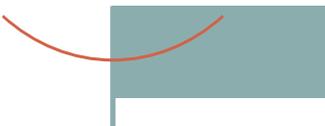


PASTORAL RESPONSE TO PERSONS IN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS



Abuse is any kind of behavior that one person uses to control another through fear and intimidation. It includes emotional and psychological abuse, battering, and sexual assault.

(When I Call For help, 1992)

Abuse happens in your parish.

Though this information focuses on violence against women, we are not implying that violence against men or against youths, against the elderly or against the unborn is any less vicious. “. . .violence against any person is contrary to Jesus’ gospel message to ‘love one another as I have loved you.’ When violence toward women is tolerated, it helps to set the stage for violent acts against other groups.”

(When I Call for Help, 1992)



PASTORAL RESPONSE TO AN ABUSED PERSON



When a woman reports that she is or has been abused, believe her. Safety is the primary concern. Therefore, **do not** ask to see the couple together.

Follow these guidelines:

1. LISTEN TO THE WOMAN AND UNDERSTAND HER SITUATION

- Uncover the abuse
- Recognize her panic and fear
- Take the threat of danger seriously
- Do not discount her fear that he may kill her
- Check out her (and her children's) safety—ask, "How can I help?"
- Assure her she does not need to face this alone

2. LISTEN WITHOUT ASSIGNING BLAME

- Believe what the woman has to say
- Beware of the temptation to think she is exaggerating; she is not likely to do this
- It is important for her to break the silence by describing what is happening to her
- Assure her that she is not to blame for the abuse and that abuse of any kind is not acceptable

3. HELP HER DISCOVER AND DEVELOP HER OWN RESOURCES

- Money (parish emergency fund)
- Friends
- Relatives
- Employment
- Stress reduction activity/reflection

The opportunity to offer pastoral care to an abused person or to an abusing person will present itself in one of the following ways:

1. **IDENTIFIED ABUSE** A woman reports being abused; a man admits to being abusive; a man is mandated by the judicial system to seek help; it is public knowledge that abuse occurs in the relationship; there has been an arrest for violence against the partner.
2. **SUSPECTED ABUSE** A couple presents themselves. A pastoral team member observes one or more of the following: domineering or demeaning language toward the partner, fear of partner, constant deference to the partner, little or no eye contact, bruises.

Need To Refer

It is essential that counseling for abusive relationship issues be offered only by a qualified therapist who understand the dynamic of domestic violence. The risks to the abused person are significant. Refer to appropriate community services while maintaining a supportive pastoral role.

4. DISCUSS WITH HER THE REALITY OF HER SITUATION

- Assure her that the information she shares with you will be held confidential except when mandated by law. Check the *Diocesan Policies on appropriate conduct - Our Promise To Protect . . . See Diocesan Website*
- DO NOT report an incident to the authorities without her permission
- Assess with her the advisability of contacting the authorities
- She may need personal and financial assistance
- She cannot make him stop — You cannot either
- Ask her to assess the risk she (and her children) face by staying
- Ask her to assess the risk she (they) face by leaving

NOTE: Statistics show that the time of leaving is the time of greatest danger

5. ASK HER IF SHE IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER

- Assist and encourage her to find a safe place for herself (and her children)
Some suggested options:
- The home of a friend or relative
- A shelter
- A motel
- A parish-family refuge
- Do not push her to leave nor criticize her for not leaving sooner

6. ASSIST THE WOMAN IN DEVELOPING A SAFETY PLAN.

Consider the following:

1. Where can she find safe shelter: friends, family, a shelter for abused women?
2. Does she need to get a restraining order?
3. Can she work out a signal for the neighbors to call the police?
4. What items should she have hidden for an emergency, i.e., money, car keys, phone number(s), medical insurance card, birth certificate(s), extra clothes, etc.

Have Safety Plans Available

7. SUPPORT HER DECISION AND ACTION.

- Beware of the tendency to rescue
- She must make the decision to stay or to leave
- She is the expert in her own situation

8. SUGGEST OPTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- Counseling
- Career counseling
- Support groups
- Education
- Separation
- Legal aid and/or counsel

9. REFER HER TO A COUNSELOR, SHELTER, OR SUPPORT GROUP SUITABLE TO HER SITUATION

9. ASSURE HER THAT YOU WILL CONTINUE TO PROVIDE FOR HER SPIRITUAL NEEDS

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

"I am concerned about you and your safety. What can I do to help you?"

