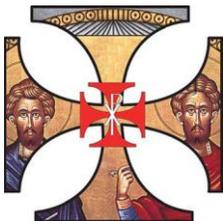


# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

## IDENTIFYING AND RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE GREEK ORTHODOX COMMUNITY



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# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:

## IDENTIFYING AND RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE GREEK ORTHODOX COMMUNITY

BY

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*The Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society, Inc. is the duly accredited women's philanthropic society of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. Comprising a National Board, nine Metropolis Boards, 480 Chapters and 27,000 members, it is the largest Christian women's organization in the United States. Since its founding in 1931, Philoptochos has undertaken a multitude of philanthropic programs to aid those who are poor, sick, and aging and that address societal issues such as child abuse, domestic violence, human trafficking and homelessness.*

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*For more information, please visit: <http://www.philoptochos.org>.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is not a family problem. It is a crime that often results in serious injury and death. Although there are nearly 5.3 million partner victimizations each year in the U.S. among women ages 18 and older, resulting in two million injuries and 1,300 deaths, many people in the Greek Orthodox community – both clergy and active parishioners alike – believe we do not have a problem with domestic violence. Among those who state there may be a problem, most believe it occurs only among immigrant or less educated women. When asked how they reached this conclusion, most state that as no victims or hardly any ever reveal the problem to them, domestic violence must not occur.

Why are our women silent? Perhaps because we are.

Whether by fact, practice or misinterpretation, our religion teaches us that marriage is a lifetime commitment, our traditions assign women the role of keeping our families together, our pride in our heritage causes us to deny our imperfections, our culture defines disclosure as shameful, and our language prevents us from accessing mainstream services. And so, we are silent.

This silence, and this denial victimizes our women yet again and isolates them from Church and community, for when we present ourselves as a community in which domestic violence does not occur, the Greek Orthodox victim remains silent. She believes she is the aberration and the only one being victimized – perhaps because she is not a “good enough” Orthodox Christian or perhaps because she has not prayed hard enough. And she blames herself, for she believes that God is allowing her to be abused because of something she did.

This manual was developed to help our community become more aware of the dynamics of domestic violence and its impact on our community. Its purpose is not to criticize our religion, our clergy, our faithful, our culture, our traditions or our men, but to enlighten and empower our women. Its purpose is to insure that Greek Orthodox victims as well as we, as a community, do not remain silent. We can accomplish this only by recognizing the horror of domestic violence and by acknowledging that it occurs in our community.

This manual is not intended to make readers experts in the field of domestic violence – a rather daunting task. Nor is it intended to be an in-depth document of its clinical or legal considerations. Rather, it is intended to provide the information and tools needed to help us more readily identify victims of domestic violence, reach out and respond to them in helpful, supportive, non-judgmental ways, and refer them to appropriate local professional services.

Our hope is that this manual will help our Church create an environment in which a victim feels comfortable turning to for help, a refuge where victims can find understanding and support, and a place where a strong and unified voice will be heard against the injustices that impact members of our community.

As part of our on-going commitment to collaborate with the nearly 500 Greek Orthodox communities throughout the Archdiocese, we welcome you to contact the Social Work Office of National Philoptochos at 212.977.7782 or by email at [socialwork@philoptochos.org](mailto:socialwork@philoptochos.org) to refer domestic violence cases to us, to help you locate local resources, to help you organize onsite seminars in your community, and to help you help victims of domestic violence.

*Paulette Geanacopoulos, LMSW*  
2012

**PART ONE:  
OVERVIEW OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

## **FACTS-AT-A-GLANCE**

*Until 1920, American husbands had the right to beat their wives with a stick “no thicker than his thumb.”*

### **PREVALENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:**

- *An act of domestic violence occurs every 15 seconds – more frequently than any other crime in the US.*
- *More than 50% of American couples will experience at least one incident of partner assault during marriage. Regular and repeated violence will occur in 10% - 20% of all marriages.*
- *10% of high school students and 22% of college students report having experienced physical violence in one or more dating relationships.*
- *25% of workplace problems - absenteeism, excessive use of medical benefits, etc. is due to family violence.*
- *A 24-hour survey conducted in 2008 by the National Network to End Domestic Violence found U.S. domestic violence programs served 65,321 victims and answered 23,045 crisis hotline calls that day.*
- *During the Vietnam War, 58,000 Americans were killed. During that same period, 54,000 American women were killed by their abusive partners.*

### **IMPACT ON WOMEN:**

- *Nearly 85% of all reported cases of adult domestic violence are women.*
- *Women are victims of domestic violence regardless of race, age, ethnicity, religion, education, income, employment, profession, immigration status, marital status, sexual preference or physical ability.*
- *More than 1 million women are stalked by their partners each year.*
- *A victim’s risk of getting killed increases when she attempts to leave or has just left. Of women who are killed by their partners, 75% are killed after they have left the relationship. On average, three women die at the hands of a current or former intimate partner every day.*

### **IMPACT ON HEALTH AND SAFETY:**

- *Battering causes more injuries to women than automobile accidents, muggings and rapes combined.*
- *1 in 3 reported domestic assaults involve the use of a weapon and / or results in serious bodily injury.*
- *Battering frequently begins when a woman first becomes pregnant.*
- *Couple / marriage counseling is not effective in domestic violence cases, as whatever the woman says in counseling may be used against her once she and her partner go home.*

### **RELATIONSHIP TO SUBSTANCE USE AND ABUSE:**

- *Although a man may use his drinking or drugging as an excuse for his violence, neither alcohol nor drugs causes the abuse. A man who batters and abuses alcohol or drugs has two different problems that must be addressed separately. A man who stops drinking but does not get help for his abusive behavior does not stop battering – he becomes a sober batterer.*
- *Although a woman may drink or use drugs, neither her alcohol nor drug use causes her partner’s violence. She is battered because her partner chooses to abuse her in order to gain and maintain control over her.*

### **IMPACT ON CHILDREN:**

- *Boys who grow up in violent homes are more likely to abuse their own female partners as adults. Girls are likely to learn that violence against women is acceptable.*
- *More than half of the men who abuse their female partners also physically abuse their children. As violence against the partner increases so does the child abuse.*
- *There is a correlation between men who abuse their partners and sexually abuse female children.*

### **ABUSE AND THE ECONOMY:**

- *A bad economy does not cause domestic violence but can make it worse. Job loss, foreclosures, debt and other factors contribute to higher stress levels at home which can lead to increased violence. A weak economy limits a victim’s options making it more difficult to find work & become financially independent.*

### **SHELTERS AND BATTERED WOMEN...**

- *In 1990, there were 1500 shelters for battered women in the U.S. and 3,800 animal shelters.*

## **UNDERSTANDING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

*To appropriately identify and respond to domestic violence, it is helpful to agree on its definition and the basis for its occurrences. It also is helpful to acknowledge that domestic violence occurs in all segments of society regardless of gender, age, religion, race, ethnic heritage, family composition, economic status or income, sexual preference, educational level, or health status. As a result, although we can identify abusive behaviors, we cannot profile who may become a batterer, or who may become a victim.*

*Perhaps most importantly, it is useful to understand that our efforts to help a victim are most effective if done on her terms and time frame – not ours. It is she who must decide if and when to take action and how. Our role is to help her understand that she is not to blame as only her partner can stop the abuse and our task is to help her explore her options, refer her to professional services, and support the decisions she makes.*

### **DEFINITION:**

**Domestic violence is a systematic pattern of violent, controlling, coercive and purposeful behaviors intended to punish, abuse and ultimately control the thoughts, beliefs and actions of the victim. This abuse usually increases and intensifies over time.**

### **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS A CRIME:**

Although domestic violence takes place between and among family members, **it is not a family problem, it is a crime.** It is called *domestic* because it occurs in the privacy of one's home –the place we expect to be safe. And it is called *violence* because it is not an argument or difference of opinion but purposeful acts that increase in frequency and intensity.

### **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS A CHOICE:**

Domestic violence occurs when a man believes that it is both **his right and his role** to control his partner. From a variety of sources, he has learned that it is appropriate and acceptable for him to use force to exercise this control, he chooses to use force and it works.

### **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS ABOUT POWER AND CONTROL:**

Domestic violence is not about losing control or being out of control. It is about the abuser choosing to use a variety of abusive behaviors to gain and maintain control over his partner. Frequently, he will use different behaviors at different times to keep his partner off guard. Some behaviors are obvious – such as threatening her with physical harm, while others are more subtle, such as “teasing” her about how she looks.

### **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS NOT JUST PHYSICAL ABUSE:**

Many victims of domestic violence are never physically assaulted.

### **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RARELY OCCURS ONLY ONCE:**

Domestic violence manifests itself through a pattern of behaviors used by the batterer to gain and maintain power and control over his victim. Oftentimes, these behaviors are difficult to recognize – especially early in a relationship.

For many women, the first abusive act will cause her to immediately end the relationship. But for others, it is a shock or an embarrassment. Some may not recognize it as abuse. Others will blame themselves and yet others, because they love their partner, will believe his promise never to do it again. But, the behaviors don't end. Ultimately, they become part of the normal course of the relationship. Not only does it take less to bring on subsequent abusive behaviors, but their frequency and severity increases over time. And, there is no guarantee that the original target of family violence will remain the only person abused. There is a strong correlation between partner abuse and child abuse.

