

# **Understanding Domestic Violence**



**Chapter 50B.**  
**Domestic Violence.**

**§ 50B-1. Domestic violence; definition.**

(a) Domestic violence means the commission of one or more of the following acts upon an aggrieved party or upon a minor child residing with or in the custody of the aggrieved party by a person with whom the aggrieved party has or has had a personal relationship, but does not include acts of self-defense:

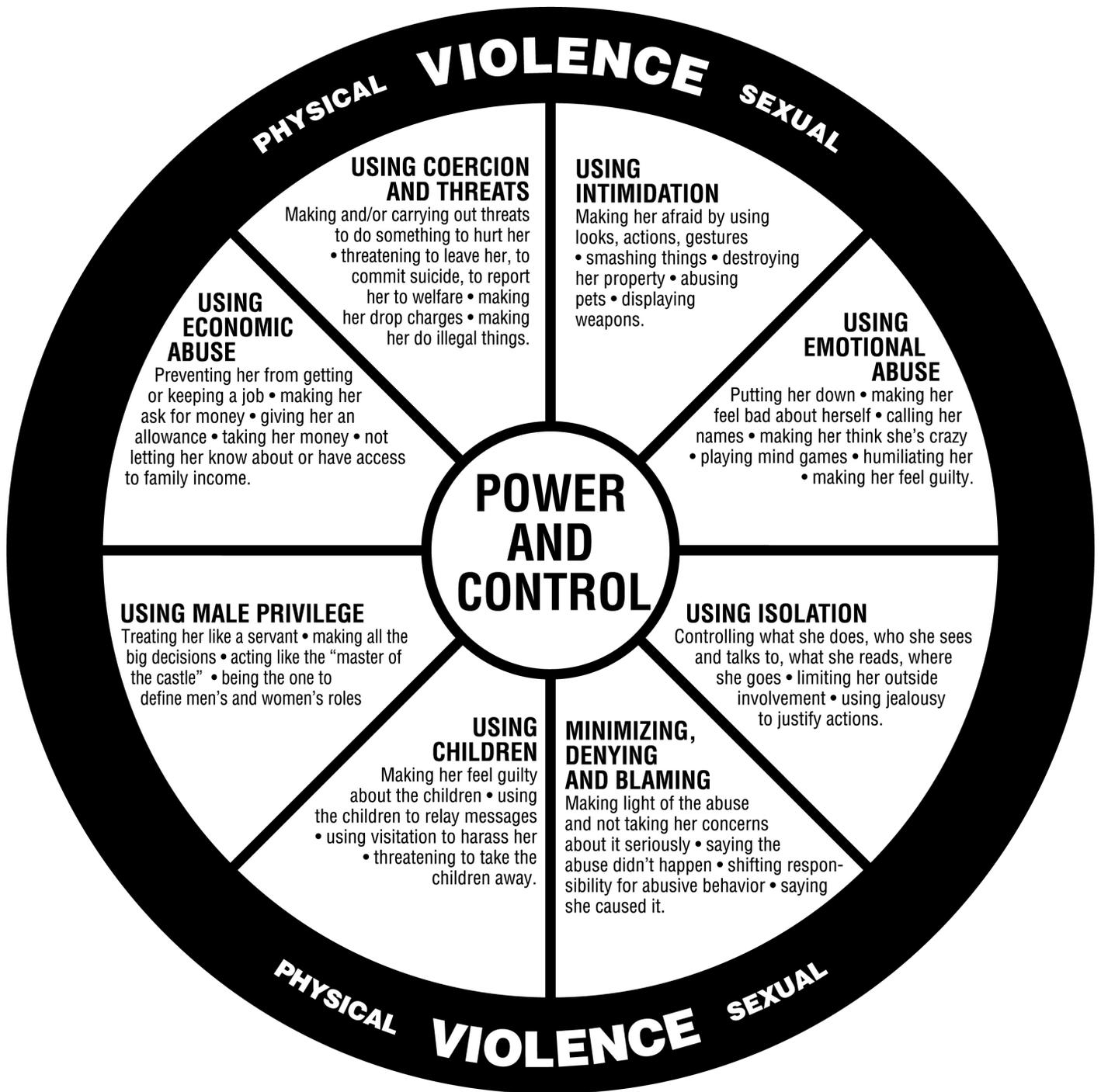
- (1) Attempting to cause bodily injury, or intentionally causing bodily injury; or
- (2) Placing the aggrieved party or a member of the aggrieved party's family or household in fear of imminent serious bodily injury or continued harassment, as defined in G.S. 14-277.3A, that rises to such a level as to inflict substantial emotional distress; or
- (3) Committing any act defined in G.S. 14-27.2 through G.S. 14-27.7.

