

Domestic violence victims are often exposed repeatedly to threats, violence, intimidation, and physical, emotional and psychological abuse. Constant, repeated exposure to violence has a profound effect on a victim's daily activities and functioning, thinking, interpersonal relationships, and sense of self.

Reactions a domestic violence survivor may experience include:

- Fear
- Anxiety
- Difficulty concentrating
- Low self-esteem
- Chronic physical complaints
- Social withdrawal
- Feelings of helplessness / hopelessness
- Nightmares and sleep disturbances
- Anger
- Depression
- Shame and embarrassment
- Substance abuse
- Numbness
- Hyper-vigilance (inability to relax, jumpiness)

If you are a victim of domestic violence you may blame your own behavior, rather than the violent actions of the abuser. You may try continually to alter your behavior and circumstances to please the abuser – believing that if you follow certain rules and make sure the abuser is happy – you will not be hurt. However, you need to know that violence perpetrated by abusers is often self-driven and depends little on your actions or words.

Domestic violence victims many times minimize the seriousness of incidents to cope, and not seek medical attention or assistance when needed. Because you fear the perpetrator and may be ashamed of your situation, you may be reluctant to disclose the abuse to family, friends, work, the authorities, or victim assistance professionals. Consequently, you may decide to suffer in silence and isolation.

People stay with abusive partners for many different reasons. By understanding these reasons, you can explore your options for living a violence-free life and avoid feelings of guilt and isolation.

- You fear you will be beaten more severely. Your batterer has threatened to find and kill or harm you, your children, and your family.
- You depend on the batterer for shelter, food, and other necessities.
- You have no one to talk to who understands and believes you.
- You believe your children need two parents, and you don't want to raise them alone.
- You want to keep the family together and live up to your religious commitment to remain with your partner.
- You fear that you won't be able to take care of yourself and your children alone.