



Breaking Through

WELLNESS NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2010

Love and Violence: When relationships go bad

Most of us hope to be in a healthy loving relationship. It is part of being human to love and be loved. That doesn't mean everything is going to be perfect. There are normal ups and downs that happen in life and love. So how can you tell when a relationship isn't healthy for you?

Intimate relationships should make both partners feel good about themselves and about each other. Each person deserves and should expect to get ones needs met in a relationship. Relationships should feel balanced and mutually satisfying. Partner abuse, also called domestic violence, occurs when a relationship is based on the misuse of power and control. There are **two kinds of power**. One is **power over someone**, power that serves to control and dominate another. The other is **positive power**, which serves to nourish the spirit and increase personal growth. Healthy relationships can and should involve power, just as long as it is the positive kind!

Partner abuse is very common in the US. It occurs in couples of every race, class, and educational back-ground. There are **three different types of abuse** associated with intimate relationships. Abuse can be physical, emotional, or sexual. Any or all three of these types of abuse can occur in relationships.

1. Physical abuse may seem to be the most "obvious" type. It includes kicking, hitting, biting, choking, hair pulling, assaults or threats with weapons, destruction of property or violence to pets. Often, victims are hurt in ways that may not be immediately visible to others, like punching to the stomach or back.

2. Sexual abuse occurs when a person is forced to participate in sex against his/her will, is forced, pressured, or prevented from using birth control, or when sex and affection are withheld to manipulate or control. Sexual abuse is an act of aggression in which sex is used to humiliate, hurt, or dominate the partner.

3. Emotional or psychological abuse may not seem so "obvious" as the previous two types. It is very common and like other forms of abuse, traumatic with potentially long-lasting effect. It is expressed in some of the following ways.

- *Extreme controlling behavior.* Abusers may control their partners' activities and friends. They are intrusive, needing to always know what the partners are thinking, feeling, or doing, and are possessive and jealous of their relationships with others. This can include being "overprotective" and treating partners as if they cannot take care of themselves.
- *Threats/Intimidation.* Abusers may act like bullies, threaten to harm their partners or friends/family of partners, or they may threaten to hurt themselves.
- *Ridicule/Shame.* Abusers may criticize, make fun of, or humiliate their partners. They may devalue or disrespect their partners, sometimes in a "joking manner."

Continued on next page

INSIDE

Jealousy	3
Facebook & Relationships	3
STIs	4

LGBT Spotlight

Partner abuse can happen between partners who are in female/male, same-sex, transgender, or poly-amorous relationships. It is a myth that partner abuse only occurs in female/male relationships. Being in a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) relationship does not offer any protection against partner abuse. According to The Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence 1 in 4 LGBT people are battered by a partner.

As in many instances of abuse with female/male relationships, partner abuse in LGBT partnerships may be underreported. The complexities and/or stigma of being out as a LGBT person may also add to underreporting. Regardless of sexual orientation, abuse is unhealthy and unacceptable. For resource information specific to LGBT partner abuse, please see or contact the following or come in to the Counseling Center and talk with a counselor.

Jane Doe Inc. Voices for Change
www.janedoe.org

Fenway Violence Recovery Program
www.fenwayhealth.org
VRP@fenwayhealth.org (email)
617-927-6250, 800-834-3242 (toll free)

Gay Men's Domestic Violence Project
www.gmdvp.org,
support@gmdvp.org (email),
800-832-1901

Love & Violence *continued*

These behaviors are used to try to control their partners' actions and emotions. Abusers believe that in order to get what they want, they need to use some kind of manipulation, threat, or force. The underlying issue for abusers is the need to be in control. If they feel their control is being challenged, they will act to regain control.

When the victim questions what is going on, the abuser, can respond in different ways.

- **Denial...** *"That wasn't abusive. I was just joking when I said that. I was drunk last night, so you can't take that seriously."*
- **Blame...** *"If you weren't so demanding or needy, I wouldn't get so frustrated with you."*
- **Undermine competence...** *"You are overreacting or oversensitive. No one else would think this is a problem."*

Cycle of Violence. There is a common pattern/cycle found in abusive relationships.

- The first phase involves a building up of tension. There may be an increase of anger, blaming, and arguing.
- The second phase involves more direct expression of anger through verbal abuse or physical abuse. The abuser does not try to control his anger and violence. Expressing the anger may make the abuser feel "relief" and make the victim "change her/his behavior" to a more acceptable situation for the abuser. Often, after an incident of abuse, the victim will feel hurt and scared. The abuser may feel guilty or ashamed. This is often the time when people will seek help from friends or professionals.
- The third phase is a period of calm and a decrease/absence of abuse. The abuser may deny the abuse; may make excuses for the behavior, such as saying he/she was drunk; may apologize and agree to change future behavior. The victim is less likely to seek help/support as this can be a time in the relationship that feels most satisfying. She/he may be hopeful that things can and will be different.
- The first phase of the cycle begins again and the period of calm will become tense and lead up to further incidents of abuse.