(b) For purposes of this section, the term "personal relationship" means a relationship wherein the parties involved:

- (1) Are current or former spouses;
- (2) Are persons of opposite sex who live together or have lived together;
- (3) Are related as parents and children, including others acting in loco parentis to a minor child, or as grandparents and grandchildren. For purposes of this subdivision, an aggrieved party may not obtain an order of protection against a child or grandchild under the age of 16;
- (4) Have a child in common;
- (5) Are current or former household members;
- (6) Are persons of the opposite sex who are in a dating relationship or have been in a dating relationship. For purposes of this subdivision, a dating relationship is one wherein the parties are romantically involved over time and on a continuous basis during the course of the relationship. A casual acquaintance or ordinary fraternization between persons in a business or social context is not a dating relationship.

(c) As used in this Chapter, the term "protective order" includes any order entered pursuant to this Chapter upon hearing by the court or consent of the parties. (1979, c. 561, s. 1; 1985, c. 113, s. 1; 1987, c. 828; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 893, ss. 1, 3; 1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 591, s. 1; 1997-471, s. 1; 2001-518, s. 3; 2003-107, s. 1; 2009-58, s. 5.)





**DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT**

202 East Superior Street  
Duluth, Minnesota 55802  
218-722-2781  
[www.duluth-model.org](http://www.duluth-model.org)



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## ***Power and Control Wheel Enactments***

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### **Power and Control**

Abusers believe they have a right to control their partners by:

- Telling them what to do and expecting obedience
- Using force to maintain power and control over partners
- Feeling their partners have no right to challenge their desire for power and control
- Feeling justified making the victim comply
- Blaming the abuse on the partner and not accepting responsibility for wrongful acts.

The characteristics shown in the wheel are examples of how this power and control are demonstrated and enacted against the victim.

### **Isolation**

- Limiting outside involvement
- Making another avoid people/friends/family by deliberately embarrassing or humiliating them in front of others
- Expecting another to report every move and activity
- Restricting use of the car
- Moving residences

### **Emotional Abuse**

- Putting another down/name-calling
- Ignoring or discounting activities and accomplishments
- Withholding approval or affection
- Making another feel as if they are crazy in public or through private humiliation
- Unreasonable jealousy and suspicion
- Playing mind games

### **Economic Abuse**

- Preventing another from getting or keeping a job
- Withholding funds
- Spending family income without consent and/or making the partner struggle to pay bills
- Not letting someone know of or have access to family/personal income
- Forcing someone to ask for basic necessities

### **Intimidation**

- Driving recklessly to make another feel threatened or endangered
- Destroying property or cherished possessions
- Making another afraid by using looks/actions/gestures
- Throwing objects as an expression of anger to make another feel threatened
- Displaying weapons

### **Using Children or Pets**

- Threatening to take the children away
- Making the partner feel guilty about the children
- Abusing children or pets to punish the partner
- Using the children to relay messages

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## *Power and Control Wheel Enactments*

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### *Using Privilege*

- Treating another like a servant
- Making all the big decisions
- Being the one to define male and female roles
- Acting like the master or queen of the castle

### *Sexual Abuse*

- Sex on demand or sexual withholding
- Physical assaults during sexual intercourse
- Spousal rapes or non-consensual sex
- Sexually degrading language
- Denying reproductive freedom