## FORMS OF ABUSE:

*Outlined below are examples of behaviors a batterer uses to establish and maintain control. While some will employ many of these behaviors, others will not. It is not the number of abusive acts that define domestic violence, but how and why the batterer chooses to use them and how they impact the victim*

- **PHYSICAL ABUSE:**

Pinching, tickling, biting, slapping, hitting, grabbing, kicking, hair pulling, punching, pushing, burning, choking, stabbing, shooting; covering the victim's mouth to prevent her from breathing; throwing her into objects (wall, furniture, etc.); preventing her from taking medications or from getting medical or dental care; denying her access to food, fluids or sleep; forcing alcohol or other drug use on her.

- **ECONOMIC / FINANCIAL ABUSE:**

Controlling all finances; denying her information on family income; keeping assets only in his name; taking, selling her belongings; transferring assets that belong to her or her family; taking money she earns; making her ask for money; making her account for every penny she spends; preventing her from getting a job; harassing her while she is at work; badmouthing her to her supervisor and co-workers; refusing to provide adequate financial support, not paying the bills, not paying or threatening to stop child support; threatening to end health benefits for her and their children; spending family money on drugs, alcohol, gambling.

- **EMOTIONAL ABUSE:**

Making her feel badly about herself, her ethnicity, her religion, the way she talks or looks; undermining her ability as a wife, partner, mother; making her feel guilty; humiliating, laughing at her, shaming/ embarrassing her in front of others; making her think she's crazy, telling others she's crazy; name-calling, mocking, ridiculing, making legal threats, disparaging her opinions; making all decisions; making her feel stupid; bringing up past events to hurt her; constantly pointing out her weaknesses; not trusting her.

- **INTIMIDATION:**

Making her afraid by looks, actions, gestures; smashing or destroying property; displaying weapons; using his anger or "temper" to get his partner to do what he wants; using his size to bully her; using jealousy to justify his actions.

- **COERCION AND THREATS:**

Making or carrying out threats to hurt her; threatening to leave her; threatening to commit suicide; threatening to jeopardize her citizenship; threatening to report a family member to immigration; threatening to take her passport or the children's passports; threatening to take or kidnap the children and having the means to do so; making her do illegal things.

- **ISOLATION:**

Controlling what she does, reads, who she sees or talks to; insisting he escort her everywhere she goes; not letting her learn English; monitoring her time; making her account for every moment of her time; restricting use of their car, telephone, computer; being rude to her family/friends; discouraging her friendships.

- **SEXUAL ABUSE:**

Forcing her to have sex without her consent: marital rape, date rape; forcing sex after a physical beating; forcing her to have unprotected sex or sodomy; forcing her to have sex with others; criticizing her sexual performance; accusing her of infidelity; withholding sex to express anger and maintain control.

- **USE OF CONTROLLING BEHAVIORS TO CHANGE HER BEHAVIOR:**  
Interrupting, changing the topic, shouting, not responding, pressuring, being impatient, sulking, ignoring her, playing innocent victim, playing the martyr; irrational mood swings; slamming doors when leaving a room or house; crying; being sarcastic, nagging, responding with disgusted or judgmental tone of voice; being inconsistent, forcing her to choose between him and her family, failing to include her in his plans or activities; giving silent treatment.
- **BEHAVIORS DAMAGING TO THE RELATIONSHIP:**  
Having affairs, flirting, talking about the attractiveness of others; emotional withholding, not expressing feelings, not giving praise, attention, support or concern; breaking promises; not supporting her in disputes with others; not supporting her personal growth; refusing to negotiate, refusing to engage in fair fighting; not taking care of himself – poor grooming habits; snooping, mistrusting, lying; intruding on partner’s private time, failing to respect partner’s feelings, refusing to accept apologies, picking a fight, being inconsiderate; not putting a priority in the relationship; not sharing his life with her, being too busy; not planning for future; refusing to talk about their problems.
- **GENDER AUTHORITY / MALE DOMINANCE:**  
Treating his partner like a servant; insisting her place is in the home; acting like the “master of the castle;” defining women’s roles – both his partner’s and their female children. demanding obedience; taking partner for granted.
- **USING CHILDREN:**  
Criticizing, making disparaging comments about their mother directly to the children or to others in front of the children; putting children in the middle of the fights between him and his partner; telling children that their mother doesn’t really love them; using the children to relay messages; threatening to kidnap or take the children out of state or out of the country; threatening a custody battle; harassing her during visitations; threatening to report her to the authorities for allegedly abusing the children.
- **BLAMING EVERYONE AND EVERYTHING BUT HIMSELF:**  
Blaming her as the “cause” of the abuse or for “provoking” it; blaming his abusive behavior on his drinking or drugging, or on the “stress” of his work, etc.
- **MINIMIZING OR DENYING THE ABUSE:**  
Rationalizing or making light of the abuse; describing an incident as a “love pat” when in fact it was a punch; denying that an incident even happened.
- **STALKING / HARASSING / DEATH:**  
Following his partner to work, school, etc.; texting nasty and inappropriate messages; frequently calling her on the phone and hanging up; calling her at odd hours; harassing others in her family; cutting her home’s utility wires; showing up at her work and preventing her from doing her work; anonymously mailing her inappropriate or threatening items; killing her.
- **ANIMAL ABUSE:**  
Hurting, injuring or torturing pets to intimidate or threaten his partner. The ASPCA has found a significant relationship between animal abuse and family violence.

## **PATTERN OF ABUSE**

*Domestic violence is characterized by a pattern of behaviors that develops and intensifies as the abuser seeks to gain and maintain power and control over his victim. Early in a relationship, this pattern may not be obvious – even to the victim. In fact, some women report that it is only after seeing a television special on domestic violence that they realize they are being abused.*

*An effective way to help someone you think may be a victim of abuse is to help her identify the behaviors by asking specific questions. For example, if you ask, “Have you been abused?” she is likely to say no for she may not understand or believe she is abused. Rather, ask questions related to specific actions: “Does he push you?” “Has he pulled your hair?” “Does he pick fights?” “What happens when you fight?” “Does he call you names?” Refer to “Forms of Abuse” to help frame your questions.*

### **CREATES AN INTENSE, POSSESSIVE RELATIONSHIP . . .**

Claiming it is “out of love and concern” and very early in the relationship, a batterer will create an intense, possessive relationship that becomes serious very quickly. He appears to idolize his partner. He tells her he wants her to spend all her free time with him because he loves her so much. He says it would be too hard for her to work (or go to school) and raise a family at the same time. Early in the relationship, she may not view this behavior as obsessive but thinks it shows how loving, caring and concerned he is. Since she loves him, she agrees not to work, or go to school, or see her friends, or go to church. Slowly, she becomes isolated from all outside interests and from anyone who may be able to help her.

### **THE FIRST INCIDENT...**

After a while, something happens that brings on the first incident – perhaps she says she is meeting friends for lunch - without him. To stop her and to establish control over her, he does something to make her afraid: he yells, or calls her names, or he slaps or pinches her or pulls her hair. Sometimes, he does something much more subtle, like giving her a look and walking away. This incident could last a few moments or a few days. The first incident sometimes occurs when the woman becomes pregnant – a very vulnerable time for her.

### **SHOCK / SELF-BLAME...**

While many women will end the relationship with this first incident, others become shocked, frightened or embarrassed. Some will blame themselves: “I didn’t have dinner ready on time.”

### **DE-ESCALATION / HONEYMOON PHASE...**

After the acute incident, the honeymoon phase follows. He vows his love, promises never to repeat the abusive behavior, blames the incident on a bad day at work, being tired, or having too much to drink when he was out with his friends. He brings her presents and flowers, and begs her forgiveness. He cries. He may enlist family support – not only his but hers. He promises to go to counseling, N.A. or A.A. He goes to church. She believes his promises, attempts to stop legal proceedings, sets up counseling for him, and feels happy and hopeful.

### **ESCALATION / TENSION BUILDING...**

During this next phase, the batterer becomes moody, sullen and nit-picks. He isolates his partner further, withdraws affection, yells, drinks and drugs, threatens, destroys property and criticizes. She tries to calm him, sometimes is silent, other times talkative. She keeps the children quiet, agrees to everything, withdraws, tries to reassure him and cooks his favorite dinner.

### **AND ANOTHER INCIDENT AND ANOTHER...**

With each subsequent incident, the abuse intensifies. A slap no longer is enough to keep control, so he breaks a rib. Name calling no longer is enough, so he intimidates her - not necessarily by hitting

her, but by placing a bullet on the kitchen table. As danger increases, she becomes more confused and afraid. When there are visible bruises, she avoids family and friends, skips work, school and church. Slowly, she loses self-confidence and self-esteem, becomes depressed and overwhelmed. She feels hopeless and trapped. Ultimately she loses her ability to act independently. As danger increases, it becomes more difficult for her to resist or be safe. She rarely tells anyone what is happening, partly out of shame and fear, and partly out of concern that nobody will believe her. Gradually, she withdraws more.

