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If you have experienced abuse and domestic violence, you aren't alone. Help is out there. This article will provide you with resources for navigating or escaping domestic violence. These resources can be for you, or shared with someone who may need them. Even if you're not sure if you're experiencing domestic violence, but you feel unsafe or uncomfortable at home, it's okay to explore these resources to learn more.

How to Identify Domestic Violence

Many people who experience domestic violence don't realize what they're going through until it's too late. Identifying your experience as one that you need to escape from is a good first step in ensuring your safety. Domestic violence isn't as simple as aggressive or violent behavior. The section below goes over some of the warning signs of domestic violence.

According to the [University of Rochester Medical Center's](#) Health Encyclopedia, some signs of domestic violence include:

- Insulting you, including things like your intelligence, activities, or appearance
- Cutting you off from your friends and family
- Withholding money
- Hurting or killing pets
- Threats, such as threatening to kill your family
- Stalking

[WebMD](#) reports the above signs along with the following:

- Forces you to have sex
- Forces you to dress in a way you are uncomfortable with
- Refuses to use birth control if requested
- Makes you feel guilty for not having sex with them
- Locks you out of the house
- Physically hurts you and/or attacks you with weapons, hits you, bites, pushes, kicks, or pulls your hair.

Each of these behaviors may start off as small and subtle. They might not even be noticeable at first, especially if the person who is doing them is otherwise a seemingly

nice person. For example, something like withholding money can start with sharing a bank account with a partner. This doesn't inherently mean that sharing a bank account will lead to withholding money, but for some, it is the first step to things like not allowing the victim access to credit cards or cash or even jobs. WebMD's [article](#) *What Are the Signs of Domestic Abuse* reinforces this idea, stating that the abuse usually doesn't start out as physical. Instead, what comes first is things like occasional put downs to lower the victim's self esteem, or odd excuses to not see the victim's family, until they are totally cut off from anyone else.

Even if some abusers don't necessarily intend to harm their victim at first with their behavior, it can still have a negative impact. If the behavior is pointed out, the abuser should ideally change their behavior through things like therapy and possibly medication, if their behaviors are the results of outlying issues. That being said, many abusers don't change their behavior, and sometimes become more defensive and controlling when their abuse is pointed out.

If you suspect someone you know is being abused, keep an eye out for the following signs:

- They make excuses for their injuries
- They have been skipping on outings like school or work with no clear reason
- They wear clothes that cover up their arms in legs in warm seasons
- They are anxious to please their partner
- Their personality changes.

Even if you have only a "gut feeling" that something is wrong, reaching out for help can save your life or the life of someone you know.

Domestic Violence Resources

If you need help or guidance immediately, below are some resources where you can reach out to talk to someone about your situation.

1. [The National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) – 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) (Everyone)

The website for the National Domestic Violence Hotline offers various resources, including:

- A [live chat](#) to reach someone who can provide resources and support.
- A [directory](#) where you can search for local shelters in your area.
- Guidance on [legal help](#). You can also call 800-799-7233 to discuss legal resources that are relevant to your situation.
- [Resources](#) if you are Deaf, DeafBLind, or hard of hearing.
- Resources for [Native Americans](#).

The [National Domestic Violence Hotline website](#) also offers educational resources, including:

- [Understanding Relationship Abuse](#). This resource discusses the different ways that domestic violence can happen, since it's more than physical violence.
- [Warning Signs of Abuse](#). This resource provides information on the warning signs of abuse.
- [Why People Abuse](#). This resource discusses why people abuse, and clarifies that abuse is never okay.
- [Power and Control](#). This resource contains a "power and control wheel" which educates on the different types of abuse.
- [Abuse and Cultural Context](#). This resource clarifies the different ways that abuse may look based on culture and other factors.

If you are worried about yourself, your children, your pets, or someone else you know, the website also has an [interactive safety plan](#), as well as an article on [internet safety](#), [how to support your children](#), and [pet safety](#).

