



Transforming Lives Through Healing and Intervention

Dear Pastor or Community Leader,

Thank you for your interest in Abuse Recovery Ministry & Services (ARMS) and for your willingness to address such an important issue as domestic abuse.

ARMS provides a free recovery program for victims of domestic abuse called Her Journey. Since 1997, ARMS has served over 40,000 women. Her Journey is designed to help all women, especially those in the faith community, heal from all types of domestic abuse. Most abuse is not physical. But all forms of abuse are about gaining power and all bring death to individuals, couples, families and our community. Using biblical principles, we encourage beliefs and behaviors that heal and promote healthy lifestyles. Her Journey is available nationwide, internationally and on Zoom. The curriculum is available in English, Spanish, Russian and Swahili currently.

ARMS also provides men's and women's intervention groups and is considered an expert in this field by the larger domestic violence community partners. Although men often present as victims, this is not always the case. However, more true male victims are reporting, and we also do have resources for them.

You probably know families dealing with these issues, but you may not realize it. Domestic abuse is often hidden. Silence prevails because of shame and fear that others will not believe it. Three in ten women and one-and-a-half in ten men will be a victim of domestic abuse in an intimate partner relationship within their lifetimes. I wish I could say that abuse is not an issue in our churches. The truth is that it is just as prevalent in the faith community as in the secular community. Abuse knows no social, economic, racial or religious bounds.

Because we know this issue is so epidemic, we hope to partner with you and your community. We are available to assist you with training for your staff or any volunteers who would feel called to partner with us in the effort to end the cycle of abuse from a Christian perspective. Please feel free to call with any questions or to let us know how we can be of further help.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stacey Womack".

Stacey Womack
Executive Director

PO Box 663, Hillsboro OR 97123 (503) 846-9284
www.abuserecovery.org / www.facebook.com/abuserecovery
ARMS is a 501(C) 3 organization. Tax ID # 93-1270845

Her Journey Program

Based on Psalm 23

Through the Valley

1. Behind Closed Doors (The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not lack.) Understanding domestic abuse and coming out of denial.
2. Drawing the Line (He makes me lie down in (fresh, tender) green pastures.) God shows us where our limits should be. Boundaries.
3. Me Angry? H--- NO! (He leads me beside the still and restful waters.) Learning to acknowledge buried anger appropriately.
4. Starved for Affection (He refreshes and restores my life - myself.) Learning to allow God to fill our need for love.
5. Perfect People (He leads me in the paths of righteousness (uprightness and right standing with Him – not for my earning it, but) for His name sake.) Learning to accept our perfect-ness in Christ.

Past the Shadows

1. Shadows of Death (Yes, though I walk through the (deep, sunless) valley of the shadow of death.) Dealing with depression.
2. Mind Makeover (I will fear no evil.) Gaining an understanding of who you are and your value by replacing old thought patterns with the truth.
3. Never Alone (You are with me.) Becoming best friends with God and being okay with your alone time.
4. Submission vs. Oppression (Your rod (to protect).) Being able to understand the difference between submission and oppression.
5. The Focus Factor (Your staff (to guide).) Learning to focus on you and your relationship with Christ as opposed to focusing on your abuser.

Into His Light

1. The Choice is Yours (Your rod and staff, they comfort me.) Taking responsibility for your choices and choosing to allow God to lead and direct you.
2. The 'F' Word (You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.) Understanding the benefits of forgiveness.
3. Women of Destiny (You anoint my head with oil. My (brimming) cup runs over.) Learning to begin dreaming again.
4. True Love (Surely goodness, mercy and unfailing love shall follow me all the days of my life.) Learning what true love really is, and what it is not.
5. Into His Light (Through the length of days the house of the Lord (and His presence) shall be my dwelling place.) Learning to live out this new life daily and prevention planning.

Groups are held continuously throughout the year. Women call for location and time information. Women can begin at any point and continue coming as long as they find it helpful.

