Student Notetaker

Silent STORM
Intimate Partner Violence and Stalking

The IMPACT on the Workplace

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Objectives:

- Identify the pervasiveness of intimate partner violence
- List myths associated with intimate partner violence
- Define intimate partner violence
- Define stalking
- Outline early relationship indicators
- Describe the power and control wheel
- Define the cycle of violence
- Define the tension-building phase
- Define the honeymoon phase
- Describe the danger zone
- Define recognize
- Define respond
- Define refer

Overview

- Scope
- Intimate Partner Violence
- Behaviors of Concern
- Cycle of Violence
- Action Options

Intimate Partner Violence Is Pervasive

- Epidemic
  - 1 woman out of 4 will be a victim in her lifetime
- Toll on workplace
  - 3-4 billion dollars per year in lost wages, productivity, and time away from work
  - Catastrophic event could be an outcome

Intimate partner violence is a widespread problem with serious consequences for the victims, their families, and their workplaces. When we say domestic violence is an epidemic, we’re not exaggerating. It’s everywhere. The statistics indicate 1 out of 4 American women will be a victim of domestic abuse, either physically or psychologically, in her lifetime. That means it is certain that any mid to large size company has employees dealing with intimate partner violence.
One of the most common myths is that smart and successful people don’t get entangled in abusive relationships. There is absolutely no stereotype. There’s no typical victim of intimate partner violence. Victims include surgeons, police officers, judges, and prosecutors. This abuse transcends all socioeconomic lines.

Myth number two is that intimate partner violence is not a workplace issue. Many people assume it’s simply a private matter that only affects individuals in their lives at home. We’ve all seen news reports of tragic incidents where an abuser actually went into a partner’s workplace and began shooting. Executives, managers, and employees are now beginning to recognize that the spillover effects of intimate partner violence are often subtle and pervasive.

Myth number three is that blatantly violent or life-threatening situations are the only kinds of scenarios that could impact the workplace. In truth, the most toxic effects of intimate partner violence can be silent—almost invisible.

It absolutely affects the company at their productivity level. When a victim is preoccupied with all the abuse, she is obviously being distracted; she’s being taken away from her work; she can’t stay focused, so she’s not being a productive employee.
Intimate Partner Violence Definition

A pattern of coercive behavior used by one person in an intimate relationship to gain power and control over another. Includes physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, and financial abuse.

Not only does it impact that individual’s ability to do her job, but the people around her. It’s a ripple effect. If that individual works in a pod or cubicle and the phone rings, people surrounding that cubicle may hear parts of the conversation. They stop working and begin to talk among themselves or IM or email each other. So now you’ve not only lost the productivity of the victim who received the abusive phone call, you lose the productivity of several employees who inadvertently become a party to the event.

It occurs between people of all racial, economic, educational, and religious backgrounds, in heterosexual and same sex relationships, living together or separately, married or unmarried, in short-term or long-term relationships.
Physical abuse is more than just battering. It includes pushing, shoving, slapping, hitting with fist, kicking, choking, grabbing, pinching, pulling hair, or threatening with weapons.

Emotional abuse is the use of words to break a person’s spirit or destroy their self-esteem. It includes intense and repetitive degradation, isolation, and control of the actions or behaviors of the partner through intimidation or manipulation, to the detriment of the individual. It can also encompass: yelling, shouting, name calling, put-downs, threats of physical abuse, humiliation in front of family/friends, destruction of personal property and/or pets, disrespect for feelings and opinions, blaming you for situations, jealousy, possessiveness, mind games, stalking, silent treatment, and making all the decisions.
Behaviors of Concern
Recognizing Abusive Relationships

- Isolates from friends and family
- Uses the children
- Uses economic abuse
- Uses emotional abuse
- Uses stalking tactics

- Does the offender want to isolate you from friends and family? For example, controlling what you do, who you see and talk to, what you read, where you go, limiting your outside involvement, using jealousy to justify actions.

