

Myths and facts

about domestic violence



There are many myths about domestic violence that perpetuate a distorted view about its nature and causes. This list is a starting point; we hope that it will prompt you to examine your beliefs and provide you with helpful information.

Myth #1: Anger causes domestic violence.

Individuals who use abuse are not angrier than the rest of us. They use anger as an excuse and justification for their behavior. We all experience anger, but many of us don't express it by abusing others.

Myth #2: People who use violence “lose control” of their temper.

Abusive behavior is not loss of control; it is the exertion of power and control of one partner over the other.

Myth #3: Domestic violence occurs only in uneducated and dysfunctional families and in families of color.

Domestic violence touches every demographic group—regardless of race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, class, sexual orientation, occupation or education.

Myth #4: If a person experiencing violence really wants to leave, they can.

Anyone who considers leaving the person using violence faces risks. 65% of battered women who are killed are murdered by their abusers when—or after—they leave.

Myth #5: Domestic violence is a woman's issue.

Men have a significant role in supporting women, holding other men accountable, and teaching youth about respectful, nonviolent relationships.

- In 2001 approximately 15% of the victims of intimate partner violence were men.¹
- Domestic violence occurs in LGBT relationships.
- Domestic violence is the leading indicator of juvenile delinquency.

Myth #6: Drugs and alcohol cause domestic violence.

Drugs and alcohol can increase the danger level and have been present in at least 50% of domestic violence cases. However, many alcoholics or drug users do not use violence, and many who use violence do not use drugs and alcohol. Stopping the person's drinking will not end the violence.

Those who both use violence and are alcoholics or use drugs have separate issues to confront if they want help—their addiction and their abusive behavior. Each problem must be addressed independently.

Myth #7: Mental illness causes domestic violence

People with mental health problems are not more violent than the general populations. So many people with mental illnesses do not abuse others, and many who do abuse others do not have mental illnesses. Those who both use violence and have mental health issues have separate problems to confront that should be addressed independently.

¹ Bureau of Justice Statistics Crime Data Brief, *Intimate Partner Violence, 1993-2001*, February 2003.