

## FAMILY ADVOCACY THE ROUGH PATCH

### DISCUSSION LEADER'S OUTLINE

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Good morning my name is \_\_\_\_\_. Today we will be talking about the rough patch.

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**

You notice a Marine in your unit seems alone, isolated, and depressed. She seems afraid to get into conversations, as if she fears getting punished. You suspect she's being abused. What can you do?

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

- (1) Know when to seek assistance if you are being abused.
- (2) Know when to intervene should you suspect someone you know is being abused.

**Learning Objective:** After this guided discussion, you will have a better understanding of how to recognize the signs and symptoms of domestic abuse.

#### **DISCUSSION**

Right after high school, Ellis married her high school sweetheart and they joined the Marine Corps together. You met them both in boot camp before her husband was kicked out because he couldn't meet the physical challenges. Both you and Ellis went to MOS school at Camp Lejeune after which you went to I MEF and Ellis went to Okinawa, where her husband joined her. Really good friends, you and Ellis kept in touch until about a year ago. You are happy to learn that Ellis is joining your unit. She is an outgoing and motivated Marine.

The first week was great, catching up and showing her around, but you notice very quickly that something is not the same with her. You chalk it up to the stress of moving and having a small baby. When you invite her and her husband over for dinner she declines telling you that her husband is still embarrassed about not meeting Marine Corps standards and may not feel comfortable around you. During a recent PT session, you noticed several bruises on the back of Ellis' legs. When you mentioned the bruises she seemed just as surprised as you, offering an explanation that she fell off her bike and injured herself. This explanation was not alarming until a few days later when you see what appears to be a black eye. She tells you the dark circles under her eyes are from lack of sleep.

She explained that she is getting very little sleep since the baby was born. You offer to have her bring the baby over for you and your wife to watch to provide a much needed break. Ellis quickly declines saying her husband doesn't like anyone outside the family watching the baby. As the

weeks pass Ellis' behavior becomes more bizarre with her making excuses for not participating in company functions, sitting in her car on her cell phone during chow, darting home directly after work, and always appearing sad. One day you decide to address all the things you've noticed and come right out and ask her what is going on. You tell her that you remember a completely different Ellis.

Crying and swearing you to secrecy she tells you her husband is very controlling and abusive mentally and physically. He is angry all the time. He is bitter about not being a Marine and she doesn't know what to do. When you ask her if she's told anyone, she says she talked to her mother who told her to be understanding of his feelings of inadequacy and to work it out. She says after the first time he hit her he promised he would never do it again. Falling for his promise to change, she thought she could rescue him by showing him how much she loved him. She tells you times were good for a while but when she became pregnant he became angry and explosive telling her his child would never respect them. He told her she is a Marine who slept her way into the Corps. He said that he was the Marine that never made it through boot camp.

Ellis explained that her husband constantly accuses her of having more respect for the male Marines in her unit and of sleeping around. She believes her husband is experiencing embarrassment and depression from not making it in the Corps. She also shared that her husband threatens to commit suicide if she ever left.

You tell her you are concerned for her safety as well as the safety of her child and offer to go to Family Advocacy Program with her to see what resources are available to her.

***What factors led to the decline of this relationship ultimately leading to abuse?***

*(Allow Marines to provide answers)*

- Not meeting the standards of the Marine Corps
- Feeling inadequate
- Insecurity
- Anxiety
- Anger
- Depression
- Family values (her mother told her to be understanding and stay)

***Would Ellis's husband have been an abuser anyway?***

No one knows for sure. Some people believe victims provoke their significant others to abuse them while others believe it is a learned behavior reinforced through social, cultural, media, psychological and economic factors; dismissed by peers, family members, and communities as acceptable behaviors.

***What types of abuse did Ellis husband use against her?***

- Emotional abuse
  - Isolation (not allowing her to go with friends)
  - Controlling where Ellis goes, who she talks to, and what she does

- Harassing (calling her daily during chow)
- Manipulating behaviors (threatening suicide)
- Accusing the victim of infidelity to justify controlling and abusive behaviors
- Making all decisions for Ellis and her child
- Defining gender roles in the home and relationship
- Physical abuse
  - Ellis has bruises on the back of her legs
  - Ellis has a black eye

### **KEY POINT 1**

1. Seek assistance as soon as you recognize that you are in an abusive relationship.
2. Trust your instincts, know your rights and reach out to a trusted support system. This system may not consist of immediate family members due to cultural beliefs and values.

Once you recognize you are in an abusive relationship, seek resources to find what options are available to you. Whatever your decision remember you cannot do it alone. If you stay you may seek counseling individually or together however, should you choose to leave you will need a solid safety plan which requires help from a trusted support system. Reach out to a family member, friend or domestic violence resource. Make copies of all important papers and keep them in a safe place, memorize important phone numbers, think of a few places you can go if you leave, put together an escape bag and leave it with a trusted friend, have spare keys to the car hidden, and review your escape plan.

**Interim Summary:** We just finished discussing when to seek assistance for an abusive relationship; now let's talk about when to intervene if you suspect someone you know is in an abusive relationship.

### **KEY POINT 2**

1. Speak up if you suspect domestic violence or abuse. Don't wait for the person to come to you. Don't judge or blame, place conditions on the victim, or pressure them to leave.
2. Avoid confrontations with both the victim and the individual who is abusing. There are many reasons why individuals experiencing abuse don't reach out to family and friends. It's important to recognize when they are ready to seek help.

### **SUMMARY/CONCLUSION**

There can be many contributing factors in an abusive relationship. It is important to recognize certain risk factors. As in the case with Cpl Ellis, she reached out to her mother but cultural beliefs prevented her mother from being a resource. Ellis's husband suffered a real blow to his ego by being put out of the Marine Corps. His idea of gender roles were in conflict with Cpl Ellis as the breadwinner.

#### **Closing Statement:**

An abusive relationship isn't easy to escape. Many factors are involved; children, finances, and living arrangements. No amount of "hoping things will change" will change the abuse. You cannot "please," do the "right" thing, or "avoid" angering him or her. You feel trapped and helpless as you are afraid you will be injured if you leave. Know that help is available. There are many resources available including crisis hotlines, legal services, and childcare. You deserve to live free of fear of the

person you love.

**END OF DISCUSSION**

**RESOURCES**

1. MCO 1754.11, MARINE CORPS FAMILY ADVOCACY AND GENERAL COUNSELING PROGRAM
2. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/usermanuals/domesticviolence/domesticviolenceec.cfm>
3. [http://www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/hr/hrdepts/asap/Documents/Domestic\\_Violence.pdf](http://www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/hr/hrdepts/asap/Documents/Domestic_Violence.pdf)