- Does the offender use the children? For example, making you feel guilty about the children, using the children to relay messages, using visitation to harass you, threatening to take the children away.

- Does the offender use economic abuse? For example, preventing you from getting or keeping a job, making you ask for money, giving you an allowance, taking your money, not letting you know about or have access to family income.

- Does the offender use surveillance tactics? For example, does he check the odometer on the car to track how far you've travelled?

- Does the offender use emotional abuse? For example, putting you down, making you feel bad about herself, calling you names, making you think you're crazy, playing mind games, humiliating you, making you feel guilty.

Stalking or other harassing behavior is often an integral part of intimate partner violence. Stalking refers to acts of following, viewing, communicating with, or moving in a threatening or menacing manner toward someone without that person’s consent. It entails a pattern of harassing behaviors intended to frighten, intimidate, terrorize, or injure another person. The primary motives for stalking include power, control, and possession.
Research suggests a strong connection between stalking and intimate partner violence, concluding that 81% of women stalked by husbands or cohabitating partners also endured physical assault by the individual. Offenders engaging in stalking behavior follow a path that ultimately can lead to homicide.

The abuser’s control tactics are what convinces the victim that she and/or her children are unable to safely leave the relationship.

Intimate partner violence is about Power and Control. In the early stages of an abusive relationship, the foundation of power and control may be built through flattery and adulation.

An offender can be very charismatic, forming attachments very quickly. But then the evidence of power shifts; he starts isolating his victim from friends and family.

He doesn’t like the associations his victim has established because now he has an investment in the relationship. He’s shifted the power balance and his victim goes along with it. A victim may feel it’s no big deal; that he’s just being a little protective.
The next step may be moving in together. He then learns a lot about his victim. He knows her bank account information and her social security number, so he uses that information to maybe start controlling her finances. Now he’s in almost total control.

There’s no violence at this point and there doesn’t even have to be violence. But it can much more insidious—this psychological and emotional abuse. There may also be an internal tearing down of the foundation of the victim’s identity.

This diagram helps us understand the different means and mechanisms used by abusers to establish and maintain control over their intimate partners. It is important to realize that many of these strategies are non-physical and many of them are not against the law. However, they are very powerful and destructive and they are reinforced by the threat or actual use of physical and sexual violence.

Abusive relationships oftentimes display a predictable cycle of violence. Even in healthy relationships, there are normal ups and downs, but in an abusive relationship, the physical and emotional stakes are typically much higher.
First comes the tension-building phase, followed by an abusive incident, and then a “honeymoon” phase when the abuser is profusely apologetic. As time goes on, the “honeymoon” becomes shorter and shorter. Although the victim desires the relationship to stay in the “honeymoon” phase, it rarely works that way.

The tension-building phase is when the abuser starts to get angry. The abuse may begin, there is a breakdown in communication, the victim feels the need to keep the abuser calm, tension becomes overwhelming, and the victim feels as though she is walking on eggshells.

When the offender believes that his ability to control the victim is diminishing, it creates this triggering mechanism where he then has to compensate for that loss.
When the offender believes that his ability to control the victim is diminishing, it creates this triggering mechanism where he then has to compensate for that loss. This can result in an overreaction, and many times this overreaction is a violent one.

**Abusive Incident**
- Incident of violence or threat occurs
  - More intense than during tension-building phase
  - May increase in intensity with each act
- Victim traumatized
- Abuser blames victim

Some Behaviors of Concern, such as sadness, might not look like they could lead to a Flash Point. What begins as sadness may evolve into a serious depression and the potential for suicide. An individual contemplating suicide may not be thinking about taking his life alone, but may also decide to take the lives of others in the workplace.

The third stage is the honeymoon phase, where the abuser apologizes for the abuse and promises never to repeat it. The abuser could blame the victim for the abuse or may even deny the abuse took place or that it was as bad as the victim claims.

