Domestic violence or abuse refers to a pattern of coercive behavior used to establish power and control over a partner in an intimate relationship. The abuse may be physical, sexual, emotional, or economic. It may be frequent or infrequent, severe or subtle. Domestic abuse can result in physical injury, psychological trauma, and sometimes death. The effect of domestic abuse is that people may feel afraid, threatened, depressed, and anxious; people may also be physically or sexually harmed.

What causes domestic abuse?

- Domestic abuse is a learned behavior. Historically, violence against women and children has largely been ignored or condoned by society.

Who is most likely to be an abuser or a survivor?

- Both abusers and survivors come from all walks of life.
- They can be from any community, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, race, religion, nationality, or educational background.
- According to the Center for Disease Control, the research reflects that nearly 1 in 4 women (22.3%) and 1 in 7 men (14.0%) aged 18 and older in the United States have been the victim of severe physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime.
- Studies indicate that domestic abuse occurs in Jewish communities (within all streams of Judaism) at a rate similar to the general population.
• Some abusers have learned and chosen to use tactics of domestic violence because of abuse they experienced or witnessed as a child; some have not experienced abuse as a child but learned and chose abusive behaviors elsewhere.
• Similarly, some individuals who are survivors in abusive relationships may have witnessed or experienced abuse as a child, but many others did not grow up in violent households.

“Why doesn’t the survivor just leave the relationship?”
• For someone who has never experienced domestic violence, the question of why a survivor stays with an abusive partner can be very difficult to understand. There are many reasons why it might be hard to leave an abusive relationship. The reasons for staying vary from one survivor to the next, and they usually involve several factors.

The following list includes just some of the reasons why women don’t come forward:
• Belief that the abusive partner will change because of their remorse and promises to stop battering
• Lack of emotional support
• Shidduch related pressure
• Feeling responsible to uphold the shalom bayis
• Guilt or shame over the failure of the relationship
• Love for the abuser
• Feeling responsible for the abuse
• Fear of emotional damage to the Children over the loss of a parent, even if that parent is abusive
• Low self-esteem, which may be reinforced by the abuser
• Fear of physical harm to self or children
• Economic dependence on the abuser
• Fear of losing custody of the children because the abuser threatens to take the children if survivor tries to leave
• Lack of information regarding domestic violence resources
• Family pressure to stay in the relationship
• Social status that comes with being with the abuser

When Supporting the Victim:

• **Believe the person** telling you they are being abused. Let them know that you are available to help whenever they may need it. What they need most is someone who will believe and listen.

• **Acknowledge and validate** that they are in a very difficult and scary situation. Their abuser may have them convinced that they are at fault or don't deserve better treatment. Let them know that the abuse is not their fault. If she is blaming herself, try to reframe: “I don’t care if you did prepare a meal late or forgot to fill the car with gas, that is no reason for him to be violent with you. This is his problem.”

• **Be Non-Judgmental:** respect their decisions. There are many reasons why victims stay in abusive relationships. They may leave and return to the relationship many times. Do not criticize their decisions or try to guilt them.

• **Reassure them** that they are not alone and that there is help and support out there.

• **Be a trusted confidant.** Keep all information entrusted to you confidential (exception: contacting an organization or law enforcement).

• **Gently guide the victim to find help.** Urge the victim to seek consultation about a safety plan.

• **Remember** that it takes an average of seven attempts for a survivor to leave a domestic violence relationship. Supporting a survivor to achieve safety and healing can be a long-term effort.
• **Contact Us** on the Shalom Task Force Hotline *(Call, Text, or WhatsApp 888-883-2323)* for guidance on supporting the victim and next steps.

• **Don’t try to fix the problem or become a counselor.** Your local domestic violence agency is staffed with trained personnel to counsel victims and help to ensure their safety. Don't put yourself in harm's way or increase the danger for the victim by getting in the middle.

• **Remember that you cannot “rescue” them.** Although it is difficult to see someone you care about get hurt, ultimately they are the one who has to make the decisions about what they want to do. It's important for you to support them no matter what they decide, and help them find a way to safety and peace.

• **Don’t give up hope.** Be patient and go at the survivor’s pace, not yours.