### *Threats*

- Threats of violence against significant third parties
- Threats to commit physical or sexual harm
- Threats to commit property destruction
- Threats to commit suicide or murder

### *Physical Abuse*

- Biting/scratching
- Slapping/punching
- Kicking/stomping
- Throwing objects at another
- Locking another in a closet or utilizing other confinement
- Sleep interference and/or deliberately exhausting the partner with unreasonable demands and lack of rest
- Deprivation of heat or food
- Shoving another down steps or into objects
- Assaults with weapons such as knives/guns/other objects

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## Case Study

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I have been married to my husband for ten years. I became pregnant with my first child shortly after we were married. We now have three children, ages nine, seven and six. Even from the beginning, my husband has made all of the decisions for our family. He told me that my job was to be a good wife—to take care of the children and to cook and clean for him.

The first time he hit me was when I was pregnant with my first child. We had come home from my mother's house and he was angry about something. I think I had forgotten to buy a kind of food item that he wanted, and then he slapped me. I thought it was just an isolated event. I never thought he would do it again.

Since then, he has hit, kicked, choked, slapped and burned me. He does not hurt me physically that often, though, maybe only once a month. Mainly, when I do something he doesn't like, such as visiting my mother or talking on the phone to a friend, he calls me a prostitute and other bad names, and tells me that he will take the children and go to his mother's home if I am not a good wife. He refuses to let me take a job, even though all of our children are in school, and I would be qualified for many different kinds of jobs. He does not let me have any money, except for a little for grocery shopping.

He is very jealous and possessive. A few months ago, he became very angry because I was late getting home from the store. He accused me of seeing another man and punched a hole in the door between the kitchen and the living room. My sons were there and saw this, and he yelled at them to go to their rooms. I recently overheard him talking to my seven-year-old son. He was asking if my son ever saw me talking to "other men." He told my son that I was crazy and that my son should watch me and tell him if I did anything strange.

Another time, we went to a party given by a friend of his from work. I met the wife of one of the people my husband works with. We spent a long time talking. After some time, my husband came up to me, grabbed my arm so tightly it hurt and left bruises, and whispered in my ear, "We're leaving." Just by the look he gave me, I knew he was angry that I spent so much time talking with the woman, and that he would likely beat me when we got home. When we got home, he smashed a framed picture I have of myself with a group of my friends at the university, before I was married, by throwing it at the wall near where I was standing. He told me that I "knew" what would happen if I continued to disobey him.

A few months ago, my husband came home late with friends and made me get up to cook them food. He started joking with his friends about how much I weighed, and that I was like all other women who let themselves go once they got married. He called me many bad names. After his friends left, he woke me up again and forced me to have sex with him, even though I didn't want to and was feeling sick.

Recently, I tried to talk to my husband about the abuse. He got very angry. He said he doesn't hurt me any more than is to be expected of a husband and that in fact he thinks that he is too nice to me. He said that if he did happen to be a bit harsh with me sometimes, it was my fault anyway for not being a good wife and letting myself become so unattractive.

I love my husband, but I do not think I can continue to live with him. He has threatened to kill me, the children, and himself if I leave him, and I don't have anywhere to go. I don't have a job or any money, and would not be able to find another place to stay even if I did leave.

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This scenario is fictional. Some aspects of the scenario are based on descriptions of domestic violence contained in reports by Minnesota Advocates For Human Rights, available at <http://www.mnadvocates.org>; the Domestic Violence Centre, available at <http://www.dvc.org.nz>; and the Family Violence Prevention Fund, available at <http://www.fvpf.org>.

