

Domestic Violence in Our Society

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As she brushes away her tears, fixes her clothes, and pulls herself up from the floor, she wonders what she did wrong. Her lip is bleeding. While she rubs her pain-stricken head, she tries to recall the evening after he arrived home. She had his requested meatloaf and potato dinner on the table at the correct time, the children were playing quietly in their rooms, and she was sitting patiently next to him as he requires. She had done everything he requested every night, but she still received the seemingly endless beatings. This story is all too familiar within our society. Each day innocent people are being hurt for what seems like unknown reasons. Researching the causes of domestic violence and treatments for the abuser are two areas that will be examined.

Causes of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence appears in many different forms. Physical abuse of a partner is the most thought of form of abuse, but domestic violence can also take the shape of emotional and sexual abuse. “Domestic violence may start when one partner feels the need to control and dominate the other” (Goldsmith, 2011, para. 1). The necessity to have power over a partner can stem from a multitude of reasons involving emotional, lifestyle, and environmental factors.

Emotional factors include low self-esteem and lack of empathy of the abuser. A lot of people believe that the abuser is not able to express his feelings and that is the reason he is abusive. The opposite is actually true:

They have an exaggerated idea of how important their feelings are, and they talk about their feelings—and act them out—all the time. . . . When he feels bad, he thinks that life should stop for everyone else in the family until someone fixes his discomfort. His partner’s life crises, the children’s

sicknesses, meals, birthdays—nothing else matters as much as his feelings.

(Bancroft, 2002, p. 31)

This is a clear demonstration that he is very in tune with his emotions and not the emotions of others. Healthy relationships consist of individuals that are aware of their feelings, as well as their family members', who are concerned with how their actions will affect others.

Lifestyle, or the way of life of the abuser, can play an enormous role in the abuse of others. Abusers tend to blame their actions on the standard of living they have or habits that they are unable to break. “. . . they feel inferior to the other partner in education and socioeconomic background” (Goldsmith, 2001, para. 1). Not only can the abuser feel inadequate compared to his partner, but he can also feel this inadequacy when he compares his life to others in society. He may tend to blame others or his partner as to why he is at that current level in society. The shortfalls he feels about himself may also lead him to alcohol abuse, and, therefore, because he uses alcohol, he feels he has an excuse to abuse. “Alcohol does not directly make people belligerent, aggressive, or violent. There is evidence that certain chemicals can cause violent behavior . . . but alcohol is not among of them” (Bancroft, 2002, p. 200). Using alcohol as an excuse to abuse allows him to get away with this behavior even further.

How a person was raised and the actions of others that are seen by the abuser can be placed under the environmental factors that contribute to the abuse. “Some men with very traditional beliefs may think they have the right to control women, and that women aren't equal to men” (Goldsmith, 2011, para. 1). These beliefs can come from viewing the abuse his father inflicted on his mother, or words he was told by his father and older men as he was growing up. Conversations or actions among friends that are abusers can also encourage or reinforce the fact that the abuse is acceptable behavior.

Treatments for Domestic Violence

Treatments for the abuser start with looking at why the person is abusing. Focusing on the reasons for the abusive behavior is needed to positively impact the abuser's life and potentially stop the abuse. Treatment of the abuser usually involves four elements, which is comprised of consequences, education, confrontation, and accountability (Bancroft, 2002, p. 355). These elements are vital to the success of their treatment process.

The treatment, because of emotional factors, used to be done by focusing on the inability of the abuser to express his feelings. "Alas, this well-meaning but misguided approach actually feeds the abuser's selfish focus on himself, which is an important force driving his abusiveness" (Bancroft, 2002, p. 31). The real focus needs to be on the abuser's ability to recognize and consider how their abusive actions affect others. Bancroft (2002) has developed a 13-step process in beginning the change of the abuser. First, the process begins with the abuser acknowledging that he did the abuse. Next, the abuser needs to admit that it was wrong, while still recognizing that he made the choice to abuse and identifies the effects it has on the victim. Finally, the change needs to come from the abuser and not others (Bancroft, 2002, pp. 339-342). Focusing on the emotions of both the abuser and the abused allows the behavior of the abuser to begin to positively change and increases the potential for the change to be successful and permanent.

Changes in the abuser's lifestyle need to start with the abuser. Alcohol treatment programs, such as Alcoholic Anonymous, are an excellent beginning:

It takes tremendous courage for a man to be honest with himself, to reevaluate his ways of thinking about his partner, and to accept how much emotional injury he has caused her. No active substance abuser is willing or able to take on this task. (Bancroft, 2002, p. 208)

The need for the treatment of the abuse will be more productive when the abuser is sober because information will not appear distorted to him.

Treatment for the abuser when environmental factors are involved consists of several programs that are available for the abuser to take part in. Duluth Model Educational Groups for Men Who Batter is a program that “is built around the basic concepts as revealed in the Power and Control Wheel. The cogs of the wheel describe methods used by abusive men . . . to maintain power and control in the relationship” (van Wormer & Roberts, 2009, p. 168). As the program continues, “participants are challenged to identify their controlling behaviors from the Wheel, replacing them with more respectful behaviors taken from a complementary teaching aid, the Equality Wheel” (van Wormer & Roberts, 2009, p. 168). This concept is a good way to demonstrate to the abuser that the actions they chose to use can be replaced with more productive and positive ones. The more productive and positive actions that are taken with the abuser’s situation, the greater the chances are for a positive outcome and for progressive behavior to continue. Regardless of the abusers background “facilitators are advised to avoid getting sidetracked by discussion of personal problems and to maintain a continuous focus on power and control tactics, and methods for changing them” (van Wormer & Roberts, 2009, p. 168). This reveals to the abuser that previous methods and traditions are not considered to be acceptable and different methods should be used and different traditions should be formed to replace them.

Conclusion

Domestic violence is a serious issue and concern in our society and should be treated as such. Steps need to be taken by the abused or by the people that are aware of the abuse. One step is to stop ignoring and pretending it is not happening. Taking steps to stop and treat abusive behavior can prevent it from continuing on through generations. The lives of those abused are negatively changed forever. They will always feel the pain. But, by getting the abuser

treatment, they can stop future pain. As the sun beats down on her face, the face that will never be hit again, the same woman realizes that the love she has for him will never fade. She smiles and starts to think of the abuse-free life she will begin to have.

References

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