Testimonials

I believe that the Her Journey classes saved my life. I gave them top priority at the time, so that I could learn to avoid getting into such a situation in future. I learned about personal value, strength, and perseverance in Christ. I learned to unwaveringly seek answers from the Bible and prayer, and not be intimidated by opposing views. **I adhered to these practices as if my life depended on it, because as it turned out, it did.** -Taryn

ARMS is such an important ministry so we can have women around us to help us see the abuse cycle, how we can walk out of it and move towards healing. I am grateful to have come across this ministry at a Care Net Conference and through the Bright Course videos. I hope to share my experience at the pregnancy center that I work at with the clients that I work with that have experienced abuse. -Stacey F

My hope is to help to spread the message, that God does not approve of spiritual abuse, and this can be done with the Her Journey material. Getting the message out is the core of my calling! It's what lights a fire under my feet and gets me up out of bed every single day for the last 8 years. -JW

ARMS has radically changed the direction of my life for the better. It gave me the anchor in God's word I was needing, in a time of emotional confusion. I felt like I could hear the Lord speaking to me, and comforting me, through Her Journey classes. -JW

I so appreciate you and the ARMS organization. The Her Journey group is the main highlight of my week. **I always feel comfort and support of the group.** -Cindi

I will forever be grateful that I had the rounds of Her Journey lessons with leader, group, and ARMS support, that gave me the strength and truth to stand on to eventually be free of domestic violence and set boundaries to stay abuse free. Even if I always answered, "I am fine", it was comforting to know someone cared about my safety when I was asked on different occasions if I felt safe. **Having the prayer time at the end of lessons reminded me, at the times I needed to know the most, that I was not alone in my journey!** -Rachelle

This class breathed the breath of life into my empty shell through the truths brought from God's word. I felt safe and needed His words of truth to wash over me as I healed. This class was a haven from the nightmare I had been living. **I need these truths to stand again in who God says I am. Lies had broken me down and I didn't understand how to get better.** Jesus brought me to healing through this class and other classes as well as counseling. Healing is work but when we reach for God with all our heart he heals, he restores, for he is faithful. -Jayme

I'm finally in that place, where I can see the light, walk in hope, trust and love again but in a healthier way. I see who I am and she's a godly, loving human with much to offer. She's good company. 😊 **I never thought I could say that. Her Journey launched me down this path.** -Jess

He has shown me time and time again how He cares for me through Her Journey. I loved hearing, in the first lesson, the heart of God - that He would not want any of his children to be abused. -Belinda

Understanding Domestic Violence and Abuse

A widely used definition of domestic violence is:

Domestic violence and abuse is not about one specific kind of behavior, like hitting. It is a pattern of behaviors a person uses to gain and maintain power and control over their intimate partner. Most domestic abuse isn't physical, although physical domestic violence is the number one cause of injury to women in the US, more than car accidents, mugging, and rape by a stranger combined.

Domestic abuse can also be psychological, verbal, sexual, financial, property, spiritual, physical or animal.

One legal definition of domestic violence is:

The infliction or threat of infliction of any bodily injury or harmful physical contact or the destruction of property or threat thereof, as a method of coercion, control, revenge, or punishment upon a person with whom the actor is involved in an intimate relationship.

Abusive and violent behavior is NOT defined by the extent of the victim's visible injury.

Why Victims Stay

Situation factors:

- Economic dependence
- Fear of greater physical danger to themselves and/or their children if they leave
- Lack of alternative housing, nowhere to go
- Fear the other person will take the children
- Lack of job skills
- Social isolation: lack of support from family or friends, and church
- Lack of understanding from minister, family, friends, mental health agencies, police, doctor, etc.
- Fear of involvement in the court process
- Fear of retaliation
- Inability to recognize she/he is involved in a set pattern of abuse

Emotional factors:

- Believes the violence is their own fault (they are often told this), feels as if they deserve it
- Feels that if she/he can change, it will stop his/her abusive behavior
- Insecurity over potential independence and lack of emotional support
- Guilt that the abusive person will not be able to survive alone. May have been suicidal threats
- Belief/hope that spouse/partner will change
- A tie to home, belongings
- Their love for the other

Personal belief:

