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a survivor needs to hear

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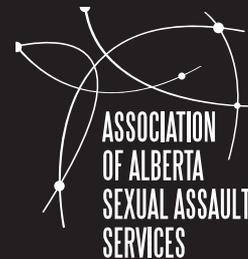
Alberta's **ONE LINE** for Sexual Violence is a toll-free phone, text or chat service.

Private and available throughout Alberta

1-866-403-8000 | **www.aasas.ca**

Sexual Violence includes (but is not limited to): sexual assault (rape), sexual harassment, child sexual abuse.

If you or someone you know has been impacted by sexual violence or you need more information, please call, text or chat Alberta's One Line for Sexual Violence.



Alberta's One Line: Support for Everyone Affected by Sexual Violence

ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICES*

Chances are everyone knows at least one person that has been affected by the crime of sexual violence – whether they have chosen to tell anyone about it, or not. For a survivor, something as simple as telling a trusted friend or family member, can help them heal from the trauma they have experienced.

Alberta's One Line for Sexual Violence offers talk, text and chat support to people in all areas of Alberta who have been impacted by sexual violence. This is an invitation to all survivors across Alberta to safely, privately reach out for help. It is also a wonderful resource for the loved ones; friends, family, and partners, of those who have disclosed an experience of sexual violence. One Line is a province-wide central platform for sexual violence support that is sexual assault specialized; safe; private and accessible to individuals in all Alberta communities. Calling, texting and chatting will be available as of May 6, 2019 from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm seven days a week for those who make the choice to reach out for support.

By calling or texting 1-866-403-8000, or visiting AASAS.ca and selecting "Chat" on the home screen, Albertans will be able to connect with kind, caring support and information about services that can help them heal or ac-

cess justice. Receiving a positive response to a disclosure of sexual violence can give survivors the assurance that healing is possible, and within their grasp.

Alberta's One Line for Sexual Violence follows closely on the heels of Alberta's #IBelieveYou campaign. The hashtag, along with the other important words that a survivor of sexual violence needs to hear: It's not your fault, have adorned billboards, posters, transit ads and public service announcements for the past three years.

The #IBelieveYou campaign has focused on creating an Alberta where survivors feel safe to tell, to share what happened to them, with someone they trust. The aim of the campaign was to change the behavior of those trusted friends and family members, ensuring that everyone understood the importance of a positive response to a disclosure of sexual violence.

The success of the #IBelieveYou campaign was measured not only by surveys and social media metrics, but by the tremendous increase in demand for specialized sexual assault and abuse services across the province. The year that #MeToo trended across the world alongside #IBelieveYou, the call for specialized sexual violence

counselling services in Alberta rose by 53%!

This demand created new opportunities to expand sexual violence support and information to areas of Alberta previously underserved. There are people throughout Alberta who want to access local services and support, but don't know where to start. AASAS is pleased to meet this need with the launch of Alberta's One Line for Sexual Violence.

#IBelieveYou has grown too. Alberta's One Line provides that positive response: "I believe you, it's not your fault. How can I help?" Albertans can choose to access this help where and when they feel ready...there is no pressure to act. It is a safe place to talk about their experience, and receive support from individuals who are specially trained to respond to people who have experienced sexual violence.

*The Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services (AASAS) is a provincial, umbrella organization that provides coordination and collaboration for the sexual assault services in the province of Alberta. They also educate Albertans about the issues that surround sexual violence. Sexual violence includes sexual harassment, sexual abuse, and sexual assault.

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Helping A Friend

A suicidal person may not ask for help, but that doesn't mean that help isn't wanted.

Most people who die by suicide don't want to die—they just want to stop hurting. Suicide prevention starts with recognizing the warning signs and taking them seriously. If you think a friend or family member is considering suicide, you might be afraid to bring up the subject. But talking openly about suicidal thoughts and feelings can save a life.

Understanding and preventing suicide

The World Health Organization estimates that approximately 1 million people die each year from suicide. What drives so many individuals to take their own lives? To those not in the grips of suicidal depression and despair, it's difficult to understand what drives so many individuals to take their own lives. But a suicidal person is in so much pain that he or she can see no other option.

Suicide is a desperate attempt to escape suffering that has become unbearable. Blinded by feelings of self-loathing, hopelessness, and isolation, a suicidal person can't see any way of finding relief except through death. But despite their desire for the pain to stop, most suicidal people are deeply conflicted about ending their own lives. They wish there was an alternative to committing suicide, but they just can't see one.

Warning signs of suicide

Most suicidal individuals give warning signs or signals of their intentions. The best way to prevent suicide is to recognize these warning signs and know how to respond if you spot them. If you believe that a friend or family member is suicidal, you can play a role in suicide prevention by pointing out the alternatives, showing that you care, and getting a doctor or psychologist involved.



Major warning signs for suicide include talking about killing or harming oneself, talking or writing a lot about death or dying, and seeking out things that could be used in a suicide attempt, such as weapons and drugs. These signals are even more dangerous if the person has a mood disorder such as depression or bipolar disorder, suffers from alcohol dependence, has previously attempted suicide, or has a family history of suicide.

Take any suicidal talk or behavior seriously. It's not just a warning sign that the person is thinking about suicide—it's a cry for help.

A more subtle but equally dangerous warning sign of suicide is hopelessness. Studies have found that hopelessness is a strong predictor of suicide. People who feel hopeless may talk about "unbearable" feelings, predict a bleak future, and state that they have nothing to look forward to.

Other warning signs that point to a suicidal mind frame include dramatic mood swings or sudden personality changes, such as going from outgoing to withdrawn or well-behaved to rebellious. A suicidal person may also lose interest in day-to-day activities, neglect his or her appearance, and show big changes in eating or sleeping habits.

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I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO. I NEVER MEANT TO HURT THEM.

THAT'S WHAT THEY ALL SAY, SIR. THE NEXT TIME, WE'RE CHARGING YOU.



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HERE'S A LIST OF MEETINGS AND SERVICES THAT I SUGGEST YOU TAKE A LOOK AT.

THANK YOU, OFFICER. I AM QUITTING DRINKING AND GETTING HELP.

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FIRST OF ALL, I'M VERY SORRY FOR EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED LAST NIGHT.

YOU SAY THAT EVERY TIME, DAD.

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I AM QUITTING DRINKING AND I'M GETTING HELP THIS TIME.



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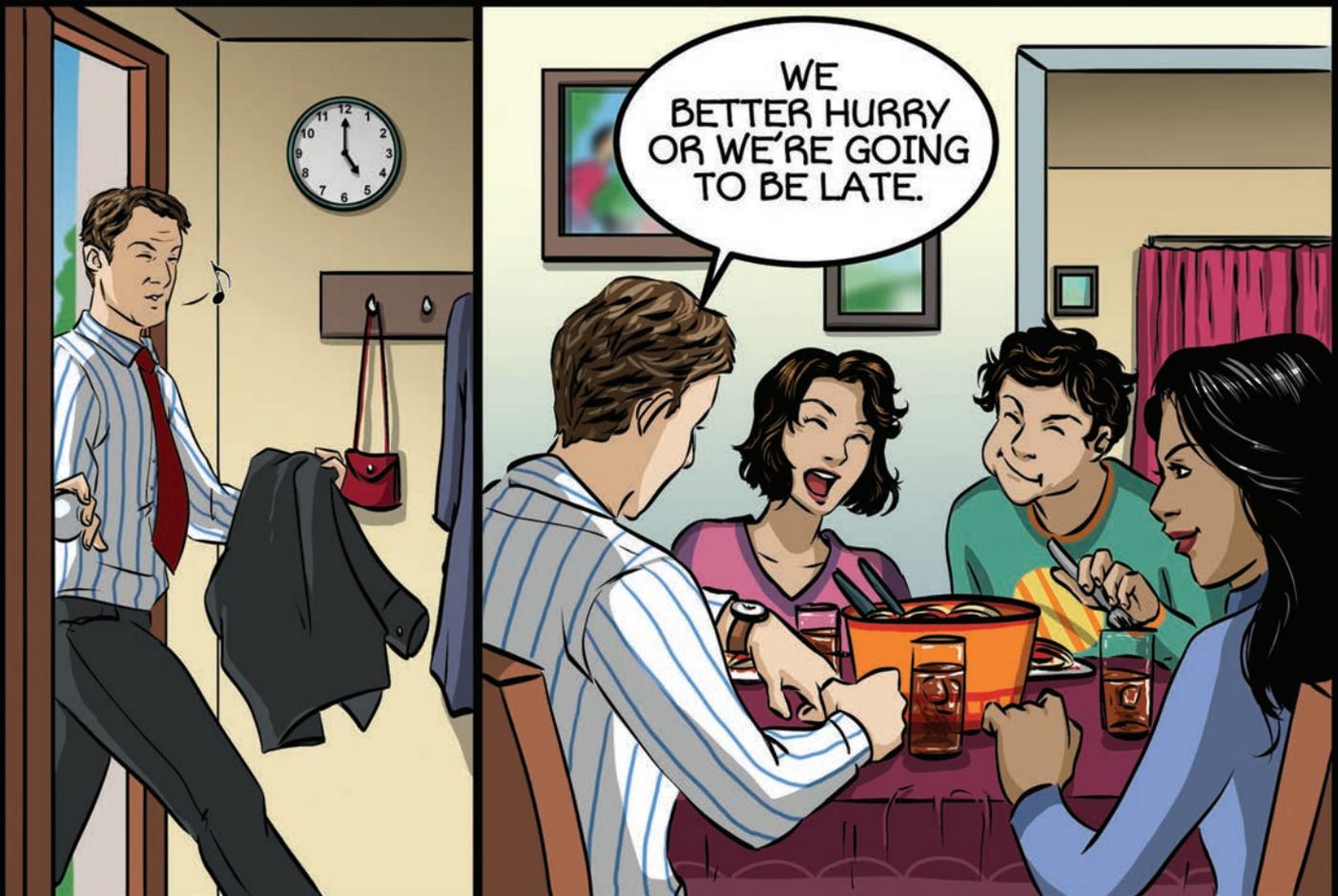
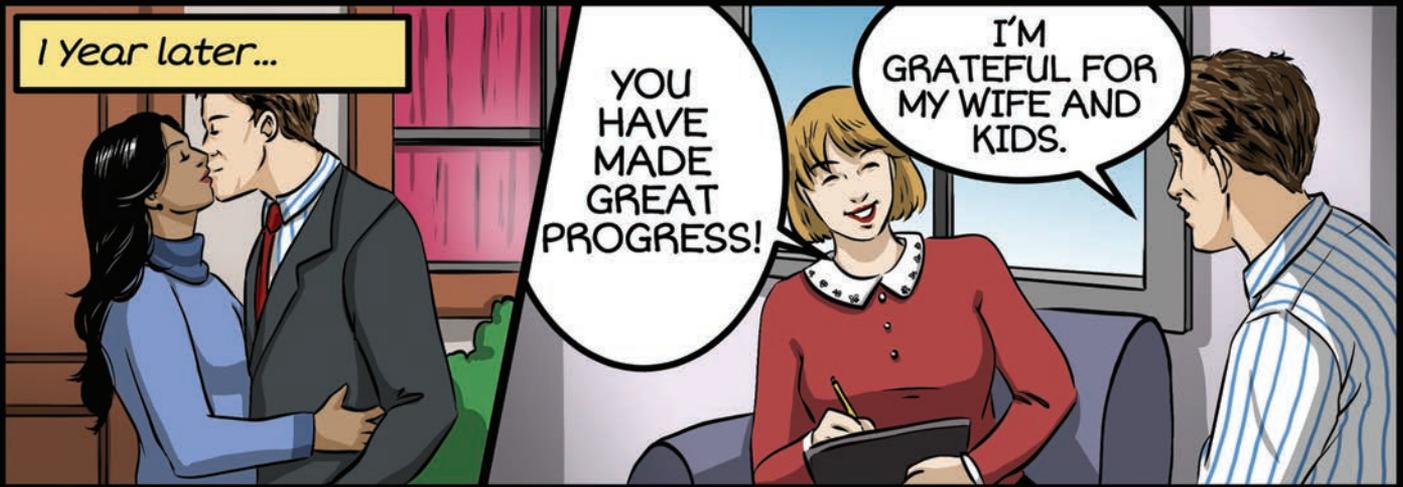
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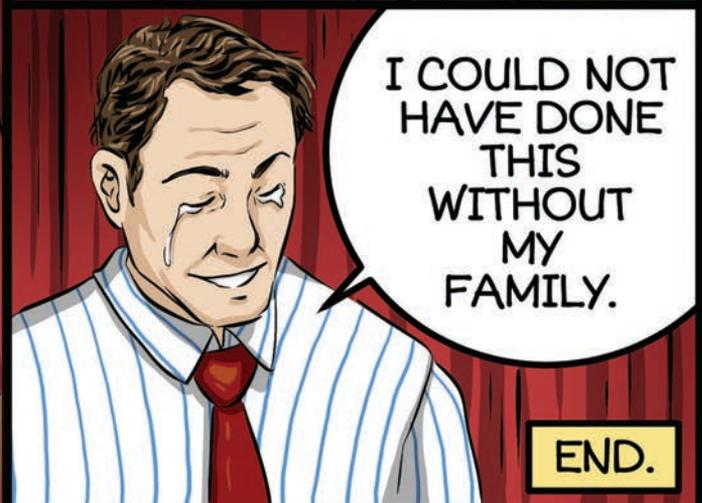


