

During Coronavirus Pandemic Domestic Violence Victims are at More Risk

As many are being asked to stay home due to the coronavirus pandemic to be safe, many individuals and children will be in even more danger. Self-isolation puts victims of domestic violence and their children at greater risk of violence and abuse occurring in the home.

As any person who has been on the receiving end of abuse will tell you, home is not a haven from abuse and violence. In fact, for millions of people this will be a trying time where they will find themselves in circumstances that can increase abuse and violence in the home.

There partner may be without employment and with schools closed, children will be at home and need assistance with online learning. Routines that were counted on will be no more for many.

With this will come more stress and tension in the home.

A person on the receiving end of abuse may have looked forward to running errands, speaking with a counselor, visiting with friends or some time away from their partner when their partner or they would go to work. It was a time that they could count on to have some solace and peace amidst the storm. For many there will be no break or pause and this could heighten things at home to a tipping point.

Many young adults who are experiencing abuse or violence at home find support from friends, friend's parents, teachers, coaches, tutors, or other individuals in their lives.

For some individuals who were planning to put in place a safety plan and leave, they may need to put that on hold. It is common for domestic violence counselors to help individuals put together a safety plan that consists of saving money, leaving a set of keys, a change of clothes and copies of important documents with a friend or relative and other essential planning items.

With many courts closed it may be more difficult to obtain restraining orders. Access to domestic violence shelters and counselors may be limited as well. Police officers may also be more hesitant to enter people's homes or make arrests.

As we are getting ready to see the coronavirus pandemic get worse, we should also brace ourselves for the impact it will have on millions of individuals who find themselves on the receiving end of abuse and violence. Hopefully domestic violence centers and shelters will be able to continue to provide the services that are needed and not be limited or close their doors. It has already been reported that more people are calling

the National Domestic Violence Hotline (that is available 24/7).

On average, nearly 20 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner in the United States. During one year, this equates to more than 10 million women and men. ¹

1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men have experienced some form of physical violence by an intimate partner. ²

Child Abuse

Many children who usually go to school in the day will be at home all day with their parents and may witness more abuse and violence and or become victims of abuse. Playing sports on a team or participating in after school programs is no longer an option. Going to a friend's house or to do a sleep over is also not advisable. All of these were options they had to be away from the home.

As a domestic violence counselor, I have found that close to 70 percent of the men that I have worked with in a year long batterer intervention program witnessed their father become physically violent with their mother. Now that more children are at home more will witness domestic violence and possibly be caught in the crossfire. This is concerning because as we are trying to break the cycle and this season that we deal with COVID-19 may increase children's exposure to violence.

Lenore E. A. Walker writes "The toll of child abuse has a direct effect on the individuals involved and society as a whole. Less well perceived is the more indirect impact of abuse against children; the psychological pain and suffering that effects every aspect of the growing child's and adult's life, whether or not that person is aware of the connection."

With virtual learning on the rise for most schools it would be good for teachers and tutors to connect virtually with children and their families and see how they are doing. Accountability, check-ins and giving children an opportunity to share what is going on in the home is vital because teachers usually can report abuse when they suspect it is happening.

What Can We Do

If you suspect that someone may be experiencing domestic violence you can reach out to them by phone, text or email and see if they need help. Sometimes just having someone to talk to can make a world of difference. Listening and offering empathy is one of the best ways to validate someone's experience and help them to speak about

it.

Yung Pueblo writes, “Before I could release the weight of my sadness and pain, I first had to honor its existence.”

You can also encourage the individual if they do need help to call the National Domestic Violence Hotline or their local domestic violence center. By bringing more awareness of what domestic violence is we can expose it as a society so that more people can access the help they need to get out of a violent or abusive situation.

Resources for victims of domestic violence:

National Domestic Violence Hotline

(available 24/7)

Call 1-800-799-7233 or text LOVE IS to 22522

National Sexual Assault Hotline

(available 24/7)

1-800-656-4673

Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline

1-800-422-4453

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1 Black, M.C., Basile, K.C., Breiding, M.J., Smith, S.G., Walters, M.L., Merrick, M.T., Chen, J. & Stevens, M. (2011). The national intimate partner and sexual violence survey: 2010 summary report. Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_report2010-a.pdf

2 Black, M.C., Basile, K.C., Breiding, M.J., Smith, S.G., Walters, M.L., Merrick, M.T., Chen, J. & Stevens, M. (2011). The national intimate partner and sexual violence survey: 2010 summary report. Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_report2010-a.pdf.

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