Why do people stay in unhealthy relationships?

- **It didn't start this way.** Especially in dating relationships, the abuser can control his/her behavior for periods of time. Couples may be together for awhile before some of the unhealthy interactions begin. The victim may think the abusive behavior is atypical and assume his/her partner can return to his/her original state.

- **Familiarity.** Sometimes those who grew up in homes where there was partner violence, or parent/child violence, will believe that it is normal/expected behavior.
- **Low self-esteem or self-confidence.** Sometimes people feel they deserve to be treated badly because they don't feel special.
- **Fear of being alone.** Many people have a fear of being alone, so they stay in a bad relationship because they think it is better than being single.
- **Financial dependence.** This can be a very real fear for many people in abusive relationships, especially if there are children involved.
- **No way out.** There can be a feeling that one is trapped and there is no way out.

Signs of a Healthy Relationship

A healthy relationship is positive for both partners. Each should feel free to express oneself without fear. Couples should be able to disagree and compromise so that both individuals feel their needs are met. Hopefully, couples can learn and practice good communication skills so a healthy, loving partnership can grow and be life enhancing.

What can I do?

The first step is to recognize what is happening. It is hard to accept that you are being hurt by someone you care about. Get some information about abusive relationships and see if it applies to you. Take it seriously. Realize that you are not alone. No one causes or deserves this kind of behavior. Talk to a trusted person, whether a friend, family member, or professional. Call or come to the Counseling Center to talk to one of the counselors.

If you feel you are an abuser, there are steps you can take. You can admit that you are hurting someone and make a commitment to stop. Get information and seek out treatment for your problem. You can call a hotline or find a support group. There is help if you are willing to get it. Call or come to the Counseling Center to talk to one of the counselors.

Resources:

RAINN <http://www.rainn.org/>
24/7 Online HOTLINE or 800-656-HOPE

Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence <http://www.janedoe.org/>

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
<http://www.ncadv.org/>

Voices Against Violence, Framingham, MA
<http://www.smoc.org/index.asp?pgid=45>
 24 Hour HOTLINE 800-593-1125 or 508-626-8686

For those who abuse: <http://www.emergedv.com/>

References:

- "When I Love You Turns Violent," Scott Johnson, 1999
- "The Verbally Abusive Relationship," Patricia Evans, 1996
- "When Love Goes Wrong," Ann Jones and Susan Schechter, 1993

When Jealousy Moves In

Jealousy is an emotion most everyone experiences from time to time. It is an innate emotion that comes about as the result of a complex pattern of thoughts and, from time to time, can be part of many relationships. So, when is jealousy healthy and when is it unhealthy?

When we care for another person and fall in love, we focus our concern

Jealousy can become a destructive force in relationships if left unchecked

on our significant other's health, job/success in school, and overall well-being. Concern is based on rational thoughts, equal power, and shared decision-making.

The feeling of jealousy, however, is a feeling

state that occurs when there is a perceived threat of loss or when we want to protect what we feel is ours. The actual emotion of feeling jealous is neither healthy nor unhealthy, but neutral. It is how our jealousy affects our behavior and how we choose to channel our feelings that may create a problem. Jealousy can result in acting or behaving in an inappropriate way toward a significant other, based on irrational thoughts, misperception about other's intentions, domination, or fear of losing love. Jealousy may cause us to use verbal, psychological, or physical means to attempt to maintain control over our significant other.

Jealousy can become a destructive force in relationships if left unchecked. If jealousy is a problem for you or someone you care about, take a jealousy quiz at the link below to see where you stand. If jealousy has moved into your relationship, come to the Counseling Center. We'd like to help.

<http://www.gagirl.com/quiz/jealousy.html>

Facebook and Relationships

Do you find yourself obsessively checking Facebook pages of your current or past relationship? Do you know that recent studies have linked jealousy to increased use of social networking sites such as Facebook?

Do any of these sound familiar to you?

- » *Every time I log on Facebook I scan my ex's page for recent pictures and postings.*
- » *When I look at my significant other's page I get upset when I see comments/postings from people I don't know.*
- » *I constantly check to see who my significant other is "friending."*
- » *I saw pictures of my ex with someone new and it just made me feel so terrible.*

Knowing that thoughts can influence our feelings is not a new concept. When we think about the impact of Facebook on relationships, it may be helpful to think about how thoughts and misperceptions can lead to jealousy within our romantic relationships. Comments and pictures can be taken out of context and jealousy can take root.

When a relationship is over it can be difficult to bring closure when the opportunity exists to "check up on them" via Facebook. Be aware of the pitfalls of keeping close tabs on exes or scouring your significant other's friends list. Keep in mind that beliefs do not equal truths! Some of these behaviors can be attributed to normal curiosity, but if you feel they are getting out of control and negatively impacting your relationships, it may be time to curb the urge to go online.

