

The Advocate

Renewal House, Fall 2023

How Social Stigma Silences Domestic Violence Victims

Why many domestic violence victims are reluctant to report,

by Wendy Partrick, PhD
Domesticshelters.org

Many domestic violence victims suffer in silence. Enduring a steady pattern of abuse and humiliation at home, they bravely attempt to present a solid exterior in public. Sometimes they pull it off; usually, they do not. We notice the signs. Whether physical or emotional, red flags are flying.

In such cases, some people wonder why victims continue to deny the abuse, which is often visibly manifest to those around them. The answer has to do with the way domestic violence victims fear they will be treated.

Reluctant to Report: Silenced by Stigma

Many victims of domestic abuse remain under the radar because they are ashamed that they have chosen to remain in a relationship with an abusive partner. Both culturally and socially, victims are sensitive to the judgment they fear from others, whether they are suffering physical abuse, emotional abuse or both. Reporting the perpetrator's behavior would involve revealing embarrassing and humiliating details they would rather never discuss—especially if they have been enduring this treatment for years.

Victims with children fear being labeled a “bad parent” for staying with a violent partner. It is easier for some victims in this situation to rationalize they are living with a bad spouse, but a good parent. This argument breaks down if abuse is occurring in front of the children, which could create a child endangerment scenario—a separate crime.

Logically, we acknowledge that we cannot subjectively understand the reasons a victim stays with an abusive partner from our perspective on the outside looking in. Yet when it comes to assessing perceptions of domestic abuse, research indicates observers might nonetheless be ready to assign levels of blame depending not only on the actions of the abuser but also of the victim.

Unfairly Judging Victims of Domestic Abuse

Yamawaki et al. (2012) conducted a study titled “Perceptions of Domestic Violence,” to examine attitudes toward domestic violence victims and perpetrators. They found that study participants attributed more blame to a victim who returned to the abuser, as compared with a victim about whom they had no such information.

They also found that participants who held domestic violence myths attributed more blame to the victim and that men blamed the victim and minimized the incident more than women did.

The study also addressed some of the reasons victims remain in relationships with abusive partners. Regarding the reasons women do not leave, Yamawaki et al. cite prior research indicating a variety of reasons, including a cost-benefit analysis weighing relational benefits against the costs of separation. We could argue that male victims no doubt engage in the same type of relational balancing test.

Victims also stay in relationships with abusive partners for fear of how they will be treated by others who learn about the abuse. This fear stems from the way victims are often treated differently, both

personally and professionally, after details of their victimization come to light.

Light Duty for Victims: Protective Bias

Some victims of domestic violence finally muster the courage to break the silence and report the abuse, only to find themselves treated differently as a result of their disclosure. Of course, family, friends, neighbors and colleagues are all relieved the victim finally came forward. Even the most well-meaning supporters, however, are prone to viewing and treating the victim differently.

Treating the victim differently, in a misguided attempt to be helpful, can have a particularly negative impact in the workplace. After reporting the abuse, a victim may have to take time off of work for doctor's visits, meetings with law enforcement and prosecutors, and testimony in court. Employers routinely profess support and understanding of the need to miss work under such circumstances. In some cases, however, this support can translate into disparate treatment.

Some victims of domestic violence return to their job only to find their workload reduced, assignments altered to “light duty,” or face other job modifications as a result of reporting their victimization. Some employers honestly think they are helping victims by reducing their workload or changing their job assignments to give them time “to recover.”

Good intentions aside, for many victims, returning to a job that has been compromised as a result of finding the courage to report the abuse is a form of re-victimization. Consequently, for some victims, even the potential of

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

More prevalent than most realize, one in four women and one in seven men will experience domestic violence in their lifetimes. Each year, 10 million women and men in the U.S. experience domestic violence. Anyone, regardless of gender, race, sexual identity or orientation, or socio-economic status, can become a victim of domestic violence. This year's campaign theme, #Every1KnowsSome1, strives to highlight how common domestic violence is and that it is more than physical violence.

We don't talk about domestic violence. Because of that, domestic violence thrives in silence.

To be able to support survivors, and to prevent domestic violence in the future, we all need to normalize talking about it openly and candidly.

