

Name: _____

Domestic Violence

(1 credit)

After completing this section, you should be able to:

1. Define domestic violence
 2. Understand the cycle of domestic violence
 3. List situations that increase the chances of homicide in domestic violence
 4. Describe the proper response of the caregiver to suspected domestic violence
 5. Describe the steps victims of domestic violence can take to help themselves
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1. Define domestic violence

Domestic violence is a pattern of behavior. One intimate partner or spouse exerts this behavior over another as a way to control that person. Domestic violence may include actual or threatened physical, sexual, psychological, or economic abuse of an intimate partner and/or children.

Domestic violence involves both physical and sexual assault and battery. Assault means threatening or trying to harm someone. Aggravated assault means assault with the use of a weapon, such as a gun, knife, blunt object, rope, or any other object that can be used to hurt someone. Battery means actually harming someone, either physically or sexually. Aggravated battery means battery with the use of a weapon. Stalking means pursuing or following someone in order to frighten or intimidate them. Stalking also includes damaging property in an attempt to frighten or intimidate. All of these violent acts are common in cases of domestic violence.

Domestic violence is a crime that can happen to anyone. It affects spouses, former spouses, relatives, parents, children, siblings, boyfriends, girlfriends, or anyone who is living together. It is not always easy to know if someone is a victim of domestic violence, especially if you do not know what to look for. Victims of domestic violence are usually women and children. Many times they are injured so badly that they must go to an emergency room for treatment. Other times you can't tell by looking at them that they are victims of domestic violence. All healthcare professionals are required by law to recognize the signs of domestic violence and abuse and report it. You will need to know what these signs of violence are, and how to report them.

The most common injuries to victims are burns (especially cigarette burns), bruises or internal bleeding, head injuries (especially hematomas), injury to the abdominal area, and broken or fractured bones. Injured people may not want to explain how they were hurt, or their explanations

may not seem likely. Sometimes the people involved will tell different stories about what happened, or their explanation for the injuries does not match a medical diagnosis. These are all warnings that the injured person could be the victim of domestic violence.

Why does domestic violence happen? There are many reasons why violence and abuse can become a problem for a family. The family may have always used physical punishment as a way of disciplining. They may simply accept violence as a normal way of dealing with problems. The abuser may never have learned positive coping skills and may use violence to deal with frustration and stress. Drugs or alcohol can also add to violent behavior, because they tend to cloud judgment and thinking. The family may have very fixed roles (for instance the mom stays at home, the dad goes to work, the children do not speak unless spoken to).



Children learn from their parents. When the parents vent their aggressive feelings through verbal abuse or physical force, their children grow to accept this as normal. Sometimes they learn that violence is the only way to cope with frustration and stress. Sometimes they learn to be afraid of confrontations, and go to any lengths to avoid starting a fight. When these children grow up and begin to form relationships, raise families, and cope with the "real" world, the cycle begins again. Some of them will become abusers; others will become adult victims of domestic violence.

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Directions. Complete the following sentences from the information you just read.

1. Domestic violence is a _____

2. Domestic violence involves both _____
and _____
assault and battery.
3. Domestic violence is a _____
that can happen to anyone.
4. All healthcare professionals are required by _____
to recognize the signs of domestic violence.
5. The most common injuries of victims are:

2. Understand the cycle of domestic violence

Abusers are often emotionally dependent and have low self-esteem. They fear abandonment; they could be very frightened that their families will leave them all alone, so they do everything they can to keep them from going. They may isolate the victim, keeping her from talking to others about what is happening. They may threaten to commit suicide if the victim leaves, or even threaten to kill the victim. Sometimes they make the victim think she is stupid, crazy, or losing her memory. Once she begins to think these things, it is very hard for her to believe in herself anymore, or take steps to leave the abuser.



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Abusers are cruel, dominating, and physically or verbally violent. They will often try to minimize or deny the abuse. They may blame the victim for what happened, and excuse their own violent behavior, saying that they just "lost control."

Many abusers suffer from alcoholism or drug problems, which can increase violent tendencies. Abusers often suffer from depression and suicidal thoughts as well.

However, abusers can sometimes be very warm and caring. They may love their families very much and feel terrible after they hurt someone. But feeling bad about violent behavior does not excuse the behavior. There is no excuse for domestic violence. In fact, it is a crime to abuse someone like that!

Since domestic violence is a learned behavior, it has to be unlearned. There are effective treatment programs in many communities that strive to help abusers learn how to substitute positive coping skills for violence.

Directions. Briefly describe characteristics of the abuser by completing the following descriptive phrases.

