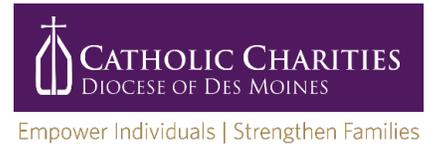


2021

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH (DVAM)

Article Series 1 of 4



Contact:

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Financial and Economic Abuse: Methods of Control

By Debrenee Grajeda, Catholic Charities Domestic Abuse Advocate

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Read on to learn more about the dynamics and impact of abuse.

People are often surprised to learn that financial and economic abuse exist, but they are actually very common methods of exercising power and control. Some examples of financial abuse include prohibiting someone from earning an income even though they want to, not allowing them access to money for basic or necessary items, and being unwilling to share information with them about family finances. It can also include refusing to pay bills as agreed upon so that the victim faces eviction or suffers from a damaged credit score.

Economic abuse, on the other hand, can include withholding or compromising items a person needs for everyday life such as food, shelter, medicine, or transportation. It can also mean stealing a person's belongings, either to sell them or simply to cause inconvenience or emotional harm. While financial abuse is focused on regulating the ability someone has to earn or spend money, economic abuse focuses on restricting or sabotaging a person's access to possessions.

The main reason these particular tactics are used is to make victims less independent and instead more reliant upon the abuser, since the more dependent a person is, the easier they are to control. This type of abuse is also usually subtle and often goes unnoticed by the outside world. It can be difficult to prove that one is being forced to stay at home, for example; some may think the person simply does not want to work outside the home. It can also be hard to explain to a landlord that a late rent payment or an unpaid utility bill can be the result of abusive control, coercion, or retaliation.

Issues like these can affect more than just the abuser's partner. Children often suffer the impact of financial and economic abuse as well, especially through the abuser's withholding of funds or material goods. Unfortunately, these forms of abuse can continue to cause problems for victims even after they have left an abusive relationship, since they may have little money to start over with or a ruined credit history which follows them.

However, there is help available for those suffering from financial and economic abuse. For the person still involved in an abusive relationship, safety planning with an advocate can be an important tool for brainstorming ways to keep finances and material possessions safe. For those who have left an abusive relationship and are starting over, government programs such as food stamps, Medicaid, and Section 8 can be helpful. Many local nonprofit programs also offer financial assistance, employment services, and connection to community resources.

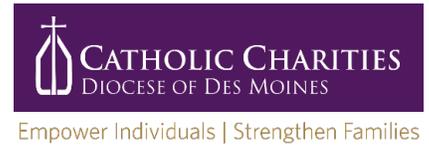
If you or anyone you know is experiencing financial, economic, or any other form of abuse, please consider reaching out to a trained advocate for free and confidential assistance and support. The Catholic Charities Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Program serves nine counties in southwest Iowa and is available 24 hours a day at 888-612-0266.

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2021

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH (DVAM)

Article Series 2 of 4



Contact:

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Verbal Abuse: Why Words Can Do Lasting Damage

By Debrenee Grajeda, Catholic Charities Domestic Abuse Advocate

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Read on to learn more about the dynamics and impact of abuse.

What could possibly hurt worse than being physically attacked by someone you love and trust? According to many survivors of domestic violence, the words used by their abusers are every bit as painful to endure. It is important to recognize that domestic violence is not always physical; verbal abuse can cause a great deal of harm without ever leaving a mark.

Verbal abuse is the repeated or continual use of disparaging, degrading, or otherwise harassing remarks. We all say regrettable things at times, or end up shouting in a moment of anger. However, verbal abuse is different in that it is part of a pattern of behavior meant to gain power or control over an individual. This form of abuse is meant to elicit an emotional response in the victim, usually of fear, shame, or sadness. It can include name-calling, attacking one's character or appearance, blaming one for things beyond their control, or using threats to frighten one into submission.

Name-calling may seem rather childish, but when used as a tactic of abuse, it can have devastating effects on a person's self-esteem, identity, and personal image. When someone is told repeatedly that they are worthless and undesirable, for example, they will likely internalize this message and eventually begin to believe it themselves. Furthermore, smaller ears listening may also begin to internalize it as well. Children in a home where a parent is verbally abusive may learn to use name-calling or hurtful language as a weapon to get what they want. They may also begin to see the non-offending parent as deficient or weak, which can harm the bond between them. Children often use the same language they hear in their household, even when they do not understand the power or implications of the words.

Verbal abuse can also entail using threats to manipulate, coerce, or intimidate. Threats may be made toward one's physical safety or to damage one's material possessions or reputation. Often, threats are also made to harm one's family members or friends, or even one's pets. Making threats even more terrifying is the capability of the abuser to carry them out; for example, if the abuser threatens to kill the victim, this can be even more powerful if they have easy access to guns or other weapons. Being threatened often leaves victims feeling like they are walking on eggshells, and they may experience anxiety or panic attacks due to the abuse.

While "sticks and stones may break our bones," it's also essential to recognize the impact that words can have on our sense of safety and wellbeing. When language is used to harm, demean, and control another person, it becomes abusive. Although the effects of verbal abuse can be just as severe as those of physical violence, there is help available. Please contact the Catholic Charities Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Program at 888-612-0266 if you are experiencing verbal abuse. Trained advocates can offer free and confidential services to help you on the path to healing.