Having informed conversations about domestic violence requires an understanding of what it is—that it's much more than physical abuse—and why 'just leaving' isn't so simple for survivors. Supporters like you can help educate your friends, families, and communities, and get these conversations started!

As a society, we all have a role in changing the narrative about what domestic violence is, to whom it happens, and how we can support those who are experiencing it, and, ultimately, prevent it entirely.

Every1KnowsSome1 who is impacted by domestic violence, and Every1 has a part to play in supporting our work to end domestic violence.

National Wear Purple Thursday is October 19th! Wear purple on this day or all month long to show your support of domestic violence victims in our communities. You could even turn it into a fundraiser for Renewal House. Send us a picture and we will post it on our social media page!

Renewal House will have information tables set up during the month at: the County Court House lobby and at Community Bank, Main Street, Canton.

Why is purple the color for domestic violence?

Have you ever wondered why purple is the color associated with domestic violence?

According to domesticshelters.org, purple, white, and gold were used in the early 1900s when the women's suffrage movement adopted the National Women's Party's colors. The colors started in England and symbolized purity,

hope, and loyalty. Then, on July 9, 1978, nearly 100,000 advocates of equal rights for women marched in Washington, D.C., many dressed in lavender.

In October 1981, when the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence observed a "Day of Unity," many of those participants also chose to wear lavender or purple.

In October 1987, the first Domestic Violence Awareness Month was observed, and again, purple-hued clothing was widely embraced by participants. This progression solidified the adoption of purple for marketing and awareness purposes by domestic violence organizations; purple was chosen as an evolution of lavender from decades past.

Annual Dinner - Friday, October 27th, with Silent Auction

We invite our community to join us on Friday, October 27th at the Gran-View Restaurant in Ogdensburg for our annual dinner.

Cocktails will begin at 5:30pm with dinner served at 6:30pm.

The cost of the dinner is \$75 per plate and the entrée choices are:

Prime Rib, Chicken Kiev, Broiled Seafood Platter (shrimp, sea scallops and haddock) and Vegetarian (grilled confit portabella mushroom).

Please let us know your dinner choice when you reserve your seat.

Please RSVP by October 18th to 315-379-9845 or renewalhouse@verizon.net.

This year's program will include a message from the executive director and a survivor will share her experience of domestic violence.

We hope that you will stay for a bit after the program to mingle and meet our staff and board.

Payment can be taken when reserving your seat or table. We accept cash, check or credit card.

Consider reserving a table for eight!

A silent auction will be taking place throughout the evening. If you would like to donate an item or items for the auction, please contact Ilene or Shari.

All money collected will go directly to assisting victims of domestic violence and sexual assault in St. Lawrence County.

Adopt a Family during the Holiday Season

Renewal House is once again sponsoring the Adopt-a-Family Program to benefit the adults and children receiving non-residential and residential services.

Client families will be paired with a donor based on the size of the family and the ages of their children. After being paired with a client family, a "Wish List" will be sent to the donors with the receiving family's genders,

ages, clothing sizes and their holiday wishes. From the list, the donor family chooses to purchase any or all of the items on the list, or substitute items they feel the client may enjoy.

This program is a source of happiness, joy and satisfaction for all involved, and with the help of the community, it is always a huge success!

If you have questions about the

program or are interested in adopting a family this holiday season, please contact Renewal House at 315-379-9845 or email renewalhouse_cmdv@aol.com.

For an on-going list of residential and non-residential needs, please email renewalhouse@verizon.net.

Donor Appreciation Report - Thank you for your support!

Advanced Business Systems
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Swartz, Jenny
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The Celtic Knot
The Glen House Resort - Smuggler's Glen Golf Course
The Joyful Givers
Truax Insurance Agency
VFW Post 1231
Wagner, Jane
Wallace, Judith
Washburn, Robert and Beverly
White, Sharon and Jim
White's Flowers
Williams, Wendy
Zonta Club of Ogdensburg

Renewal House recognizes the businesses, organizations, and community members who generously support the adults and children who seek services at Renewal House by donating money, items, or time. The names listed on this report are from donations received since our last newsletter.