1. Emotionally _____
2. Low _____
3. Fear of _____
4. Cruel, dominating, and _____ or _____ violent
5. Depression and _____ thoughts
6. Domestic violence is a _____ behavior

3. List situations that increase the chances of homicide in domestic violence

The following situations increase the chances of homicide in domestic violence cases:

- Abuser threatens to kill himself, his partner, children, or relatives.
- Abuser fantasizes about homicide or suicide.
- Abuser owns weapons, such as guns or knives, and has threatened to use them or has actually used them in the past (the use of guns is a strong predictor of homicide).
- Abuser has a past criminal record.
- Law enforcement failed to hold abuser accountable in the past.
- Abuser feels like he owns the victim.
- Abuser is obsessed with the victim.
- Abuser is separated from the victim (this is an extremely dangerous time when abusers make the decision to kill).
- Abuser suffers from acute depression.
- Abuser has access to the victim, even if they are separated.
- Abuser harasses or stalks the victim.
- Dangerous behavior gets worse. The abuser is enraged and does not care about the consequences (risk-taking behavior).
- Victim is sexually assaulted by abuser.
- Abuser takes hostages.
- Abuser increases the use of drugs or alcohol.
- Victim, neighbors, family members make repeated calls to the police.

Directions. List ten situations that increase the chances of homicide in domestic violence cases.

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2. _____

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- 3. _____

- 4. _____

- 5. _____

- 6. _____

- 7. _____

- 8. _____

- 9. _____

- 10. _____

- 2. _____

- 3. _____

- 4. _____

4. Describe the proper response of the caregiver to suspected domestic violence

Caregivers are required by law to recognize and report suspected or known cases of domestic violence. Specifically, you must do the following:

- Know the signs of domestic violence.
- Be on the alert for signs of domestic violence.
- Report to your supervisor or another designated authority if you suspect domestic violence or abuse.
- Keep things confidential. This protects you, your agency or facility, and the victim.

Directions. List the four proper responses from caregivers.

- 1. _____

5. Describe the steps victims of domestic violence can take to help themselves

While the Internet can provide many valuable resources for a person trying to escape an abusive relationship, steps should be taken to ensure that the abuser does not discover information about the victim's safety plan by reading email or tracking Internet activities. The best way to prevent this from happening is for the victim to use a computer that the abuser does not have access to. Some places victims can go to use a computer safely include the homes of friends or family members, local libraries, or workplaces.

In some cases the abuser will isolate the victim to such an extent that it may be difficult to access a computer outside the home. In these cases, there are ways to make computer use safer. These methods include the following:

- To protect email privacy, victims should change password(s) often. They should not use words that the abuser can easily guess, such as names of family members or pets.
- If victims receive threatening emails from the abuser, they should save and print them. This provides a record of abusive contact. Sending such emails may be a federal offense. They can pursue legal action by contacting the police or their U.S. State Attorney's office.

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- Internet browsers will usually save a history of web sites that have been viewed. Victims should learn how to empty the cache file and clear the history on their browsers. Details about how to do this can be found at the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence's web site at www.ncadv.org.

The steps above do not completely guarantee that the abuser will not be able to track computer usage. There are programs that can be installed on a computer which record every keystroke made on the machine. Such a program would allow the abuser to track any web sites visited and discover passwords to email accounts accessed on that computer. If victims suspect that their abuser has installed such a program on their home computer, they should not use it to access information to create a safety plan.

The following important steps should be taken before victims of domestic violence attempt to leave:

1. Call the local shelter or domestic violence hotline. The National Domestic Violence Hotline number is **1-800-799-SAFE**.
2. Gather the following items and hide them at neighbors', friends', or relatives' houses:
 - Medications and prescriptions
 - Insurance information
 - Clothes for self and children
 - Birth certificates
 - Marriage certificates
 - Social security cards
 - Financial information
 - School and medical records
 - Legal documents
 - Account numbers

3. Save money.
4. Make and hide a set of duplicate keys.
5. Disable any weapons in the home (unload guns, get rid of ammunition, hide weapons).
6. Make an escape plan for various scenarios.
7. Leave!

Victims who are separated from the abuser should take the following safety precautions:

1. Change locks.
2. Install security system if possible.
3. Educate children about safety issues.
4. Get counseling from local shelter.
5. Consider obtaining a restraining order.

Share this information with those in your care!

Directions. Describe the seven steps that should be taken before victims of domestic violence attempt to leave.

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2. _____

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Directions. State the five safety precautions for victims who are separated from their abusers.

- 8. _____
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- 9. _____
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- 10. _____
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- 11. _____
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- 12. _____
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