- Believes that marriage is forever
- See the abuse as normal, especially if she/he was raised in it
- Believes abuse is only physical and this is just normal marital conflict
- She/He wants her children to have a father and mother
- Religious and cultural beliefs, if they could pray harder or submit more, it would end

Things one may experience from the abuser if separated:

The abuser usually tries multiple tactics once his victim has left. He/She may be angry or seem very remorseful, promising to get help or never to do it again. He/She will often blame their victim or others for their problems. He/she is the most likely to get help at this point, but even this may just be manipulation. Eventually, if they do not get what they want, they will return to anger. An abuser will often start to exercise more control over the children once they do not have as much control over the spouse/partner. Separation can be a dangerous time and we highly recommend appropriate [safety planning](https://abuserecovery.org/resources/) first. Please see even more resources at:

<https://abuserecovery.org/resources/>

Facts About Abuse

1. Abuse is the single major cause of injury to women in the U. S.
2. All physical abuse starts with emotional abuse. 90% of the scars left from abuse isn't from physical abuse, they are emotional.
3. 1 in 3 women have suffered from domestic violence or sexual assault. More men are also now reporting abuse and assault, from childhood but also in intimate relationships.
4. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, on average, more than three women and one man are murdered by their intimate partners in this country every day. In 70 - 80% of intimate partner homicides, no matter which partner was killed, the man physically abused the woman before the murder.
5. In the U. S., a woman is more likely to be assaulted, raped, or killed by a male partner than any other type of assault.
6. Up to 14% of female patients treated in the Emergency Dept are there for Intimate Partner Violence-related conditions. In addition, between 5% and 38% of all women seen in the ED report experiencing IPV in the previous year.
7. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists says that 1 in 6 abused women are first abused during pregnancy. More than 320,000 women are abused by their partners during pregnancy each year.
8. Of the estimated 4,970 female victims of murder and nonnegligent manslaughter in 2021, data reported by law enforcement agencies indicate that 34% were killed by an intimate partner. By comparison, about 6% of the 17,970 males murdered that year were victims of intimate partner homicide.
9. 50-75% of women in psychiatric wards have experienced physical or sexual abuse. Over 90% of women and men in homeless shelters have been involved in abuse and well over 90% of women seeking help from pregnancy resource centers have been victims of abuse.
10. 95% of children who experience violence in the home will grow up to repeat the pattern (the giving or the taking). 70% of males raised in abusive homes become abusive.
11. 47% of men who beat their wives do so at least three times a year.
12. For ones who have ended their abusive relationship, the abuse became more frequent or stayed the same 25% of the time. Harassment, trespassing, or stalking occurred 60% of the time.
13. There are a variety of signs to look for to determine if someone is dangerous but stalking behaviors and strangulation are in the topmost dangerous tier and are what law enforcements first consider when investigating homicides.