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**Statements of Support and Validation for Survivors of Domestic Violence:**

• “This sounds like a difficult experience.”
• “I'm really sorry to hear this has happened to you.”
• “This was not your fault.”
• “Are there things we can do to help you feel safe?”
• “Are you okay? Do you need medical attention?”
• “I know this must be uncomfortable.”
• “If you want to talk about this again, you can talk to me.”
POWER AND CONTROL

USING COERCION AND THREATS
Making and/or carrying out threats to do something to hurt her • threatening to leave her • to commit suicide, to report her to welfare • making her drop charges • making her do illegal things.

USING ECONOMIC ABUSE
Preventing her from getting or keeping a job • making her ask for money • giving her an allowance • taking her money • not letting her know about or have access to family income.

USING INTIMIDATION
Making her afraid by using looks, actions, gestures • smashing things • destroying her property • abusing pets • displaying weapons.

USING EMOTIONAL ABUSE
Putting her down • making her feel bad about herself • calling her names • making her think she's crazy • playing mind games • humiliating her • making her feel guilty.

USING MALE PRIVILEGE
Treating her like a servant • making all the big decisions • acting like the “master of the castle” • being the one to define men’s and women’s roles.

USING ISOLATION
Controlling what she does, who she sees and talks to, what she reads, where she goes • limiting her outside involvement • using jealousy to justify actions.

USING CHILDREN
Making her feel guilty about the children • using the children to relay messages • using visitation to harass her • threatening to take the children away.

MINIMIZING, DENYING AND BLAMING
Making light of the abuse and not taking her concerns about it seriously • saying the abuse didn’t happen • shifting responsibility for abusive behavior • saying she caused it.
Power and Control Wheel for the Jewish Woman

CURRENT, PAST AND FUTURE PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

Forcing her to be with others, forcing her to be intimate, ridiculing her modesty, taking modest pictures without consent

“T will never give you the Geft”
“Where you use, you’ll never marry”
“If you report me, it’s a messiah”
“We have a job, but the community will blame you”

Threats and Intimidation

“Forcing her to watch pornography, forcing sexual intercourse, taking unwanted videos, degrading her sexuality”

“Is it all your fault that the home isn’t ready for Shabbos?”
“The way you dress is a bad example!”
“People in the community are talking about you”
“You are not tznius”

Sexual Violence

“Not giving her enough money for Shabbos, refusing to pay for her education, not providing money for her Shul, and other personal needs”

Emotional Abuse

“Putting her down because she is a woman—‘You must show respect, I am the head of the household’”

“Is that your fault for breaking up the family?”
“If you leave, I will kill the children, telling them that ‘mommmy doesn’t love them’”

Spiritual Abuse

“Identifying her as religious, forcing her to act in a certain way, telling her she is sinful/bad”

Isolating her from her religious community, forcing her to attend shul, going to shul and ruining her name

Economic Abuse

“Forcing her to be mohel/Shabbos, changing her name, cutting her hair, going to school, and ruining her name”

Using Children

“Blaming her that if she leaves, the children will not be safe/ good Shidduchim, alienating children against her—barring her from attending shivas, going to school, and ruining her name”

Hitting, punching, kicking, tripping, pulling hair, sleeping, showing, choking

Not allowing access to funds; applying for credit cards in her name; ruined credit, preventing her from obtaining or retaining a job; taking her income or keeping such control on the money that she has nothing

“‘As your husband I am the man, and the Hashkafa dictates you must obey me’—using text to rationalize abuse”

Assists the myth “Jewish men don’t drink or beat their wives.”

He is an upstanding person in the community—bright, accomplished, Talmid Chacham, gives charity and is helpful to others—fear that no one will believe he is abusive at home

Produced By

Adapted From Original Wheel:
Domestic Abuse Prevention Project
202 Est Superior Street
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UJA Federation
NEW YORK

MET COUNCIL
The Largest Jewish Communal Social Safety Net in America
Different Types of Domestic Abuse:

**Emotional Abuse**
She may be in an emotionally abusive relationship if her partner exerts control through:

- Calling her names, insulting her or continually criticizing her
- Refusing to trust her and acting jealous or possessive
- Trying to isolate her from family or friends
- Monitoring where she goes, who she can call and who she spends time with.
- Demanding to know where she is every minute
- Punishing her by withholding affection.
- Threatening to hurt her, the children, her family or her pets
- Damaging her property when he’s angry (throwing objects, punching walls, kicking doors)
- Accusing her of cheating and being often jealous of her outside relationships
- Cheating on her intentionally to hurt her and then threatening to cheat again