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Children are our most precious resource. When we help our community members to be good parents, we are investing in our future, because our children will be tomorrow's leaders.



WHAT IS ABUSE?

Abuse can be physical, emotional, or sexual. Physical abuse means any form of violence such as hitting, punching, pulling hair, and kicking. Abuse can occur in both dating relationships and friendships.

Emotional abuse (stuff like teasing, bullying, and humiliating others) can be difficult to recognize because it doesn't leave any visible scars. Threats, intimidation, put downs, and betrayal are all harmful forms of emotional abuse that can really hurt — not just during the time it's happening, but long after too.

Sexual abuse can happen to anyone, guy or girl. It's never right to be forced into any type of sexual experience that you don't want. The first step in getting out of an abusive relationship is to realize that you have the right to be treated with respect and not be physically or emotionally harmed by another person.

Signs of Abusive Relationships

Important warning signs that you may be involved in an abusive relationship include when someone:

Harms you physically in any way, including slapping, pushing, grabbing, shaking, smacking, kicking, and punching

Tries to control different aspects of your life, such as how you dress, who you hang out with, and what you say

Frequently humiliates you or makes you



feel unworthy (for example, if a partner puts you down but tells you that he or she loves you)

Threatens to harm you, or self-harm, if you leave the relationship

Twists the truth to make you feel you are to blame for your partner's actions

Demands to know where you are at all times

Constantly becomes jealous or angry when you want to spend time with your friends

Unwanted sexual advances that make you uncomfortable are also red flags that the relationship needs to focus more on respect. When someone says stuff like "If you loved me, you would ..." that's also a

warning of possible abuse, and is a sign that your partner is trying to manipulate you. A statement like this is controlling and is used by people who are only concerned about getting what they want — not caring about what you want. Trust your intuition. If something doesn't feel right, it probably isn't.

WHERE TO GET HELP?

Ending abuse and violence in teen relationships is a community effort with plenty of people ready to help. Your local phone book or the internet will list crisis centers, teen help lines, and abuse hotlines. These organizations have professionally trained staff to listen, understand, and help. In addition, religious leaders, school nurses, teachers, school counselors, doctors, and other health professionals can be sources of support and information.



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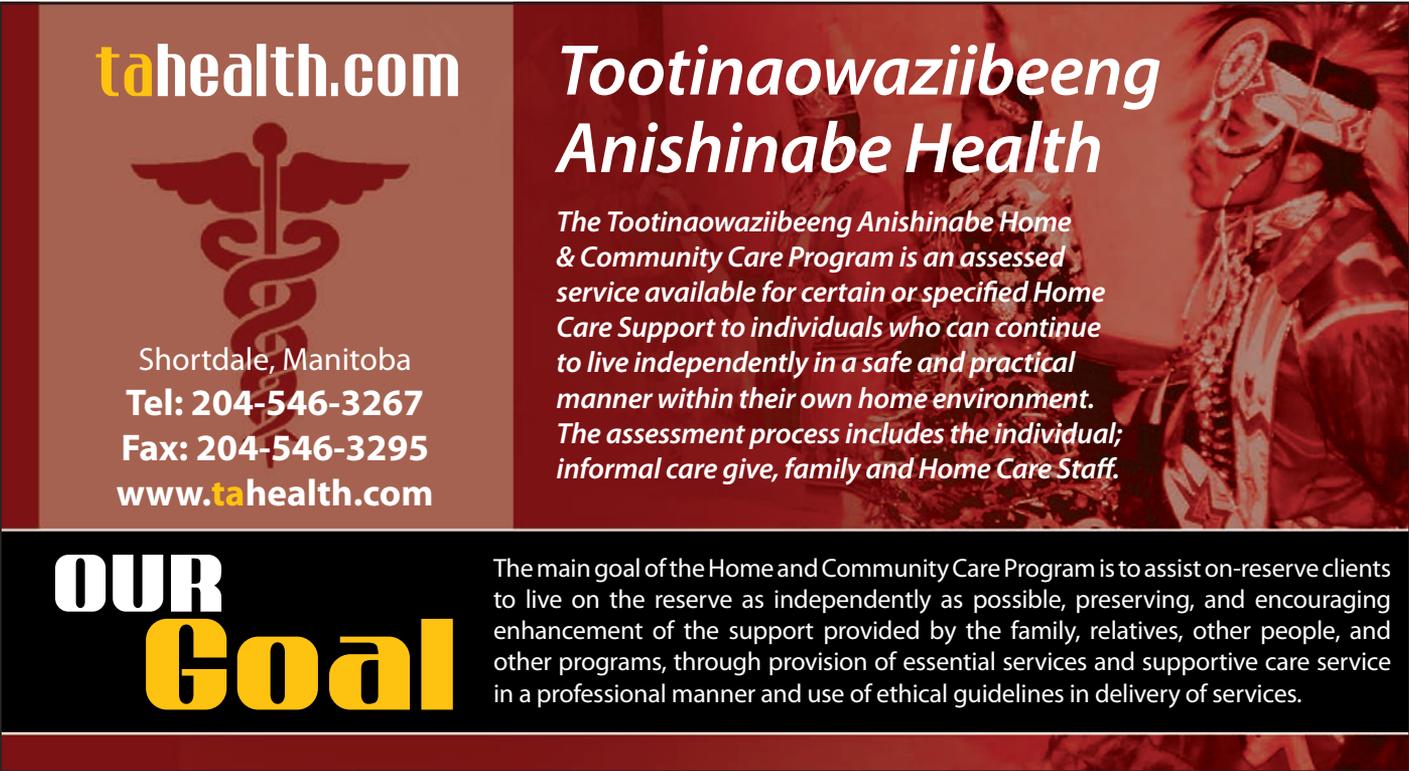
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CHILD ABUSE FACTS: WHAT CAN I DO?



Experiencing child abuse is hard.

You might stress from one day to the next, never knowing what to expect. You might also struggle with feelings of guilt, shame, anger, fear, and confusion. You might feel trapped or like there's nowhere to turn and no one you can trust. Still, if there's one thing that is important for you to understand right now, it's that you don't have to deal with this abuse alone.

How It Feels & Facts About Child Abuse

If things have been rough at home for a long time, you may have become used to it. The abuse might feel almost normal—you accept it as just

another part of your day. This can be a way of coping. If you accept the abuse as normal, it feels less upsetting. But deep down, you know that what's happening isn't right.

Here are some other feelings that are common for people living with family abuse:

- Betrayal
- Guilt
- Hopelessness
- Rejection
- Fear
- Worthlessness
- Shame
- Confusion
- Helplessness
- Anger
- Sadness

Dealing with Child Abuse

Not getting the love or care you deserve can change the way you think. Some people try to cope by cutting themselves or by using drugs and alcohol. Not only do these behaviours not stop the abuse, but they also don't help you deal with it. The thing with self-destructive coping is that, in the long-run, it just makes you feel worse. It makes you feel like you deserve to feel bad. And just in case no one has told you this: You do not deserve to feel bad.

It's not your fault

It seems like an obvious or simple



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statement, but it's really important that you understand this: IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT. Write that down and put it someplace where you'll see it every day. You cannot blame yourself for what's going on at home. You have done nothing to make any of this happen. Even if the abuse is a "punishment" for something you've done "wrong," you do not deserve it. Nothing that you can do is punishable by abuse. Talk to Someone

You can't control what happens in your family, but you can choose how to respond to it. Now here's the hard part: The best way to take control is to talk to someone about it. That probably seems impossible, right? That's the reason why many teens take years to tell someone about what's happening at home. Some never do.

Why should I tell?

The reason it's important to tell someone is that this isn't the kind of thing that you can take on by yourself. You need help to make it better.

Who do I tell?

There are a few different people you can talk to about what's going on at home. Is there an adult you trust who doesn't live at home with you? It could be a teacher, friend's parent, guidance counsellor, coach, relative, or someone else you trust. You can also call Kids Help Phone to talk to a counsellor anonymously.

What to expect

The person you tell should take you seriously and want to help you right away. If the person you talk to doesn't want to get involved, you need to tell someone else. Don't wait for things to get better on their own.

Not ready yet?