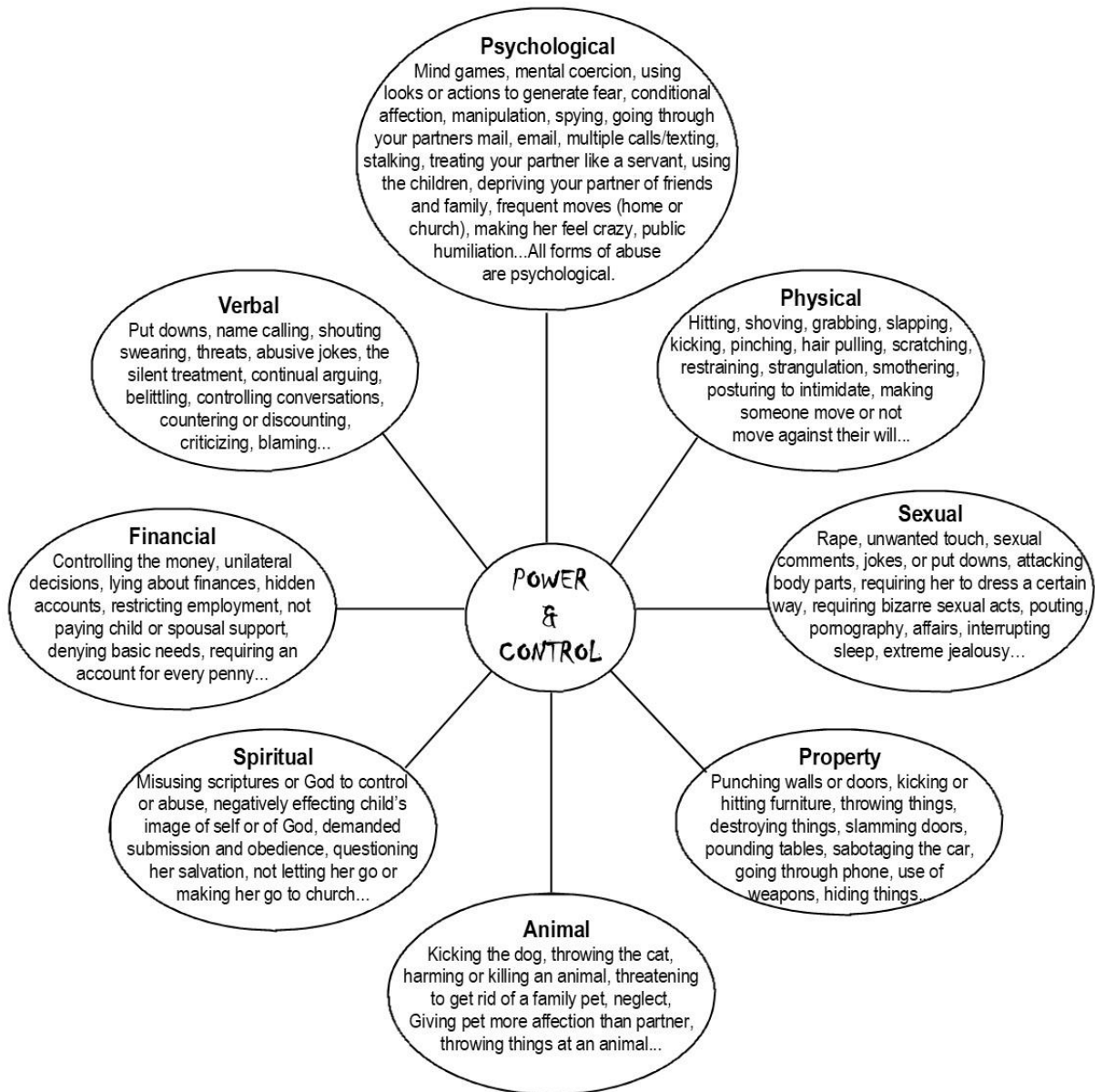
15 Warning Signs of Abuse

If a partner is displaying a combination of these behaviors, you may have a potential batterer.

1. **A push for quick involvement:** Comes on very strong, claiming, “I’ve never felt loved like this by anyone.” An abuser pressures the other for an exclusive commitment almost immediately.
2. **Jealousy:** Excessively possessive; calls or texts constantly or visits unexpectedly; prevents the victim from going to work because “you might meet someone,” checks the mileage on your car. Frequently accusing the other of having an affair, when there is no proof.
3. **Controlling:** Interrogates the victim intensely about whom they’d been talking to and where they were; controls all the money.
4. **Unrealistic expectations:** Expects the victim to be the perfect partner and meet his/her every need.
5. **Isolation:** Tries to cut the victim off from family and friends; accuses people who are your supporters of “causing trouble.”
6. **Blames others for problems or mistakes:** It’s always someone else’s fault if anything goes wrong and the victim pays the price verbally, emotionally, and in any way he/she deems necessary.
7. **Makes everyone else responsible for his feelings:** The abuser says, “You make me angry” instead of, “I am angry”, or “You’re hurting me by not doing what I tell you.” Less obvious is the claim: “You make me happy.”
8. **Hypersensitivity:** Is easily insulted, claiming that his/her feelings are hurt when he/she is really mad. They’ll rant about the injustice of things that are just a part of life.
9. **Cruelty to animals and to children:** Harms or kills animals. Also may expect children to do things that are far beyond their ability (spanks a 2 year old for wetting a diaper or may tease them until they cry.)
10. **“Playful” use of force during sex:** Enjoys throwing his/her victim down or holding them against their will during sex; says he/she finds the idea of rape exciting. May use strangulation and other dangerous tactics in the bedroom.
11. **Verbal abuse:** Constantly criticizes his/her victim or says blatantly cruel, hurtful things; degrades, curses, calls her/him ugly names. This may also involve sleep deprivation, waking you up with relentless verbal abuse.
12. **Rigid sex roles:** Expects her/him to serve, obey, submit and may require she/he remain at home.
13. **Sudden mood swings:** Switches from sweetly loving to explosively violent in a matter of minutes, or even more confusing, within seconds.
14. **Past battering:** Admits to hitting people in the past, but says that they made him do it, or the situation brought it on.
15. **Threats of violence:** Makes statements like, “I’ll break your neck”, or, “I’ll kill you,” then dismisses them with “Everybody talks that way”, or, “I didn’t really mean it.”