### **HEALTH/PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT...**

Many victims experience physical symptoms such as insomnia, headaches, chronic back pain. Women who are asthmatics suffer more severe asthma attacks. Some women try to ignore the abuse by self-medicating with alcohol, drugs or overeating. Because many abusers refuse to pay for healthcare, she becomes more ill. Some suffer from rotting teeth due to lack of dental care. The frequency of exposure to repeated violent incidents causes some victims to develop **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**. They suffer intrusive memories, nightmares, flashbacks, psychic numbing and avoidance, withdrawal, and amnesia. Some become hyper-vigilant, have excessive startle responses, sleep disturbance and concentration difficulties.

### **FEELINGS OF HELPLESSNESS...**

Battered women may be perceived as weak to others and may appear as though they are “allowing” the abuse to occur. In reality, they actively are trying to keep themselves safe by doing whatever is necessary to appease the batterer. Initially, these efforts are successful and she believes she can stop the violence, but over time, and as the violence escalates, she “learns” there is nothing she can do to stop the violence. Thus, she grows to believe she is helpless. Often, the victim does not use other strategies to try to end the violence such as police intervention or Orders of Protection because she believes they are useless and would result in an increased threat to herself and her family. Unfortunately, there is truth in that, **for of women who are killed by their partners, 75% are killed after they have left the abusive relationship.**

### **VICTIM-BLAMING...**

Because the general view is that children cannot protect themselves, people are sympathetic towards children who are abused. But, because adult victims are believed to have options, they tend to be blamed. Also, many people think the adult victim contributes to her victimization – believing that she is doing something to “deserve” or “provoke” it or that in a perverse way, she “enjoys” it - views that generally are not made about victims of other forms of violence. Social approval also is more often given to a victim who resists rather than those who comply, even though resistance increases the likelihood of injury or death. Over time these victim-blaming views become incorporated into the victim’s understanding of who she is.

### **CONTINUING TO HAVE CHILDREN . . .**

The victim of violence who continues to have the batterer’s children frequently is criticized. Why isn’t she using birth control? Why is she still having sex with him? While people may assume she has access to birth control – which many do not – or that she voluntarily is having sex with him, the reality is that many abused women have learned that they can keep themselves and their children safe by complying with the abusers’ sexual advances – advances not made out of love but rather his physical and perverse needs.

### **WHY DOES A VICTIM STAY WITH THE ABUSER?**

The reasons women stay or return to an abusive relationship are complex:

- she loves her husband and wants the abuse to end, not the relationship
- she fears no one will believe her because her husband is a “pillar” of the community

- she has no place to go
- she believes the abuse is her fault
- she fears losing her children to parental kidnapping or in a custody battle
- she left before and was stalked at work or school, train station, mall, street, etc.
- she fears physical injury and death. On average, three women die at the hands of a current or former intimate partner every day

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF MEN WHO BATTER**

*Excerpted from article by Patricia Martel, LCSW-R, ACSW based on her experiences leading groups for men who batter at a mental health clinic in the Bronx, NY. Men attend voluntarily or by court-mandate. Two reasons men give for their behavior are family history: they saw their father or other significant males beating their mothers, siblings and themselves – especially when they tried to protect their mothers, and parental or their own substance abuse. Although these factors may play a role, not all men who have these life experiences become batterers. The characteristics included in this section were identified by victims of domestic violence as behaviors exhibited by their partners. We suggest that women and teenage girls look for these traits in potential partners as a way to flag someone as a possible abuser.*

#### **•HE IS JEALOUS/ LACKS TRUST**

He is extremely jealous and over possessive. He doesn't trust his partner and expects her to (*for example*) immediately answer his phone calls and texts.

#### **•HE NEEDS IMMEDIATE GRATIFICATION**

He has strong needs that must be met right away; he expects her to dedicate herself to those needs.

#### **•HE DENIES RESPONSIBILITY**

He denies responsibility for his actions. This denial perpetuates the abuse, over time intensifies it, and so distorts his sense of reality that he cannot understand why his partner objects to his punishment, especially since he does it "*for her own good*".

#### **•HE IS VERY RIGID**

He has rigid rules for behavior and uses actions to control his partner so she will follow these rules. When she breaks a rule, she is "punished".

#### **•HE FEELS SELF-PITY**

He feels everyone else is at fault for his life, so he feels sorry for himself. He feels nobody understands his potential or problems and is one against the world. Since others do not always make special concessions for him, they always disappoint him.

#### **•HIS ATTITUDE TOWARDS CHILDREN & HIS PARTNER**

Though he says he wants children, they rarely come first. He expects the entire household to revolve around him. If anyone steps out of line, his partner is to blame. Since he believes she is responsible for his well-being, he expects her to know what he needs without being asked.

#### **•HE ISOLATES HIS PARTNER**

He claims her family doesn't like him. He tells her that her female friends and neighbors are "interfering" or are "lesbians." To increase his control over her, he does not allow her to see or talk to family or friends, thus isolating her from anyone who can help her.

### **CAN AN ABUSER CHANGE?**

Once an abuser has had all of the power in a relationship, it can be difficult to change to a healthy relationship with equal power and compromises. Sometimes, the abuser will stop the physical violence but may continue the verbal and emotional abuse. The bottom line is that an abuser can and does change but only if he is held accountable, accepts responsibility for his actions, ***and willingly chooses to change.***

**PART TWO:  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & THE GREEK ORTHODOX COMMUNITY**

## GREEK ORTHODOX CLERGY PERSPECTIVES

*By Rev. Athanasios (Al) Demos, D.Min.*

When a couple comes forward to be married in the Orthodox Church they stand together as equals. Many beautiful and meaningful prayers are said for them, taken as excerpts from the Old and New Testaments. They exchange rings to express their eternal love and devotion for one another. They each hold a white candle. The white candle symbolizes the pure and holy Virgin Mary and the light burning from it represents Christ as the Light of their life. The woman is asked to imitate the Virgin for the rest of her life, to be steadfast and preserver in faith, to be obedient *to God*, to be a shining example of love, hope and faith for her family. She should be a living example of true Christian womanhood and motherhood. The man is asked to imitate Christ, to be humble, kind, compassionate, merciful and understanding. He should be a living example of true Christian manhood and fatherhood.

When the priest recites the canon of the marriage the couple is united as one in their sacred union in Christ. Their hands are joined to seal the union. They are crowned: as king and queen of their own family, therefore they should treat each other with love, dignity and respect as their own distinct "royalty." For in reality, they are each the one, singular, unique and exclusive counterpart of the other. They are also crowned as "martyrs" in that they joyfully and enthusiastically do not hesitate to sacrifice in assuring that they both do everything in their power to fulfill the physical, mental and spiritual needs of their partner.

The couple drinks from a common cup to show they will share all things in life, both the bitter and the sweet. It is a physical pledge of patient endurance in time of illness, difficulties and trouble; as well as a pledge to seek to share life fully and joyfully to the benefit of each partner, their children and families.

They then take their first walk together as husband and wife, circling the table on which is placed the Holy Gospel (or in some cases the Priest will lead them while he holds the Gospel in his right hand). This first walk is sacred in that it centers on the word of God (the Gospels) as the two take their first steps together in the name of the Holy Trinity, and thereby glorifying God. They symbolically are requested to keep the Gospel at the center of their life. They are expected to be self-aware and self-focused, but always Christ-centered.

Their role is not to be "crutches" for one another, but respectful supporters of everything and anything that will bring forth the full, wholesome potential of their partner. They should be there for one another to help each other find their full potential as a man, as a woman and as a couple. They should see their spouse as a completion and fulfillment of each other as one complete, united being, a sacramentally united couple, responsible to and for one another.

As they leave the Church they begin their life long walk together in the Light and path of Christ, their Saviour. He will guide, enlighten and direct them in their way when they are open and accepting of His guidance. Their crowns have been removed, but they each wear an invisible crown. Their main goal and purpose in sharing their life together is not only to love each other exclusively and to share their life uniquely, but to seek to provide the atmosphere and environment to help bring their partner to God's kingdom; to make their spouse's "invisible" crown a "Crown of Glory" in the Kingdom of God.

There is a point, however, in the Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians which is read that states, "...and let the wife see that she respects her husband..." Ephesians 5:33.

When a Greek Orthodox wedding reaches the point when this quote is read, there are some men who look at their wives as if to say, *"remember these words, I'm the boss!"*

Unfortunately, some women have bought into that thinking and become more susceptible to accepting abuse, beatings and battering, with no recourse. They often say that they have to keep peace in the family and endure their husband's wrath. They must remember, however, that while Christ and the Church do ask that we endure sufferings as Christians, neither Christ nor the Church wants anyone to be a victim! We are asked to forgive our enemies, but forgiveness never includes believing that we must accept abuse from anyone. We have every right to be humble, but again, humility does not include thinking that we must allow someone to walk all over us. We are not expected to tolerate or accept abuse! Each of us is a valuable, important, significant person of immeasurable worth to God and to all those who truly love us.

