

Myth 1

People who abuse their partners and use violence in relationships just lose their temper or have an anger management problem.

Fact: Abusers often use anger as an excuse to justify their behavior and actions. Many people experience anger but do not control, manipulate, or harm others. Domestic violence is not simply a loss of control over anger or temper; it is a specific pattern of behaviors and actions that one person takes to control and abuse another person. Domestic violence is often carefully planned and thought out so as not to alert your close friends or family members.

Myth 2

Domestic violence only occurs in low-income or certain ethnic and cultural communities.

Fact: Domestic violence occurs across all levels of society and affects people from every social, economic, ethnic, religious, and cultural background. While domestic violence is more common in households with lower annual incomes, domestic violence occurs in homes of any income level.

Myth 3

There is something the victim did to cause the abuse or could have done to avoid the abuse.

Fact: No one deserves to be abused, regardless of what they do. Abusers almost never take responsibility for their actions, but may apologize or try to make up for their behavior. Blaming the victim is another form of control and manipulation to keep them in the relationship and make them feel guilty for a problem that is not their fault.

Myth 4

Men and LGBTQ partners cannot be victims of domestic violence.

Fact: Although women make up the majority of those victimized by domestic violence, men can also be victims. Couples in same-sex relationships experience abuse at similar rates to heterosexual couples.

Myth 5

Drugs and alcohol cause domestic violence.

Fact: Substance abuse and domestic violence are two separate issues that often go together, and it is difficult to

address one without addressing the other. Both require separate specialized treatment, and neither is the victim's fault. The presence of drugs and alcohol in a relationship where there is also domestic violence can significantly increase the level of danger. People who use drugs or alcohol may be less inhibited, and thus become angered more easily, but there are many people who abuse substances who do not use violence. Abusers often blame their behavior on drugs and alcohol.

Myth 6

Children are not affected by domestic violence if they were in a different room or didn't witness the violence firsthand.

Fact: Domestic violence affects children of all ages in a variety of ways. Even if they do not directly see the abuse, children may overhear arguments, violence, and verbal abuse. Children can be surprisingly perceptive and will detect stress and anxiety in a relationship and tension between the parents. Sometimes when a parent is a victim of abuse, children may also suffer abuse.

Myth 7

Victims choose to stay in an abusive relationship; they can leave if they really want to.

Fact: Victims may feel trapped in an abusive relationship for a variety of reasons. Victims are often at the highest risk when they choose to leave the relationship, and some may think it is safer to stay. There are many factors that may keep a victim from leaving including threats to harm or kill, financial dependency, immigration status, or a lack of resources or support.

Information adapted from the following sources:

The National Domestic Violence Hotline - What is Domestic Violence: www.thehotline.org/get-educated/what-is-domestic-violence

The Clark County, Indiana Prosecutor - Myths and Facts about Domestic Violence: www.clark-prosecutor.org/html/domviol/myths.htm

Boston University Police Department - Domestic Violence Myths: www.bu.edu/police/prevention/domestic_violence_myth.htm

Center for American Progress - Domestic Violence in the LGBT Community: www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbt/news/2011/06/14/9850/domestic-violence-in-the-lgbt-community