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## *Do's and Don'ts of Handling Domestic Violence Victims*

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### DO

- Explain the services available in a simple and direct manner.
- Prioritize the victim's needs.
- Express concern for their safety and that of their children. Empower the victim with information that increases their choices.
- Be aware of your own attitude, experiences and reactions to abuse. It is appropriate to disagree with the victim's behavior and/or attitude while remaining objective, empathetic and understanding.
- Help the victim understand the danger and repetitiveness of the violence.
- Encourage the victim to take small steps, which will promote independence and build self-confidence.
- Take into consideration cultural values and beliefs.
- Challenge any efforts on the victim's part to justify the abuse through religion.
- Convey fears for the victim's safety and respect their reasons for staying. Separation from the abuser can be the most dangerous time for the victim.
- Define your role as a court official; be realistic about what you can and cannot do with regards to the relationship.
- Recognize that the victim's reactions and responses may change frequently and be unpredictable. Reactions will range from resistance to cooperation.
- Express your concerns if the situation is lethal and take appropriate action.
- Be patient and honest with the victim.
- Emphasize the abuser's responsibility for his/her own choices.
- Expect the "honeymoon" period to emerge following an abusive episode.
- Challenge the victim's explanation of the incident and openly ask if their partner is hurting them. The approach must be sensitive and not threatening in nature.
- Be honest with the victim, especially about confidentiality issues.

### DON'T

- Assume that battered women know about their options and the services available.
  - Overload the victim with services and decisions.
  - Ever ask the victim why they stay. This is a shaming remark, which insinuates the victim is at fault. Leaving does not always solve the problem.
  - Impose your own values and make quick judgments. Your reaction to the victim's responses will be communicated strongly.
  - Expect the victim to exaggerate or invent the violence.
  - Try to rescue the victim.
  - Lump all victims into one category.
  - Reject the woman's religion or ignore references to religious beliefs.
  - Convey disappointment if the victim chooses to stay. This can elicit feelings of failure and worthlessness.
  - Get caught up in the role of marriage counselor, mediator and/or referee.
  - Become cynical with the victim's failure to take the action or respond the way you believe they should. Your frustration can result in victim blaming and impact your ability to intervene effectively.
  - Ignore or minimize the potential dangerousness of the situation.
  - Expect instant decision-making by the victim or contribute to unrealistic expectations.
  - Let the victim blame themselves or other factors for the abuse.
  - Delay in responding to a reported incident of violence. Timing is a key factor in gathering evidentiary information.
  - Accept unexplained injuries accompanied by implausible reasons.
  - Make a promise you can't keep.
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## Danger Assessment\*

1. Has the physical violence increased in severity or frequency over the past year?
2. Does he own a gun?
3. Have you left him after living together during the past year?
- 3a. (If you have *never* lived with him, check here\_\_\_)
4. Is he unemployed?
5. Has he ever used a weapon against you or threatened you with a lethal weapon?
- 5a. (If yes, was the weapon a gun?\_\_\_\_\_)
  
6. Does he threaten to kill you?
7. Has he avoided being arrested for domestic violence?
8. Do you have a child that is not his?
9. Has he ever forced you to have sex when you did not wish to do so?
10. Does he ever try to choke you?
  
11. Does he use illegal drugs? By drugs, I mean "uppers" or amphetamines, speed, angel dust, cocaine, "crack", street drugs or mixtures?
12. Is he an alcoholic or problem drinker?
13. Does he control most or all of your daily activities? (For instance: does he tell you who you can be friends with, when you can see your family, how much money you can use, or when you can take the car? (If he tries, but you do not let him, check here: \_\_\_\_\_)
14. Is he violently and constantly jealous of you? (For instance, does he say "If I can't have you, no one can.")
15. Have you ever been beaten by him while you were pregnant? (If you have never been pregnant by him, check here: \_\_\_\_\_)
  
16. Has he ever threatened or tried to commit suicide?
17. Does he threaten to harm your children?
18. Do you believe he is capable of killing you?
19. Does he follow or spy on you, leave threatening notes or messages on an answering machine, destroy your property, or call you when you don't want him to?
20. Have you ever threatened or tried to commit suicide?

One study has shown that women who score 8 or higher on the Danger Assessment are at very grave risk of being killed by their intimate partners; women who score 4 or higher are at great risk. . . .By simply asking the questions in the assessment, magistrates may raise a victim's awareness of the dangerousness of the situation.