Teens who live with abuse often feel conflicted, and confused. They know that things aren't right, but just don't feel ready to tell someone what's happening. Sometimes, teens don't want to talk about abuse because

they feel guilty, but other times, they might be worried about practical things, like being separated from their siblings, or – in certain cases – being deported.

It's normal to want to think about what might happen before you ask for help. It's also pretty common to feel like you're betraying your parents by asking for help, even though you're not. It takes a lot of courage to talk about child abuse, so take the time you need.

Until you are ready to talk, here are some things you can do to stay safe and prepare yourself for that next step:

- Create a safety plan
- Get involved with hobbies or social activities
- Identify and build your social support network
- Spend time with people you know you're safe with.



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IDENTIFYING TRAUMA AND THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAUMA INFORMED-CARE

Trauma can be divided into the Three E's: event, experience, and effects. Trauma results from an event, a series of events, or set of circumstances that threatens to or causes someone to experience severe physical or emotional harm. These experiences may result in various negative effects on that person's everyday experience. Trauma can occur based on many different circumstances. Some of these

family environment. While some children may not show any symptoms, short-term distress is almost universal after a child experiences a traumatic event. Here are some common reactions many children have after a traumatic event occurs:

- Dissociation (extreme avoidance of thoughts, feelings, memories about the trauma)
- Sexual acting-out behaviours

Over time, most children return to their normal lives and routines, overcoming their symptoms after several weeks or months. Some children, however, may instead develop persistent traumatic stress symptoms that may require psychological treatment. Factors that influence this include the nature of the traumatic event, prior trauma exposure, ongoing life stressors, and the presence of positive relationships in the child's life, among others.

Children are at risk of developing more serious symptoms if they experience overlapping or cumulative traumatic events (e.g., being a victim of both physical and sexual abuse). As these events accumulate, trauma compounds and the seriousness of negative effects begin to increase.

PTSD vs. child traumatic stress

It's important to remember that a child experiencing traumatic stress isn't necessarily experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). With PTSD, children continue to experience the following symptoms after a month or more:

Common child reactions:

- Development of new fears
- Hyper-reactivity to perceived threats
- Loss of interest in regular activities (play, hobbies, etc.)
- Regressive behaviours (toileting accidents after being potty trained, sucking of the thumb, reclaiming a stuffed animal as an older child)
- Sleep problems and nightmares
- Sadness, low self-esteem
- Wary of physical contact with adults
- Separation anxiety when apart from primary caregivers
- Behavioural extremes (acting out or withdrawal)
- Flashbacks of the trauma
- Somatic symptoms (e.g., headaches, stomach-aches)
- Social struggles (e.g., fighting with peers)

The Three E's of Trauma:



include physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, witnessing family violence, bullying, and the loss of a loved one or friend.

Each child will respond to trauma differently depending on various life factors like age, previous exposure to trauma, and

- Reliving the experience through flashbacks or nightmares
- Avoidance of event reminders (e.g., avoiding the location where the trauma occurred)
- Negative emotions (alienation, anger, hopelessness)
- Increased irritability
- Difficulty sleeping

Not every child experiencing traumatic stress has all the symptoms of PTSD, but this doesn't mean that they haven't been affected by their experience.

The importance of trauma-informed care

It is important to note the difference between trauma-informed care and trauma-specific care.

Trauma-informed care acknowledges the experiences of the child, focuses on ensuring the safety of the child and emphasizes their strength and resiliency. Trauma-specific care includes evidence-based therapy and is only to be conducted by registered mental health professionals.

If persistent trauma symptoms are not addressed, they may stay with the child as they grow up. This may contribute to creating lifelong struggles with depression, anxiety, pain, anger issues, and substance misuse. A caregiver's personal trauma history may also affect their ability to cope with their child's traumatic experience, making supports for the entire family crucial.

Dr. Marcia Gordeyko, a registered psychologist with Alberta Health Services who works in partnership with the Zebra

Child Protection Centre, believes that being trauma-informed is something everyone can be a part of.

"Having a basic understanding of how a traumatic experience may impact children and youth is key to providing warm, empathetic support," she says. "Research shows that for those who have experienced trauma, positive and supportive interactions can help increase resilience and prevent negative future outcomes."

Trauma-informed care is a crucial part of ensuring that a child feels supported and understood.

Trauma-informed care also recognizes that when a child is affected by a traumatic event, their caregivers and support system are affected as well. Being able to recognize one another's experiences and reactions to the event, as well as help each other cope and work through feelings of sadness, anger, or guilt, is incredibly important to the healing process.

"This is a very hopeful message to communicate to families who have experienced trauma – that their traumatic experiences don't have to define them," says Dr. Gordeyko. "Being trauma-informed can help us change the message from 'what is wrong with you?' to 'what happened to you?'"

How to take a trauma-informed approach:

All behaviour has meaning. A child may act differently as a result of the traumatic situation that has occurred. Their behaviour is not who they are, rather, it is how they might be expressing themselves. When addressing this behaviour, try using the phrase "what happened to

you?" as opposed to "what's wrong with you?"

All feelings and experiences are real for that child/youth/parent. We are not here to determine truth; instead, we are here to listen and validate their experience.

Be careful with using the phrase "I understand". Although you may believe you understand how that child may be feeling, every situation is unique and different. Instead of saying you understand, try using phrases like: "I'm hearing you, I'm listening, or, that sounds hard."

Use caution around labelling. Avoid saying: "traumatized child", instead, use: "a child who has experienced trauma."

Resources

If you would like to learn more about childhood trauma, please visit the following resources:

- The National Child Traumatic Stress Network: <https://www.nctsn.org/audiences/families-and-caregivers>
- Alberta Family Wellness Initiative for information on child trauma and brain development: http://www.albertafamilywellness.org/resources/results?-search-term=&audience_filter=families-individuals
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) resources on child trauma: <https://www.samhsa.gov/child-trauma/learning-materials-resources#caregivers>



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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: HOW TO HELP A FRIEND

You might have sensed for a while that things weren't right in your friend's family.

You might also have witnessed something while you were at your friend's house – yelling or hitting – that was a serious cause for concern. Or perhaps your friend came right out and told you about abuse in their home.

It doesn't matter how you found out about what's happening – what matters now is how you deal with it.

HOW TO HELP A FRIEND?

Some secrets are TOO BIG to keep

Even if your friend has sworn you to secrecy, you should

always get an adult involved if someone you know is being abused or neglected. That's because you really can't stop what's happening to your friend by yourself.

Can you think of someone you trust who might be able to help? Here are some ideas:

One of your parents



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- Professional Management and Staff
- Public Awareness and Education
- Training in Human Resource Development
- Program Evaluation
- Family Support Services
- Preventative Services
- Child and Youth Services



Teacher
Guidance counsellor
Sports coach
Spiritual or faith leaders, if appropriate

WHAT CAN I DO?

Being there for your friend is one of the best things you can do during this tough time. It's also important that you:

LISTEN

Let your friend talk about what's going on and be a good listener. Try not to tell them what they need to do, other than to get help.

ENCOURAGE

Your friend needs support, so encourage them to get it by talking to a guidance counsellor or someone else who can help. Offer to go with your friend if they feel worried about telling an adult about the abuse. You can also be there with your friend when they make a call to child protective services or to the police.

REACH OUT

If your friend hasn't told you anything, but you think something is wrong at home, ask them about it. You could ask about a specific incident, such as, "Your dad really grabbed you hard back there. Are you okay?" You could also just ask them how things are going at home. You might say, "I've noticed that you seem down and I'm worried about you. Is there anything you want to talk about?"

BELIEVE

Don't tell your friend that things aren't as bad as they seem. Listen to what they have to say and believe that they are telling the truth.

CHECK IN

Call your friend to see how they're doing. Understand that

they might not always want to talk about it. Do things that will take your friend's mind off of their problems for a while. Little activities like going out for coffee, taking a walk, or seeing a movie can help a lot.

Remember that your friend's family is just one part of who they are. They still need to have some fun.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Supporting a friend is hard work, so be sure to look after yourself.

How are you feeling about everything? Are you coping? You might want to talk to someone, such as a guidance counsellor or a parent.

Remember that it's all right to take a break if the stress is getting to you. And remember that you are a good friend to care so much.

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4 REASONS PEOPLE STAY IN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Keirstin adores her boyfriend, Mike. She says that he is the love of her life and an amazing father to her two children. The only hiccup in their relationship is that Rick is abusive. He has abused her repeatedly, put her in the hospital, given her bruises, black eyes, and busted up lips.

Despite all this, Keirstin refuses to press charges, and she doesn't plan to leave him. She says she isn't going to leave him because "If there is a chance we can work through this, I want to be there through it."

That doesn't seem like a good reason to put up with abuse and multiple hospital visits. So why does she stay?

People who have never been in an abusive relationship often can't understand why someone would stay. They don't understand the reasoning as to why someone would put up

with being treated that way. Leaving can be more difficult or complicated than one would assume. So, if you see or know someone in an abusive relationship, first try to understand why they can't or won't leave the relationship.

1. EMOTIONS

- » **Fear:** They might be afraid to leave because of what will happen. If their partner has threatened them or their loved ones, they might not feel like it is safe to go.
- » **Normalcy:** They may not recognize that their relationship is unhealthy. If they grew up in a home where abuse was common, a healthy relationship might never have been modeled to them, and they may not know what one looks like.
- » **Exposure:** If they are LGBTQ+ and

have not yet come out, their partner may threaten to expose them. This can be very damaging emotionally if they are not yet ready to share this part of themselves with the world.

- » **Shame:** It may be hard for them to admit that they have been abused. They may feel shame, or guilt, for becoming involved with an abusive partner. They may worry that they will be judged.
- » **Self-Disrespect:** They may feel that they deserve to be with this person. If their partner is constantly belittling them, their words may take root.
- » **Hope:** They may stay in the relationship because they think their partner will change. They may love their partner and want the abuse to end, but not the relationship entirely.

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2. PRESSURE

- » **Social Pressures:** If the abuser has good social standing, or is popular it can be hard for a person to admit abuse. They may fear that people won't believe them, or that people will take their abuser's side.
- » **Cultural or Religious Pressures:** The victim's culture or religion may pressure them into staying in the relationship so as not to bring shame on them or their family.
- » **Parental Pressures:** They may feel pressure to raise their children in a two-parent home. Or the abuser may threaten to take the children if the victim leaves.

3. DISTRUST

- » **Distrust of Adults:** Adults often believe that teenagers aren't capable of fully experiencing love. So, when a teen is in a relationship, and something goes wrong, they may feel like they have no one to

turn to. They might feel like no one will take them seriously.

- » **Distrust of Police:** Teenagers often feel that the police won't help them, and so they don't report abuse.
- » **Language or Immigration:** If they are undocumented, a victim is very unlikely to report abuse for fear of their situation being found out. As well, if they are not fluent in English, they may not be able to communicate their situation effectively.

