

# Domestic Violence Awareness

Domestic violence occurs when one partner exerts control over the other in a relationship, and may take the form of physical, sexual, emotional, or economic abuse. Approximately one in three women and one in four men has experienced some form of violence by an intimate partner in their lifetimes. Actions that may be considered domestic violence include:

- ▶ Slapping, punching, threats, intimidation, or insults
- ▶ Forcible sexual contact or sexual assault
- ▶ Financial control
- ▶ Deliberate isolation from family and friends
- ▶ Threatening loss of custody of children or parental rights if the victim tries to leave
- ▶ Stalking

Often, a person who has been abused finds it difficult to leave the abusive situation. Reasons for staying include:

- ▶ Economic dependence
- ▶ Fear of reprisals
- ▶ Social isolation or a lack of support from family and friends
- ▶ Cultural or religious constraints
- ▶ Belief that the partner's behavior will change
- ▶ Continued love for a partner, despite the abusive behavior

The COVID-19 pandemic has also made it more difficult for many people who are experiencing domestic violence to remove themselves from an abusive situation.

A personal safety plan will help a person who is experiencing domestic violence to protect her or himself and any at-risk children. Careful planning can help the person create a stable situation where they can regroup and rebuild. Important elements of a personal safety plan include:

- ▶ Determine a safe place to go when violence is threatened or occurs, such as a friend or family member's home or a domestic violence shelter.
- ▶ Plan for phone access. A prepaid cell phone may be a useful backup option.
- ▶ Keep a packed bag in a safe, easily accessible place outside your home. Include money, car keys, copies of important documents, and a list of helpful resources (including phone numbers).
- ▶ Apply for a major credit card in your name only. Route statements to an email account that only you can access.
- ▶ While it may be a difficult or frightening step to take, notifying your employer about the situation will help them ensure your safety at work. Informing your child's school will alert them to be aware of potential risks, such as an estranged partner attempting to pick up a child after school.
- ▶ Call the police if you or your children are in danger.

If you are experiencing domestic violence, or if you suspect a friend or loved one may be at risk, LifeMatters can help. Assistance is available 24/7/365.

Call **LifeMatters®** by Empathia toll-free anytime. **1-800-367-7474**

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Call collect to **262-574-2509** if outside of North America

Visit **LifeMatters®** online at **mylifematters.com**

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Language assistance services in your preferred spoken and written languages are available at no cost by calling 1-800-367-7474.