"Would you like to talk about what is happening in your relationship?"

"What happens when you and your partner argue?"

"Does your partner ever slap, push, shove, kick or threaten you?"

"Can I safely call you back? How should I identify myself? What should I do if he answers?"



FIVE STATEMENTS EVERY ABUSED WOMAN NEEDS TO HEAR:

1. "I am concerned for your safety."
2. "The abuse will not stop without intervention."
3. "Nobody deserves to be hit."
4. "Your children are being affected by the violence."
5. "I am here for you and will support your decision."

DOMESTIC ABUSE PROGRAMS

Programs with shelters are marked with *

<u>COUNTY</u>	<u>AGENCY</u>	<u>CRISES NUMBER</u>
Brown	*Family Violence Center	920-435-0100
	*McClosky Manor	920-494-8747
Door	Help of Door County	920-743-8818
Algoma	Violence Intervention Program	920-487-2111
Langlade	*AVAIL	715-623-5767
Manitowoc	*Domestic Violence Center	920-684-5770
Marinette	*Rainbow House	800-956-6656
Menominee	Menominee Cty Domestic Abuse Program	715-235-9075
	Harbor House Domestic Abuse Program	920-832-1666
Outagamie	Oneida Tribe Domestic Abuse Program	920-869-4415
	*Oneida Shelter	920-869-1661
Shawano	FACES	715-526-3421
Winnebago	*Regional Domestic Abuse Services	920-235-5998
	*Place 2B—Marion House	920-231-2378

You may call the programs in any county for assistance

CATHOLIC CHARITIES

Green Bay	920-437-7531, ext 8234
Manitowoc	920-684-6651
Marinette	715-735-7802
Oshkosh	920-235-6002
Sturgeon Bay	920-495-0162



FOR REFERRAL INFORMATION

WITHIN THE STATE OF WISCONSIN:

Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence
608-255-0539

FOR REFERRAL INFORMATION THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES: 1-800-799-7233

PASTORAL RESPONSE TO AN ABUSING PERSON



Need To Refer the Abusing Person

It is essential that counseling for abusive relationship issues be offered only by a qualified therapist. The risks to the abused person are significant. Refer to appropriate community services while maintaining a supportive pastoral role.

When offering pastoral care to an abuser, safety is the primary concern. Therefore, **do not** ask to see the couple together. The purpose is to offer pastoral care in assisting the abuser to seek help in ending the abusive behaviors.

Follow these guidelines:

1. LISTEN TO THE ABUSER'S STORY.

- While supporting this person, do not support the abusive behaviors. i.e. "In all relationships there are times of disagreements. Abuse is never an acceptable way to resolve conflicts."
- Be aware that a common response of an abuser is to minimize the abuse, to deny responsibility for abusive behaviors, and to blame the partner for his abusive behaviors
- Recognize his pain
- Inform him that nowhere in the New Testament does Jesus condone abuse

2. DISCUSS WITH HIM THE REALITY OF HIS SITUATION.

- Acknowledge the courage that it takes to seek help to end abusive behaviors
- Discuss the consequences of the abuse
- Explore how he felt during and after the abuse
- Explain the positive outcomes from seeking help
- Assure him that the information he shares with you will be held confidential, except when mandated by law. Check the *Diocesan Policies on appropriate conduct — Our Promise To Protect . . . See Diocesan Website*

3. DEVELOP WITH HIM AN APPROPRIATE SUPPORT NETWORK.

He may be suicidal or homicidal

Identify *the following*:

- People available for emotional/ financial support that will encourage and affirm non-abusive behaviors
- Crisis center numbers
- Professional resources
- Immediate needs. He may need shelter, food, clothing, access to his material possessions, i.e. tools for work, personal papers, etc.

Provide a community resource list.

If you are concerned about suicide or homicide, call for professional help: Police, 911, Crisis Center _____.