The National Domestic Violence Hotline serves all survivors who are experiencing abuse, including:

- Adults 18+
- Seniors
- LGBTQIA+
- People of Color
- Native Americans
- Disabled Individuals
- And much more

2. [Safe Horizon](#) – 1-800-621-4673 (for everyone)

Safe Horizon is the largest nonprofit dedicated to survivors of domestic violence in the United States. They offer numbers for the following issues:

- Domestic Violence – 1-800-621-HOPE (4673)
- Crime Victims – 1-866-689-HELP
- Rape and Sexual Assault (New York only) – 1-212-227-3000

3. [National Library of Medicine](#) – Domestic Violence

This resource is a peer reviewed article with information about domestic violence, including statistics and definitions of different types of abuse. There is also information on why abusers do what they do, risk factors for abuse, and facts about abuse. The article has information for healthcare providers, including strategies for treating survivors and how to provide care.

4. [211.org](#)

211 is a helpline you can call for essential resources, including domestic violence shelters. The [211 website](#) is also available to search for resources, including housing, crisis resources, mental health resources, and much more.

5. [National Resource Center on Domestic Violence \(NRC DV\)](#) – 1-844-762-8483

The NRC DV is an educational resource to teach people about domestic violence. Their goal is to prevent domestic violence from occurring and change how the community responds to it through their special projects and key initiatives. For those wanting to educate others, they offer research and evidence along with awareness and prevention resources. They also have information on public policy and their advocacy.

6. [The National Dating Abuse Helpline](#) – 1-866-331-9474 (for youth)

This helpline is available 24 hours and is intended for teens and young adults. Help can be reached through chat or phone. The representatives are trained in supporting callers and provide them with information and advocacy. The reps will also talk to concerned adults such as teachers, parents, law enforcement, and others.

7. [The National Center for Victims of Crime \(NCVC\)](#) – 1-800-FYI-CALL (for youth)

This nonprofit helps young people find victim service counselors. Per [Youth.gov](https://youth.gov), the NCVC is “the nation’s leading resource and advocacy organization for crime victims and those who serve them”. The Victims of Crime [website](https://www.victimsofcrime.org) has numerous resources for victims of crime. They can be reached out to via text or calls.

How to Find a Domestic Violence Shelter

It may be difficult for some to leave a dangerous or difficult situation where you are experiencing abuse. However, it may become necessary for your safety.

If you are in immediate need of a shelter, you can reach out to the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](https://www.ndvh.org) at 1-800-799-7233. The website also contains a [directory](#) where you can search for local shelters in your area. Another option is to call [211](https://www.211.org), which will connect you to a phone line where the representative can provide you with information to local resources, including available shelters and any other essential services you might need. The website [DomesticShelters.org](https://www.DomesticShelters.org) also offers a directory and other resources for those who may be looking to escape a violent situation.

Common Difficulties of Leaving a Domestic Violence Situation

Sometimes, people hear about domestic violence situations and ask, “why do people stay in abusive relationships?” The question might seem obvious to some, but it’s not so easy to answer. The stigma can make it hard for people to choose to leave. Asking questions like “why do people stay” also implies that the survivor is to blame for the abuse they are experiencing. This is not the case, and abuse is always the perpetrator’s fault. There are many complex reasons why someone might have difficulty with leaving an abusive domestic violence situation, many of which overlap. Some reasons to consider include:

- **A lack of financial resources.** Abuse often involves eliminating the survivor’s access to financial resources, such as a savings account or cash.
- **Isolation.** By the time an abuse survivor realizes they need to leave a relationship, the abuser has likely already cut them off from any connections with friends and family.
- **Children.** If a survivor has children, especially if the abuser is their parent too, leaving may become even more complicated. Some people worry that leaving their abusive partner may be harmful to their children. They might worry that the

partner will get custody of the kids in a divorce, or they will worry that they can't support the kids without their partner.

- **The cycle of violence.** Abusers often show a behavioral pattern that occurs in a cycle. According to [Women Against Abuse](#), this cycle (the cycle of violence) is characterized by the following phases: the honeymoon phase, tension, and violence. The honeymoon phase is when everything feels great in the relationship. When tension occurs, it can feel like walking on eggshells, This finally leads to the violent incident. After the violent incident, the abuser shows strong remorse, which often leads back to the honeymoon phase.