\*"Danger Assessment," Jacquelyn C. Campbell, PhD, RN, FAAN. This lethality checklist is taken from The Magistrate Protocol for Domestic Violence Cases.



## **Why Victims of Domestic Violence Stay and Go**

### **Situational Factors:**

- Economic dependence
- Fear of greater physical danger to themselves and their children if they attempt to leave
- Fear of emotional damage to children
- Fear of losing custody of children
- Lack of alternative housing
- Lack of job skills
- Social isolation resulting in lack of support from family or friends and lack of information regarding alternatives
- Fear of involvement in court processes
- Cultural and religious constraints
- Fear of retaliation

### **Emotional Factors:**

- Fear of loneliness
- Insecurity over potential independence and lack of emotional support
- Guilt about failure of marriage
- Fear that partner is unable to survive along
- Belief that partner will change
- Ambivalence and fear over making formidable life changes



## Signs to Look for in a Battering Personality

1. **Possessiveness.** At the beginning of a relationship, an abuser may say that jealousy (actually possessiveness) is a sign of love. Possessiveness has nothing to do with love. It is a sign of lack of trust. The abuser may question his partner about who she talks to, accuse her of flirting, or keep her from spending time with family, friends, or children. As the possessiveness progresses, he may call her frequently during the day or drop by unexpectedly. He may refuse to let her work for fear she'll meet someone else, or even engage in behaviors such as checking her car mileage or asking friends to watch her.
2. **Controlling Behavior.** At first the batterer will say this behavior is due to his concern for her safety, her need to use her time well, or her need to make good decisions. He will be angry if the woman is "late" coming back from the store or an appointment; he will question her closely about where she went and who she talked with. As this behavior progresses, he may not let the woman make personal decisions about the house, her clothing, or even going to church. He may keep all the money or even make her ask permission to leave the house or room.
3. **Quick Involvement.** Many battered women dated or knew their abuser for less than six months before they were married, engaged, or living together. He comes in like a whirlwind, claiming, "you're the only person I could ever talk to", or "I've never been loved like this by anyone." He will pressure the woman to commit to the relationship in such a way that later the woman may feel very guilty or that she's "letting him down" if she wants to slow down involvement or break off the relationship.
4. **Unrealistic Expectations.** Abusive people will expect their partner to meet all their needs. He expects a perfect wife, mother, lover, and friend. He will say things such as "if you love me, I'm all you need, and you're all I need." His partner is expected to take care of everything for him emotionally and in the home.
5. **Isolation.** The abusive person tries to cut his partner off from all resources. If she has male friends, she's a "whore." If she has women friends, she's a lesbian. If she's close to family, she's "tied to the apron strings." He accuses people who are the woman's supports of causing trouble. He may want to live in the country, without a telephone, or refuse to let her drive the car, or he may try to keep her from working or going to school.
6. **Blames others for problems.** If he is chronically unemployed, someone is always doing him wrong or out to get him. He may make mistakes and then blame the woman for upsetting him and keeping him from concentrating on the task at hand. He may tell the woman she is at fault for virtually anything that goes wrong in his life.
7. **Blames others for feelings.** The abuser may tell his partner "you make me mad," "you're hurting me by not doing what I want you to do," or "I can't help being angry." He is the one who makes the decision about what he thinks or feels, but he will use these feelings to manipulate his partner. Harder to catch are claims, "you make me happy," or "you control how I feel."
8. **Hypersensitivity.** An abuser is easily insulted, claiming his feelings are hurt, when in actuality he is angry or taking the slightest setback as a personal attack. He will rant and rave about the injustice of things that have happened, things that are just a part of living (for example being asked to work late, getting a traffic ticket, being asked to help with chores, or being told some behavior is annoying).
9. **Cruelty to animals or children.** Abusers may punish animals brutally or be insensitive to their pain or suffering. An abuser may expect children to be capable of things beyond their abilities (e.g. punishes a 2 year old for wetting a diaper). He may tease children until they cry. Some studies indicate that about 60% of men who physically abuse their partners also abuse their children.
10. **Sexual abuser.** An abuser may physically assault private parts of a woman's body. He may show little concern about whether the woman wants to have sex and use violence to coerce her into having sex with him. He may begin having sex with his partner while she is sleeping. He may

force her to do sexual acts that she finds uncomfortable, unpleasant, or degrading. He may demand sex after beating her.