TYPES OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

Abuse Recovery Ministry & Services
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Abuse is still abuse regardless of what form it is.
Domestic abuse is a pattern of behaviors used to gain and maintain power and control over those closest to you.

How Prepared is Your Church or Center to Serve Victims of Abuse?

Have sermons condemned abuse in the home?

- ☐ Has your church or Center had a full sermon or training on abuse or family violence?
- ☐ When families are discussed, is it mentioned that many families do not fit standard cultural and church ideals for family life?

Is abuse discussed in premarital counseling programs?

- ☐ Is printed information on abuse (such as brochures or an [abusive behaviors checklist](#)) given to all couples who undergo premarital counseling prior to their wedding?
- ☐ Are couples asked whether there has ever been an incidence of violence in their relationship?
- ☐ Are couples admonished to live violence-free lives and offered suggestions for dealing with anger and disappointment?

Is dating violence discussed with youth?

- ☐ Has the person who works with youth been informed about the prevalence and severity of dating violence even among church teens?
- ☐ Has information on dating violence been provided in a place where a teen can see it in privacy?
- ☐ Has the issue been raised from time to time in youth gatherings, together with suggestions on how to respond to violence and how to help friends who have been abused?

Are safety mechanisms in place?

- ☐ Have abuse victims been counseled to ensure that they have made some advance preparations in case they need to leave their home quickly?
- ☐ Who can be called on short notice if there is an emergency facing a family in your care?
- ☐ Are there people in the congregation or center who are aware of the important safety issues for women and children in your area?
- ☐ Are there any members who are trained to provide emergency services?
- ☐ Does the church or center have a support group for victims of violence?

Have you asked the shelter about its needs?

- ☐ Has a contact been made between the women's organizations in your church and the nearest shelter for battered women?
- ☐ Has someone ever called the shelter to inquire how the church might assist in its work (e.g., painting a room, moving a woman and her children, childcare, food treats at Christmas, spiritual counseling)?

Do you know the transition worker by name?

- ☐ Does someone know the location of the nearest community shelter for battered women?
- ☐ Has the church established some contact with at least one worker at the shelter?
- ☐ If there are no community-based housing resources, has the congregation or center itself made some provision for emergency shelter?

Is information available in safe locations?

- ☐ Where is the safest location in your building to place information that abuse victims can look at in privacy (such as the restrooms)?
- ☐ What information can be offered to women or men in immediate crisis or those in relationships that are sometimes abusive?
- ☐ Is a contact name and phone number provided on the literature?

Adapted From *No Place for Abuse*, pages 72-74, Kroeger & Nason-Clark

Guidelines for Clergy & Community Leaders

Remember the Goals:

- 1. SAFETY for the abused and their children**
- 2. ACCOUNTABILITY for the abuser**
- 3. RESTORATION of individuals; and IF POSSIBLE, relationships**

DOs and DON'Ts with a Victim

DO believe them. Their description of the domestic abuse is only the tip of the iceberg. ***Be careful not to “victim shame”.*** This can include statements like “why didn’t you leave?” or “what did you do to make them so angry?”.