4. OBTAIN A COMMITMENT to seek help from a community resource to end the abuse

- Make it known that you will support his effort to change
- Offer to follow up the referral to ensure that he is getting the help he needs
- Domestic abuse programs have information on specific services for abusers

- **ASSIST HIM IN DEVELOPING A PREVENTION PLAN** for avoiding future abusive behaviors until he can receive professional help

ASK HIM: *What are his immediate plans? Plans for the coming week? Where will he go after he leaves your presence?*

Review Support network.

NOTE: Research shows that there is a greater risk that he might escalate his abusive behaviors if he is threatened by a belief that his partner will leave him.

6. ENCOURAGE HIM TO HONOR HIS PARTNER'S DECISION.

- Be sensitive to how difficult this may be for him to accept.
- Discourage any attempts to change her choices.
- Help him to understand that the only person he can change is himself.

7. ASSURE HIM THAT YOU WILL CONTINUE TO PROVIDE FOR HIS SPIRITUAL NEEDS.

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

"I am concerned that you continue in your effort to seek help. How can I assist you?"

"Have you sought help in the past and was that helpful?"

"I'd like to follow up with you on this issue. How can I contact you?"

"Where can you stay? Who can you openly talk with?"

"Do you need legal counsel in order to obtain your material possessions or to advise you of your rights?"



DOMESTIC ABUSE PROGRAMS

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WHAT TO LOOK FOR

WHAT IS ABUSE?

Abuse in a relationship is a pattern of coercive control that one person exercises over another.¹

Abusers use physical, verbal and sexual violence, threats, emotional insults and economic deprivation as a way to dominate their partners and get their way.

Assault and coercion can be found among married and unmarried heterosexuals, lesbians and gay males. Historically, society has accepted and diminished the importance of women. That has led to today's situation where women comprise the vast majority (95%) of those who are battered.

¹Scheter, S. (1987). *Guidelines for mental health providers in domestic violence cases*. Washington, D.C.: NGADV.

Behaviors That May Indicate An Abused Person:

FEAR OF PARTNER

- Shrinks from partner's touch
- Reluctance to make decisions without partner
- Describes partner as jealous, threatening, bad-tempered
- Reluctant to speak or disagree in the partner's presence

ISOLATION OF THE WOMAN

Limited or no access to:

- Money
- The car or other forms of transportation
- Family or friends
- Job or school
- Phone

REPEATED INJURIES OR INJURIES THAT DO NOT SEEM ACCIDENTAL

STRESS-RELATED ISSUES

- Headaches
- Insomnia
- Ulcers

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

- Depression
- Suicide attempts or threats
- Eating disorders
- Substance abuse
- Alcohol and /or drug abuse

FREQUENT FLEEING FROM HOME

PHYSICAL OR VERBAL ABUSE OF THE CHILDREN

Behaviors That May Indicate An Abusing Person:

- Chooses not to control anger
- Belittles verbally and humiliates partner
- Exhibits unpredictable behavior
- Continually asks for second chances
- Blames others for faults
- Isolates partner
- Is jealous of partners' friends, children, family, job
- Insists on handling all of the money
- Plays on your guilt
- Is closed minded; "My way is the only way."
- Instills fear when angry
- Constantly says, "I will change and I won't do it again."



A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops - When I Call For Help

For Pastors and Pastoral Staff

Make your parish a safe place where abused women and abusive men can come for help. Here are some specific suggestions:

- Include information about domestic violence and local resources in parish bulletins, newsletters and on websites.
- Place copies of brochures and/or other information, including local telephone numbers for assistance about domestic violence, in the women's restroom(s).
- Keep an updated list of resources for abused women. This can be a project for the parish pastoral council, social justice committee, or women's group.
- Find a staff person or volunteer who is willing to receive in-depth training on domestic violence; ask this person to serve as a resource and to help educate others about abuse.
- Provide training on domestic violence to all church ministers, including priests, deacons and lay ministers. When possible, provide opportunities for them to hear directly from victims of violence.
- Join in the national observance of October as "Domestic Violence Awareness Month." Dedicate at least one weekend that month to inform parishioners about domestic abuse. During that month, make available educational and training programs in order to sensitize men and women, girls and boys to the personal and social effects of violence in the family. Help them to see how psychological abuse may escalate over time. Teach them how to communicate without violence.

