



Intimate Partner Violence



WHAT CONSTITUTES INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE (IPV)?

Intimate partner violence, also known as domestic violence, is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors that adults or adolescents use against their intimate partners (spouse, fiancé, boyfriend, girlfriend, dating partner, or ex-partner or spouse).

IPV ENCOMPASSES A CONSTELLATION OF CONTROLLING BEHAVIORS THAT INCLUDE:

- Actual or threatened physical harm
- Emotional abuse
- Forced sexual contact
- Economic control
- Social isolation
- Destruction of a victim's property, keepsakes, or personal possessions
- Abuse of a victim's animals/pets
- Misuse of divine beings and religious beliefs, practices, teachings, and traditions
- Asserting male superiority and attributing abusive behavior to cultural traditions

These behaviors can occur in any combination, sporadically or chronically, over a period as long as several decades. Women and men can be victims of IPV in heterosexual or same-sex relationships. IPV can affect anyone, no matter one's race, gender, age, socioeconomic status, religion, education level, or geographic location.

Forms of Abuse

"Types of Abuse," Love Is Respect, loveisrespect.org/resources/types-of-abuse/

EMOTIONAL

- Withholding affection
- Extreme jealousy
- Intentionally embarrassing victim in front of others
- Isolation
- Excessive gaslighting and refusing to listen
- Blaming abusive or unhealthy behavior on victim's actions
- Controlling a person's every move
- Threats, intimidation
- Destruction of property (throwing objects, punching walls, kicking doors, etc.)
- Harming a person's pets
- Taking advantage of or manipulating children
- Excessive texting to "check in"

VERBAL

- Insults, name-calling, and put-downs
- Yelling and screaming
- Constant criticism
- Verbal threats and intimidating communication

FINANCIAL

- Keeping control over the expenditures of household income
- Denying access to money or account information, activity, and balance
- Excessive monitoring of how the victim spends money
- Putting victim's money into accounts they cannot access
- Hiding or stealing money
- Using victim's Social Security number to obtain loans without their permission
- Maxing out victim's credit cards without their permission

SEXUAL

- Any unwanted sexual contact, including but not limited to groping, kissing, oral, or intercourse
- Any unwelcome sexual advance or comments
- Forced sexual intercourse (by stranger, friend, family, boyfriend/girlfriend, or spouse)
- Refusing to use condoms or restricting access to birth control



Theology of Abuse

Some of the most common questions from victims/survivors of faith who experience intimate partner violence or abuse are:

- Where was God?
- Why did God allow this to happen to me?
- Did I somehow cause this to happen?
- Does God still love me?

God is love (1 John 4:7-8) and God hates evil (Psalm 5:4-5). The reality is that when one person acts in a hurtful way, another person bears the pain of that act. Scripture does not promise that humans will not experience suffering. However, God does promise to be present with those who are suffering (Deuteronomy 31:8; Psalm 22; 23:1-4; 55; 91:4; Matthew 5:4; 2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

No one deserves to be abused, no matter what sins they have committed. A victim is never at fault for the abuse they endure. Nothing they did could cause abuse.

God's love is constant, consistent, unfailing, stable, unconditional, steadfast, and unmovable. The Apostle Paul writes, "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39, NRSV). Nothing can separate anyone from God—and that includes abuse and the perpetrators of abuse.

Forgiveness is complicated, and it can hold a broad range of thoughts and emotions for survivors. When victims/survivors are told to "forgive and forget," that can create a harmful model of forgiveness. Healthy forgiveness for a survivor includes a full understanding of the offenses committed, adequate space for their emotions, setting boundaries, releasing the right to hurt for being hurt, trusting that God can heal anything, and prayer.

Forms of Abuse (cont.)

- Sexual contact with someone who is intoxicated (drugs or alcohol), unconscious, or asleep, which inhibits their ability to consent
- Threatening, pressuring, coercing, or outright forcing someone to perform a sexual act
- Using one's spiritual authority inappropriately to advance their own personal fulfillment or happiness at the expense of those they lead
- Using Scripture to oppress or exploit
- Using spiritual language to diminish or dismiss one's concerns

SPIRITUAL

- Using Scripture to manipulate or control by minimizing or rationalizing abusive behavior
- Belittling one's beliefs or spiritual practices
- Forcing children to be raised in a faith the partner has not agreed to
- Use of authority or power differential to manipulate, shame, or control

PHYSICAL

- Shoving, Slapping, Scratching, Pulling, Grabbing, Punching, Hitting, Biting, Spitting, Choking
- Throwing items at victim
- Pulling hair
- Threatening to use items as weapon against victim
- Preventing victim from leaving or forcing them to go somewhere

Why Victims Stay:

- They are afraid, in denial, or ashamed.
- They still have feelings for their abuser.
- They are trying to protect their children.
- Because of their religious beliefs.
- They don't have support from others.
- Financial difficulties.
- Because of what they learned about what it means to be a woman/wife or man/husband.
- Because of cultural norms.

If you have never experienced repeated abuse over a long period of time, you likely find it difficult to understand why a victim remains in an abusive relationship. Some common reactions from those untrained in abuse are: "Why don't they just leave? No one is stopping them. They must be a very weak person, or they would leave." To maintain power and control, an abuser will wear down the self-esteem and self-reliance of the victim. Over time, the victim believes they are worthless and incapable of doing anything on their own.

For more information...

Love Mercy Do Justice: A Mission Priority of the Evangelical Covenant Church

8303 W. Higgins Rd.
Chicago, IL 60631
Call: 773-583-3211
Email: lmjd@covchurch.org
Web: covchurch.org/abuse

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Web: ncadv.org

National Domestic Violence Hotline

Web: thehotline.org Hotline: 1-800-799-7233

Advocacy for Victims of Abuse online training

Web: <http://ava-online.org>