11. **Verbal abuse.** In addition to saying things that are intentionally meant to be cruel and hurtful, verbal abuse is also apparent in the abuser's degrading of his partner, cursing her, and belittling her accomplishments. The abuser tells her she is stupid and unable to function without him. This may involve waking her up to verbally abuse her or not letting her go to sleep.
12. **Rigid sex roles.** The abuser expects his partner to serve him. He may even say the woman must stay at home and obey in all things – even acts that are criminal in nature. The abuser sees women as inferior to men, responsible for menial tasks, and unable to be a whole person without a relationship.
13. **Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde personality.** Many women are confused by the abuser's sudden changes in mood. She may think he has some sort of mental problem because one minute he's agreeable, the next he's exploding. Explosiveness and moodiness are typical of men who beat their partners. These behaviors are related to other characteristics, such as hypersensitivity.
14. **Past battering.** The abuser may say he has hit women in the past, but blame them for the abuse (e.g., they made me do it"). The women may hear from relatives or ex-partners that he is abusive. A batterer will abuse any woman he is with if the relationship lasts long enough for the violence to begin; situational circumstances do not make one's personality abusive.
15. **Threats of violence.** This includes any threat of physical force meant to control the partner. "I'll slap your mouth off," "I'll kill you," "I'll break your neck." Most people do not threaten their partners. Abusers will try to excuse their threats by saying that everybody talks that way.
16. **Breaking or striking objects.** Breaking loved possessions is used as a punishment, but mostly to terrorize the woman into submission. The abuser may beat on the table with his fist, or throw objects around or near his partner. There is great danger when someone thinks he has the right to punish or frighten his partner.
17. **Any force during an argument.** This may involve the abuser's holding the woman down, physically restraining her from leaving the room, or any pushing or shoving. He may hold his partner against the wall, telling her, "You're going to listen to me."

# **Domestic Violence and Children**

## **Children Exposed to Batterers**

### **Traits of Batterers**

- Controlling
- Entitled/Self-Centered
- Believe they are the victims
- Manipulative
- Good public image
- Skillfully dishonest (e.g. say they “don’t remember”)
- Disrespectful, Superior

### **Implications of Entitlement Thinking**

- Leads abusers to think they are the victim
- Will stop partner from attending to children so she can attend to him
- Wants children to meet his needs
- Increases a child’s vulnerability when conditioned to meet adult’s needs

### **Implications of Good Public Image**

- Keeps people from believing partner and children
- Abuser looks like sensitive team player
- Confuses the children
  - believe no one else thinks anything is wrong with battering
  - Leads children to blaming the mom, because she is only one saying something is wrong

### **Implications of Manipulation**

- Calm demeanor in court
- File multiple harassing or retaliatory motions
- Make false allegations against partner, (e.g. -flight risk, substance abuser, neglects children)
- Use court process to avoid child support or get it reduced
- Use parallel actions in different jurisdictions to gain advantage

### **Batterers**

- Good early in a relationship
- Externalize responsibility
- Punish, retaliate
- Batter serially
- Danger increases post separation

## **Batterer's Risk to Abuse Children**

### **Physical Abuse**

- 50% of batterers abuse their children
- 7 times more likely to abuse their children than a non-battering parent

### **Sexual Abuse**

- Six times more likely to sexually abuse their children than a non-battering parent
- Correlated with presence of violence towards partner but not severity

## **Post Separation Risk**

- Abuse mothers during exchanges
- Use child as weapon for information on mother
- Physical, sexual, or mental abuse of child
- Child exposed to abuser's violence of new partner
- Learn attitudes and behaviors that lead to violence
- Batterer is not focused on needs of child