DO reassure them that the abuse is not their fault, they don’t deserve this treatment, it is not God’s will for them.

DO give them referral information; like ARMS 503-846-9284/866-262-9284 or the National Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

DO support and respect their choices. Even if you do not understand or agree.

DO encourage them to think about a safety plan: set aside some money; copies of important papers for them and children; a change of clothes hidden or in care of a friend if they decide to go to a shelter. Plan how to exit the house the next time the abuser is violent. Plan what to do about the children if they are at school; if they are asleep, etc. (This is both practical and helps them stay in touch with the reality of the abuser’s violence. [Safety planning](#) is a process that is ongoing.)

DO protect their confidentiality.

DO help them with any religious concerns. Send them to ARMS for help with this, too.

DO assure them of God’s love, and of your commitment to help them through this difficult time. Pray with them.

DO help them see their partner’s violence has broken the marriage covenant and that God does not want them to remain in a situation where their life and the lives of their children are in danger.

DO support them and help them mourn the loss of the relationship if their abuser is unwilling to make changes and the relationship comes to an end.

DO NOT give information about them or their whereabouts to the abuser or to others who might pass information on to the abuser. Do not discuss with the church council, elders, board members, other team members or volunteers who might inadvertently pass information on to the abuser.

DO NOT minimize the danger. You can be a reality check. “From what you have told me, I am very much concerned for your safety . . .”

DO NOT tell them what to do. Give information and support.

DO NOT react with disbelief, disgust, or anger at what they tell you. **Let them know that you are concerned, that you believe them, what the abuser has done is wrong, and they did not deserve to be treated abusively.**

DO NOT blame them for the other’s choice to be abusive. Encourage them to understand that they cannot control the abuser’s choices.

DO NOT recommend couples counseling or approach the spouse/partner and ask for “the other side of the story.” These actions will endanger the victim.

DO NOT recommend mediation, communications workshops or [couples counseling](#). Power and control are the problem and until that is dealt with, there is no relationship to work on.

DO NOT send them home with a prayer and directive to submit, bring the other to church, or be a better Christian spouse/partner.

DO NOT encourage them to believe forgiveness is the answer for the problem.

DO NOT encourage their dependence on you or become emotionally involved with them.

DO NOT do nothing.

DOs and DON'Ts with an Abusive Partner

DO approach them and express your concern and support for them to be accountable and to deal with their abusive behavior (**if you have a relationship with them and once the victim is in a safe place and is in agreement with this**- NEVER if they are not in agreement or if it might result in more abuse, even from afar).

DO NOT go to them to confirm the victim's story. DO meet with them if they desire, but do not allow them to focus on the partner/spouse being the problem.

DO address any religious rationalizations they may offer or questions they may have.

DO name the abusive behavior as the individual's problem, *not the spouse/partner's problem*. Tell them that only they can stop it.

DO refer to a program which specifically addresses domestic abuse. Counseling will not be enough.

DO assess them for suicide or threats of homicide.

DO warn the victim if they make specific threats toward the victim.

DO find ways to collaborate with community agencies and law enforcement to hold them accountable.

DO NOT allow them to use religious excuses for their behavior or accept them blaming the spouse/partner for their behavior.

DO NOT give them any information about their spouse/partner or their whereabouts.

DO NOT be taken in by their **minimization, denial or lying** about the abusive behavior. Abusers can be very charming on the outside and you need to refuse to be swayed and direct the conversation back to the issue of the behavior and their beliefs that the behavior is OK.

DO NOT be taken in by their “conversion” experience. If it is genuine, it will be a tremendous resource as they proceed with accountability. If it is phony, it is only another way to manipulate you to maintain control and avoid accountability.

DO NOT advocate for the abuser to avoid the legal consequences of their violence. Do not step in the way of the God-given consequences of the behavior. DO NOT provide a character witness for them with purpose in any legal proceedings for the same reason.

DO NOT confuse their remorse with true repentance. Remember true repentance comes with a change in behavior/true fruits.