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Article Series 3 of 4



Contact:

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Staying Safe in the Age of Technology

By Debrenee Grajeda, Catholic Charities Domestic Abuse Advocate

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Read on to learn more about the dynamics and impact of abuse.

There is no denying that technology has made life easier in many ways. A wealth of knowledge is easily accessible with one Google search, loved ones can stay in touch across oceans, and massive amounts of information can be stored on a device no bigger than a thumb. But with all these benefits come new challenges as well. Perhaps most concerning for survivors of domestic violence is the question of how to stay protected in a world full of tweets, snaps, and geolocation.

Sometimes information gained through the use of technology is not freely given. Many victims report that their abusers place tracker apps on their smartphones without their knowledge. These apps, which run constantly in the background unseen, can track the victim's movement and location, sending the information to the abuser. This can pose a real safety threat, especially if the survivor has left the abusive relationship. Data regarding the survivor's pattern of movements can provide an abuser with dangerous information such as work schedule and timing of school drop-offs. It can also suggest times when a vehicle may be left unattended, such as at a place of employment or a grocery store, for example.

In addition, the SnapChat app, which allows users to send self-deleting pictures and messages, is routinely used to send threats which cannot be tracked. In fact, if the recipient takes a screen shot of the SnapChat message, an alert is sent notifying the sender, which can put the recipient in further danger. This app and others like Facebook Messenger are also frequently used by abusers to distribute graphic images of their partners without their consent. This is a humiliating form of sexual harassment and can have a devastating impact on the victim. Further, depending upon the age of those who send and receive the content, this behavior can fall under other criminal conduct as well.

So how does one continue to use technology safely despite these issues? Following a few good guidelines may help. Survivors should make sure to regularly check their phones for any new apps that they themselves have not downloaded. Even apps which do not appear suspicious, such as a clock or a calculator, should be examined. These "fake" apps are often hiding the real app underneath. Survivors should also check to make sure that their geolocation is turned off whenever possible. Sometimes this information is needed for things like access to driving directions; however, turning it off when not in use is always best. Finally, survivors should consider checking the privacy settings on their social media accounts like Facebook and Instagram to ensure that they are set to the highest security levels. Routinely changing passwords for all accounts, as well as using facial recognition options for phone access, can also prove helpful.

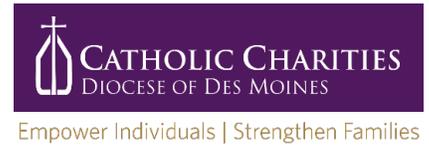
If you are a survivor in southwest Iowa who would like to learn more about staying safe while using technology, please consider reaching out to speak with a trained advocate at 888-612-0266 for free and confidential assistance.

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Contact:

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The Impact of Domestic Violence on Children

By Debrenee Grajeda, Catholic Charities Domestic Abuse Advocate

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Read on to learn more about the dynamics and impact of abuse.

We all know that kids are resilient, but we would be remiss to think that they are not impacted by what goes on around them. Many different outside influences can positively or negatively affect how a child thinks, feels, and develops. One issue that can negatively impact children is exposure to domestic violence.

Obviously, being physically present when abuse is taking place is severely detrimental to children. Seeing a parent or caregiver being abused can be an extremely traumatic experience. Sometimes, a child will try to intervene in the abuse and end up getting injured themselves. Other times, a child may feel guilty for not intervening, and assume that the abuse is somehow their fault. Abuse is always confusing for a child, because it teaches them two conflicting lessons; the first thing they learn is that the abuse harms someone they love, but they also learn that using abuse can get a person what they want. These concepts are very difficult for a child to reconcile.

Being physically present during an assault is not the only way children can be harmed. Many mistakenly think that if a child does not actually witness abuse, it cannot affect them. However, this is a myth. Children are much more aware than we think. They can overhear loud arguments, physical fights, or the sound of objects breaking, even if they are not in the same room. They are also very capable of picking up on adults' emotional states. This means that even if they do not see the abuse taking place, they may recognize the fear, anxiety, and despair of the victimized parent, as well as the anger of the abusive parent.

The trauma of being exposed to domestic violence, whether directly or indirectly, can have a host of negative effects on a child's wellbeing. These effects are mainly caused by the child experiencing unhealthy levels of stress for prolonged periods of time. The child's brain and body are basically stuck operating in survival mode. Some psychological effects include the development of depression, anxiety, and sometimes PTSD. Physical effects can also manifest, and can range from digestive trouble, to headaches, to regressive behaviors such as thumb-sucking or bed-wetting in children who are developmentally past these stages. Negative social effects are also very common, and can include undesirable behaviors such as throwing tantrums, acting out, or hitting; under-performing in school or other activities; and socially isolating or withdrawing from friends or other supports.

Thankfully, studies have shown that if a child has at least one trusting, supportive adult relationship, they are much more likely to develop resilience and overcome trauma. This proves that one caring person can make a lasting difference in the life of a child. If you are worried that your children have been impacted by domestic abuse, reaching out for help is a great first step. Consider calling Catholic Charities' Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Program in southwest Iowa today at 888-612-0266 to speak with a trained advocate about free and confidential services.

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