We need a br8k - it's ovr and other things you should never text

- » Don't make texting your relationship's sole method of communicating. Some things should be said in person.
- » Don't communicate bad news in a text. This is not the way to break-up with someone.
- » Don't text anything private, confidential, or potentially embarrassing. You never know what could come back to haunt you in the future.
- » Don't forget that it's hard to make out your tone in a text, much as it is in an e-mail. This can result in misunderstandings and potential harm to a relationship.
- » Don't text while you're talking with someone else face to face. It gives the person you're with the message that he/she is less important than the person you're texting.

"I'm sick of just liking people. I wish to God I could meet somebody I could respect."
- J.D. Salinger

"Among other things, you'll find that you're not the first person who was ever confused and frightened and even sickened by human behavior. You're by no means alone on that score, you'll be excited and stimulated to know. Many, many men have been just as troubled morally and spiritually as you are right now. Happily, some of them kept records of their troubles. You'll learn from them—if you want to. Just as some day, if you have something to offer, someone will learn something from you. It's a beautiful reciprocal arrangement. And it isn't education. It's history. It's poetry." - J.D. Salinger

What To Expect From An STI Check

by Pamela Lehmberg, Nurse Practitioner, Health Services

Most people with a **sexually transmitted infection (STI)** have no idea they have been infected and are unaware they are passing anything along to sexual partners. One in two sexually active people will contract an STI by the age of 25. The best way to find out if you have been exposed to an STI is to get tested. STI testing is generally quick and painless, but can be confusing if you don't know what to expect. Here is a step-by-step of what to expect at FSC Health Services when you come in for the check.

First, you will need to make an appointment. The best way to do that is to call (508-626-4900) a day or two before you want to come in. The person booking your appointment will ask your name, telephone number and the reason for your visit. You could say something like "I want to get checked for STI's." Don't be alarmed, we are not nosy or judgmental, we just need to make you an appointment with the appropriate clinician. Same day appointments are often available for students with urgent concerns.

Second, you need to show up for your appointment. You may be asked to wait in the waiting area, then you will meet with a nurse practitioner (NP). After introducing herself she will meet with you in one of the exam rooms and ask questions about your medical and sexual history. Answer honestly. She will be assessing your risks so that together you can decide which sexually transmitted infections you might have been exposed to. This discussion is confidential. The NP will also talk with you about STI treatment, prevention, and if relevant, contraception.

Lastly, you will be asked to give a urine sample. The urine will be sent to a lab and checked for the most common bacterial STIs, gonorrhea and chlamydia. Most STIs are asymptomatic. However, if you do have any signs or symptoms of an STI at the time of your visit there will also be a brief genital exam. Signs of a possible STI include genital rash, bumps, blisters, or abnormal vaginal or penile discharge. Symptoms of an STI include burning with urination, pain with sex, or genital itching.

The whole STI appointment usually lasts about half an hour. Test results are generally available in a few days. You and your NP will decide if you will receive your test results on the phone or at a follow-up appointment. Health Services also has free condoms and dental dams. Whether you are visiting for an appointment or just stopping by, feel free to take what you need to keep yourself protected.

To learn more about STIs visit these Web sites:

www.ashastd.org

www.plannedparenthood.org

www.cdc.gov/std/general

FSC Health Services does not test for HIV.

We recommend:

Health Awareness in downtown Framingham

354 Waverly St. 508-935-2960

Rapid, anonymous, free HIV testing

No appointment needed

References:

Cates JR, Herndon NL, Schulz S L, Darroch JE. (2004). "Our voices, our lives, our futures: Youth and sexually transmitted diseases." Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

Top three STI myths

Myth # 1:

" If I had a STI I would know it. I would have signs or symptoms telling me something is wrong."

Reality: The majority of sexually transmitted infections are asymptomatic. Most people with an STI have no idea they have been infected and are unaware they are passing anything along to sexual partners.

Myth #2:

" I had a test that 'checked me for everything.' "

Reality: There are many different STIs, some are caused by bacteria and some are from viruses. Each infection requires its own test. There is no one test for everything. To figure out which STI you should be checked for, your provider will ask about your sexual history. S/he is evaluating your risks so being honest will help you get the best tests for you.

Myth #3:

" I am safe if I only have oral sex."

Reality: Penetrative vaginal or anal sex is needed to transmit some STIs. However, common STIs like herpes and gonorrhea can be spread by oral sex and the most common viral STIs, human papilloma virus (HPV) and herpes, can be spread by genital skin to genital skin contact.

Breaking Through

WELLNESS NEWSLETTER SPRING 2010

EDITOR: Paul Welch, LICSW

Feedback welcomed.

Please e-mail pwelch@framingham.edu

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS:

Jeanne Haley, LICSW

Marie Margulies-Ellias, LICSW

MSW Interns: Yolanda Baldwin,

Suzanne Hartmann, Erika Kling

COUNSELING CENTER

Health & Wellness Center

Foster Hall

508-626-4640

www.framingham.edu/counseling