Services Offered at Renewal House

Renewal House provides a variety of services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault in St. Lawrence County. All services are free and confidential. Services include:

24-hour Crisis Hotline: Staff and volunteers are available 24 hours a day by calling **315-379-9845**.

Regular office hours are 8 am — 4 pm, Monday through Friday. If it is not an emergency and you would like **to leave a message, call 315-379-9878**. We will get back to you as soon as possible.

Individual Counseling/Emotional Support: Short-term individual counseling in a non-judgmental atmosphere that acknowledges a person’s ability and right to make choices. Help is available to consider options and plan for safety. Home visits are provided if needed.

Support Group: A facilitated self-help group for victims and survivors of domestic violence providing mutual support and understanding from others who have been abused and who share something in common. It has helped many victims feel less isolated, get useful information, and develop a safety plan. Transportation is provided if needed.

Economic Empowerment Program: Staff facilitate *Moving Ahead Through Financial Management*, a 5-module economic empowerment curriculum designed to identify and address financial abuse, develop budgeting strategies, and encourage financial security and independence.

Children’s Program: Recreational/Support Group to help children understand what abuse is and to give them a safe space to talk about their feelings. Children are reassured that the abuse is not their fault. Individual counseling is also provided.

Safe Housing: 24-hour intake for emergency, temporary shelter for domestic violence victims.

Advocacy: Assistance in obtaining orders of protection, pressing criminal charges, and working with law enforcement. We also help in obtaining emergency assistance from Department of Social Services, Office of Victim Services and other community programs.

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners: Specially trained medical professionals providing compassionate, knowledgeable assistance to a victim of sexual assault.

Community Education and Outreach: Presentations are available for any public or private group, school, business, or agency.

Campus Advocacy
Our Campus Advocate provides direct service, trainings, and presentations for all colleges in St. Lawrence County. We are currently at five colleges that are generously sharing their space with us:

Clarkson University, Tuesdays, Student Center, Room 044

SUNY Potsdam, Wednesdays, Sisson Hall, Room 240

SUNY Canton, Thursdays, Payson Hall, Room 207

St. Lawrence University, Fridays, Bewkes Hall, Room 315.

SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry. Mondays, one day each month. Contact our Campus Advocate for more information.

Human Trafficking Services: Contact our Human Trafficking Case Manager for more information

Renewal House prohibits the discrimination or harassment of any person based on race, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or expression, religion and national origin.

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- Victoria Berg

And many Volunteers and Interns who assist us each year.

State and Local Stats

Domestic Violence Counts Report — New York Summary

On September 7, 2022, 97 out of 107 (91%) identified domestic violence programs in New York participated in a national count of domestic violence services conducted by the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEVDV). The following figures represent the information shared by the participating programs about the services they provided during the 24-hour survey period. (Renewal House was included in this summary.)

9,157 Victims Served. 5,673 adult and child victims of domestic violence found refuge in emergency shelters, transitional housing, hotels, motels, or other housing provided by local domestic violence programs. 3,484 adult and child victims received non-residential supportive services related to legal needs, housing advocacy, transportation, mental health, public benefits, and more.

1,572 Hotline Contacts Received. Domestic violence hotlines are lifelines for victims in danger, providing support, information, safety planning, and resources via phone, chat, text, and email. Hotline staff received 1,572 contacts, averaging nearly 66 contacts per hour.

397 People Educated. On the survey day, local domestic violence programs provided 21 public training sessions (educational sessions provided to the public) to 397 people, addressing topics like domestic violence prevention and early intervention.

951 Unmet Requests for Services. Victims made 951 requests for services that programs could not provide because they did not have the resources. Approximately 65% of these unmet requests were for emergency shelter, hotels, motels, and other housing.

“We provided a client with basic necessities, safety planning, assistance with an order of protection and lease termination, counseling, referrals, and more. They told us: ‘I came in today feeling so defeated, and I leave feeling hopeful. I know now that I didn’t deserve this and that I am worthy of love and respect. I cannot thank you enough.’”

