

Breaking the Cycle of Family Violence

Written by Dr. Howard T. Washington

In February of 2011, Jennifer Hudson's interview with Oprah Winfrey aired where they discussed the tragic deaths of Jennifer's mother, brother and seven-year-old nephew. The estranged husband of Jennifer's sister was arrested and charged with the 2008 killings. This highly publicized case is just one example of the silent epidemic of domestic violence. The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence defines domestic violence as *the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and or other abusive behavior perpetrated by an intimate partner against another. It is an epidemic that affects individuals in every community, regardless of age, economic status, race, religion, nationality or educational background. Violence against women is often accompanied by emotionally abusive or controlling behavior and thus a part of a systematic pattern of dominance and control. Domestic violence results in physical injury, psychological trauma and sometimes death. The consequences of domestic violence can cross generations and truly last a lifetime.*

As our focus this month turns to women's issues, I cannot help but speak to the need to address the silent cry of the victims of domestic abuse and family violence. The statistics are startling. A 2011 survey conducted by the National Violence Against Women reported that 1 in every 5 women in the United States have been raped. Over 50 % of the females raped reported being raped by an intimate partner. The U.S. Department of Justice reports that historically women have been most often victimized by someone they knew.

The first step in breaking the cycle of family violence is recognizing the signs of abuse. Abuse can be physical, verbal, emotional, sexual, or digital. Physical abuse is any use of physical force with the intent of causing fear or injury. This can involve pushing, pinching, hitting, kicking or using an object or weapon. Verbal or emotional abuse includes behaviors such as insults, threats, embarrassment, isolation, intimidation and stalking. Sexual abuse is any action that impacts a person's ability to control their sexual activity or the circumstances in which the activity occurs. Rape, coercion and any unwanted sexual contact are examples of sexual abuse. Digital abuse is a new form of abuse in light of the social networking technologies that exist today. This form of abuse is the use of social media to intimidate, harass or threaten a current or ex-dating partner. It includes demanding password, checking cell phones, cyber bullying, sexting, excessive or threatening texts, or stalking on Facebook or other social media.

For more on dating or domestic violence visit www.breakthecycle.org.

If you are concerned that you (or someone you know) is a victim of domestic violence, you may want to ask the following questions.

Does your partner (or the partner of someone you know)...

1. Embarrass you in front of family and friends?
2. Insult, intimidate or make you feel inferior?
3. Threaten you verbally?

4. Physically assault you? It may start and gradually escalate to cause bruising and injury.
5. Pressure you to have unwanted sex?
6. Isolate you from family and friends?
7. Keep you from doing things you like to do?
8. Punish you for making him or her angry?

Do you...

1. Feel afraid of your partner's reactions or actions?
2. Make excuses for your partner's behavior?
3. Try not to do anything that will make you partner angry?
4. Stay in a relationship because you are afraid of what your partner will do if you broke up?
5. Accommodate everything your partner wants regardless of what you want to do?

If any of these circumstances are happening to you, you may want to consider talking to someone to get help. Without reaching out to get help, the abuse will continue. Visit www.womenslaw.org to research resources available to prepare a plan to get help.

Reporting domestic violence is a serious matter and must be done with extreme caution and proper planning, but help is available. Ohio Domestic Violence Resource Center provides information and community resources available to help you stay safe and get legal protection when necessary. Locally C.H.O.I.C.E.S. of Columbus provides assistance to victims of domestic and family violence. If you or someone you love is a victim, do not hesitate to recognize the abuse, research the options and break the cycle of violence. Your safety and the safety of your family may depend on it.

COLUMBUS Programs

C.H.O.I.C.E.S.

P.O. Box 6157

Columbus, OH 43206

Hotline: (614) 224-4663

Phone: 614-224-7200

Fax: (614) 224-7222

Web: <http://www.ccafvl.org>

Jewish Family Services

1070 College Ave

Columbus, OH 43209

Phone: (614) 231-1890 x118

Phone: (614) 358-2530

Fax: (614) 231-4978

Web: <http://www.ifscolumbus.org/>

Statewide Programs - OHIO

Ohio Domestic Violence Network

4807 Evanswood Dr. Suite 201
Columbus, OH 43229
Hotline: (800) 934-9840
Phone: (614) 781-9651
Phone: 614-781-9651
Fax: 614-781-9652
Web: <http://www.odvn.org>
Email: info@odvn.org

Ohio Domestic Violence Resource Center

Web: <http://www.ohioDVresources.org>

This site provides information on domestic violence and community resources available to help you stay safe and complete the court papers necessary to get legal protection.

Ohio Legal Services

Phone: 1-866-529-6446

Web: <http://www.ohiolegalservices.org/>

Visit the website or call the phone number to find the Legal Services office nearest you.

Rahab's Hideaway

Web: <http://www.rahabshideaway.org/>

Assisting women escaping from prostitution and sexual exploitation. Services include maternal and pediatric health care, mental health services, child and youth development programs, education, and job training.