God doesn't just let things happen to us. It is not God's will to see anyone mistreated with abuse. God wants us to love one another with understanding, compassion, mercy, dignity and respect. Abuse is devoid of all these qualities. Each of us needs to read the statement that is also found in Ephesians 5, which precedes the words of the Epistle. It refers directly to the man's role in marriage. It reads:

*"Husbands, love your wives,  
just as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself up for her,  
that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word;  
that He might present her to Himself a glorious Church,  
not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing,  
but that she should be holy and without blemish.  
So husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies;  
he who loves his wife loves himself."*

Ephesians 5:25-28

In other words, when the husband loves his wife to the extent that he is willing to make any sacrifice for her; when he treats her with love, dignity, honor and respect - presenting her without bruises or blemishes, but whole, complete, loved, admired, adored and cherished as deemed by virtue of the position she holds as his wife - as his other self - as his completion of himself; **then** she should respect him (*in return*).

In this same Epistle to the Ephesians, St. Paul writes,

*"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God,  
by Whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.  
Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, yelling and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.  
And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another,  
even as God, in Christ, forgave you.  
Therefore, be imitators of God as dear children,  
and walk in love as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us.  
...but fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you...  
neither filthiness, nor foolish talking... which are not fitting...  
and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,  
but rather expose them."*

4:30-5:4 & 5:11

**The Bible itself tells a battered woman that one sure way to overcome the brutality of an abusive husband is by "exposing him", by telling someone!**

Psalm 55 can be interpreted to convey the betrayal of the spouse who abuses:

*“For it is not the enemy who reproaches me; then I could bear it.  
Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me;  
Then I could hide from him.  
But IT WAS YOU, my equal, my companion and my acquaintance.  
We took sweet counsel together, and walked in the house of God in the assembly.”*

The shock of the betrayal is more than overwhelming. It tears at the sacred union of husband and wife. Mutual faith, trust, and confidence are central to the success of a marriage. The betrayal of abuse can destroy a marriage. What happened to the “sweet counsel” and “the walk in Christ”? The Christian commitment of a wife can cause her great distress as well as confusion. What should she do? Will she be going against the Church by telling on her husband? Will she be unfaithful to her vows and the sacred commitment she made to him before God?

Here we see the victim, victimizing herself again, placing blame where it doesn't belong. She has to redirect the blame and realize that it is the abuser who is going against the Church. It is the abuser who is unfaithful to his sacred vows. It is the abuser who renounces his sacred commitment to her. It is the abuser who is wrong, not she!

Some friends will tell a domestic violence victim to pray, and we should pray whenever we can. Our trust, faith, hope and love for God find clear expression whenever we turn to our Lord in prayer. But prayer in itself does not stop abusive behavior. We pray for peace in the world at every Liturgy, yet we cannot regulate the lack of peace found in people's hearts. A victim's prayers, though always meaningful, cannot stop the abuser from abusing her. Concrete, tangible help is needed. Someone must be told and the battered woman must seek help from others.

Counseling sessions, on an **individual basis**, especially with a Christian counselor, may prove most helpful in resolving their problems. It has been strongly suggested that “couple counseling” could prove to be detrimental to the victim since anything the victim says may be used against her once they leave the counseling sessions. This would be the result of the abuser acting out his need to hold power and control over his spouse. What he really needs to do is to face and accept his responsibilities as an abusive perpetrator. He has committed a criminal act and must be aware of the seriousness of his actions. The abuser needs to seek help or else he will never overcome these faults and become healed. If he refuses to seek counseling, if he refuses to accept that he has a problem, then the wife may have to seek a separation for a time to help him understand the seriousness of his situation. If there is still no improvement or desire to resolve his problems, then unfortunately, the wife may have to seek permanent separation or even divorce.

For the Church and the couple, divorce is always undesirable, but sometimes it is completely unavoidable. When a woman fears for her life and that of her children, then she must make serious decisions. It would be helpful for clergy to fulfill their responsibility by seeking to become completely aware of the dilemma involved in abuse and not to defend the abusing husband, by whitewashing a potentially dangerous situation with platitudes. The woman needs understanding, help and support, not an added guilt trip from her priest or from fellow parishioners. She, as well as her priest and her Church, must be concerned for her safety and the safety of her children.

There are many types of abuse: verbal, mental and physical abuse. I would also add spiritual abuse, because the confusion brought on by the abuse diminishes and can destroy the spiritual life of a person as well.

Everyone should be more informed concerning the signs of abuse, as well as how to seek help for those who are victims of abuse. Don't stand up for the abuser, you only hurt him and his family all the more. Stand up for the victim, listen to her, believe her and take her to a knowledgeable and concerned Clergyman, Psychologist or Social Worker as soon as you possibly are able. They will take over from that point on, while you are ever available to listen, to understand, to be compassionate and non-judgmental, to be there for the person who trusts you and needs your help.

To learn more about abuse, what it is and how it can be resolved, please call the Social Work Office of the National Philoptochos at 212.977.7782.

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***Biographical Notes:***

*Rev. Athanasios (Al) Demos holds a Doctorate in Ministry in Pastoral Psychology from Andover Newton Theological School (1988), and a Masters in Divinity from Holy Cross School of Theology (1968). He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Theology from Holy Cross School of Theology (1967) and a Bachelor's Degree in History from Hellenic College (1965).*

*Father Al served as Pastor at St. George Church in Bethesda, MD. From 1996 to 1999 he served St. Paraskevi Shrine Church in Greenlawn, New York, and for two years in a row, the church achieved its highest membership, sacraments, Church attendance and donations in its history. He established the Little Angels Group (birth -4 years old), HOPE (4-6 year olds), and JOY (7-12 year olds); the AGAPE Newsletter and Care Ministry to shut-ins. He also facilitated the building of new Classrooms and Youth Center, and established a solid ministry to poor individuals and families.*

*Father Al served with distinction at Hellenic College / Holy Cross School of Theology as its Director of Development and Alumni, Director of Admissions, Dean of Students and Admissions, and teacher of the Senior Pastoral Theology Class. While Dean of the Cathedral of New England in Boston, he served as President of the New England Clergy Brotherhood and President of the Pan-Orthodox Brotherhood.*

*Father Al is a former high school and college football player who chose to attend seminary rather than play for the Philadelphia Eagles. He and his wife, Carol Psaros Demos, a Librarian at Simmons College, have two sons, Constantine who is a CPA, and Mark, who attends Emerson College in Boston.*

## CULTURAL TRADITIONS, RELIGIOUS BELIEFS & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

*For most of us, the basis of the values we develop and the standards by which we live are rooted in our ethnic heritage, our cultural traditions, our religious beliefs and our societal norms. It is also from these sources that we form our attitudes about gender roles and relationships, and our understanding of which behaviors are acceptable and appropriate.*

*Those of us raised in traditional Greek homes were taught to take pride in our heritage and to believe that our family values are the foundation of our community's many successes. Both of these principles are well-founded; however, they can muddy the waters if they cause us to deny or minimize our problems. The reality is that we suffer the same problems at the same rate of prevalence as other ethnic groups, whether it is chronic mental illness, substance abuse, eating disorders, gambling, poverty, homelessness, family violence and dysfunction, and more. But, because it has been ingrained in us that it will bring shame to our family if we disclose our "secrets", we do not talk about our problems to others.*

*Many of us were socialized to believe that the husband, as head of the household, can do no wrong. We have heard family members equate physical strength with "manliness" and Greek women described as "dependent, manipulative or hysterical." Each of these contributes to responses that our battered women hear from family members: "Any other woman would love to have him as a husband." "He's a good provider and so good looking." "How will you raise your children alone?" "You will destroy our family if you divorce." "Become a better wife - stop fighting with him." "Your father hit me. I survived."*

*Through our religion, we have learned that the Church performs each marriage with the intent that it fulfills its purposes and goals in a life-long, permanent union. We have been taught that God is a loving and forgiving God and we believe in the power of prayer. Each of these teachings can lead the abused woman to a spiritual crisis. She cannot understand why this loving and forgiving God is "allowing" the abuse to occur. Why isn't praying stopping the abuse? Isn't she praying long enough or hard enough? If she thinks - as many do - that she is being punished for something she did, why hasn't God forgiven her?*

*The playback of these tapes creates cultural and spiritual barriers that prevent a woman from believing that domestic violence is wrong, and that stop her from seeking outside help. For immigrant women, these obstacles are compounded by language barriers that keep her from both knowing about and accessing mainstream services. When these attitudes are coupled with our society's sex role stereotypes and portrayals of women, and when we are reminded that men traditionally have held positions of power in most cultures, it is no wonder that some men believe they have the license to abuse and some women believe it is their fate to live in violence.*

*Given the powerful interrelationship between culture and religion, it is important that we neither ignore nor underestimate their influence on victims of domestic violence. A battered woman - especially one who is following her cultural script - can be helped most effectively within the framework of her cultural and religious beliefs. By doing so, we accomplish several goals:*

- we validate and show sensitivity to her cultural and spiritual framework*
- we help her recognize how her cultural traditions and religious beliefs have given her the strength, inner resources and skills to cope with the abuse*
- we can dispute distortions and reframe misinterpretations*
- we can increase the likelihood she will agree to seek professional help, as actual or perceived cultural barriers influence a person's willingness and ability to accept services, and*
- we will better understand our own attitudes and beliefs so that our interactions with the battered woman will be helpful, rather than hurtful or judgmental. Only by examining our own opinions will we be able to be supportive and help her take the steps she is ready to take, at the time she is ready to take them, rather than try to convince her to do what we think she should do.*

## DISPELLING DISTORTIONS AND MISINTERPRETATIONS

### **MARRIAGE: Marriage is a life-long commitment**

#### REFRAMING THE CONCEPT:

While there is no question that we should enter marriage with the assumption that it will last for life, no victim should be made to believe that our Church values the sanctity of marriage over the sanctity of her life. For all intent and purposes, the husband, by choosing to engage in abusive behaviors and choosing not to stop, has already ended the "life" of the marriage.