Renewal House Stats for 2022

Total Individuals served **1,047**

Domestic Violence Victims 86%

Sexual Assault Victims 14%

Females 76%

Males 6%

Gender Nonconforming 1%

Children/Youth 17%

Hotline Calls **6,399**

86% during office hours

14% after hours

Safe Housing to **49** individuals

100 were referred to alternate housing

Average length of stay was **24 days**

Services Included:

Emotional Support/Counseling, in-person

Phone Counseling

Criminal Justice Support

Transportation

Information/Referrals

Child Care / Child Recreation

Domestic Violence Support Group

Forensic Sexual Assault Exams by a
Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner

Provided **401** educational presentations to
10,092 individuals

facing adverse job consequences is a reason not to come forward. This reluctance facilitates the continuing pattern of abuse.

Encouragement and Empowerment

Continuing education and community awareness of the dynamics of domestic abuse can reduce the perceptions of the stigma that cause many victims to suffer in silence. Encouraging reporting through support and empowerment, coupled with assurances of job stability, will help victims break the cycle of abuse and embark on the road to recovery.

True Stories About the Moment Survivors Decided to Leave

Survivors share the exact moment when they decided to leave an abuser and escape domestic violence

Amanda Kippert, DomesticShelters.org

In case you weren't aware, abusive partners aim to confuse their victims. They make them doubt their own intuition, gaslight them into questioning their reality. The goal is to keep a victim trapped for as long as possible under an abuser's control. It's not a place anyone wants to be, but for many survivors, there can be a turning point—a moment when they see the abuser for who they really are and realize the time to leave domestic violence is *now*. We asked the survivors who are part of our

DomesticShelters.org Victims and Survivors Community on Facebook, *what was your last straw?* Here's what some of them said. If any sound familiar, maybe that's your sign to get out, too. Contact a trained domestic violence advocate at a shelter near you [Renewal House] to talk about safety

planning and discuss the best way to leave an abuser.

What Was Your Last Straw?

"Looking at the terrified face of our 1-½-year-old son as his father screamed at me."

"He told me in explicit detail how he was going to kill me and our three children. A few days later, I ran to a shelter with my kids."

"The first time he drew blood."

"When I saw the gun."

"My almost two-year-old son was in a hitting phase and my now ex-husband said, 'Hit her for me, buddy,' like he was teaching him his ways. I couldn't raise my son to be like him."

"He would gaslight me and try to recreate history. In an argument, he'd bring me to mental exhaustion and tears. He told me that I was crazy and delusional. He blocked me from leaving, but I found a way to escape with the children. He was beating on my car windows when we left. I told him I was going to the store, but we never went back."

"We were both on drugs and in danger of losing our two small children. I knew I had to get clean ... if I lost my [parental] rights, I wouldn't survive it. He wasn't willing to get clean. I went to rehab and found clarity once I got away from him. Thank god, I got my kids back. It's been three years and from what I hear, he's still not sober."

"The last straw for me was discovering he was offering me up for sex with strangers on the Internet. He was setting me up to be raped."

"Waking up to his hands around my throat."

"The last beating. He punched me, strangled me, dragged me by the hair and threatened me with a loaded gun. I know this sounds bad, but he had done worse. The last straw was the fact that he was doing this while our one-year-old was in my arms. I'm seven months outside that relationship and life has been peaceful.... I'm grateful God gave me a second chance at life."

"Getting away for two weeks for work, seeing his outrageous behavior from a distance, and then the two friends I had been staying with sitting me down and telling me what they had observed. That time away gave me enough mental rest to plan the end."

"A lot of verbal abuse that kept happening closer and closer together. Then there was one big moment where he threatened to rape me and bury me in the backyard. I left with the kids the next morning."

"He broke my ribs."

"He lost it on our 4-year-old daughter—screaming, yelling, absolutely terrifying her. He grabbed her by the jacket and threw her on a sofa. I tried to intervene and he pushed me away, screamed at me ... I couldn't help her and I was so scared."

"I had come home from my mom's for Easter and brought him some food. He was angry the minute I got home. He punched me in the back right after asking me [to be intimate]. It was a feeling hard to describe, but a few days later I asked him to leave and he left."

"My abuser left bruises on our 14-year-old daughter's back. I didn't know until the school called. Child Protection gave me a choice—her or my husband."

