepts/asap/Documents/Domestic_Violence.pdf)