



Domestic Violence During a Pandemic

Home should be a safe place. We are sheltering in our homes while physically distancing, but this isolation forces victims of domestic violence into uncomfortable and dangerous circumstances. People currently living in an abusive situation may be at an increased risk for abuse while practicing physical distancing. The isolation leads to victims not having access to their traditional support system and their normal autonomy. Usually when a victim seeks help they will wait for their abuser to go to work and their children to go to school. During the pandemic, that is not an option.

How do I know if I am in an abusive relationship?

Domestic abuse includes any attempt by one person in an intimate relationship or marriage to dominate and control the other. Domestic violence and abuse are used for one purpose and one purpose only: to gain and maintain total control over you. An abuser doesn't "play fair." An abuser uses fear, guilt, shame, and intimidation to wear you down and keep you under their thumb.

You might be experiencing domestic violence if you're in a relationship with someone who:

- Calls you names, insults you or puts you down.
- Prevents or discourages you from going to work or school or seeing family members or friends.
- Tries to control how you spend money, where you go, what medicines you take or what you wear.
- Acts jealous or possessive or constantly accuses you of being unfaithful.
- Gets angry when drinking alcohol or using drugs.
- Tries to control whether you can see a health care provider.
- Threatens you with violence or a weapon.
- Hits, kicks, shoves, slaps, chokes or otherwise hurts you, your children or your pets.
- Forces you to have sex or engage in sexual acts against your will.
- Blames you for his or her violent behavior or tells you that you deserve it.
- Threatens to tell friends, family, colleagues or community members your sexual orientation or gender identity.

If you're in an abusive, dangerous situation, keep the following in mind:

- Think of strategies to avoid encounters in areas like bathrooms and kitchens where there are more hard surfaces and access to knives or dangerous objects. Take advantage of distancing, playing in the yard, sleeping separately.
- If you can, reach out to any of the hotlines or organizations mentioned on the next page.
- Remember there are no emergency orders in place that state you cannot leave your home if there are safety concerns.
- Reach out virtually, join a Facebook group run by a therapist, or connect with a professional to set up a facetime session.
- Be aware of the risks of using technology.
- Reconnect with loved ones, even if you've lost touch.
- If you are in imminent danger call 911.
- Keep cell phone on you and charged at all times.
- Courts are still open and protection orders can still be sought. Carefully assess if this is a safe option.
- Create code words to use with family and friends to alert them if you are in an unsafe situation.
- Reach out to a spiritual support system (friend from church, faith leader).
- Understand there is no perfect plan of safety especially right now, but by maintaining a routine and having plans in place may increase an individual's personal safety.

If you suspect someone is in an abusive relationship you can do the following:

- Find ways to create community for abuse survivors through virtual connections. Set up virtual watch parties or happy hours.
- Reach out to your neighbors. If you haven't seen their car move or their curtains go up in a few days, send a text message to check in.
- Offer a safe word for when they may be in trouble and need help.
- If possible, suggest doing necessary errands together (keeping a safe distance) such as trips to the bank or grocery store.

Resources for victims of domestic violence

- **National Domestic Violence Hotline** Call 1-800-799-7233 or text LOVEIS to 22522
Available 24/7. Can connect callers with local resources and immediate support. Also available through [online chat tool](#).
- **National Sexual Assault Hotline** 1-800-656-4673
Provided by RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network). Available 24/7. Also available through [online chat tool](#).
- **Crisis Text Line** Text HOME to 741741
Available 24/7 for victims of abuse and any other type of crisis.
- **Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline** 1-800-422-4453
Available 24/7 in 170 different languages.
- **Office on Women's Health Helpline** 1-800-994-9662
A resource provided by the US Department of Health & Human Services
- Find a list of resources organized by state [here](#), provided by the Department of Health & Human Services' Office on Women's Health

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