

A woman with dark curly hair and glasses is sitting on a bed, crying. She has her hand pressed against her forehead, and her eyes are closed in distress. The background shows a bed with white and red bedding.

What Is Domestic Violence?

A comprehensive guide to helping you understand domestic violence and abuse

Domestic violence is not always easy to spot. It doesn't always come with bruises or a black eye.

Victims may not always be in imminent danger, but rather feel controlled or uncomfortable, be forced into doing something they don't want to or be intimidated by their partner, all signs of abuse. Domestic violence is ongoing and often escalating.

This toolkit will provide you with these insights and more. Inside you'll find:

- Helpful Articles
- Recommended Books
- Lists
- Danger Assessments
- In-Depth Videos
- Survey Results
- Support Communities
- How to Find Help



There are hundreds of articles on [DomesticShelters.org](https://www.DomesticShelters.org) covering the many facets of domestic violence. Here are links to those that will help you answer the question, “What is domestic violence?”

[Abusive Red Flags](#)

10 indicators of an abusive partner to be aware of.

[Profile of an Abuser](#)

Warning signs to help you spot an abusive partner.

[This is What Abuse Looks Like](#)

Sometimes signs of control are not always obvious.

[10 Patterns of Verbal Abuse](#)

This form of abuse may be difficult to recognize.

Signs of Gaslighting

Learn the signs of this subtle form of psychological abuse.

What is Gaslighting?

This type of psychological abuse leaves survivors questioning every memory they have.

What is Coercive Control

This difficult-to-recognize form of abuse is often disguised as love.

Recognizing Religious Abuse

Is your abuser using your spiritual beliefs to control you?

Identifying Financial Abuse

Questions to ask to help you identify this type of abuse.

Sexual Abuse to Control

Sexual abuse can take many forms beyond rape.

Signs of Elder Abuse

Domestic violence can happen later in life, too.

Recognizing Emotional Abuse

These 19 signs will help you identify this type of abuse.

[Misconceptions About DV](#)

Experts clear up some myths about intimate partner violence.

[How Abusers Speak](#)

Listen for these words that could spell control, or much worse.

[Demographics and Domestic Violence](#)

Statistics on the demographics of domestic violence.

[The Lingo of Domestic Violence](#)

Terms and phrases used to describe the components of an abusive relationship.

[History of Domestic Violence Coalitions](#)

Understand the history of coalition work.

[Domestic Violence in Affluent Marriages](#)

Abuse in affluent marriages.

[Including Them and Them When Talking Domestic Violence](#)

For individuals who fall outside the categories of male and female.

[Men Can Be Abused, Too](#)

Facts everyone should know about DV against men

Sexual Coercion

How sexual coercion is a form of abuse.

Victim Shaming

Victim shaming comments and questions focus the blame on the wrong person.

Toxic Triangulation

How an abuser causes conflict through miscommunication with others.

The Violence Against Women Act

How this law is helps to make the world a more peaceful place.

Grey Rape & Stealthing

Two concerning buzzwords surrounding violence against women.

A Deadly Cycle

The four stages of abuse that can happen over and over.

The Cycle of Violence

Along with the Power and Control Wheel, these illustrative tools can help survivors understand domestic violence.

Understanding Grooming

A predatory tactic that is meant to build a deep emotional connection

[Homicide and Injury](#)

Leading facts and statistics on homicide and injury from domestic violence.

[Possessiveness](#)

Signs of possessiveness that can turn into abuse.

[Financial Abuse](#)

Learn the terms that define this form of intimate partner abuse.

[Violence in LGBTQ Relationships](#)

Abuse occurs in the same frequency and severity among the LGBTQ communities.

[Incest and Domestic Violence](#)

Incest and domestic violence are intricately linked.

[Withholding Medical Care and Medication](#)

Another way an abuser will wield power and control over a victim.

[Do You Know These 7 Terms for Abuse?](#)

The vocab of domestic violence is broad and diverse.

