

לא תעמד על דם רעך

Do not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor
Leviticus 19:16

DOMESTIC ABUSE

Domestic abuse is a pattern of coercive behaviors used to establish power and control over an intimate partner. These behaviors can include physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, financial abuse. The myth that Jewish families are immune from abuse is a cause for missing red flags. Jewish women are often reluctant to seek help and clergy can play a critical role in providing support.

A WOMAN MAY BE IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP IF SHE...

- becomes quiet when he is around and seems afraid of making him angry
- stops seeing her friends and family and becomes increasingly isolated
- often cancels plans at the last minute
- has unexplained injuries, or the explanations she offers don't quite add up
- has mentioned his violent behavior, but only casually

A CHILD MAY BE A WITNESS TO DOMESTIC ABUSE IF HE OR SHE...*

- has sleep difficulties
- complains of headaches, stomachaches, aches and pains with no clear medical cause
- behaves aggressively and/or has angry outbursts
- shows an increased activity level
- becomes hyper-vigilant
- exhibits regressive, "babyish" behavior
- withdraws and loses interest in friends, school, or other activities he or she used to enjoy
- seems numb or shows no feelings at all; is not seemingly bothered by anything
- develops or increases separation anxiety
- is easily distractible

** Source: The Child Witness to Violence Project, Yale University*

(Note: These signs are not unique to child witnesses of domestic abuse – they may be exhibited as a result of a variety of stressful and disturbing situations.)



202.857.1300 • www.jwi.org

1129 20th Street NW, Suite 801 • Washington, DC 20036

IF YOU SUSPECT A WOMAN IS IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP...

- approach her in a way that will not make her partner suspicious – remember that her safety is in jeopardy
- be aware that she may not see herself as abused
- let her know you understand she may not want to share details with you or leave the relationship
- listen and believe her
- offer spiritual guidance and reassure her that Judaism does not support abusive behavior

IF A WOMAN DISCLOSES THAT SHE IS IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP...

- listen and believe her
- ask her what she wants to do and respect her choices
- acknowledge that she may not want to share personal information or leave the relationship
- offer spiritual guidance and reassure her that Judaism does not support abusive behavior

IN EITHER SITUATION...

- suggest she take steps to protect her safety and that of her children
- discuss safety planning and refer her to a professional for safety planning and counseling
- *do not* use statements that shift responsibility from the abuser onto the abused
- *do not* be judgmental
- *do not* drill for information
- *do not* ask her why she does not leave
- *do not* encourage her to work it out with her abuser
- *do not* confront the abuser – it puts her and you at risk!
- *do not* counsel the couple together – it puts her at risk!
- *do not* violate the victim's confidentiality

SAFETY PLAN

A safety plan is necessary whether the victim is staying, leaving or has already walked away. Briefly, it includes: • planning how and to where the victim and children will escape • securing documents such as medical records, insurance policies, financial papers, passports, visas, the marriage license and ketubah, securing extra keys to property such as house and car • setting aside money and establishing credit in own name. Remember: Safety planning should always be done with the assistance of professionals.

REFERRAL RESOURCES

The National Domestic Violence Hotline
800.799.SAFE (7233), TTY 1.800.787.3224

The Shalom Task Force Hotline 888.883.2323
(not available in all communities)

*This tipsheet was created for clergy by
JWI's Clergy Task Force on Domestic Abuse.*