

[5 Ways to Combat Domestic Violence](#)

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Published by Anonymous on Oct. 02, 1999

PREVENTION

5 Ways to Combat Domestic Violence

The American Bar Association's Commission on Domestic Violence says, "Domestic violence affects us all. The justice system is struggling with an increasing number of cases relating to domestic violence. The business community suffers a loss of employee productivity and absenteeism because of domestic violence. We all need to take steps to end this national problem. Volunteer your time to help at victim services programs. Support your local shelter by organizing fundraising activities." They recommend five ways to combat spouse abuse.

1. Know Domestic Violence

When spouses, intimate partners or dates use physical violence, threats, emotional abuse, harassment or stalking to control the behavior of their partners, they are committing domestic violence. Most victims of domestic violence are women. Children who witness domestic violence are also victims; they suffer from behavioral and cognitive problems. Boys are more likely to be aggressive and engage in criminal behavior if they grow up in homes where violence exists.

2. Develop a Safety Plan

If you, a relative, a friend or a neighbor are experiencing domestic violence, think about ways to ensure your safety. Leave a spare set of keys, emergency money, important phone numbers and documents like birth certificates, passports, bankbooks and insurance papers in a safe place your batterer doesn't know about--for example, with a trusted friend or relative. Plan how to get out of your home quickly and safely, should a battering incident begin. Think about a safe place to go to once you leave your home. If you can, learn local crisis hotline numbers, so that you can call for advice or assistance.

3. Call 911, the Police

If you are being battered--or if you know that a relative, friend or neighbor is being battered by a spouse or intimate partner--call the police right away for help, if you can get to a phone safely. Don't be afraid to ask for immediate help. Domestic violence is a crime, not a "private family matter."

4. Exercise Your Legal Rights

You--or anyone else experiencing domestic violence--has the right to go to court and petition for an order of protection if you have been battered in one of the fifty states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. In most parts of the country, you can also ask for custody of your children and child support at the same time. You should try to get a lawyer to represent you

and protect all of your rights under the law. Call your state or local coalition against domestic violence, a state or local crisis hotline or the state or local bar association to learn more about where to find legal help.

5. Get Help for Your Family so that the Violence Will Stop

Many services are available to help families struggling with domestic violence. Look in the phone book for the number of your state or local domestic violence coalition or crisis hotline for help in locating the financial, housing and counseling services needed to break free of domestic violence.

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