- Attempting to control her appearance: what she wears, how much/little makeup she wears, etc.
- Telling her that she will never find anyone better, or that she is lucky to be with a person like him

**Physical Abuse**
She may be experiencing physical abuse if her partner has done or repeatedly does any of the following tactics of abuse:

- Pulling her hair, punching, slapping, kicking, biting or choking her
- Forbidding her from eating or sleeping
- Hurting her with weapons
- Preventing her from calling the police or seeking medical attention
- Harming her children
- Abandoning her in unfamiliar places
- Driving recklessly or dangerously when she is in the car with him
- Forcing her to use drugs or alcohol (especially if she’s had a substance abuse problem in the past)
- Trapping her in her home or preventing her from leaving
Economic or Financial Abuse - When an abusive partner extends their power and control into the area of finances. This abuse can take different forms, including an abusive partner:

- Giving an allowance and closely watching how she spends it or demanding receipts for purchases
- Placing her paycheck in their bank account and denying her access to it
- Preventing her from viewing or having access to bank accounts
- Forbidding her to work or limiting the hours that she can work
- Maxing out credit cards in her name without permission or not paying the bills on credit cards, which could ruin her credit score
- Stealing money from her or her family and friends
- Using funds from children’s savings accounts without her permission
- Living in her home but refusing to work or contribute to the household
- Forcing her to give him her tax returns or confiscating joint tax returns
- Refusing to give her money to pay for necessities/shared expenses like food, clothing, transportation, or medical care and medicine

Minimizing, Denying and Blaming:

- Making light of the abuse and not taking her concerns about it seriously.
- Saying the abuse didn’t happen.
- Shifting responsibility for abusive behavior.
- Saying she caused it.

Male Privilege:

- Uses halachah to justify his mistreatment of her whether or not it is a true interpretation of the halachic authority.
- Refuses to let her or discourages her from speaking to a rav.
- Lies to the rav in order to get an answer he likes.
- Treating her like a servant.
- Making all the big decisions.
- Being the one to define men’s and women’s roles.
Digital Abuse

The use of technologies such as texting and social networking to bully, harass, stalk or intimidate a partner. Often this behavior is a form of verbal or emotional abuse perpetrated online. She may be experiencing digital abuse if her partner:

- Tells her who she can or can’t be friends with on Facebook and other sites.
- Sends her negative, insulting or even threatening emails, Facebook messages, tweets, DMs or other messages online. Puts her down in his status updates.
- Steals or insists to be given her passwords.
- Sends her unwanted, explicit pictures or videos and demands she send some in return.
- Steals or insists to be given her passwords.
- Constantly texts her and makes her feel like she can’t be separated from her phone for fear that she will be punished.
- Looks through her phone frequently, checks up on her pictures, texts and outgoing calls.

Using Children:

- Making her feel guilty about the children
- Using the children to relay messages.
- Using visitation to harass her.
- Threatening to take the children

Using Coercion and Threats:

- Threatening and/or carrying out threats to do something to hurt her.
- Threatening to leave her, to commit suicide, to report her to welfare.
- Pressuring her to drop charges.
- Pressuring her to do illegal things.
I’m in an Abusive Relationship – What Do I Do?

- **Do not make any sudden changes.** Every relationship is different, and each situation has to be considered individually. Generally, it’s not a good idea to make any sudden changes on your own without consulting someone who understands abusive dynamics first. The STF hotline is an excellent resource for this. Our advocates can help you with safety planning or by connecting you to someone to discuss the particulars of your situation with.

- **Find a trusted person to confide in.** It’s important to have someone to speak with who makes you feel safe and heard. If you don’t feel safe with anyone in your social circle, a qualified therapist may be able to give you such an opportunity, and guide you in other ways as well.

- **Think about** what parts of your life are under your control and try to focus on those. Doing that can help you to feel more anchored, and give you the strength to navigate the significant challengers you’re facing.

- **Don’t give up!** There’s hope! It may take time and hard work, but you can get to a better place.