After a violent incident, the abuser may work to rebuild the relationship by asking for forgiveness and promising it won’t happen again.
He may fulfill some of the promises made in the honeymoon phase, giving the victim hope the abuse has ended, or the abuser may even give gifts to the victim. It's a time when things in the relationship seem to be going just fine. It's often a time when the person trying to leave the relationship either loses resolve or is persuaded to stay.

In this kind of the cycle, there can be periods of time when things seem almost normal. But then tension begins to build and, sooner or later, there is another explosion of psychological or physical violence. It is important to understand that not all abusive relationships follow this kind of recurring pattern or cycle. Some abusers seem to strike without warning, with no buildup of tension. And some abusers have no remorse for their behavior or actions. With these kinds of abusive profiles, there may not be a honeymoon phase.

While there may or may not be a predictable pattern of abusive behaviors in any given relationship, there is a predictable period when the danger of physical violence increases dramatically. That period is when the power and control dynamics are ultimately challenged when the victim decides to leave the abusive relationship.
When the victim of abuse leaves or announces that the relationship is at an end, she enters what is generally called the "danger" zone. Terminating the relationship is really breaking the cycle of violence. Some studies tell us that it’s 20 times more dangerous in the timeframe when an individual decides to leave.

If the victim moves away from the abuser, it is almost guaranteed that the abuser will try to stalk the victim in the workplace. Because control is no longer possible at home (and the victim may have a new and unknown place of residence), the abuser will try to apply the abusive tactics to the workplace. First may come harassing phone calls, followed by threatening to show up at the workplace, and then, actually showing up at the workplace. When the cycle of violence at home is broken, the violence and abuse spill into the workplace.

At no time is the risk greater to anyone associated with the victim than when the victim has ended the relationship.

In the United States alone, three women per week, on average, are killed by their partners. This can happen even when the woman has been granted a Restraining Order or an Order of Protection. When a victim does get an Order of Protection, it is not uncommon for the workplace to be listed as part of that protective order, just as it is not uncommon for the workplace to never be informed of that fact.
First, it’s important to recognize the signs that a co-worker or colleague may be in an abusive relationship. We talked about stalking—both physical and electronic. Those are red flags—signs that violence could be brewing.

Some of the signs may be more subtle, such as someone wearing a turtleneck in summer because she is trying to hide bruises. The same is true for other kinds of clothing that may seem out of season. If flowers or gifts are delivered to someone and there’s an unenthusiastic or nervous reaction, that can be a sign. Increase in absences or tardiness, poor concentration or inconsistent work, high anxiety and/or fearfulness, and receiving an unusual number of calls, faxes or e-mails from a partner are all signs.

Other signs may include:

- Frequent unexplained use of leave time
- Discomfort communicating with others
- Sudden, unexplained requests to be moved from public locations
- Frequent financial problems
- Sudden change of address
- Reluctance to participate in after-work activities

The workplace is basically “ground zero” for this type of behavior to be observed.
It's not your job to be a counselor or an expert in Social Services, but if you feel comfortable, you might approach the individual in a caring way and give her an opportunity to talk and share her burden. If you decide to do so, keep in mind that the goal is simply to listen and offer support. It's not your responsibility to provide advice on how and what to do.

As a result of your approach, the employee may confirm that intimate partner violence is occurring. If this happens, you should express your concern and support, and assure the victim that the information will be shared only on a need-to-know basis. It is imperative to tell only those who need to know, such as security personnel.

Inform the victim that intimate partner violence is a crime and that protection can be sought from the courts. Listen in a non-judgmental way. Provide information about company and community resources and suggest safety planning. Do not tell the person what you think she should do. Respect the person's ability and responsibility for solving her own problems (when connected with appropriate resources).

Do not try to physically intervene. Do not offer to go to the person's home to get her things or have the person stay with you.

