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Interpersonal Communication

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Domestic Violence

One hard topic we as humans tend to ignore is domestic violence. It is a very touchy subject that most people would like to look away from. We are all exposed to some kind of violence from a young age from people we may know like friends, family or neighbors. Even right in our homes with our television, computer, cell phones. However, my first exposure to domestic violence came to me at a young age. When I use to live in an apartment complex, I use to hear our neighbors scream and yell through the walls. Sometimes I could hear objects being thrown and hitting the walls or they'd hit each other. It got to the point where even the police were called in and they had to intervene. I told myself that I would never use violence to solve anything or end up an abuser.

Oxford dictionary describes domestic violence as “Violent or aggressive behavior within the home, typically involving the violent abuse of a spouse or partner”. Unfortunately, violence does not discriminate according to National Domestic Violence Hotline; “1 in 4 women (24.3%) and 1 in 7 men (13.8%) aged 18 and older in the United States have been the victim of severe physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime”. Sadly that does not excuse children, 1 in 4 (22%) have been a witness to violence in their households. 30 to 60% of children are physically abused in their own homes by a parent. These are only the statistics in the U.S alone.

What causes people to act out in violent ways? Psych Central states, a lot of partners feel the need to have control over others. They can have low self-esteem or have anger problems,

jealousy, feel intimidated from their partner's wealth or education. Sometimes abusers think they are better than their partners, they may have some kind undiagnosed psychological or personality disorder. How does it start? Abusers can learn violent behaviors from a young age. They may have been exposed to violence and could have been brought up with it. They could've experienced it themselves and repeated to their partners, could've witnessed it among friends or family and it could even be cultural inside their communities. Also, drugs and alcohol can make the abuser's violence and actions harder to control.

Knowing the signs of domestic violence can help the partner or spouse see the red flags and help them realize the possible danger they are in. Here are a few signs the abuser uses from the WebMD website; if your partner bullies, lies, threatens and controls you. Examples would be to criticize and accuse you of things, threatens you or a loved one and makes you feel small and worthless. Can Control your money and expenses. They may hide money and credit cards, steal money from you or friends or family and won't let you buy your own basic needs. Cuts you off from family and friends, makes you ask for permission to see other people and embarrass you in front of friends or loved ones. Physically or sexually assaults you, examples could be forcing you to have sex, make you feel like you owe them sex. These signs can also take a lot out of someone mentally and are usually the same for men as well.

These next examples are signs of abuse the victim can be going through from Very Well Mind's website. First are the signs of physical abuse on the victims face or body from a busted lip, bruising on arms, wrist or eyes. Then are the signs of emotional abuse from low self-esteem, becoming fearful and change in habits like sleeping, loss of interest in daily activities as well as signs of depression. Change in behavior also plays a role in signs of abuse like keeping to themselves and being private about their personal life and relationships, canceling work, events

or appointments. Having the ability to see the signs first hand can help anyone prevent any future emotional, physical, sexual, as well as mental damage to themselves.

We are lucky to live in times where help and resources are available to us with just a few clicks of a button. Sources can carry information and have the ability to provide help to those going through any kind of domestic violence. The hotline.org is one of many websites that can provide resources and help to victims. From start to finish you can chat or call their 24/7 hotline number for free at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) with more than 200 languages provided. They also include a number for deaf or people of hard hearing to be able to communicate at 1-855-812-1001 and all calls are confidential. They also include a list of information before and after leaving an abusive partner. The links include topics such as What to expect when you call, Path to safety, Legal help, Help for your pets, Help for friends and others, Help for survivors even Help for the abusive partner. Other websites include Family and Youth Services Bureau, NCADV (National Coalition against Violence) and Futures without Violence to name a few. There are also shelters available for victims and children, some of the ones here in Minnesota are Domestic Abuse Project, Violence Free Minnesota and Sexual Violence Shelter as some examples.

I believe it's important to know the signs of domestic violence from signs of the abuser to the signs of the victims. People should also educate themselves with the signs and the many resources that are provided. I also hope that female abuse to their male partners are taken more seriously and receive just as much attention as the female cases. Even though domestic violence may not be happening to you there could always be a family member or a friend even a friend of friend that can experience any type of abuse. That way you can help prevent any more abuse and possibly save the lives of others.

