

Profile of Abusers

Abusers do not differ from non-abusers in race, religion, or economic status. Abusers come from every profession, every level of education, every income level, every ethnic group, and every location. While batterers have proven to be a highly varied group and difficult to characterize, it has been noted that in general, batterers:

- Have low self-esteem.
- Believe in a traditional family with a dominant male as head of the household.
- Blame others for their actions.
- Are pathologically jealous.
- Believe their violent behavior is justified and should not be punished.
- Have a high need for control.
- Fear being alone.
- Lack guilt, shame, and remorse over their actions.
- Deny allegations of abuse or become hostile when confronted with them.

Abusers are also great manipulators. They can be charming, witty, attractive, and intelligent. They tend to hide their violent side from those outside the family and often appear normal and likable to others. Even when confronted with their actions by police, counselors, or in court, they can appear to be much more calm and rational than the victim. Yet, in their private lives they seem to have a dual personality – a personality that seeks to dominate others, to punish and control them through emotional and physical abuse, then transforms into a seemingly caring and emotionally independent individual when those they abuse are most likely to take flight.

These same likable characteristics are used against the victim in the Apology or Honeymoon Phase that sometimes occurs after violent outbursts. Seeing the kinder side of the batterer's character often gives the victim hope that change is possible, which leads him/her to stay. Most victims want the abuse to end, but the relationship to continue.

Impact of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence can result in serious injury or death as well as in chronic health problems. It can certainly affect the nutritional status of victims. Without intervention, the overall pattern of domestic violence continues. Sometimes physical abuse decreases with age, but there is no evidence that the abuser's cruel behavior will simply stop on its own. Even with intervention, many abusers continue to abuse and there is evidence that over time, damage to victims worsens.

Domestic Violence: A Learned Behavior

Domestic violence is not simply human nature – it is a learned behavior. Abusers have learned that violence is an appropriate way to control others through:

- Family experiences,
- External victimization,
- Various media, and
- Societal acceptance.