



## **Six Sources of Help for Abuse Victims**

What should you do if you are a victim of domestic violence? You should get help, even if you are not sure you are ready to leave the relationship. Here are six sources of help that are available to you.

### **1. Friends and Family**

Friends and family offer you love and support, because they have a relationship with you and are invested in your well-being. This benefits you because it helps you to know you are not alone and that you have ongoing support in dealing with the abusive relationship. If you have gone to them repeatedly and then stayed in the relationship, they may be unhappy with your choice and may seem angry or irritated. It may feel shameful to you to admit one more time that the problems are still there. Don't let this shame or fear keep you from going to them. Their irritation and frustration is driven by their love for you.

### **2. Church**

If you are involved in a church, you can seek help from your pastor, care ministries, women's ministry, Stephen's ministry, or anyone else available to you. Churches vary in their ability to respond to domestic violence, depending on whether or not they have professional or lay counselors and knowledge of abusive relationships. One of the negatives is that you may be told that you cannot consider divorce and can only separate, as many churches do not encourage divorce. You may also find that they do not understand the seriousness of verbal and emotional abuse. Some churches have financial help available through their care ministries.

### **3. Professional Counseling**

It is always helpful to seek professional counseling, when you are dealing with a difficult relationship and especially if there is domestic violence. Counselors are trained to help you and will validate the seriousness of the abuse and strengthen your ability to set boundaries. If there are children in the home, some of the states have laws that require counselors to report to child protection services when the children have observed the domestic violence incidents. This is obviously for the good of the children, but it causes a crisis in the relationship. The negative of professional counseling is that it can be expensive, if you don't have health insurance that covers

the cost or adequate financial resources. It is worth exploring low cost counseling options that may be available in your workplace or community.

#### **4. Police Department**

Domestic violence, specifically physical abuse, is a crime. The police are trained to respond to domestic violence. You can call them to your home during or after an incident. States have different laws regarding the prosecuting of the perpetrator. Some do not require the victim to file a complaint and allow the district attorney to prosecute, even if the victim decides not to. These laws came about because of the tendency of victims to refuse to prosecute after the incident was over. You can also file a restraining order and get the perpetrator out of your home. Prosecuting the abuse gets them into court-ordered treatment.

#### **5. Domestic Violence Programs**

There are domestic violence programs that offer counseling services, classes, group support, and legal advice usually for free. Some operate shelters where women and their children can go to escape the violence. Police departments are usually aware of the programs that are available in the community.

#### **6. God**

Regardless of what your faith is, it is a benefit during times of trouble. Faith in God offers you comfort, hope, peace, purpose, and strength. If you haven't been close to God, return to Him knowing that He does not support abuse and does not want you to be mistreated. Regardless of whether you believe it was God's will or not for you to be in the relationship, God doesn't want you to tolerate abuse. Psalm 10:14 says, "But you, O God, do see trouble and grief; you consider it to take it in hand. The victim commits himself to you; you are the helper of the fatherless."

If you are dealing with domestic violence, even if it is in a stage where it isn't happening regularly, you should get support from any or all of these six sources. You need help to empower you to set boundaries to protect yourself and your children.

It should also be noted that you need to be careful confronting someone who is abusive. Always put your own safety first. It should also be noted that ending a relationship with someone who is abusive can escalate the violence. If you are a victim of physical abuse, do not attempt to leave the relationship without getting advice on how to leave or without having a safe place to go to.