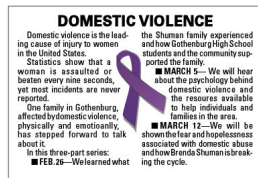


# Control drives abusers, fear keeps victims from leaving

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

Thursday, 06 March 2014 15:32 -

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The reason is quite simple but the solution is not.

In most cases, those who physically, verbally or emotionally assault their intimate partners want control over them, according to Ella Herrarte.

Herrarte is a volunteer coordinator and bilingual client advocate at the Parent-Child Center in Lexington that serves Dawson and Gosper counties and the surrounding area.

Fear is what keeps those on the receiving end of domestic violence from seeking help or leaving the situation.

“They are afraid of the threats, that they won’t be able to make it financially and they don’t feel like they have support from anyone,” Herrarte said.

Another big fear is when children are involved.

Abusers may threaten to harm or kill the children if the victim seeks help, she said. Victims also often refrain from telling agencies that could assist for fear that their children will be placed in foster homes.

“They think they will be blamed for not protecting their children from the abuse,” Herrarte said.

Women and men in abusive situations also keep that part of their lives from others.

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“Victims keep it a secret because they think people will judge them or, if they tell anyone, the abuse will be worse,” she said.

Sometimes, abusers threaten to kill whom they want to control so victims will be too frightened to leave.



In fact in those situations, Herrarte said there's a 75% chance that victims will be killed or badly injured.

“Abusers become angry because they feel like they are losing control over that person,” she said.

Herrarte said many victims don't realize that a push or shove by the abuser is physical domestic violence.

“And verbal abuse is just as damaging,” she said. “Bruises and pain go away if you're hit but if you're constantly demeaned, it's worse.”

Often abusers see wives or girlfriends as property and feel they are entitled to sex at any time. Herrarte said they don't accept no as an answer and try to manipulate.

Regardless of where victims are in the abuse cycle, Herrarte said it's important to have a safety plan.

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“Neighbors can help,” she said. “Tell a trusted neighbor what’s going on. If they hear noises coming from your house, ask them to call the police.”

Signals, like turning lights off and on, can also draw a neighbor’s attention.

If a victim sees that the abuser is upset, Herrarte warned against being in a closed room.

“Have an exit door and try not to be in a place like the kitchen where knives are,” she said. “If you if feel like your life is in danger, call the police or the crisis line if you need to come to a shelter.”

Another helpful tip in an abusive situation is to place important documents in a safe place that can be grabbed at a moment’s notice, Herrarte said.

“Passports, birth certificates, bank information, custody papers, those sorts of documents,” she said.

Because abusers often take phones away from their victims in their attempt to control, Herrarte said the Parent-Child Center has cell phones donated for people who need them.

“We make sure 911 can be called easily,” she said.

Most important is that victims of domestic violence know that the abuse is not their fault.

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## WARNING SIGNS OF ABUSE

- Some of the warning signs that someone may be abusive include:
- Wants to know where you all the time
  - Constantly texting or calling
  - Deeply jealous, accusing you of having affairs, possessive of you
  - Minimizes your feelings and concerns
  - Doesn't consider or value your opinion, undermines you
  - Wants the relationship to move quickly
  - Doesn't respect your boundaries
  - Doesn't see that he or she is doing anything wrong with how they treat you
  - Dr. Jeckyl & Mr. Hyde mentality: Shows one side to other people and shows a different one to you
  - Limits your time with your friends and family, won't let you see your friends and family
  - Doesn't take responsibility for his/her choices, blames others for what he/she does
  - History of being abusive in the past
  - Unrealistic expectations, unreasonable demands
  - Tells you that you are crazy, stupid or other names you'd want to avoid
  - Criticizes how you look and tells you no one else would want you
  - Disrespectful towards women with attitude, beliefs, comments and jokes
  - Is manipulative
  - Has a sense of entitlement and feels that he or she is owed
  - Punishes and threatens you and acts on the threats
  - Tries to say what you can wear, do and where you can go
  - Is abusive towards children, including emotional abuse
  - Is overly sensitive, gets upset over normal life situations, feels injustices by many people
  - Doesn't allow you personal space, time to yourself and may go through your things like mail
  - Always needs to be around you

Source: The Nebraska Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Coalition

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