4. RELIANCE

- » **Financial:** If they are dependent on their abusive partner for money, it can seem impossible to leave the relationship.
- » **Housing:** They may feel that they have nowhere to go if they end the relationship. This is especially true if they live with their abuser.
- » **Disability:** If they depend on their

abuser because of a disability, they may feel that their well-being is tied to the relationship. This can have a heavy influence on whether they stay in the relationship or not.

From the story before, Keirstin chooses to stay with her abusive boyfriend. She says "I don't know how many times I need to get hit for me to finally leave. I feel like I have one foot out of the door. I've left him before, and my life was a mess." She stays with him because she doesn't want the relationship to end, just the abuse.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

When someone you know, for whatever reason, chooses to stay in an unhealthy relationship; it can be very hard to watch. But it is crucial that you don't judge them! Listen to them, ask them how you can help. Understand that it can be extremely difficult to leave an abusive relationship.

Let them know there are options available for them.



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GASLIGHTING: IT'S ALL IN YOUR HEAD, OR IS IT?



Do you find yourself feeling uncharacteristically irrational, depressed, and emotional? Are you having a difficult time making simple decisions, and often find yourself feeling confused and unhappy? Have you ever found your instincts and feelings to be previously trustworthy and reliable, but you now question your own judgments to the point of feeling like you are losing your mind?

If this description sounds much too familiar to you, there's a chance you may be a victim of gaslighting.

GAS-WHAT?

A term coined in the 1938 play *Gaslight*, "Gaslighting" stems from a husband's attempt to intentionally manipulate his wife into believing she is going crazy. By repeatedly turning the gas lights down in their apartment and denying any change in atmosphere when she asks, over time the husband succeeds in convincing his wife that she is imagining everything, and eventually she begins to doubt her own sanity.

Most of us no longer live with gas lights and would be quite certain that something fishy is going on if our partner tried to do the same thing to us today using our iPhone or computer, or the TV. However,

the phenomenon remains in the form of persistent emotional abuse where one person uses the same technique to wear down the other person's ability to interpret and trust his or her own perceptions and beliefs. Over time, this gives the abuser a form of manipulative power or control.

WHAT DOES THE ABUSER SEEK TO GAIN FROM TREATING THEIR PARTNER(S) IN THIS WAY?

Through consistent denial, contradictions and lying from the abuser, the victim is eventually driven to a disorienting place of feeling that they cannot trust their own memories, perceptions, and sensitivities to what is happening around them. For an abuser looking to gain control over another, this lack of self-confidence and manners of instability can create the perfect victim for an abuser to gain control over.

Victims of gaslighting often become dependent on the abuser to define stable reality, to confirm to them "what's really going on". As their ability to rely on their own interpretations, self-trust and confidence breaks down, the abuser can succeed in manipulating the victim into relying on them for reassurance and support.

The victim's fragile and dependent emotional state may make it difficult for them to recognize that abuse is happening, as well as making it difficult for them to leave the relationship and the reassurance they come to depend on.

Another unfortunate element characteristic of gaslighting is that the abuser will sometimes influence the victim into isolating themselves from friends and family. In this way, the abuser can disconnect the victim from other external and objective support systems, those of which may be more likely to suggest to the victim that abuse is taking place.

WHO IS SUSCEPTIBLE TO GASLIGHTING?

Gaslighting is not limited only to romantic relationships. It can take place in friendships, parent-child relationships, professional connections, and as a form of school bullying. Situations may appear relatively normal, and in some cases, the person being gaslighted may not be directly aware of what is happening to them.

If you think you, a friend or family member may be a victim of gaslighting, the list below may help you to determine whether you are being mistreated.

Common signs of gaslighting include:

Stubborn feelings of confusion and the sense that you are “going crazy”.

Constantly second guessing yourself, your opinions, and your beliefs.

Persistent anxiety over whether you are “too sensitive”, or are always “being too emotional”.

You are finding yourself relying more on the opinions and validation of others, and less on your own instincts and gut feelings.

An underlying sense that you were once much happier, confident, and at ease.

You find yourself apologizing all the time, even when you have done nothing wrong.

You make excuses to family and friends for your partner’s abhorrent or erratic behavior.

Your arguments seem to go in circles.

Feelings of hopelessness or depression in the relationship.

I THINK I MAY BE A VICTIM. WHAT NOW?

The first steps in remedying a situation where gaslighting may be taking place is to identify the signs and for the person being victimized to learn to trust themselves again. Relying on one another and the ability to compromise are contributors in the foundation of healthy relationships, but dependence and co-dependency can only go so far before becoming harmful.

ASK FOR HELP.

If you feel you are in over your head or fear what the abusive person might do if you try to confront them, ask for help from a trusted friend, relative, or therapist. If you truly think you are in danger, or the abuser has made other threats towards you, call 911 or contact the closest family

or domestic violence emergency center.

REMEMBER, IT’S NOT YOUR FAULT.

Many people in abusive relationships feel ashamed about their situation and may come to believe what their abusers are telling them. They can become convinced that they somehow deserve or are responsible for what is happening to them, and it is important to remind yourself that what is happening to you isn’t your fault.

Everyone deserves a healthy relationship where they are treated with respect and dignity, and you owe it to yourself to protect your self-worth and independence. If you feel you are being bullied into feeling powerless and insecure, it may be time to reevaluate the condition of your relationships.

**ARTICLE PROVIDED BY
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12 OBVIOUS SIGNS OF AN EMOTIONALLY ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP



Emotional abusers have the same end goal as a physical abuser – they desire to control the other person. The difference between physical and emotional abuse is the use of physical violence (or the lack thereof). Not every negative experience with your partner can be attributed to emotional abuse. It is not emotional abuse if you break up with a partner. It is not emotional abuse if you argue with a partner. It's not emotional abuse if your partner reacts to something you've done that hurt them.

SO WHEN IS IT EMOTIONAL ABUSE?

Emotional abuse is an attempt to control. Often, the perpetrator doesn't even know they are abusive. The actions may come from a place of insecurity. They might not be confident of their partner's feelings for them, and use that as an excuse to

become jealous, check in constantly, or accuse their partner of cheating. These behaviours are forms of emotional abuse.

See 12 more obvious signs of emotional abuse below:

1: THEY HUMILIATE YOU

This is the number one sign of emotional abuse. If your partner humiliates you in front of your friends or family, that is a serious red flag. The only way to combat this negative behaviour is to call your partner on it and stick up for yourself.

2: YOUR OPINION DOESN'T MATTER

When your partner chooses to ignore your opinion or doesn't want to hear it, they are emotionally abusing you. In a healthy relationship, partners work together to take care of each other. If one partner decides the other

one doesn't matter, the relationship will die.

3: CONSTANT SARCASM

If your partner is constantly using sarcasm they are likely using it as a way to get away with saying hurtful things. Sarcasm is a selfish form of humour, and likely isn't all said in jest. Tread carefully, likely your partner doesn't have great empathy for other people – especially you.

4: CRITICISM OF YOUR FEELINGS

They don't ever take your side on your emotional issues, instead, they call you a 'cry baby' or 'too sensitive'. They won't try to understand your side of the issue.

5: THEY ARE CONTROLLING

Partners who are emotionally abusive tend to try and micromanage. You

may feel like they are watching you and judging all your actions – like a supervisor.

6: THEY CONSTANTLY CORRECT YOU

Maybe they don't let you tell a story because you 'can't get it right' or 'they tell it better'. Maybe they try to correct your behaviour – like in social settings. Maybe they tell you not to talk so loud, or not to talk so much. Regardless of how they want you to behave, let them know that you are not a child and that you deserve freedom – just like they do.

7: THEY DON'T WANT YOU TO GO OUT

If you say you want to go out with friends, and they freak out – that's a sign of emotional abuse. A person who wants control of your life will often freak out if you try to make decisions they don't 'approve' of.

8: THEY CONTROL THE PURSE STRINGS

If you're living with an emotionally abusive partner, they will try to tell you where and how you can spend money – even if it's YOUR money.

9: THEY COMMUNICATE THROUGH HAND GESTURES

No, not cute little 'I love you' hand signs. An emotionally abusive person will try to shoo you out of the room by waving their hands, etc. This is flippant and disrespectful communication, and you deserve someone who will communicate with you by using words.

10: THEY POINT OUT ALL YOUR MISTAKES

It doesn't matter if you spelt something wrong in a text, or maybe you said a word incorrectly. They always have to be right.

11: THEY BLAME YOU FOR EVERYTHING

They will accuse you of things you never did – things that might never have even happened. They do this to try and guilt you so that you will be easier to control.

12: THEY ARE INTOLERANT

You will never be good enough for them. An emotionally abusive person will have no grace for your shortcomings – yet have infinite grace for themselves.

If you are experiencing these behaviours, you are experiencing someone who does not have respect for you. Some partners are unaware how they are affecting you, and they may be open to discussion. Don't let them get away with this behaviour – stick up for yourself!



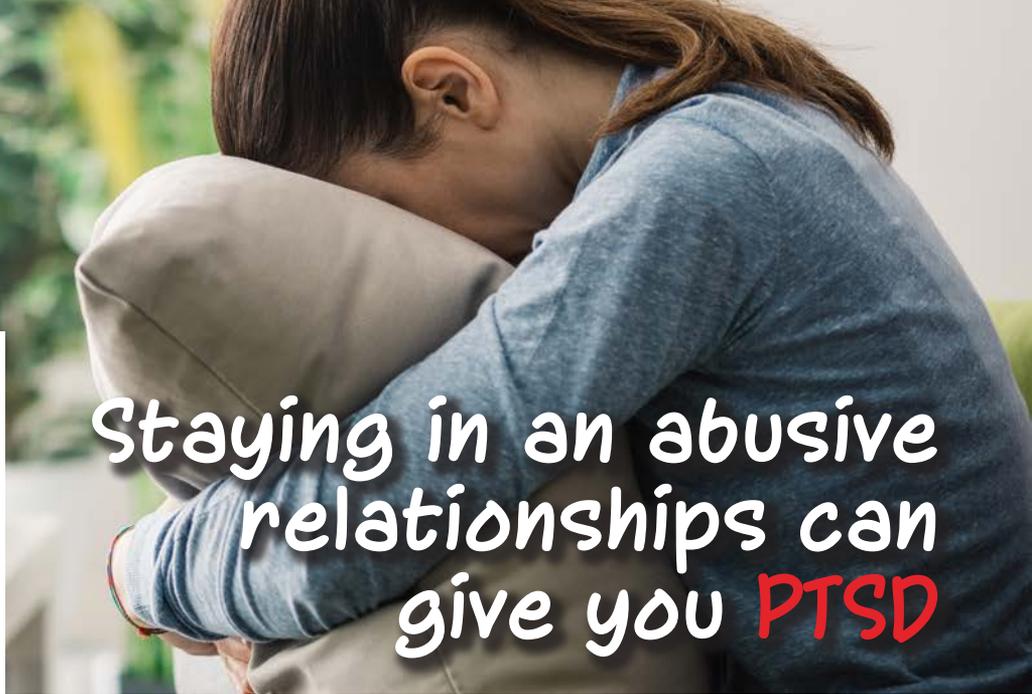
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Staying in an abusive relationship can give you PTSD

Too often when a woman decides to stick it out with their abusive partner people are eager to make statements like, 'You're being stupid' and 'Why aren't you thinking straight?'.

