

Though many people would say that relationships enrich their lives, that sadly isn't the truth for everyone. For some relationships, it can have a different effect that often goes unaddressed or sometimes unnoticed. Domestic violence impacts many people physically and mentally, and it is a very serious public health issue. Domestic violence can occur between anyone with a significant relationship living in the same household. The purpose of this article is to educate and help the public understand what domestic violence can all look like and bring awareness to some of the statistics of domestic violence.

On average, for one year, more than 10 million women and men are physically abused due to domestic violence. That is nearly 20 people per minute. On average husbands/boyfriends are responsible for the murders of three women every day. One in nine men and one in four women experience severe physical violence, sexual violence, and/or stalking within a domestic relationship. Having impacts of injury, PTSD, fearfulness, and needing the use of victim services. Over 27,000 calls monthly go to the National Domestic Violence Hotline and each year there are over 10 million Americans that are subjected to psychological and physical abuse from a loved one. Specific to our service area, WoMen's Rural Advocacy Programs have seen an increase within the past year. During fiscal year 2022, October 1, 2021, through September 30, 2022; 239 domestic abuse/human trafficking clients were helped in Lyon/Lincoln County, 201 in Redwood County, and 147 in Yellow Medicine County. Currently during fiscal year 2023, from October 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023; Lyon/Lincoln County has already served 221 clients, Redwood has served 214, and Yellow Medicine has served 131. When comparing the first 3 quarters of fiscal year 2022 (October 2021-June 2022) to the first 3 quarters of fiscal year 2023 (October 2022-June 2023), WRAP has seen an increase of 28%. While reading these statistics, keep in mind that these numbers are only from the violence that is reported. With that being said, it is believed that over 50% of domestic violence abuse goes unreported each year.

So, what is domestic violence? Domestic violence is a pattern of behaviors used to maintain or gain control and power. Those patterns range anywhere and can include physical and sexual violence; using coercion and threats; using intimidation; being emotionally abusive; isolating their victim/s; minimizing, blaming, or denying the acts of abuse; using children in the abuse; using male privilege; and using economic abuse. These tactics are usually not used alone but sadly occur simultaneously.

Sometimes abuse can be hard to understand. The Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, MN developed a diagram to help the overall understanding of patterns in domestic abuse relationships by identifying abusive and violent behaviors. The power and control wheel identifies power and control as the goal of all the tactics of abuse. While looking at the wheel please keep in mind while being created, it assumes she/her pronouns for survivors and he/him pronouns for the partner. However, the behavior being discussed can happen to people of any sexuality or gender. Domestic violence and relationship abuse can be hard to explain in a single diagram, but the Power and Control Wheel gives a good idea of how to understand domestic abuse and what it entails.

Let's break down the wheel. On the outside of the wheel, it says physical and sexual violence and on the inside are 8 different tactics and the ways in which they achieve that dominance. Some of those tactics are in other kinds of relationships that are not yet considered physical or sexual abuse. What this wheel shows is that physical and sexual violence put together with those tactics is how they gain that power and control. What many victims do not realize is how those eight tactics can be the start of that cycle and how realizing those signs may prevent further, more damaging abuse.

Using Coercion and Threats:

- Making and/or carrying out threats to do something to her
- Threatening to leave her, to commit suicide, or to report her to welfare
- Making her drop charges
- Making her do illegal things

Using Intimidation:

- Making her afraid by using looks, actions, or gestures
- Smashing things
- Destroying her property
- Abusing pets
- Displaying weapons

Using Emotional Abuse:

- Putting her down
- Making her feel bad about herself
- Calling her names
- Making her think she's crazy
- Playing mind games
- Humiliating her
- Making her feel guilty

Using Isolation:

- Controlling what she does, who she sees, and talks to, what she reads, and where she goes
- Limiting her outside involvement
- Using jealousy to justify actions

Minimizing, Denying, and Blaming:

- Making light of the abuse and not taking her concerns about it seriously
- Saying the abuse didn't happen
- Shifting responsibility for abusive behavior
- Saying she caused it

Using Children:

- Making her feel guilty about the children
- Using the children to relay messages
- Using visitation to harass her
- Threatening to take the children away

Using Male Privilege:

- Treating her like a servant
- Making all the big decisions
- Acting like the “Master of the castle”
- Being the one to define men’s and women’s roles

Using Economic Abuse

- Preventing her from getting or keeping a job
- Making her ask for money
- Giving her an allowance
- Taking her money
- Not letting her know about or have access to family income

Domestic violence has many signs. It is important to recognize these signs and if you need assistance please reach out. WRAP provides free & confidential services to victims of domestic violence and/or human trafficking in Lincoln, Lyon, Redwood, & Yellow Medicine counties. WRAP can be reached at 1-800-639-2350 (after business hours calls are forwarded to Safe Avenues in Willmar). If you would like to learn more information about WRAP please visit www.letswrap.com or check out our Facebook or Instagram pages!

<https://www.thehotline.org/identify-abuse/power-and-control/>

<https://www.loveisrespect.org/everyone-deserves-a-healthy-relationship/power-and-control-dating-abuse/>

<https://ncadv.org/STATISTICS>

<https://www.theduluthmodel.org/wheels/understanding-power-control-wheel/>

