



**COVID-19**

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## COVID-19 and Domestic Violence

Domestic or intimate partner violence happens globally in the best of times. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), one-third of women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual violence by a partner in their lifetime. While there is no single survey demonstrating it, the body of global research surveys indicate that men experience domestic violence as often as women (*Psychology Today*).

The WHO has warned that COVID-19 creates a situation—due to stress, the disruption of social and protective networks, and decreased access to services—that increases the risk of violence in the home.

Are you worried about your neighbor, yourself, or your partner being the victim or even the perpetrator of domestic violence? Help is available. Check for national resources online or call your employee support program, physical or mental health provider, or local government for help and information about resources in your community. In an emergency, call the police.

Below are ideas to help you or someone you know in situations of domestic violence.

What can you do if you are living with domestic violence?

- Violent behavior can escalate fast. It can start as verbal abuse and change to yelling and then to hitting things, pets, or people. Remember that the violent behavior ends when the person who is having the behavior works on it. This is beyond your control.
- Make an emergency plan: Prepare a bag with your important documents, keys, clothes, and other important items. If you have children or pets, think about them and how to protect them in case of an emergency. Have a list of phone numbers you can call, including the police, domestic violence

services, and people you can count on, like friends and family. Generally, feeling fear or anger can give you the impulse to contact the special services or emergency numbers, do not hesitate to do so if you feel it is the right time for you.

What can you do if you realize that your neighbors are living with domestic violence?

- Violence at home can have serious physical, emotional, and psychological consequences. In most countries, if you realize that your neighbors or anyone you know are living an event of domestic violence, the recommendation is to call the local special services or emergency number.

What can you do if you realize that when you get angry, you feel that you can't control yourself and you hurt others?

- You can learn to control your emotions and express them in healthy ways. First, however, you need to take action to keep everyone safe:
- Recognize the physical warning signs of anger, such as changes in body temperature, tension in your muscles or jaw, or stomach aches.
- Take a time out. That means that you stop, go to another room, or take a walk. The important thing is that you put some distance between yourself and others but stay in a safe space. If you stop at the beginning of a situation, you will be able to avoid escalation and avoid hurting others.
- During the time out, think about yourself, your feelings, and your thoughts. Try to identify if you are angry or if you feel anything else: stress, pain, fear, etc. Maybe you feel emotions that you have difficulty managing. Try to think of your needs and the positive things you can do to feel better. Try to identify your thoughts blaming others (“I wouldn't get angry if you weren't such a flirt”), and reframe it in such a way that you are in control of your



emotions and responsible for your own actions (“I am afraid that when this pandemic is over I won’t have a job and my partner will leave me. I can’t control this situation, but I can work on this relationship.”). Remember, the only person you can control is yourself.

- Come back to others when you don’t feel angry anymore. If you start feeling angry again, take more time out.

Maybe you learned not to ask for help to show that you are a strong person, but people can be helped to manage violence. Look for classes or counseling to help you learn to manage anger, develop communication skills, and have safe, healthy relationships. If you don’t know where to start, try calling your employee support program, or local or government family support services in your community.

#### References

World Health Organization (WHO). (2017, November 29). *Violence against women*. Retrieved May 9, 2020, from <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>

Psychology Today. (2019, November 19). *Domestic violence against men: No laughing matter*. Retrieved May 9, 2020, from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/talking-about-men/201911/domestic-violence-against-men-no-laughing-matter>

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