While it's hard to say goodbye to someone you love, chances are that the toxic relationship is draining you of your happiness and could make you a victim of PTSD.

Look out for these signs that your relationship isn't good for your health:

- 1** The start of the relationship is normal and doesn't start off on an abusive note.
- 2** Slowly though red flags start to emerge like a short temper, possessiveness, anger and so on. You'll more than likely make excuses for them, or haven't noticed them.
- 3** You do your best to keep your relationship from failing. You ignore the fact that things aren't fine, you keep the ugly side hidden and you keep your relationship from falling apart.
- 4** You grasp at straws for why you should stay. You tell yourself

you've put so much into this relationship, it's okay if he gets upset once in a while. You stay because you don't want your children to grow up without their father. You can't leave them because of financial issues. The reasons why you need to stay will go on, but the thing you should really do is leave.

5 Living with someone who is abusive towards you can muddle your mind and body. You'll forget what it was like to be happy, you'll have lost your self-esteem and feel crippled. Maybe your partner has convinced you to stay because you won't be anything without them and say you'll be worse off if you leave.

6 One day you'll look in the mirror and see that you aren't the person you once were. You'll realize

that you've put all of your energy towards saving a relationship that isn't worth saving.

7 Then you'll realize PTSD is slowly creeping into your life. It's the psychological abuse that will hurt your mind. Physical wounds will heal but the emotional damage will stay with you forever. Soon you'll become depressed and stressed. PTSD will make you feel like all of the life has been drained out of you.

The most important thing to do is seek help as soon as you open your eyes and realize that you're not okay. Seek therapy and most importantly tell yourself that you can leave. You don't have to prove anything to anyone, it's time to move on and be happy once again.



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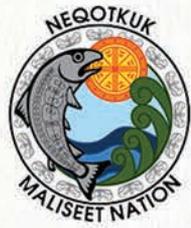


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OVERCOMING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

After you talk to someone about what's been going on, things at home might not get better right away. You'll need some time to adjust, depending on what is decided about what's best for you and who is involved in the process.

Try to take things one day at a time, and remember why you spoke out in the first place. Child neglect is a serious problem and the most frequent type of abuse.

Children who suffer from neglect

most often also have attachment difficulties, cognitive deficits, emotional/ behavioural problems, and physical consequences as a result of neglect.

Getting by

It's always important to take care of yourself, especially when there's a lot going on. Here are some ideas for caring for yourself:

Be your own cheerleader

Saying nice, positive things to

yourself can help you feel more reassured and safe. It might help you to write these things down and keep them close to you so that you can read them when you feel discouraged.

Here are some examples:

"I'm not a bad person because I've been hurt."

"I haven't been hurt because I am bad."

"It's not my fault."



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“I don’t deserve to be abused.”

“Things will get better eventually.”

Make a list

Write down the positive things that came out of having asked for help. This list can help you remember why you spoke out and give you hope for a happier future.

Here are some examples:

I was living with abuse, and now I’m not

Being away from the abuse will help me build relationships that are free of abuse

Being away from the abuse will help me work on my self-esteem

Speaking out means that my life has more hope

Keep busy

Making sure that you have lots to do will help keep your mind off what’s happening.

Here are some ideas:

Go to school. Avoid the temptation to skip class or drop out. Being in school will help you focus on the things you have to look forward to in life, like your favourite subjects or extra-curricular activities.

Get active. Whether you join a team or take up running, staying active will help you feel better.

Keep a journal. Keep track of what you feel from day to day, whether you’re angry, sad, confused, or happy. Try to not judge yourself for these feelings. Your emotions are yours and you don’t have to share them with anyone.

Hang out with friends. Call a friend, make plans, and go out with others. Hanging out with friends can help you feel happier and more supported, and spending time with people who care about you is really good for your self-esteem.

Build on your strengths

Everyone is good at something. What are you really good at? It could be art, singing, playing sports, writing, or reading. Take

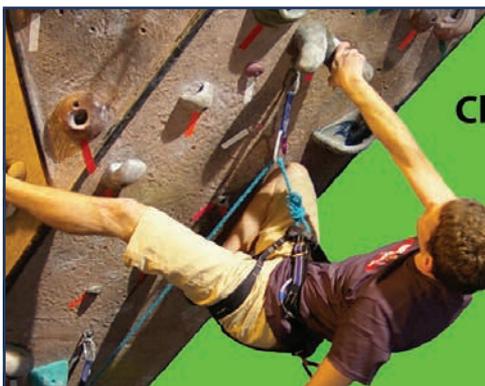
something that you love doing and try to be more disciplined about doing it more often. This will help you deal with your feelings about the abuse and build your self-esteem.

Talk to someone

If you’re struggling with your feelings right now, or if you just need to talk, you can always call Kids Help Phone to speak to a professional counsellor. You can also talk to someone else you trust, such as a relative, friend, coach, teacher, guidance counsellor, or anyone else you feel comfortable with.

Children who are victims of neglect have a more difficult time forming and maintaining relationships – such as romantic partnership or friendship – later in life due to the lack of attachment they had in their earlier stages of life.

Understanding the causes of abuse is crucial to addressing the problem of child abuse. You don’t have to try to handle this on your own, and you don’t have to feel lonely.



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AN EFFORT TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & PROMOTE A NEW VISION OF MASCULINITY FOR ALL



SOS Safety Magazine had a chance to speak with Véronique Church-Duplessis, Bilingual Project Manager at White Ribbon, about gender-based violence in Canada, how families should address toxic masculinity in the home, and what their organization is doing to end violence against women and raise awareness about gender equity and healthy relationships.

WHAT EXACTLY IS WHITE RIBBON AND WHAT WOULD YOU DEFINE YOUR MISSION AS?

White Ribbon engages men and boys in the prevention of gender-based violence by promoting equity and transforming social norms. We challenge and support men and boys to realize their potential to be part of the solution in ending all forms of gender-based violence.

HOW DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION AIM TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT GENDER EQUITY AND HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS?

White Ribbon has a number of campaigns and initiatives that promote healthy relationships and violence prevention, including, among

others, It Starts with You. It Stays with Him, Draw-the-Line, and Neighbours, Friends, and Families.

Our It Starts with You, It Stays with Him initiative encourages men to be good role models for the boys in their lives and to talk about gender equality, healthy relationships and consent, and violence prevention with them.

As one of the Draw-the-Line campaign partners, White Ribbon has developed tools to bring conversations about healthy relationships and sexual violence prevention in schools.

Through Neighbours, Friends, and Families, and in partnership with OCASI and the Arab Community Center of Toronto, White Ribbon has trained male allies to facilitate awareness-raising events in their community.

DOES WHITE RIBBON FOCUS EFFORTS ON CONNECTING DIRECTLY WITH YOUTH? IF SO, WHAT HAVE YOU FOUND TO BE SUCCESSFUL METHODS OF CONNECTING WITH THEM?

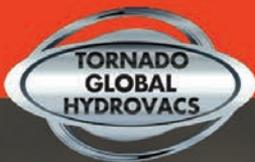
A lot of our initiatives focus on engaging youth. We deliver dozens of workshops on male

allyship in schools and to other youth groups every year.

Storytelling is one of the most effective ways of connecting with youth. Our facilitators share personal stories to highlight how gender inequality and gender-based violence have affected them and their loved ones to help break the culture of silence that often surrounds the topic and promote empathy. Our facilitators look at how harmful male stereotypes hurt everyone, including men. We approach boys and young men as potential allies and emphasize that they have the ability and responsibility of making a difference.

Our goals are to create an emotional connection and raise empathy for survivors, to break the culture of silence to show that inequality and violence are real issues that affect all communities, and to give practical tips to men and boys so that they can take action and become allies.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO FAMILIES ON HOW THEY SHOULD COMMUNICATE, DISCUSS, OR APPROACH THESE TOPICS?



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First, it is critical to talk about these issues even if they can sometimes be uncomfortable. If we don't talk about it, we're allowing for the problem to continue.

It's important to initiate these conversations when children are young and build them up gradually starting with discussions of bodily autonomy, boundaries, and respect for others' boundaries to later discuss consent and healthy relationships. It's also important to help young people, especially boys, develop their emotional intelligence, that is their ability to experience, communicate and manage a wide variety of emotions in a healthy and constructive way.

Fostering empathy and compassion is also critical to help build healthy relationships, prevent gender-based violence, and support survivors.

WHAT'S THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE RIGHT NOW WHEN IT COMES TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE?

One of the biggest challenges remains the myths that surround gender-based violence. Misconceptions surrounding false accusations is probably the most common and harmful one.

There's this idea that innocent men will have their lives ruined by false accusations. This is a myth and an extremely harmful one since it leads people who have experienced sexual violence to the conclusion that they won't be believed if they come forward to report their experience of assault. False accusations are extremely rare, around 2-4% of cases reported to the police (it is worth remembering that fewer than 1 in 10 sexual assaults are reported to the police in the first place).

People don't lie about being sexually assaulted more than they do about other crimes such as theft and false accusations extremely rarely make it all the way to court. The main consequence of this myth is that it keeps victims of sexual assault from reporting their experience

since they fear that they won't be believed.

WHAT KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS STAND OUT FOR YOU AND THE ORGANIZATION WHEN IT COMES TO YOUR EFFORTS THUS FAR?

Thousands of men have signed our pledge to "never commit, condone, or remain silent about violence against women and girls" (whiteribbon.ca/pledge).

Every day, more and more men and boys embrace their responsibility as allies to end gender-based violence. The fact that violence against women and girls is no longer seen exclusively as a "women's issue" but rather as a collective issue that should matter to everyone is a big step forward.

WHAT'S THE ONE THING YOU THINK COULD BE DONE THAT WOULD CHANGE THE WORLD THE MOST?

It's difficult to pinpoint one specific action.

For fathers and parents, I would say that they can have the biggest impact by talking about gender equality, consent, and healthy relationships with their children regularly.

For young people, I would say it's about fostering empathy and breaking the culture of silence that surrounds violence against women and girls.

FOR ANYONE CURRENTLY SUFFERING, WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE IMPORTANT MESSAGE FOR THEM TO HEAR?

You are not alone and we believe you. It's never too late to reach out for help.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WANT TO RAISE AWARENESS AND BE PART OF THE CHANGE?