There are also other reasons why someone might have difficulty leaving an abusive relationship that have less to do with the survivor directly and more to do with culture and society. These include:

- **Social barriers.** Things like religious beliefs can cause someone to feel like they can't leave their relationships. Some people don't believe in divorce, and/or are socialized to believe that it is not an option. Another social barrier can be something like having a disability. Women Against Abuse states, "a person with a physical disability is five times more likely [...] to be abused by a partner or someone considered a part of their household. There are other social barriers such as being LGBTQ+.
- **Institutional failures.** Police can be ineffective or harmful when contacted to deal with an abusive situation, instead treating it like a "normal" domestic conflict. If an abuser does receive a restraining order, there aren't really any policies to keep them from coming back and repeating a violent act. Additionally, there is often a lack of beds in shelters, so a survivor sometimes has to wait for somewhere to stay.

What to Do After Escaping Domestic Violence

If you have escaped an abusive situation, but don't know what to do now, it can feel confusing and overwhelming to get back on your feet. First of all, congratulations on taking this courageous step! In this section, we will go over some ideas for what to do after leaving an abuser.

1. **Find a safe place to stay.** Whether it's with friends, family, or a domestic violence shelter, finding a place to stay is one of the most important parts of leaving a

domestic violence situation. While looking for a safe place to stay, tell very few people where it is, and disable any location services on your phone. There are several resources to help you find a shelter, including:

- [DomesticShelters.org](https://www.DomesticShelters.org)
- [National Coalition Against Domestic Violence \(NCADV\)](https://www.NCADV.org)
- [HUD Exchange](https://www.HUDExchange.org)
- [Just Shelter](https://www.JustShelter.org)
- [Family Violence Prevention Services \(FVPS\)](https://www.FVPS.org)

2. **Gather a support system.** Leaving an abusive situation can be emotionally difficult for many reasons. Surrounding yourself with people who care can help you feel safe and help you regulate your emotions. Support systems can include therapy, friends, a support group, family, or anyone else who will be available to listen to you and be there.
3. **Go to therapy.** While therapy is part of the last tip, it is mentioned here because it has unique benefits beyond a general support system. A therapist is educated to help you process any difficult emotions or trauma you may have experienced with the abuser. They can also help treat any symptoms of depression or other conditions that may be a result of what you went through.
4. **Establish a self care routine or habit.** Going for walks, making art, going on bike rides, taking a bath, getting a massage, and more are all routines and habits that can help you feel your best. It can also give you purpose to your day, and promote pleasure during your day.
5. **Set goals.** Some people can feel lost after leaving an abusive relationship. Creating and accomplishing goals can give you a sense of control back. Checking off things you want or need to do can also give you a [dopamine boost](#), which can help your overall mood and motivation.

Facts about Domestic Violence

Knowing the facts about domestic violence can help someone understand that they may be going through an abusive situation. This knowledge can also help reduce stigma. These facts may be helpful regardless of if you know someone who is going through this situation, are a survivor, or think you may be experiencing abuse. Below are some facts about domestic violence.

These facts are thanks to [NewHope.org](https://www.newhope.org)

- Most domestic violence incidents are not reported.
- Women aged 20-24 are at the greatest risk of experiencing domestic violence.
- Domestic violence is the highest cause of injury to women.
- Children exposed to domestic violence are more likely to be sick more often.
- Domestic violence survivors are more likely to experience sleep issues, anxiety, depression, and other emotional problems.

These facts are thanks to [RESPOND, inc.](https://www.respondinc.org)

- 4/10 women and 3/10 men experience domestic violence.
- Three women each day are murdered by an intimate partner.
- About one in five homicide victims are killed by their partner.
- One in three teens will experience dating abuse before they graduate high school.
- 5/10 transgender or other gender non-conforming people experience domestic violence
- 40% of black men and 45% of black women experience sexual and physical violence from a partner.

Conclusion

It's okay to need support and help if you are experiencing abuse. Although "domestic violence" may imply only certain types of abuse, there are many different ways that abuse can look. This includes physical, emotional, financial, sexual, and coercive abuse. You deserve to be treated well, and help is out there.

Other Resources

[Types of Therapy for Drug and Alcohol Addiction](#)

[Eating Disorder Treatment Options and Resources](#)

[Music Therapy Treatment Options and Resources](#)

[Resources for Stressed College Students](#)

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Facts About Domestic Violence



New Hope, Inc.



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RESPOND Inc.

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