### **HEADSHIP OF THE HUSBAND: The husband is the head of the household**

#### REFRAMING THE CONCEPT:

Many people's understanding of the husband's "headship" and thus, submission of the wife, is based on their interpretation and partial reading of St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. In reality, St. Paul states that in Christ "there is neither male nor female," since "you are all one in Jesus Christ."

### **WOMAN'S ROLE: To keep the family together.**

#### REFRAMING THE CONCEPT:

Since the Greek Orthodox marriage ceremony promotes a mutuality of commitment and a mutuality of respect, both partners are responsible for the family's well-being.

### **KEEPING SECRETS: «Τί θά πεί ό κόσμος;» ("What will people say?")**

#### REFRAMING THE CONCEPT:

Many of us believe that disclosure is a betrayal of the entire family. They also believe that by revealing their problems - secrets - they will be the subject of community-wide gossip. As a result, our domestic violence victims would "rather feel-the-pain than the shame". Our abused women can be helped to recognize that reporting a crime - which is what domestic violence is - is neither shameful, nor a betrayal. It should not be kept a secret but must be exposed and opposed.

### **FAMILY PRESSURES LEADING TO TOLERATING THE ABUSE:**

#### REFRAMING THE CONCEPT:

Family, gender and societal roles are ever-changing. What was believed to be the norm and what may have "worked" 25 or 50 or 75 years ago, no longer has to be what "is." Women have more options and are more independent than ever before. More importantly, they have the right to a peaceful and safe life.

### **FORGIVENESS / PATIENCE: «Κάνε υπομονή παιδί μου...» (*Have patience, my child*).**

#### REFRAMING THE CONCEPT:

No victim should be made to believe that forgiving our enemies, turning the other cheek, or practicing patience means she must endure or accept the abuse. If we suggest to a victim of domestic violence that she forgive her batterer, it should be with the understanding that act of forgiveness will help her relieve her own negative feelings towards the abuser. Forgiveness does not mean she removes responsibility for the abuse nor does it mean that she - or we - no longer will condemn his actions. The abusive actions must continue to be condemned and the abuser must continue to be held responsible for these wrongful actions.

**FATALISM: Concept of fatalism:** «Όλα είναι γραμμένα.»

**REFRAMING THE CONCEPT:**

While the victim may believe she has no control over her life, she can be helped to recognize that she has not been sitting back passively allowing the abuse to occur. Rather, she can be helped to understand that she has actively developed the coping and survival skills to manage the abuser in a way that will keep herself and her children as safe as possible.

**PRAYER: Expectations about praying, praying longer or praying harder**

**REFRAMING THE CONCEPT:**

Perhaps the most hurtful advice that a member of the clergy or a faithful person can give a victim (other than not believing her) is to tell her to pray, pray harder, pray longer and more often in a way that makes her think that we are telling her that praying will end the abuse. While praying will help a victim find the inner strength to cope with the difficult times, **prayer will not stop the abuse.** Only the batterer can stop the abuse.

**REVENGE: Assuming that a victim of domestic violence is seeking revenge.**

**REFRAMING THE CONCEPT:**

There is a huge difference between “revenge” and “justice.” The definition of revenge is to be spiteful, to retaliate, to inflict punishment in return for an injury or an insult. The definition of justice is to seek a moral rightness and fair and equitable treatment.

**SPIRITUAL IMPACT: That God is “allowing” the abuse to occur, or He is punishing her. God is great and will solve our problems.** «Ο θεός είναι μέγας»

**REFRAMING A VICTIM’S CONCEPT OF GOD’S ROLE IN THE ABUSE:**

A significant way a member of the clergy can help a victim through her spiritual crisis is by ensuring that she understands that God has neither abandoned her nor is He punishing her. She needs to hear that it is the abuser who is “letting” the violence occur, not God, and that it is the batterer who is responsible for his behavior.

## HOW WE, AS A COMMUNITY, CAN RESPOND TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

This manual neither expects you to become an expert in domestic violence, nor deal with a victim's problems alone. Rather, what it "expects" is that together, we will create a Church environment in which a victim feels comfortable turning to for help. We can accomplish this by:

- reaching out to women who we believe are being abused
  - responding in culturally sensitive ways
  - helping her to increase her safety and that of her children
  - recognizing and helping her through her spiritual crisis
  - helping her decide what is best for herself and her children, if and when to act and when not to act
  - acknowledging and setting aside our own cultural and personal biases, attitudes and interpretations about why we think someone is being abused, and what we think a victim should do
  - having the information available to refer her to local programs so that she can communicate with professional domestic violence advocates about her options,
- and,
- working cooperatively with these services in ways that will help and not harm the victim.

### **IF YOU THINK SOMEONE IS BEING ABUSED LET HER KNOW YOU CARE.**

- *Call 9-1-1 or your local police department if the abuse is occurring now.*
- *Believe her!*
- *Help her sort out some of the confusion brought on by the abuse. Be open, nonjudgmental and maintain confidentiality.*
- *Let her know she is not alone, she is not to blame and that she deserves a life free of violence.*
- *Help her develop a safety plan (see checklist in this manual).*
- *Refer the victim to a local domestic violence program and help her get the help she needs when she is ready.*
- *Do not suggest couple counseling, mediation, or communication workshops.*
- *Do not confront the abuser. Letting the abuser know that you are aware of his behavior could endanger the victim or her children.*
- *Let her know that financial help may be available from your local Philoptochos chapter or National Philoptochos if she needs it.*
- *Understand what you may view as inaction may be the victim's best safety strategy at that given time.*
- *Understand that there is no quick solution*

## **FINDING LOCAL SERVICES & RESOURCES:**

### **NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE:**

Regardless of where you are in U.S., you can locate domestic violence programs by contacting the **24 / 7 National Domestic Violence Hotline** at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or TTY 1-800-787-3224. As this hotline provides **confidential and anonymous support**, we recommend that you publicize this number in your community to enable victims to call it directly.

### **NATIONAL NETWORK TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:**

The National Network to End Domestic Violence represents the 56 U.S. state and territorial coalitions against domestic violence that serve as state-wide and territory-wide leaders in the efforts to end domestic violence. These coalitions connect local domestic violence service providers and are valuable resources for information about services, programs, legislation and policies that support survivors of domestic violence. The state-by-state listing is at:

**<http://nnedv.org/resources/coalitions.html>**

## **RESEARCH TO HELP PREPARE A VICTIM WITH WHAT TO EXPECT:**

Find 24 hour hotlines, support groups, shelters, counselling programs, social service agencies, government benefit offices and childcare programs. Designate someone, perhaps a GOYA member as part of her / his community service, to research the resources in and near your community. This information will help you prepare a victim with what to expect if and when she decides to take action. For example, if you give a victim a phone number to a local service provider, will it provide her with the service she needs and is ready to accept or, will it refer her elsewhere? **This is critical, as the victim may only be able to make one safe telephone call without the batterer finding out.**

**RECORD FINDINGS:** Create a chart to record program details.

- **ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:**

- WHO ARE THEIR CLIENTS?

- If the program is a shelter, does it accept only victims whose abuse is recent or who are in imminent danger? Is its population just DV victims or is it also a shelter for homeless women? Do they take children? If yes, is there a limit to how many? Does the sex and age of the children impact the shelter's ability to take in the victim? For example, some shelters only accept women, others only women with daughters, or if the child is a son, he must be under a specific age, e.g. 12.

- INCOME ELIGIBILITY / FEES FOR SERVICE.

- Is the service free? If yes, what is the income threshold? Is there a sliding scale fee? Do they accept insurance? Will they help the woman apply for public benefits?

- **METHODS OF REFERRAL**

- How does a person get referred to the program? Court-mandated? Self/voluntarily? Police? Social service agency? Church? Other?

- **PRACTICAL ISSUES:**

- What hours / days of the week is the program open?
- Where is it located? (If it is a shelter, they will not tell you the address)
- How accessible is it to public transportation?
- What kind of security does the program have in place?
- What languages are spoken by staff / volunteers? Do they accept volunteers?

- **WAITING PERIOD:**
  - How quickly after someone is referred or seeks the service will the person be seen / interviewed? (The longer the wait, the less likely the victim will follow up on the referral)
- **PROGRAM'S "CONTRACT" WITH THE CLIENT**
  - What will the program expect the woman to do? e.g. apply for public benefits, attend a certain number of groups, enter a job training program, etc.
  - Must she attend all sessions of (for example) the support group, or can she come and go at different times when it is safe for her to attend without the abuser finding out.
- **TRAINING / VOLUNTEERING**
  - Does the program offer training to local community groups?
  - What is an effective way for your group to work cooperatively with the program?
  - Do they need program volunteers?
  - What kind of training must volunteers take and when is it scheduled?
- **WHAT ELSE SHOULD YOU BE ASKING?**
  - Ask what else you need to know about their services that you can tell the victim.