Educate yourself on the issue and start the conversation with your peers. You can down-

load our free Draw-the-Line resources for your school at dtl.whiteribbon.ca/scenarios to help you start these conversations. Organize a White Ribbon workshop for your school: whiteribbon.ca/workshops

If you help break the culture of silence, you will make a difference. You will help survivors know that they are not alone and that there are people who can help them. You will let everyone know that gender-based violence is never acceptable and that we all have a responsibility to be part of the solution. If you want to become a male ally, you can start here: whiteribbon.ca/how-to-be-an-ally.

WHAT DO YOU WANT WHITE RIBBON TO MEAN TO OTHER PEOPLE?

White Ribbon is committed to encouraging men and boys to take responsibility and become part of the solution to end gender-based violence. We're committed to providing men and boys with the knowledge and the tools they need to play a positive role to prevent violence and promote healthier, non-violent ways of being a man in our society.

DO YOU HAVE ANY PROJECTS/NEWS/ DEVELOPMENTS PEOPLE SHOULD BE LOOKING OUT FOR? AND WHERE CAN PEOPLE CONNECT WITH YOUR ORGANIZATION IF THEY WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Our Draw-the-Line resources on sexual violence prevention for teachers, students, and parents are available to download for free at dtl.whiteribbon.ca

We're always available for workshops on violence prevention and male allyship. You can find more details and book your workshop at whiteribbon.ca workshops

Read our blog at whiteribbon.ca/blog or subscribe to our newsletter whiteribbon.ca about to stay abreast of new developments and events.



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Reporting 101: Six Tips To Protect Children in Your Community

The age-old saying is true: It takes a community to raise a child. It also takes a community to respond to child abuse. Did you know under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, anyone who has “reasonable and probable grounds” to believe a child is being sexually exploited, physically abused, emotionally harmed or neglected has an obligation to file a report with authorities?

You too may have your suspicions – that child in your daughter’s class, your next-door neighbour or son’s teammate where something just doesn’t seem right. You may have witnessed something concerning or maybe the child has given subtle hints or clues. The best-case scenario is you’re wrong. Worst case scenario is leaving the child to suffer in silence. By speaking out against child abuse, you can lend your voice to children and youth who haven’t yet found theirs.

Not sure where to start? Here are six important things to remember when reporting child abuse:

Every child display “signs” of abuse differently – Every child is unique and responds to trauma in different ways. Although there is no diagnostic tool, a drastic and prolonged change in a child’s typical pattern of behaviour may be cause for concern.

Reports can be made anonymously – If you’re worried you may be identified as a source, a report can be made anonymously through Crime Stoppers or the Child Abuse Hotline. You can also report abuse through a local police agency, however, anonymity is not guaranteed.

Online child exploitation counts too – Adults are also obligated to report the online exploitation of children and any material that depicts abuse towards children. Reporting online exploitation can be done anonymously and at the click of a button. Cybertip is an online tool which takes online reports and distributes them to the appropriate law enforcement agencies.

Get down to the last detail – Providing as much detail as possible will help investigators do their jobs quickly and successfully. Is the child in immediate danger? How do you know the child? When did you first notice something wasn’t right? What have you seen or heard? Where is the child now?

It’s not your job to uncover the truth – Trust in the expertise of a team of law enforcement agencies, medical professionals, specialized assessors, and child advocates to confirm if abuse is happening. They will know the difference between a malicious report and a genuine report of child abuse. They will not be angry at you for a report that turns out to be

untrue. In fact, they would thank you for helping them protect children and youth in our community.

The child and their non-offending caregivers are in good hands – The Zebra Child Protection Centre and other Child Advocacy Centres throughout the country exist solely to act in the best interests of a child throughout the process of disclosure, investigation, prosecution, and healing. If your report is investigated, rest assured that the child is now safe, supported, believed and on the path towards recovery.

Child abuse is everyone’s business. Ready to make a report? Here are some numbers you’ll need to know:

Edmonton Police Service Complaint Line: **780-423-4567**

24hr Child Abuse Hotline: **1-800-387-5437**

Edmonton and Northern Alberta Crime Stoppers: **1-800-222-8477**

OR your local RCMP detachment

To report online exploitation: Cybertip

If a child is in immediate danger, please dial 911.

Written by Zebra Child Protection Centre

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ONE WORD AWAY FROM AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

Have you ever gotten mad at your partner and caught yourself saying, “You’re such a ____!” – whether it was blatant and outspoken or said under your breath?

Repeat after me: **HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS DO NOT NAME CALL.**

Yet, so many of us have gotten in the habit of name-calling our significant other. Or, we turn a blind eye when our significant other name-calls us.

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS DO NOT NAME CALL.

Take this opportunity to look in the mirror and ask yourself, “Am I verbally abusing my partner?”

Do you name-call when you get frustrated?

Do you belittle their intelligence or feelings?

Do you speak extremely negatively of your partner to your friends or family?

It’s normal to get angry at your part-

ner – two people are trying to merge their personalities, feelings, thoughts and actions into one relationship. There are going to be disagreements and arguments. However, there is a constructive way to navigate these spats, which means there is also an unconstructive way – or potentially a toxic/abusive way – to navigate them.

If you have skimmed through this and caught yourself thinking, “Wow, I could probably improve,” then congratulations! Your ability to self-reflect fairly and honestly is an attribute that many people don’t have. But it also means that we have some work to do.

Here are five tips for reconfiguring your relationship and for healthily handling your disagreements.

ANALYZE YOUR INTENT

Before you spew out words of hate, ask yourself, “Why am I drawn to saying this?”

Are you trying to hurt your partner, or are you trying to come to a mutual

and healthy agreement?

If you’re trying to hurt your partner, then you might have some more soulsearching to do. You should have so much respect and love for your significant other that you would do anything in your power to NOT hurt them.

If you’re trying to come to a mutual and healthy agreement, then you might have some maturing to do. By name-calling, you immediately lose your credibility. You’ve reduced yourself to an angry and spiteful person, and it’s difficult to follow that up with, “Let’s talk this one out”.

Use constructive words

Name-calling is a cop-out. It diminishes the potential for communication or productivity. Name-calling doesn’t directly address the problem at hand or how you feel – it merely makes YOU sound mean.

Replace “you’re such a b*tch” with constructive words. For example, take a deep breath and lay it out: “I

feel sad because you cancelled our plans”.

By changing the way you communicate, you can leave room for a healthy conversation that hopefully, will lead to a better understanding of each other and a good compromise.

BE MORE LIKE RUMI

“Before you speak, let your words pass through three gates:

At the first gate, ask yourself ‘Is it true?’

At the second gate ask, ‘Is it necessary?’

At the third gate ask, ‘Is it kind?’”

As outlined by Rumi,

I think Rumi’s Three Gates of Speech is an excellent way to rewire your brain when having a conversation with your significant other.

Before flying off the handle and talking out of spite, ask yourself: Will my comment allow for a better understanding of each other? Will my comment open the lines for compromise? Will my comment still make my

partner feel respected by me?

RE-ESTABLISH YOUR BOUNDARIES

When you begin a relationship, you have a clean line drawn that outlines what is appropriate and accepted and what is a ‘hard no.’ It is my hope for you that name-calling is a ‘hard no.’

However, once our boundary is crossed, the line moves, and it becomes easier to pass. You’re weakening the standards that you have once set for yourself.

It is more difficult to re-establish these boundaries than it was to establish them in the first place.

It is essential that you look at this objectively and actively discuss the best way to re-establish your boundaries.

THERAPY

If you have tried numerous ways to eliminate name-calling in your relationship but have been unsuccessful,

then it might be time to consider other options.

I am a huge advocate of therapy, and I believe that sometimes therapy can introduce things to you that you didn’t know about yourself.

Maybe there is a reason that you fall into this pattern. Maybe your relationship is no longer healthy or constructive for you – or maybe, just maybe, it’s brought out some of the worst traits in you.

Luckily, we have multiple avenues that allow for more self-awareness than ever before. Take advantage of them!

Despite all of this, congratulations on recognizing that you had some work to do! One of the greatest things about life is that we are all a work in progress.

So let’s work on always being better partners, coworkers, friends and people.

Written by
Celina Dawdy


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DIVORCE & SEPARATION

HOW TO SURVIVE?

Your parents are fighting all the time...

You have to turn the music up or leave the house to avoid it. Then they finally drop the bomb – they’re getting divorced. You feel relieved, right? Wrong. More likely, you’re desperately sad. You may feel as if someone close to you has died. And you’re really, really angry. No one asked your opinion. Aren’t you part of this family, too?

DIVORCE RATES ARE ON THE RISE.

Chances are, your grandparents stayed married all their lives, but these days about half of marriages in Canada will end in divorce. You probably have tons of friends whose parents are divorced. You see divorce on TV, in books, at the movies, everywhere. Divorce has become normal, commonplace. Too bad that doesn’t make it hurt any less.

If your parents are getting divorced, here are some tips to that will:

Let yourself feel what you feel: It’s okay to be very, very upset. Even if you once wished

your parents would divorce, when it actually happens, you’re shattered.

“A divorce is catastrophic to a child no matter what age they are. It is a real turning point; a crisis in their life,” says psychotherapist Mary Jo Rapini.

DON’T BLAME YOURSELF

No matter what you did, even if you pitted your parents against each other or asked them point blank to divorce, this is not about you. It’s about them, and it’s not your fault.

Reach out

Do you have friends whose parents are divorced? Talk to them about how you feel. You can also talk to an adult who is not your parent, such as a favorite aunt or uncle, teacher, guidance counselor, coach, or whoever you feel close to.

Communicate with your parents

Your parents are hurting, too, and they really

want to make this as easy on you as possible. But they can’t help you unless you tell them what you need. Is it more alone time with one or both of them? Reassurance about where and how you’ll live? A preference about who you’ll live with? Be honest. Your parents may not be able to grant all your wishes, but they’ll do a lot better job if they know what you want.

Write it down

Keep a journal of your feelings. “Whatever you can fit from your head onto paper, you won’t have to act it out,” says Rapini. In other words, you’re less likely to feel the need to forget your problems through self-destructive behaviors like drinking, doing drugs, or failing in school.

HAVE FRIENDS WHOSE PARENTS ARE DIVORCING?

Offer to be there and to listen. Validate their feelings by saying things like, “yeah, that sounds tough. It would make me angry (or sad), too.” Reassure them and offer them hope. Be sure to tell an adult if they start talking about suicide or hurting themselves or others.

FOR PARENTS

There's no way around it. Divorce is catastrophic for children, even once they reach the teen years.

"It does something to a kid's trust," says psychotherapist, lecturer, and author Mary Jo Rapini, LPC from Houston, Texas. "Something you believed in so fundamentally, to see that broken is really heart-wrenching. It really rocks their world."

SO, AVOID IT IF YOU CAN. BUT IF DIVORCE HAS BECOME THE ONLY OPTION FOR YOU, HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO HELP YOU HELP YOUR TEENS COPE:

- Be aware that they may start out by putting on a brave face, saying they're glad you're divorced, but expect that façade to crack. Your teens will likely experience not only deep sadness but also intense anger.
- Whenever possible, include your teens in any decision-making about how you will manage your lives post-divorce.