Use liturgies to draw attention to violence and abuse. Here are some specific suggestions:

- In homilies, include a reference to domestic violence when appropriate. Just a mention of domestic violence lets abused women know that someone cares. Describe what abuse is so that women begin to recognize and name what is happening to them. Watch the video *When You Preach, Remember Me* (Available through USCCB office).
- In parish reconciliation services, identify violence against women as a sin.
- Include intercessions for victims of abuse, people who abuse people, and those who work with them
- If you suspect abuse, ask direct questions. Ask the woman if she is being hit or hurt at home. Carefully evaluate her response. Some women do not realize they are being abused, or they lie to protect their spouses. Be careful not to say anything that will bolster her belief that it is her fault and that she must change her behavior.
- Have an action plan in place to follow if an abused woman calls on you for help. This includes knowing how and where to refer her for help. This will be easier if you have already established contact with local shelters and domestic violence agencies.
- Include a discussion of domestic violence in marriage preparation sessions. If violence has already begun in the relationship, it will only escalate after marriage.
- In baptismal preparation programs, be alert that the arrival of a child and its attendant stress may increase the risk of domestic violence.

Suggestions for preaching about domestic violence can be found at
www.usccb.org/laity/women/suggestions.shtml

SAMPLE PRAYERS

When I Call For Help: A Prayer

Listen, God, to my prayer;
Do not hide from my pleading;
hear me and give answer.
If an enemy had reviled me,
that I could bear;
If my foe had viewed me with contempt,
from that I could hide.
But it was you, my other self,
my comrade and friend,
You, whose company I enjoyed,
at whose side I walked
in procession in the house of God.
But I will call upon God,
and the Lord will save me.
At dusk, dawn, and noon
I will grieve and complain,
and my prayer will be heard.
(Ps 55:2-3, 13-15, 17-18)

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Introduction:

Creator God, you are always bringing forth life and teaching us to respect life. In our parish family, some are being wounded by domestic violence. Help us respond to these wounded companions.

- That we may join in the national mourning of victims who have died from domestic violence, *we pray . . .*
- That we, as a Christian community, might create a safe place for victims to tell their stories and receive support, *we pray . . .*
- That we, as a Christian community would have the courage to invite abusers to seek help, *we pray . . .*
- That we, as a parish community, would commit ourselves to creating a non-violent future, *we pray . . .*

Concluding Prayer:

O God, in whose enduring love we trust, bind up the wounds of those betrayed by abuse at the hands of others. Heal them and make them whole, that they may once more receive and give love with confidence in their dignity as your daughters and sons. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

Sample Prayer Service Introduction

Our society has ignored and even promoted the use of violence to maintain control within relationships. We gather at this time to recognize the fact that our lives have been touched by both abusers and the abused. Perhaps we are among them.

Invitation To Prayer

We invite you to put yourself in the presence of your God - Let this God be a gentle, welcoming presence that removes all fear and discomfort, a God who promises healing and strength.

Reading: Luke 4:16-21

Reflection

Jesus promised freedom for the oppressed. Those who are abused are oppressed by their partners. They deserve to be safe. They have a right to know they are loved by someone who will not hurt them or threaten them. By making a parish a safe place, Jesus' promise is fulfilled—healing can happen; oppression can be overcome. Our church neither condones nor ignores the pain of its people.

Witness

An individual or two may be found to share their story and what they did to arrive at a certain sense of freedom.

Healing Ceremony

After praying for healing both as individuals and as a society, a ritual activity such as placing a rock on the altar or a washing of the feet or an anointing can be used to show that the oppression is overcome.

Sending Forth

As we leave this space, we go forth healed yet wounded. Our task remains to support one another as we strive to live without violence.



More Sample Prayers of the Faithful

For those who have hurt another through their words and actions, may they find the strength to seek help and healing, *we pray to the Lord.*

That all of us grow in our awareness of the tendency toward power, control of others and violence in our lives and ask God for the help to deal with these destructive tendencies, *we pray to the Lord.*

For children, women and men who find themselves in defenseless situations, victims of violence, that they may find protection, *we pray to the Lord.*

For children and youth who have been violated by those they trusted, that their wounds may be healed, *we pray to the Lord.*

For women who are battered and abused in their own homes, that their cries for help may be heard and answered by this community, *we pray to the Lord.*

That this faith community commit itself to violence-free attitudes and actions in reaching out to one another and to the larger community we serve, *we pray to the Lord.*