**OFFER TO COOPERATE WITH LOCAL RESOURCES:**

Inform each program, including your local police department, of your willingness to work cooperatively with them. As noted above, ask if they offer training that interested members of your church can attend.

**PUBLICIZE LOCAL RESOURCES:**

Domestic violence education is not only an effective first step to prevention but also is a way to reach victims who may not feel comfortable speaking directly to you. The mere act of publicizing information about domestic violence gives the victim the powerful message that the Church recognizes the problem, does not condone violence, and is not closing its eyes to it.

**POST AND DISTRIBUTE LITERATURE**

- Create a **"WOMEN'S ISSUES" BULLETIN BOARD** in a public and well-traveled area of the church to post information about domestic violence services along with other women's issues - such as breast cancer, women and heart disease, etc.
  - By making the bulletin board "multi-issue", it will not identify someone who stops to read it as a victim of domestic violence, and won't inform the abuser that his partner is seeking help.
- Post and distribute a bibliography of books and articles about various women's issues including domestic violence. Request from Philoptochos' Social Work Office the fliers "Does Your Partner..." and "Developing A Safety Plan."
- Ask your priest / church office to insert these fliers in one of your weekly bulletins perhaps in October, which is Domestic Violence Awareness Month.
- Distribute the information to students and parents of Sunday School and Greek language classes, youth and sports groups, and the adult groups offered in your community.

### **SPONSOR FORUMS:**

- Sponsor a forum to promote an awareness of domestic violence. An excellent resource for our community is “**Litrosi**” (Liberation) a 48 minute videotape in Greek with English subtitles produced by the *Greek Orthodox Family and Counselling Wife Assault Program*, Toronto, CANADA. Contact the Philoptochos Social Work Office to borrow a copy.
- Invite speakers from a local shelter or domestic violence service program, Coalition Against Domestic Violence, police department or court program to discuss topics such as the psychological, emotional, economic and physical behaviors of domestic violence; safety planning for victims and their children; services available; legal aspects including what responses victims and other helping people can expect from the police and other law enforcement officials; the difference between criminal and civil court actions; how to obtain Orders of Protection and what to expect from them.
- Hold round-table discussions and “Ecumenical Town Meetings” to identify, examine and re-frame the cultural attitudes and religious beliefs that influence our understanding of domestic violence and that may appear to ignore or condone domestic violence.

### **HOLD A TEEN DATING RELATIONSHIP FORUMS:**

Together with GOYA and JOY, sponsor forums about issues such as teen dating relationships, the importance of respect, equality and compromise in these relationships, and how to identify and avoid dangerous relationships and situations. Contact local schools, the police and domestic violence programs for speakers.

### **TEACH NON-VIOLENT BEHAVIORS:**

Reach out to the youth and adult members of the community to help them learn and re-learn non-violent behaviors by bringing in local professionals to offer seminars on anger management, impulse control, conflict resolution, fair fighting, bullying and cyberbullying. Contact local youth programs or schools, local domestic violence programs, and the local police department for speakers on such issues.

### **ASK YOUR PRIEST TO SPEAK OUT AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:**

It is extremely powerful for a victim to hear the words “Expose and Oppose” spoken in church. October is “Domestic Violence Awareness” month: ask your priest to schedule a sermon or to speak at a program during October.

## DOES YOUR PARTNER . . . ?

*Recognizing behaviors that are part of domestic violence is not always easy, even for the victim -in part because domestic violence is much more than physical abuse. In fact, many women who are controlled by their partners or who live in fear have never been physically assaulted. Understanding what domestic violence is means being aware of the many different things men do to control their female partners. Use the following checklist of behaviors to help you decide if you or someone you know is being abused.*

### USE EMOTIONAL CONTROL?

- Call you names, yell or put you down, make ethnic slurs, constantly criticize you or undermine your abilities as a wife and mother?
- Act in an overprotective way or become extremely jealous?
- Make it difficult or prevent you from seeing family or friends, or badmouth your family and friends?
- Prevent you from going where you want, when and with whom you want, or insist he go with you wherever you go because he "loves you" so much?
- Humiliate or embarrass you in front of others?

### USE ECONOMIC CONTROL?

- Deny you access to family savings or checking accounts, credit cards or car?
- Insist that everything - house, car, etc. - is in his name only?
- Control all the family finances, take the money you earn, give you a meager allowance, force you to account for every penny you spend?
- Prevent you from getting or keeping a job, or going to school, sometimes saying that "a mother should be home" with her children? Or, "it's too hard for you to work and raise the children at the same time?"
- Keep you from using his health or dental insurance or prescription plan?

### MAKE THREATS?

- Threaten to report you to the police or child welfare for "being a bad mother"?
- Threaten to harm or kidnap the children?
- Frighten you with looks, actions, gestures?

- Display weapons to scare you, or threaten you directly with a weapon?
- Intimidate you by his size and/or weight?
- Use his anger or loss of temper as a threat to get you to do what he wants?
- Threaten to jeopardize your citizenship or permanent resident status?
- Threaten to take your passport or your children's passports?
- Threaten to report one of your family members to immigration or the IRS?

### COMMIT ACTS OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE?

- Carry out threats to hurt you, your children, your pets, family members, friends or himself?
- Destroy personal property, throw things around or at you?
- Grab you, push, hit, punch, slap, pinch, kick, choke or bite you?
- Force you to have sex when you don't want to, or engage in sexual acts that make you uncomfortable, or force you to have sex with others?
- Force you to drink or drug with him?
- Prevent you from taking medications, getting medical or dental care, deny you access to food, fluids or sleep?

**YOU ARE NOT ALONE!  
YOU ARE NOT TO BLAME!  
YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE SAFE**

*For confidential referrals to local programs, call  
**National Domestic Violence Hotline:**  
**1-800-799-SAFE (7233)**  
**or TTY 1-800-787-3224**  
**Operates 24 hours / day, 7 days / wee***

## **SAFETY PLAN GUIDELINES**

### *Recommendations of National Center for Victims of Crime*

*One of the most important things you can do when developing your safety plan is to talk to a victim advocate who can help you fully consider safety issues, understand your legal rights, and identify community resources (e.g., shelters, sources of financial assistance, or food banks). You can also locate a victim advocate through a local domestic violence agency which provides services at no-charge to victims. The following safety suggestions have been compiled from safety plans distributed by state domestic violence coalitions from around the country. Following these suggestions is not a guarantee of safety, but could help improve your safety situation.*

#### **Personal Safety with an Abuser**

- Identify your partner's use and level of force so that you can assess danger to you and your children before it occurs.
- Try to avoid an abusive situation by leaving.
- Identify safe areas of the house where there are no weapons and where there are always ways to escape. If arguments occur, try to move to those areas.
- Don't run to where the children are as your partner may hurt them as well.
- If violence is unavoidable, make yourself a small target: dive into a corner and curl up into a ball with your face protected and your arms around either side of your head, fingers entwined.
- If possible, have a phone accessible at all times and know the numbers to call for help. Know where the nearest pay phone is located. Know your local battered women's shelter phone number. Don't be afraid to call the police.
- Let trusted friends and neighbors know of your situation and develop a plan and visual signal for when you need help.
- Teach your children how to get help. Instruct them not to get involved in the violence between you and your partner. Plan a code word to signal that they should get help or leave the house.
- Tell your children that violence is never right, even when someone they love is being violent. Tell them that neither you nor they are at fault or cause the violence, and that when anyone is being violent, it is important to keep safe.
- Practice how to get out safely. Practice with your children.
- Plan for what you will do if your children tell your partner of your plan or if your partner otherwise finds out about your plan.
- Keep weapons like guns and knives locked up and as inaccessible as possible.
- Make a habit of backing the car into the driveway and keeping it fueled. Keep the driver's door unlocked and the other doors locked for a quick escape.
- Try not to wear scarves or long jewelry that could be used to strangle you.
- Create several plausible reasons for leaving the house at different times of day or night.
- Call a domestic violence hotline periodically to assess your options and get a supportive, understanding ear.

#### **Getting Ready to Leave**

- Keep any evidence of physical abuse, such as photographs of bruises and torn clothing.
- Know where you can go to get help; tell someone what is happening to you.
- If you are injured, go to a doctor or an emergency room and report what happened to you. Ask that they document your injuries.

- Plan with your children and identify a safe place for them (e.g. a room with a lock or a friend's house where they can go for help). Reassure them that their job is to stay safe, not to protect you.
- Contact your local battered women's shelter and find out about laws and other resources available to you before you have to use them during a crisis.
- Keep a journal of all violent incidents, noting dates, events, and threats made.
- Acquire job skills as you can, such as learning to type or taking courses at a community college.
- Try to set money aside or ask friends or relatives to hold money for you.
- Store some belongings with a friend or relative. Leave clothing, medications, your Social Security card, a credit card (if possible), citizenship documents, children's school/medical records, children's toys, insurance information, copies of birth certificates, money, and other valued personal possessions with them.