IF YOU CAN WORK IN AT LEAST SOME OF THEIR IDEAS, YOU'LL GIVE THEM THE SENSE THAT THEY HAVE SOME OPTIONS AND CONTROL.

- Keep post-divorce life as similar as possible to how it was before.

"As much as possible," says Rapini, teens should "stay in their own room in their own home in their own school district. Make it part of divorce agreement for at least one year after the divorce. Otherwise the grief will be tripled."

TREAT YOUR CHILDREN EXACTLY AS YOU DID BEFORE THE DIVORCE.

- Make sure you get regular alone time with each of your children.
- Investigate the possibility of getting them into a support group of their peers. Find one near you at DivorceCare for Kids.
- Be aware that children and teens are very attuned to your facial cues. No matter how hard you try to hide it, they will know when you're upset.
- Encourage your teens to communicate their needs and feelings with you. – Tell your teens' teachers what is happening at home, and ask them to let you know if there are signs at school that they are in distress.
- Don't force your teens to interact with your

new boyfriends or girlfriends until they are ready.

"What happens notoriously that causes problems is when parents split up, the one that doesn't have primary custody usually starts dating," says Rapini.

TO TEENS, THAT CAN FEEL LIKE A SLAP IN THE FACE. THEY ALSO MAY FEAR THEY ARE BEING REPLACED BY THIS NEW PERSON.

Never, ever try to outdo or bad mouth your ex.

"You may have a sore tongue from biting it, but bite it you should," says Rapini.

REMEMBER THAT INSULTING YOUR EX MAY FEEL LIKE A PERSONAL ATTACK TO YOUR TEEN.

- As much as possible, work with your ex to keep your teens' life running smoothly. Write down your personal hot button issues and have your ex do the same. Then agree to never, ever bring those up again. Don't be territorial about whether your teens keep their stuff at your place or your ex's. Get professional mediation help if you need it. You can find a mediator through Family Mediation Canada.

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TODAY'S FAMILY STRUCTURE

FAMILY STRUCTURE

There is no single right way to be a family and no two families are exactly alike. There are things about your family that you may like and things that you may dislike. This is normal. No one is ever 100% satisfied with their family.

Families come in different shapes, sizes and colours.

Different Kinds of Families

- two parent families (i.e. a mom and a dad)
- one parent families (you may or may not see the other parent)
- foster families
- adoptive families
- step families (you may have one or more step-parents with or without step brothers or step sisters)
- families headed by same sex partners (i.e. two moms or two dads)
- families headed by extended family members (i.e. grandparents, aunts or uncles)
- mixed race families
- immigrant families
- families in which members speak more than one language or belong

to more than one cultural or religious groups

You can even have any combination of the above family types. Maybe you belong to a mixed race foster family or to a family that is headed by same sex partners one of whom is a new immigrant.

All families look and act very differently and each has its own set of “rules” and expectations for how the family will work.

DIFFERENT FAMILY RULES

Family Rules may include:

- the way you share meals (e.g. who cooks, where, when and what type of foods you eat)
- how much time you spend together
- how tasks are divided (e.g. who works, who cares for the house and children)
- how much time you spend with your extended family
- how you celebrate holidays
- how you communicate with other family members (e.g. how often you talk, what you talk about, how you express differences)

- the way you solve problems
- how much input children have in making family decisions

But no matter what type of family you live in your family should be a place where you feel safe. Hopefully the adult(s) in your family give you guidance, support and a sense of belonging. If you are lucky the members of your family love, respect and value one another.

TYPES OF FAMILY PROBLEMS

Unfortunately, not all families are safe and loving. Every family has difficulties but some problems are more serious than others.

Here are some of the different types of problems your family may have:

- financial problems
- problems between adults
- fights between brothers and sisters
- big changes in the family (e.g. a move, a job loss, a physical or mental illness of a family member)
- the addition or subtraction of a family member (i.e. through birth, death, divorce or remarriage)
- addiction (e.g. drugs, gambling, alcohol)
- violent or abusive behaviour

STOPPING THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

It has been said that the only things that truly matter in life are your relationships with others. But what if your relationships with your family and friends are marred by violence? What if, the people who are supposed to protect you, don't?



The Different Types of Violence

It is called many things...domestic violence, domestic abuse, spousal abuse, intimate partner violence, battering or family violence. But whatever we decide to call it, the sad fact is that gender-based violence still exists. And it affects us all. It destroys families, weakens the fabric of our society, and takes a heavy toll on our communities and our economy.

Sadly, Alberta continues to lead the pack when it comes to domestic violence figures. A recent study by the Canadian Women's Foundation reports that 74 per cent of Albertans know a woman who has experienced physical or sexual abuse – compared to 67 per cent of Canadians in general. Each year, over 40,000 arrests result from domestic violence, that's about 12% of all violent crime in Canada. On any given day in Canada, more than 3,300 women along with their 3,000 children, are forced to sleep in emergency shelters to escape domestic violence. Every night, about 200 women are turned away because the shelters are full.

“Every hour, of every day, a woman in Alberta will undergo some form of interpersonal violence from an ex-partner or ex-spouse.”

Family violence creates a home environment where children live in constant

fear. We know that boys who witness their mother's abuse are more likely to batter their female partners as adults than boys raised in non-violent homes. Girls who witness their mother's abuse may grow up to believe that threats and violence are the norm in relationships, and perhaps the most chilling of statistics, 63% of adolescent boys who commit homicide, kill their mother's abuser. Children who witness violence suffer the same consequences as those who are directly abused. In other words, a child who witnesses spousal violence is experiencing a form of child abuse.

Studies, unequivocally, show that the precursors of domestic violence occur in childhood and adolescence. Children and youth learn relationship skills and social behaviours from their parents and other family members. A high proportion of children who witness or experience violent relationships in childhood go on to perpetuate these patterns in adulthood. A growing body of research shows that domestic violence is often preceded by dating violence in adolescence which is, in turn, often preceded by bullying and aggression in childhood and early adolescence. The lessons of power and bullying learned in the playground are often refined and intensified into domestic abuse as adults.

Violence Prevention

Violence prevention programs in junior and senior high have had extremely positive results. According to Canadian Women's Foundation:

- Eighty three percent of teens who participated in a violence prevention program said they learned how to recognize an abusive relationship and now know what to do if they or someone they know is being abused
- Sixty percent used these new skills in their own dating relationships and credited the program with helping them to choose the right partner or leave an unhealthy relationship
- Sixty per cent of students in a high school with a violence prevention program noticed a decrease in violence and bullying in their school and in the broader community.

Domestic and gender violence are complex and intractable social problems that cannot be easily solved. But the cycle of violence can be broken. By helping our young people learn positive healthy relationship skills we can help end the cycle.

Shelley L Magnusson
The Alberta Teachers' Association

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT PTSD

“There’s a stigma associated with PTSD, and a lot of it is the warrior culture and masculinity that you need to be able to handle this,” says Seth Kastle – an army veteran. “And if you can’t, it’s because you’re weak.”

When Kastle returned home after serving overseas for 16 years, he had it all. He had a steady job, a beautiful wife, family, and friends. So he was very confused when it all began to fall apart. He felt angry. He could feel it building in his chest like a ball of fire.

Unbeknownst to him, he was suffering from PTSD (Post traumatic stress disorder) “I didn’t even know what PTSD was.” He said later. He developed PTSD as a result of witnessing the trauma of war, but this disorder can occur after any person, of any age, experiences a major trauma in their life.

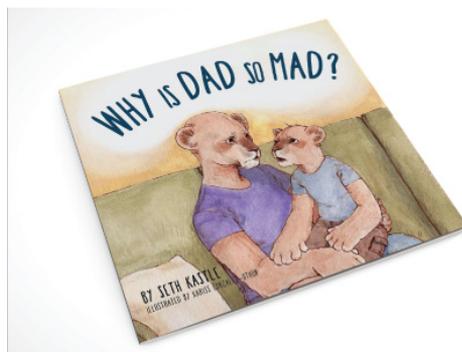
Because Kastle didn’t know what was wrong with him, he didn’t seek treatment. He says, regretfully “I waited too long.” He would have angry outbursts at work, he drank too much, and he pushed away from the ones who loved him most – even his wife. “There have been a thousand times looking back where my wife should have left me.”

But she didn’t. They stuck it out and sought ways to help Kastle work through his struggle.

He eventually found a therapy source that really helped him, and slowly he started to get back on his feet. Now he just needed to find the words to talk about his experience – especially with his young daughter.

There aren’t many resources available on how to open a discussion about PTSD with children. After a particularly rough day, Kastle came home and took 30 minutes to write about his experience. And then he filed it away and forgot about it.

Later, when a fellow veteran and friend of Kastle published a book, Kastle decided to do the same.



This is how the book “Why Is Dad So Mad?” was born. He wrote it to help explain to his daughter how he struggled with PTSD. He even includes in the book the feeling of fire in his chest that he experienced because of his PTSD. **“After I first read the book to my daughter, I remember her saying, ‘I’m sorry you have a fire in your chest now, Dad.’”** She was four.

This book isn’t helping just Kastle and his family, though. Kastle frequently gets emails

from people, thanking him for this resource.

Kastle hopes this book will open doors to conversations about PTSD. He thinks that if more resources were available to returning veterans, reintegration would be much easier.

The PTSD foundation of America says that 1 out of 3 veterans coming home will have PTSD and that less than 40% will seek treatment.

People with PTSD have to face the stigma, the shame, and the discrimination that surrounds mental health disorders. But they shouldn’t have to.

We all play a part in disassembling outdated views of mental health. We can help shift attitudes by becoming educated on these issues, becoming a better listener, and showing our support for those currently struggling.

It can be incredibly difficult to take the first step towards getting help, but it will be worth it. **“I can easily admit that every piece of my life is better now that I took that step,”** says Kastle.

When he started his journey, he didn’t even know what PTSD was, and now he is speaking up to help others understand it too. Now that is how to stand against age-old taboos.

Teaching Our Boys to Respect Women

We often focus on what a girl can do to avoid unwanted attention, violations of privacy, etc. We teach them that if they misstep (send incriminating photos, dress provocatively, etc.) they will likely end up with an unshakeable poor reputation. But doesn't the responsibility lie with both parties? Boys have just as much liability when it comes to treating women the way they want and deserve to be treated. Sadly, this is not as common as it should be. It is that parents jobs to raise young men to respect women both online and off.

Maybe your son is over affectionate to a girl in his class. He's eight years old, so it doesn't seem like a big deal. You might even think it's cute. However, the little girl in his class hates it. She's told him many times to leave her alone, but he doesn't. While this isn't violence, it is certainly disrespect. This kind of disrespect toward girls and their boundaries is the kind of disrespect that can escalate to violence and even abuse.