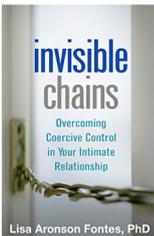


Reading books can be a helpful way to understand if you're a victim of abuse and understand the abuser's behavior.

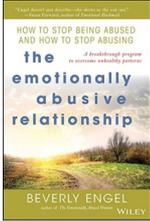
Here are our recommended reads:



Not To People Like Us: Hidden Abuse In Upscale Marriages. Why does a highly-educated woman with a career and resources stay in an abusive marriage? How can a man considered a pillar of his community and regularly give his wife a black eye? Why are we convinced domestic violence is restricted to the lower classes, when its not? The author explores the overlooked population of upscale wives, who rarely report abuse and remain trapped by their own silence.



Invisible Chains: Overcoming Coercive Control in Your Intimate Relationship. Showered with attention? It can feel incredibly romantic and can blind you to hints of problems ahead. What happens when attentiveness becomes domination? The desire to control can lead to jealousy, threats, micromanaging, even physical violence. If you are trapped in a web of coercive control, this book provides answers, hope, and a way out



The Emotionally Abusive Relationship: How to Stop Being Abused and How to Stop Abusing.

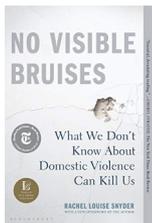
Whether you suspect you are being emotionally abused, fear that you might be emotionally abusing your partner, or think that both you and your partner are emotionally abusing each other, this book is for you. In this breakthrough book, Beverly Engel, one of the world's leading experts on the subject, shows us what it is and what to do about it.



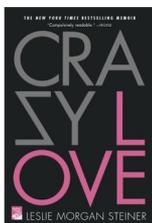
Surviving a Cyberstalker: How to Prevent and Survive Cyberabuse and Stalking. This book is written to help you protect yourself from cyberabuse and stalking and to empower you to fight back. It is vital to regaining control over your life in case you and a cyber predator or stalker ever cross paths. Alexis Moore is the foremost cyberstalking authority in the world. In this book she shares her creative tactics overcoming cyberstalking.



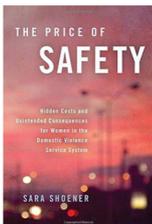
Goodbye, Sweet Girl: A Story of Domestic Violence and Survival. It is a hell of a thing to write about brutality and suffering with strength, grace, generosity and beauty. That's precisely what Kelly Sundberg has done in her gripping memoir about marriage and domestic violence. Sundbergs honesty is astonishing, how she laid so much of herself bare, how she did not demonize a man who deserves to be demonized.



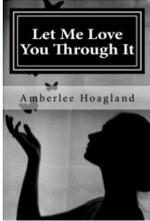
No Visible Bruises: What We Don't Know About Domestic Violence Can Kill Us. In *No Visible Bruises*, journalist Rachel Louise Snyder gives context for what we don't know we're seeing. She frames this urgent and immersive account of the scale of domestic violence in our country around key stories that explode the common myths—that if things were bad enough, victims would just leave; that a violent person cannot become nonviolent; that shelter is an adequate response; and most insidiously that violence inside the home is a private matter, sealed from the public sphere and disconnected from other forms of violence.



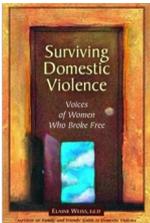
Crazy Love. At 22, Leslie Morgan Steiner seemed to have it all: good looks, a Harvard diploma, a glamorous job in New York City. Plus a handsome, funny boyfriend who adored her. But behind her façade of success, this golden girl hid a dark secret. She'd made a mistake shared by millions: she fell in love with the wrong person.



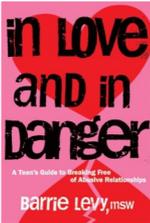
The Price of Safety: Hidden Costs and Unintended Consequences for Women in the Domestic Violence Service System. This book is an account of the resources for survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV) and IPV survivors' experiences with them in three communities in the United States.