If an employee feels uncomfortable approaching a colleague who may be a victim, that employee should nonetheless alert a manager who can gently inquire of the potential victim about possible intimate partner violence.

If you've recognized some signs of potential intimate partner violence, but you don't feel comfortable approaching the individual directly, you should report it. Share your concerns with your manager, supervisor, human resources, or security, and continue to pay attention. If you see more signs of potential abuse, be sure to report those as well.

It may help to go with someone to report the potential problem. It may be with the victim, a co-worker, or a colleague who shares your concerns. Remember how quickly a personal problem can turn into a workplace problem. Your organization needs to be aware of anything that could pose a threat to its people.
Action Options

- Refer
  - Help victim connect with outside agencies
    - Battered women shelters
    - National Center for Victims of Crime
    - National Network to End Domestic Violence
    - Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence

If your organization has its own resources for dealing with situations like this, you should follow those guidelines. In most cases, though, “refer” means to help the victim connect with outside agencies that have experience dealing with victims in abusive relationships.

This is not an area for amateur help, especially if the victim is getting ready to leave the abusive relationship and enter the danger zone. By referring victims to resources that already exist in the community, you can help someone transform from victim to survivor.

The National Center for Victims of Crime, the National Network to End Domestic Violence, and the Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence are all groups that promote getting help to individuals that have been victimized. Some organizations, such as the Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence, are willing to work with companies to help them take a stand against this issue and to promote awareness in their workplaces.
Be Safe, Sensible, and Prepared
Steps to Safety

American Bar Association
Commission on Domestic Violence

In An Emergency

If you are at home and you are being threatened or attacked:

- Stay away from the kitchen (the abuser can find weapons, such as knives, there)
- Stay away from bathrooms, closets, or small spaces where the abuser can trap you
- Get to a room with a door or window to escape
- Get to a room with a phone to call for help; lock the abuser outside if you can
- Call 911 (or your local emergency number) right away for help; get the dispatcher’s name
- Think about a neighbor or friend you can run to for help
- If a police officer comes, tell him/her what happened; get his/her name and badge number

At Home

- Keep a phone in a room you can lock from the inside; if you can, get a cellular phone that you keep with you at all times
- If the abuser has moved out, change the locks on your door; get locks on the windows
- Plan an escape route out of your home; teach it to your children
- Think about where you would go if you need to escape
- Ask your neighbors to call the police if they see the abuser at your house; make a signal for them to call the police, for example, if the phone rings twice, a shade is pulled down, or a light is on
- Pack a bag with important things you’d need if you had to leave quickly; put it in a safe place or give it to a friend or relative you trust
  - Include cash, car keys, and important information, such as court papers, passport or birth certificates, medical records, medicines, and immigration papers
- Get an unlisted phone number
- Block caller ID
- Use an answering machine; screen the calls
- Take a good self-defense course
**Children**

- Teach them not to get in the middle of a fight, even if they want to help
- Teach them how to get to safety, to call 911, to give your address and phone number to the police
- Teach them who to call for help
- Tell them to stay out of the kitchen
- Give the principal at school or the daycare center a copy of your court order; tell them not to release your children to anyone without talking to you on the phone; give them a photo of the abuser
- Make sure the children know who to tell at school if they see the abuser
- Make sure the school knows not to give your address or phone number to anyone

**Outside the Home**

- Try to get rides with different people
- Shop and bank in a different place
- Cancel any bank accounts or credit cards you shared; open new accounts at a different bank
- Keep your court order and emergency numbers with you at all times
- Keep a cell phone and program it to 911 (or other emergency number)

**At Work**

- Keep a copy of your court order at work
- Give a picture of the abuser to security and friends at work
- Tell your supervisors—see if they can make it harder for the abuser to find you
- Don’t go to lunch alone
- Ask a security guard to walk you to your car or to the bus
- If the abuser calls or emails you at work, save voice mail and email messages
- Your employer may be able to help you find community resources