### **The Day You Leave**

- Leave when it is least expected, for example, during times of agreement and calm.
- Create a false trail. Call motels, real estate agencies, schools in a town at least six hours away from where you plan to relocate. Ask questions that require a call back to your house in order to leave those phone numbers on record.

### **General Guidelines for Leaving an Abusive Relationship**

- Make a plan for how you will escape and where you will go.
- Plan for a quick escape.
- Put aside emergency cash as you can.
- Hide an extra set of car keys.
- Take with you important phone numbers (of friends, relatives, doctors, schools, etc.) as well as other important items, including:
  - Driver's license
  - Regularly needed medication
  - List of credit cards (account number and date of expiration) held by self or jointly, or the credit cards themselves if you have access to them
  - Pay stubs
  - Checkbooks and information about bank accounts and other assets.

### **If time is available, also take:**

- Citizenship documents (such as your passport, greencard, etc.)
- Titles, deeds, other property information, and tax returns
- Medical records
- Children's school records and immunization records
- Insurance information
- Copy of marriage license, birth certificates, will, and other legal documents
- Verification of Social Security numbers
- Welfare identification
- Valued pictures, jewelry, or personal possessions.

### **AFTER LEAVING THE ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP**

#### **If you are getting a restraining order and the offender is leaving:**

- Change your locks and phone number.
- Change your work hours and route taken to work.
- Change the route you take to transport children to school.
- Keep a certified copy of your restraining order with you at all times.

- Inform friends, neighbors, and employers that you have a restraining order in effect.
- Give copies of restraining order to employers, neighbors, schools along with a picture of the offender.
- If available in your community, register with VINE Protective Order™ to be notified immediately when the order is served, when hearings will be held, and when any amendments to the order are filed. Ask your victim advocate or sheriff's office about this service.
- Call law enforcement to enforce the order.
- Carry a charged cell phone preprogrammed to 911.

**If you leave:**

- Consider renting a post office box for your mail.
- Be aware that addresses are listed on restraining orders and police reports.
- Be careful to whom you give your new address and phone number.
- Change your work hours if possible.
- Alert school authorities about the situation.
- Consider changing your children's schools.
- Reschedule any appointments that the offender is aware of when you leave.
- Use different stores and frequent different social spots.
- Alert neighbors and request that they call the police if they feel you may be in danger.
- Talk to trusted people about the violence.
- Replace wooden doors with steel or metal doors.
- Install security systems if possible.
- Install a lighting system that turns on when a person is coming close to the house (motion sensitive lights).
- Tell people you work with about the situation and have your calls screened by one receptionist if possible.
- Tell people who take care of your children which individuals are allowed to pick up your children. Explain the situation to them and provide them with a copy of the restraining order.
- Call the telephone company to request caller ID. Ask that your phone be blocked so that if you call, neither your partner nor anyone else will be able to get your new, unlisted phone number.
- Receive ongoing support from domestic violence and mental health service providers.

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## DEVELOPING A PERSONALIZED SAFETY PLAN

*(Recommendations from Safe Horizon, New York City)*

*You do not have control over your partner's behavior, but you do have a choice about how to respond. It is very difficult to decide to leave a relationship and seek safety either with someone you know or in a domestic violence shelter. It might take several attempts before you can permanently leave. And once you decide that leaving is in your best interest, you still need to cope with the emotional, physical, and financial issues that arise. We strongly recommend that you make a safety plan. Your plan addresses you and your family's individual situation and helps to ensure that if you decide to leave you are as safe as you can be and have everything that you need. The following guide can help you make a safety plan. Remember that if you write out your plan, you need to keep it in a place where your partner won't find it. We suggest that you work on a plan with an experienced domestic violence counselor. You can find one at a local program by calling the national domestic violence hotline at **1.800.799.SAFE (7233)***

### **COMMUNICATE WITH SOMEONE WHO CAN HELP AND DECIDE WHERE YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN WOULD GO IF YOU NEEDED TO LEAVE:**

This may be difficult especially if your partner has isolated you; however, it is important to confide in someone who can help you:

- A trusted friend or family member who can listen without judging and who can keep your confidentiality.
- An advocate or domestic violence hotline counselor can help you figure out which friends and relatives might be able to help you.
- An advocate or hotline counselor can help you figure out alternatives if you have to leave at a time when no one you know is available to help you.
- If you don't have a car, think of a safe place close to your home where your friend could pick you up. Also, know the routes to public transportation nearest your home.
- Plan a code word or phrase to use on the phone with a friend if you need to access help when your abuser is present. Tell your friend that when you say that code word, it means you're in trouble and you need him/her to call 9-1-1 for you.
- If you feel comfortable, tell your neighbors about the violence and ask if they will call the police if suspicious noises are coming from your home.
- If you have an Order of Protection, keep it on you at all times and keep a copy of it somewhere safe.
- You can dial 9-1-1 for free from most telephones. If you are in immediate danger, you should always call 9-1-1.

### **DECIDE HOW YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN WOULD GET OUT OF YOUR HOME:**

- Decide on a pathway if you have to leave at night. Think of public places you can access 24 hours a day. Know the locations of and the route to police stations, hospitals, fire stations, and 24 hour convenience stores in your area.
- If you leave by car, make sure you lock the car doors immediately.
- Consider making a plan for each room in your home. What can you do to get out of the basement or upper floors of your home?
- Know which doors lock in your home.

- If you live in an apartment building, how can you get out safely? Is there a fire escape that could get you safely to the ground? Is there a stairwell you could use?
- Keep your essential belongings (credit cards/ID) and keys in a safe place, in case you have to leave quickly.
- If your partner may harass you at work, make an escape route at work. Also, give a photo of him/her to a supervisor you trust and ask that s/he not be allowed inside. If you have an Order of Protection, give the security guard or receptionist a copy.

### **HOW TO KEEP YOUR CHILDREN SAFE:**

- Make sure your children know how to dial 9-1-1 in an emergency situation
- Instruct your children on where to go in an emergency

### **IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS TO BRING**

Keep important documents together in a safe place. A domestic violence hotline counselor can help you decide where. These documents and other necessities could include:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| • Order of Protection                   | • Important legal documents   |
| • ATM card                              | • Police records  |
| • Money/cab fare                        | • Record / photos of violence   |
| • Check book                            | • Baby's things (diapers, formula, medication)  |
| • Credit card                           | • Children's school and immunization records  |
| • Passport                              | • Birth certificates  |
| • Green card                            | • Medications   |
| • Work permit                           | • Clothing  |
| • Public Assistance ID                  | • Eye glasses   |
| • Cell phone                            | • Lease   |
| • Coins to use in a payphone            | • Non-perishable snacks for children (e.g. juice and crackers)                                      |
| • Driver's license & registration       | • Important phone numbers including the domestic violence national hotline at <b>1.800.799.7233</b> |
| • Social security card                  |   |
| • Your partner's social security number |   |
| • Medical records                       |   |
| • Address book                          |   |
| • Insurance policies                    |   |

### **PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE**

- Keep a journal of all violent incidents, noting dates, events and threats made if possible.
- Whenever possible, take pictures of any bruises, black eyes and other injuries you may have sustained because of the abuse, and place the date of the event on it.
- Advance your career and ability to work by completing school, taking courses, or learning a new skill.
- Try to set money aside or ask friends or family members to hold money for you.

## **WORKING CROSS CULTURALLY** –*Overview for Healthcare Providers*

Intimate partner violence affects people regardless of race, ethnicity, class, sexual and gender identity, religious affiliation, age, immigration status and ability. The term culture is used in this context to refer to those axes of identification and other shared experiences. Because of the sensitive nature of abuse, providing culturally relevant care is critical when working with victims of abuse. In order to provide care that is accessible and tailored to each patient and their family, providers must consider the multiple issues that victims may deal with simultaneously (including language barriers, limited resources, homophobia, acculturation, accessibility issues and racism) and recognize that each victim of intimate partner violence will experience both the abuse and the health system in culturally specific ways.

Disparities in access to and quality of health care also have an impact on the ability of providers to help victims of intimate partner violence. For example, women who are members of racial and ethnic minority groups are more likely than white women to experience difficulty communicating with their doctors, and often feel they are treated disrespectfully in the health care setting. English-speaking Latinos, Asians and Blacks report not fully understanding their doctors and feeling like their doctors were not listening to them. People with disabilities that affect cognitive or communication may be dependent on an abusive intimate partner and thus are at especially high risk. In addition, some patients may experience abuse from the health care system itself and this may affect their approach to and utilization of the health care system.

Providers also enter health care encounters with their own cultural experiences and perspectives that may differ from those of the victim. In a successful health care interaction within a diverse client population, the provider communicates effectively with the patient, is aware of personal assumptions, asks questions in a culturally sensitive way and provides relevant interventions. Eliciting specific information about the patient's beliefs and experience with abuse, sharing general information about intimate partner violence relevant to that experience and providing culturally accessible resources in the community, improves the quality of care for victims of violence. In addition, having skilled interpreters who are trained to understand intimate partner violence (and not family members, caregivers or children) is crucial when helping non-English speaking patients and their families. Culturally sensitive inquiry questions for all caretakers and adolescent patients can facilitate discussion and help providers offer appropriate and effective interventions.