Out he went!"

"My therapist finally convincing me that I *would* have enough money if I left."

"I got to a point where I was more afraid to stay than I was to leave."

"Sadly, I never left him. He got thrown in jail for abusing me and called his mom to bail him out. She imposed a condition that he had to file for divorce for her to do it, so he did. Three months later I was happy and free and he came begging me to take him back. Best thing that could have ever happened to me and my kids. I got the divorce and never looked back, all thanks to a mother-in-law who hated me. I went back to school and got a degree ... and have a great job and have eight grandchildren who he'll never be allowed to see. I thrived and he failed."

"When he set me on fire."

"I just had enough of it all one day."

Myths About Domestic Violence

DomesticShelters.org

Victims are only young women.

Couples counseling is the answer to stopping the abuse.

Reproductive abuse doesn't exist.

It's not rape if you're married.

Victims of abuse are weak.

Financial abuse isn't real, it's a person's responsibility to be financially independent.

If there's not a bruise, it's not abuse.

The survivor is exaggerating the abuse.

Abusers only become violent because they're intoxicated. The abuser must be mentally ill, have addiction problems, etc.

Abuse only happens among uneducated, low-income individuals.

The abuse must not be that bad if the survivor is still with their partner.

The survivor knew what they were getting into at the start of the relationship.

Victims don't care about their children if they stay in the relationship.

Both partners are probably abusive.

Victims provoke the abuse.

By staying, a survivor is encouraging or tolerating abusive behavior.

If a victim wanted the abuse to stop, they'd just leave.

Men are the only perpetrators.

Signs of a Traumatic Brain Injury

Many domestic violence victims are at risk of TBI—know the signs and symptoms to get help

DomesticShelters.org

Domestic violence victims are at significant risk for a traumatic brain injury, or TBI. TBI is defined as an injury to the brain caused by trauma, most often from physical assaults, sports or motor vehicle accidents. The CDC estimates that, annually, 1.5 million Americans survive TBIs. The latest research found that the number of women who experience a TBI from domestic violence is thought to be 11 to 12 times greater than the number of TBIs experienced by those in the military or athletes combined. Of course, men and children can also experience TBI

as a result of domestic violence.

How Domestic Violence Causes TBI

There are several ways a victim can suffer a TBI at the hands of an abuser:

- Strangulation (the victim doesn't need to lose consciousness for the brain to be affected by even seconds of a loss of oxygen)

- Suffocation in which an abuser holds a pillow, hand or other object over a victim's mouth and nose

- Abuser striking a victim's head with an object

- Repeated blows to a victim's head through striking or kicking

- Violent physical shaking by an abuser

- Striking a victim's head against a wall, headboard or other hard surfaces

- An abuser pushing a victim down a flight of stairs or out of a moving car

A TBI Means an Abuser Is Escalating

Abusers almost always escalate their abusive tactics over time. A TBI is a severe red flag that an abuser is willing to use potentially deadly force to control their partner. You deserve to feel safe in your relationship and there are people who can help you get out safely.

Consider calling your local domestic violence hotline [Renewal House] to talk about next steps.

Renewal House funding sources:

NYS Office of Victim Services

NYS Office of Children and Family Services NYS Department of Criminal Justice Services NYS Coalition

Against Sexual Assault

NYS Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence

St. Lawrence County Department of
Social Services

United Way of Northern New York

FEMA

Arconic Foundation

NNY Community Foundation

Stewarts Holiday Fund

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Donations and Fundraising

✂

Fall 2023 Newsletter

I have enclosed my tax-deductible donation in support of the programs
and services offered at RENEWAL HOUSE.

\$250 _____ \$100 _____

\$75 _____ \$50 _____ Other Amount _____

I give permission for my name to be listed on the donor
appreciation report in the next newsletter.

I do **NOT** want my donation to be recognized.

NAME: _____

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Please make checks payable to RENEWAL HOUSE and mail to:

3 Chapel Street, Canton, NY 13617.

Your support is greatly appreciated!

We now accept credit card donations. Please contact Ilene or Shari at 315-379-9845.
Or go to our website at silvrenewalhouse.org to make your donation.