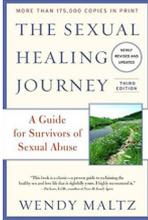
Let Me Love You Through It: The Inspiring True Stories of Victims, Becoming Survivors of Domestic Violence. Abuse thrives in the silence. Join the author on her mission to bring to light the biggest, silent epidemic man has ever known; 29 brave women and men, including the author, provide you a peek inside the true darkness of their lives lived in domestic violence, and their encouraging battles to escape.



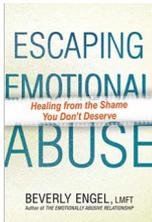
Surviving Domestic Violence: Voices of Women Who Broke Free. Stories domestic violence survivors who escaped their abuser, reclaimed their dignity, reconstructed their life, and rediscovered peace. Domestic violence doesn't just happen "out there." It happens in our neighborhood and on our street. It happens to women we see at work, the supermarket, and the PTA board meeting. Find encouragement and hope in the voices of these who broke free.



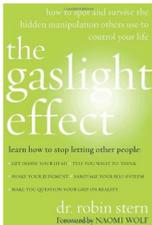
In Love and In Danger: A Teen's Guide to Breaking Free of Abusive Relationships. With one out of 11 high school students experiencing physical abuse, this book is an important read for teenagers who have questions about abusive dating relationships, helps them understand the causes and consequences of their situation, learn what they can do about it, find help from parents and other adults, and discover how to build healthier relationships.



The Sexual Healing Journey: A Guide for Survivors of Sexual Abuse. Compassionate and enduring, renowned author, psychotherapist, and certified sex therapist Wendy Maltz presents a comprehensive program for healing that sensitively takes readers step-by-step through the recovery process, integrating expert advice with groundbreaking exercises, proven techniques, and first-person accounts of women and men at every stage of sexual healing.



Escaping Emotional Abuse: Healing from the Shame You Don't Deserve. In *The Emotionally Abused Woman*, therapist Beverly Engel introduced the concept of emotional abuse, one of the most subtle, yet devastating forms of abuse within a relationship. Now Engel exposes the most destructive technique the abuser uses to break our spirit and gain control—and guides readers on how to free themselves from the shame that can keep them from the life (and the love) they deserve.



The Gaslight Effect: How to Spot and Survive the Hidden Manipulation Others Use to Control Your Life. Gaslighting is an insidious form of emotional abuse and manipulation that is hard to recognize and break free from. The book tells you how to detect gaslighting, recognize the stages and how to escape it in your relationships.



Sometimes lists are easier on the mind because they are uncluttered and to-the-point. If you'd rather read a few items vs. articles or books, these lists are for you.

To view all list items at once, click the SEE ALL button located below the list text.

- [25 Relationship Red Flags](#)
- [25 Risk Factors for Domestic Violence](#)
- [18 Things Abusers Do When They're Gaslighting](#)
- [19 Myths About Domestic Violence](#)
- [35 Ways to Recognize Emotional Abuse](#)
- [16 Signs of Financial Abuse](#)
- [33 Signs of Elder Abuse](#)



There are three well-known, free, online assessment tools available that can help you understand the level of danger that may be present, but not always obvious.

The Danger Assessment

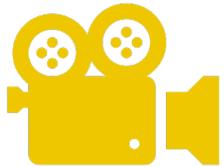
The free tool helps determine the level of danger an abused person has of being killed by an intimate partner.

MOSAIC

Using a series of questions, this tool assesses how similar a situation is to other situations that have gotten worse.

Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment

A risk assessment designed to be used by professionals that calculates how a man who has assaulted his female partner ranks among similar perpetrators with respect to the likelihood that he will assault a female partner again in the future.