**The Family Violence Prevention Fund**  
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San Francisco, CA 94103-5133  
(415) 252-8900 TTY (800) 595-4889  
*www.endabuse.org*

<http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/userfiles/file/HealthCare/pediatric.pdf>

APPENDIX  
Attachment "E"

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE POWER & CONTROL WHEEL

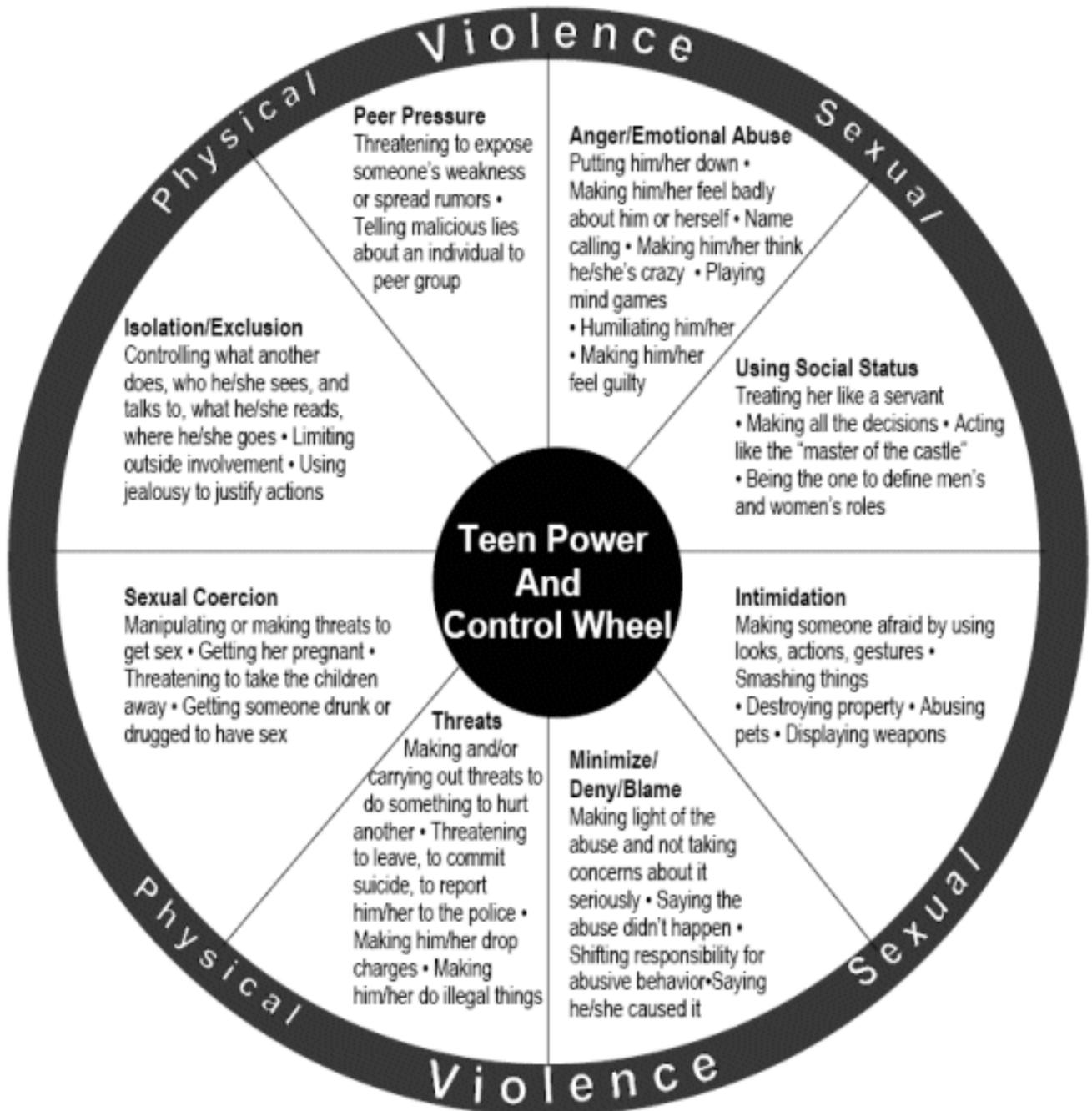
*National Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence*



APPENDIX  
Attachment "F"

# TEEN POWER AND CONTROL WHEEL

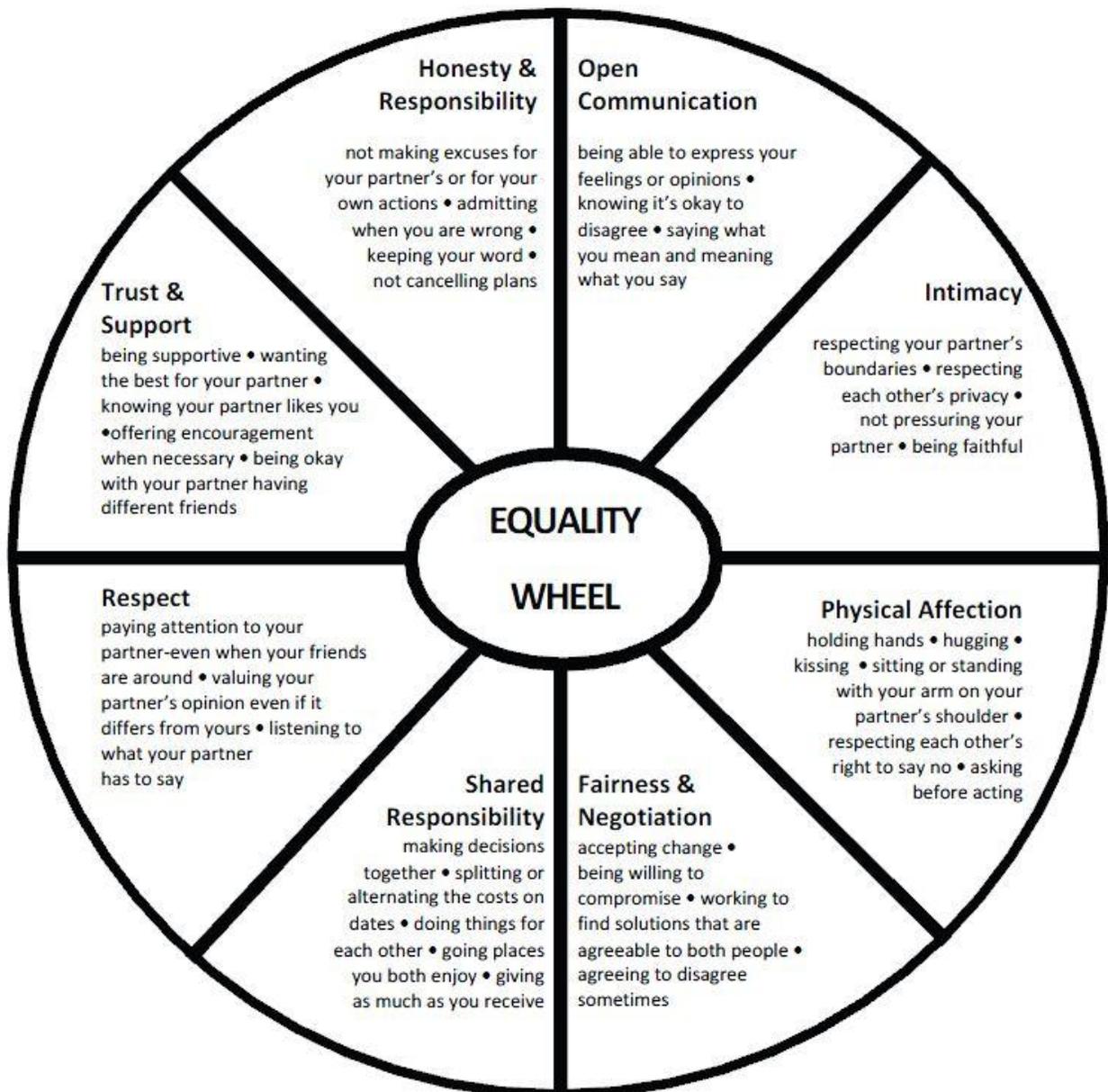
*Adapted from the Domestic Abuse Intervention in Duluth, Minnesota*



# TEEN DATING RELATIONSHIP EQUALITY WHEEL

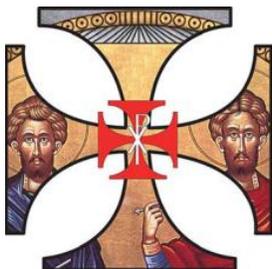
*From Step Up Speak Out*

A strong dating relationship is based on EQUALITY and RESPECT, not power and control. Think about how you want to be treated in a relationship. You will come up with a relationship under control, not a relationship that is controlling you.



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**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:  
IDENTIFYING AND RESPONDING TO  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE GREEK ORTHODOX COMMUNITY**

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