DO NOT send them home with a prayer. Instead, work with others in the community to hold them accountable.

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Twelve Reasons Why Couple's Counseling is Not Recommended For Domestic Violence Situations

- 1. Focusing on the relationship assumes that each person contributes to the abusive behavior**, when in truth the perpetrator is solely responsible for his abusive behavior.
- 2. Focusing on issues other than the abusive behavior allows the abusive behavior to continue.**
- 3. Danger to the victim may increase due to the counselor's involvement in the relationship.** Because the batterer's goal is to maintain control of the relationship, any interference on the counselor's part may lead to an increase in his controlling behavior. The therapist may unwittingly elicit information or initiate interventions that escalate abuse.
- 4. A couple's counselor who is focused on the relationship may be hesitant to strongly confront just one of the individuals**, concerned this will be viewed as favoritism. Such failure to directly confront the abuse contributes to minimization and denial.
- 5. Blaming the victim.** When abusive behavior is identified, the victim may be asked, "What was your part in this?" Alternatively, the batterer may use comments and observations of the couple's counselor to justify his abusive behavior (e.g., "Remember, he said how your refusal to answer my questions only makes things worse!") many victims already tend to blame themselves; the counselor may unwittingly encourage this.
- 6. Out of fear of further abuse, the victim may not be honest about the abuse or other issues in the couple's session**, giving the false impression that things are better than they really are.
- 7. On the other hand, the victim may have a false sense of security and safety in the couple's session.** This may lead her to disclose information she normally wouldn't at home, believing that the therapist will keep her safe. Once they have left the safety of the counseling room, he may then retaliate.
- 8. In couples counseling, if the therapist focuses extensively on the abuse, the batterer may feel shamed, scapegoat, and to blame for every problem in the relationship.** In a batterer intervention group, while he is held accountable for his abuse, he is not blamed for every problem in the relationship. Couples counseling may discourage the level of disclosure that is possible in a group.
- 9. Before other issues in the relationship can be effectively addressed, the abusive behavior must end.** Abusive behavior tends to distract attention away from other issues, like a smoke screen. This is akin to couples counseling where one or both parties are active alcoholics; until they are sober, such interventions have little effectiveness. Similarly, until the abuse has stopped, other interventions have limited effectiveness.
- 10. It colludes with the batterer's denial.** It allows him to continue to blame her and/or the relationship for his abusive behavior. He can then take advantage of the couple's sessions to further his agenda of control and power over.
- 11. There is usually no assessment for violence in couples counseling.** If an assessment is done with both people present, the potential for honest disclosure will be undermined.
- 12. Couples counseling can keep a victim in the abusive relationship longer than she would otherwise stay in the false hope that the counseling may make things better.** Some forms of couples counseling require couples to make a time commitment (e.g. 3-6 months) of not separating while in the counseling, which may prolong an abusive relationship.

by Chris Huffine, Psy. D. July/98

Reading Resource List

[We Too: How the Church Can Respond Redemptively to the Sexual Abuse Crisis](#), by Mary DeMuth, Harvest House, 2019

[No Place for Abuse: Biblical & Practical Resources to Counteract Domestic Violence](#), Catherine Clark Kroeger & Nancy Nason-Clark, InterVarsity Press, 2001

[Abuse and Religion: When Praying Isn't Enough](#), Anne L. Horton & Judith A. Williams, Lexington Books 1998

[Domestic Violence, What Every Pastor Needs to Know](#), Reverend Al Miles, Fortress Press, 2011

[A Cry for Justice: How the Evil of Domestic Abuse Hides in Your Church](#), Jeff Crippen & Anna Wood, 2012

[Am I Sleeping with the Enemy? Males and Females in the Image of God](#), Ron Clark, Cascade Books, 2010

[Why Does He Do That?](#), Lundy Bancroft, Berkley Publishing Group, 2002

[The Verbally Abusive Relationship](#), Patricia Evans, Adams Media Corporation, 1992, 1996

[The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind and Body in the Healing of Trauma](#) by Bessel Van Der Kolk, MD, Penguin Books, 2015