Teaching boys to respect women.

This task may feel like an uphill battle, and in many ways, it is. Media very often portrays women as objects or playthings. Women are portrayed as one-dimensional, and thus not deserving of respect. So in a world that sees disrespecting women as normal, how can we teach our boys to act counter-culturally?

Boys under 5:

Teach by example. If you are showing respect – especially if you are the father – you are teaching respect. Showing respect means you show respect to everyone, especially women. Don't name-call, even in jest. Don't ever hit or threaten a woman. Listen to and respect the opinions and ideas of the women around you. Speak kindly. This seems like a pretty basic idea, but it is hands down the easiest way to model respect. Never speak unnecessarily harsh to a child, or an adult, regardless of gender. Teach your children to be helpful, and help them to recognise when someone feels lousy/needs their help.

Boys aged 5-12:

Everything from the previous section is still applicable for these boys. However, this age group presents a new set of challenges for you.

As media becomes a much larger presence in your son's life, it needs to be monitored consis-

tently. Violence in media is very prevalent, and while your 5 or 6-year-old may show no interest, your 9 or ten-year-old will be all over it. Don't watch violent shows, or MMA fights with your young children – these types of shows model aggression and can exacerbate violent tendencies in your child. This same philosophy applies to programs with gratuitous sexual content.

Prepare for pornography. When you son is 8 or 9 you need to warn him about pornography. The average age of exposure to porn is 11 years old, so you need to pre-arm your child. Tell your child about the existence of pornography. Tell them that others may want to show it to them because they might think it's funny – but it's actually harmful. Let them know that it isn't real, or reflective of what people in a healthy and loving relationship want. Do not normalise porn, there is nothing normal about it. The attitude that it is something that 'all boys do' contributes to our cultural problem of disrespect and domestic violence.

Let your sons know that they should talk to you if anyone tries to show them porn. You should also encourage conversations surrounding this issue of disrespect. If your son witnesses disrespect, ask them how it made them feel.

Ask your son how they think the victims feels. These kinds of conversations teach empathy and offer perspective.

Boys aged 12-18:

You son needs to be taught the following concepts in his teen years, in addition to the lessons outlined above (especially the ones regarding media and porn use).

INTIMACY.

Teach your son about healthy relationships, and how to express love in a normal and functional way. They need to understand that love is more than sex. Teach your son that you can't separate sex and emotions, that if they try to separate the two; they open the doors to sexual miscommunication and coercion.

CONSENT.

No means no. Any form of no means no. Consent needs to be a constant conversation. Saying yes one time doesn't mean the answer is yes every time.

BOUNDARIES.

Tell them that pornography is not allowed, and teach them why. Statistics submit that 100% of boys have viewed some form of violent pornography by the age of 15. This is not OK, and something needs to change.

CALL THEM ON SEXISM.

Women belong in the kitchen jokes (and those along similar lines) are often told and laughed at by groups of teenage boys. It would seem these types of comments and one-liners are all a part of the male experience. But they don't have to be, and they shouldn't be. If you catch your son criticising women in the form of a joke about their driving, or math abilities, or similarly gendered issues; call them on it. Sexism is not cool, or funny.

Ultimately it's the things that your do, more than the words you say, that will make the biggest impact on your son. What the men in your son's life do will set the tone for what your son thinks is acceptable behaviour towards women. So, surround your sons – or the boys you work with – with great men. Be a great example, and teach them well.





Think Family Violence Doesn't Affect Your Workplace? Read Linda and Stan's Story

BY: RUTHANN WEEKS, CIRS, FOUNDER OF HARMONY TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

By: Ruthann Weeks, CIRS, Founder of Harmony Training & Development

Linda has been with Stan for 19 years. Theirs started out like many other college romances. They were so in love they barely made time for their studies and were consumed by their relationship. Stan wanted Linda all to himself. He could not get enough of her and every moment not taken up by classes or work, they were together. Linda thought it romantic. They graduated and got married right away. Linda, a teacher, got a job at a local elementary school and Stan's degree in finance landed him a job with a nearby bank. Stan was a very attentive husband, and Linda's friends were jealous of the ways he "doted" on Linda by checking

in on her during the day and texting her between her classes. Stan was very particular about how he liked Linda to look and often took her shopping and bought her outfits. He even had his mother teach her how to prepare his favorites meals. Linda was in love with Stan and wanted him to be happy. She did her best to please him.

Over the years, as their family grew and Linda's time between working her full-time job and rearing their children didn't enable Stan the care and attention he craved, Stan became sullen and sulky. He blamed Linda for not caring for him in the same way. Linda barely had anything for herself. She'd lost touch with most of her friends. She didn't even talk on the phone to her sister any more because Stan seemed so resentful of their lengthy "girl-talk."

It happened that Thanksgiving. Linda had been busy in the kitchen preparing their feast, their teenaged children were out with friends and Stan was watching football and drinking beer. When the phone rang Stan hollered at Linda to answer it. She didn't hear him, because she'd run down to the basement to get a jar of preserves. Grumbling Stan answered the phone and when he did the caller hung up.

Stan became enraged and accused Linda of having an affair. Linda vehemently denied it, but Stan refused to believe her and became violent with rage. He punched Linda in the face that afternoon, kicked her in the ribs and continued to berate and abuse her for hours. Behind closed doors, right there in the middle of suburbia.

Linda was in shock, but she was not surprised. Not really. She wasn't sure how she gotten there, but she'd been tip-toeing around Stan for years trying to keep him placated and reassured of her devotion. He'd accused her of affairs before if she didn't respond to his text fast enough or answer her phone when he called her on her drive home after school. She had tried something different with her hair once and Stan had accused her of trying to attract new men into her life. He'd insisted that she change it back to the way he liked it as proof of her devotion to him and to their marriage.

Linda showed up to school that next week with a black eye and cracked ribs. She'd done her best to cover up her bruised eye with make-up, but it was still visible. When her students or co-workers asked about her injuries she blamed it on her clumsiness on the basement stairs as she carried a laundry basket. She was quite sure that she was "safe" and that everyone believed her story.

Stan was more physical from that point on. He would often grab Linda's arm and leave bruises. She wore a lot of sweaters, even when the weather was hot. Stan started to strangle Linda until she blacked out. She was starting to have difficulty swallowing. Scarves did a good job of covering the marks Stan left on her throat. Linda felt fortunate that he rarely laid hands on her when their children were around. She didn't know that they lay in their beds at night and heard his attacks and the terrible names he called her. They'd noticed the bruising. They were afraid of Stan and just didn't know what to say to their Mom. They coped by being out of the house as much as possible.

The bank where Stan worked supplied their staff with company cell phones and laptops. Stan often used these to send harassing texts and emails to Linda. It was his corporate cell phone that he used to call Linda when he knew she should be on her way home from work. One such afternoon when he called Linda from his office and was threatening her he was overheard by a co-worker, Susan who was in the next office. He was telling Linda how she'd better not think she was going out with her teacher friends for their staff function that weekend and that she'd be sorry if she ever tried to cross him. It wasn't the first time Susan had heard Stan speak rudely to his wife, but it was the first time since they'd had their company-wide domestic violence training and policy implementation. Susan knew that she was obligated to tell their supervisor that she had overheard Stan threatening Linda on the phone, and that he was using company time and resources to harass his wife. The company would be obligated to investigate and devise a plan to control or eliminate the hazard that Stan represented, should he be found guilty as a perpetrator of domestic violence.

Linda had had enough and was determined to end this cycle of abuse she was trapped in. She'd tried to leave Stan a couple of times before, but he'd always won her over with apologies and promises to never let it happen again and by declaring his love and devotion to Linda and their children. He'd made her feel guilty for breaking up their family. Linda had gone that morning to obtain an Emergency Protection Order (EPO) against Stan. She had a bag of essentials in the trunk of her car, and some money set aside in a personal account.

In keeping with their newly implemented domestic violence policy, Linda had confided her plans to her boss and shared that there was an EPO in place against Stan. The school where Linda worked initiated their domestic violence safety procedure that ensured confidentiality as much as possible, while engaging safety planning for Linda and everyone else at the school. As the school office was the first point of contact for all visitors entering the school, staff there was given a picture of Stan and given minimal information about the EPO. If Stan were to show up unexpectedly, the police would be called immediately. The procedure also stated that Linda would be accompanied to her car at the end of every work day to make sure she wasn't alone in the parking lot where Stan might try to corner her.

Linda wasn't sure what to expect from Stan once he found out she'd left him, but the recent workplace training they'd had on domestic violence left her feeling empowered and knowledgeable enough to know that violence often escalates when the relationship ends and not to trivialize the potential for Stan to become enraged when he couldn't "win her back" this time. She'd replaced her phone, so Stan couldn't reach her that way and had plans to stay short-term with a teacher friend that Stan did not know.

Stan and Linda's story is not unique. You can substitute Linda's job as a teacher to any employee working at a restaurant, hotel, office complex or construction site. Stan as the perpetrator could be a delivery driver, an equipment operator, a CEO, an assembly line worker, or a police officer. Domestic violence costs workplaces millions every year in lost productivity, absenteeism, and benefit costs. Often co-workers are left to pick up the slack when someone is not able to get their work done because they are absent due to domestic abuse or otherwise distracted by the abuse that is occurring.

Alberta has joined the Canadian provinces now legally obligated to provide protection of workers related to domestic violence through OH&S policy

updates. There is now a requirement to train all levels of employees what domestic violence entails, conduct hazard assessments and to create workplace policy and procedure to address potential concerns.

In 2016 I founded Harmony Training & Development, a social enterprise, to help address the rampant social problem in our society that is domestic violence, also known as family violence, intimate partner violence or woman abuse. I've made it my life's work to educate and offer policy development to address the workplace issues of violence and harassment. A portion of all revenues goes to support domestic violence prevention initiatives that help create safe spaces for those seeking shelter from abusive and oppressive environments.

Our homes are supposed to be our safe places. Spaces where we are accepted and loved unconditionally. Although when home is dominated by an abuser and we are constantly "walking on eggshells", trying to avoid the next inevitable explosive incident, there is no safety there and sometimes it's our workplace where we can get a reprieve from the constant domination of our mates. That is, until the abuse shows up at work.

There are many business owners, supervisors, HR personnel and workers that are not trained in the complex issue of domestic violence. They have no prevention plans in place and have no idea how to properly approach someone they think may be perpetrating violence or experiencing abuse. Ignorance is not an excuse when there is potential liability for not protecting your work force.

Contact Harmony Training & Development today to book your training!

Harmony Training & Development is a social enterprise offering training related to workplace violence and harassment, via presentation, lecture and/or interactive workshops.

A portion of all proceeds goes towards domestic violence prevention initiatives.

Call 780-460-1019 or email info@harmony-training.ca today for your free consultation!

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