Videos to Watch



[Click video thumbnail to watch](#)



[Click video thumbnail to watch](#)



A lot of lessons can be taken away from people who have been through it before. Check out the following survey results to learn from the experiences of others.

- [Which type of abuse did you experience first?](#)
- [At what age did you first experience abuse by an intimate partner?](#)
- [If you've experienced cyberstalking, what tactic did your abuser use?](#)
- [Did your batterer use strangulation as an abuse tactic?](#)

- Did you find verbal abuse more or less damaging, long-term, than physical abuse?
- What did your instincts tell you when you met your abuser the first time?
- How do you feel the system is failing DV survivors?
- Did an abuser ever use sleep deprivation as a form of abuse?
- Which abuser(s) have you encountered?
- As a survivor of abuse, what term do you prefer?



Online forums and chats can help you connect with others who are in or have faced similar situations and find support and ideas from the survivor community.

[AfterSilence.org](https://www.AfterSilence.org) aims to help victims become survivors and to communicate in the recovery of domestic and sexual violence. It offers an active message board and chat room for rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse, incest and molestation survivors. There are over 31,000 members and about 1,000,000 posts, including recent posts and many useful posts from days and months past.

[Pathways to Safety International](https://www.PathwaysToSafety.org) If you're an American overseas, your situation is different than 99% of your fellow countryman, and this site will be a wonderful resource for you. Among the services is a 24-hour response to emails, as well as international phone options.

DomesticShelters.org Facebook Page offers one of the most active places where domestic violence survivors. You'll find conversation, past experiences and unvarnished stories, and occasionally advice from professionals who have joined in on a topic.

DomesticShelters.org Facebook Group is a private group designed to be a safe space for domestic abuse victims, survivors, advocates and others affected by abuse to support one another through meaningful dialogue and helpful insight.

Fort Refuge is a clever, grassroots site run by survivors for fellow survivors as a safe place to come together and discuss their struggles and victories in healing from various types of abuse. Though the forum and chat do not boast the same numbers as some of the larger organizations, they are one of the more active conversation places on the internet currently. They also add new content to their site regularly.

Love is Respect - National Teen Dating Helpline focuses on teen relationships and can be accessed by phone, text or live chat. It offers real-time, one-on-one support by trained peer advocates who offer information and advocacy to those involved in dating abuse. They also offer support to parents, teachers, clergy, law enforcement, and service providers.

National Domestic Violence Hotline offers confidential, private, one-on-one chats with advocates every day 24/7.

OnYourMind.net is a safe and anonymous place for teens to get information and support from other teens in an online chat room, covering topics such as relationships, school, depression, stress, suicide, parents, cutting, identity and health.

Pandora's Aquarium is an online forum with around 2 million posts and over 70,000 members, and is run by Pandora's Project, which provides information, support and resources to rape and sexual abuse survivors and their friends and family.

When accessing hotlines, chats or forums from a computer, tablet, or smartphone, please remember to take the necessary precautions to keep your activities confidential from your abuser. Learn more about how to stay safe online [here](#).

Also, keep in mind that local shelters may offer in-person or virtual support groups. You can find shelters in your area at [DomesticShelters.org](https://www.DomesticShelters.org).



Another way to determine if you're experiencing abuse is to contact a trained domestic violence advocate near you or through a national service.

To search for domestic violence program staffed with trained advocates, visit [DomesticShelters.org](https://www.DomesticShelters.org) and type either your city and state, or ZIP code, into the search bar at the top of the page. A list of organizations and contact numbers near you will be displayed. To reach an advocate, reach out directly by calling the phone number listed. Most are open 24/7.

To speak to an advocate at the National Domestic Violence Hotline, also 24 hours a day, seven days a week, call 800-799-SAFE (7233) or visit [thehotline.org](https://www.thehotline.org) to chat online.

It's important to know that your call is confidential and you can choose to remain anonymous when speaking with an advocate. To know what to expect when calling, read [this article](#).