I remember when a close family member of mine by the name of David told me a story. As a child of no more than four, David sat on the stairs whimpering with a sense of isolation weighing down on his chest. Hearing the crying and thinking it was David’s little sister, his mother had turned the corner to go comfort her.

“Are you awake sweetie?” She had affectionately cooed.

Hearing her call, David froze as though he had been caught doing something wrong; panic reflected in his eyes. After his mother realized it was David who was crying, and the crying had awoken his little sister; his mom changed in an instant. Her once warm smile had chilled, “oh it's you,” she had said walking up to him with an ice-like precision that caused him to shiver.

Though he instantly became silent, David was unable to stop trembling in front of her. All he could think was be still, look away, and be silent. She looked at him as though he was a rat with a broken tail.
She sneered then viciously she had screeched “You woke your little sister!” Placing her hand on the side of his face she proceeded to slam his head into the wall with a raging fury. The thunk of his head on the wall was hollow like him, so there he was left alone to whimper again; this time he would be silent.

Years later, I sat listening to David chuckle. The way he told it was with an air of humor. Too young I was to comprehend the true gravity of the story, and too small I was to glimpse the tears welling in his eyes.

So many people similar to David have to face violence like that in their homes. Countless numbers of women, children, and men have to look at someone who should love and protect them with fear.

Domestic Abuse is a critical problem in our world today, and we can combat this problem by being supportive of people who are experiencing it, as well as donating to and contacting charities that can provide assistance, such as the community safety network.

The Problem

Domestic abuse or intimate partner abuse is when a spouse in a relationship exerts power over the other, this can include financial control, verbal abuse, physical abuse, endangering their children, or anything that one spouse uses to manipulate, control, and subdue their partner. This often times affects children in the household. Roxanne Dryden-Edwards (MD) in an article titled Domestic Abuse describes “Intimate partner abuse is a major public-health problem, due to its affecting more than 2 million women and 800,000 men and resulting in homelessness, injury, or death of victims, billions of dollars in health-care costs, and lost work productivity” (Edwards 2). Indicating that almost 3 million people in the U.S. are experiencing these violent and horrific events in their own home. That number being only the reported cases. In many instances people experiencing violence in their home are unable to contact anyone for help. Too many people like David have to sit in silence and fear with no real way of escape. I’ve had to watch people fall to domestic abuse, watching them be inflicted with trauma and fear is heartbreaking. Experiencing that kind of physical and psychological pain is far more destructive. Millions of people have to feel isolated, alone, and trapped with no real way to

<table>
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<th>Type of attack used in intimate partner violence, by gender, 2001–05</th>
<th>Percent of victims of nonfatal intimate partner violence who were attacked</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of attack</td>
<td>Female</td>
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| Raped | 7.2% | 0.8%
| Sexual assault | 1.9 | 0.9 |
| Attacked with firearm | 0.5 | — |
| Attacked with knife | 2.5 | 8 |
| Hit by thrown object | 2.1 | 4.5 |
| Attacked with other weapon | 0.8 | 1.8 |
| Hit, slapped, knocked down | 62.7 | 62.2 |
| Grabbed, held, tripped | 54.9 | 26 |
escape physical violence. DoSomething.org describes “In the United States, more than 4 children die from child abuse and neglect on a daily basis. Over 70% of these children are below the age of 3” (Dosomething.org). This issue affects children too. Kids, often times infants, die because of this. Children younger than you or me are beat to death by their mother or father. How can we let children to young to protect themselves die because they were thrown to hard against the wall, or because they were not checked on in for days? We shouldn't. We shouldn't let so many suffer, yet we do. Due to this appalling circumstances we need to stand against domestic abuse because others often times can’t.

The Perpetrators

Domestic abuse is a complex issue, but a large part of it are the perpetrators. In order to grasp the severity of this matter we have to look at the causes. Toby D. Goldsmith, MD wrote “Abusers may feel this need to control their partner because of low self-esteem, extreme jealousy, difficulties in regulating anger and other strong emotions... Some people with very traditional beliefs may think they have the right to control their partner, and that women aren’t equal to men. Others may have an undiagnosed personality disorder or psychological disorder” (Goldsmith 2). These causes of domestic abuse specifically what drives people to be abuses is complex and there is no one cause that drives someone to do so, but the one thing that they do all have in common is they choose to abuse others. While things such as personality disorder or substance abuse can contribute, abuse still isn't necessary. Most abusers are victims as well, they have experienced or are experiencing suffering too but they are dealing with it in a way that is, put simply, wrong. They need help much like the people that need help because of them. I interviewed a shelter manager here in Jackson Hole named Gracie Hale who expands on this stating, “The role of alcohol and substance abuse can play a large role in the escalation of domestic violence but that's not the cause of it... not all people who have issues of substance abuse or who have mental or emotional illnesses are engaged in domestic violence and vice versa... it really a learnt behavior often it's something they've learned in the developmental years that having power and control over someone is a way to get their needs met... ”(Hale). That's the key:

Being abusive is a learned behavior, meaning that the people who enact domestic abuse enact it because they've experienced something traumatic that allowed them to learn it.
It's a cycle of destruction from one person to another. The constant passing on the pain and suffering to the next affecting more and more people, generation after generation with no end in sight, unless we mark an end. We need to put our foot down to this constant circle of malevolent hurt and injustice.

The Pain

The effects of domestic abuse are equally important; It's where you really start to see the true gravity of this issue. The article by Julie McGarry titled *Older Abused Women Suffer Long-Term Psychological and Physical Effects* explains, “Women who have experienced domestic abuse are also at increased risk of experiencing mental health problems such as depression. Many of those in the present study had experienced a number of psychological problems, at the time of the abuse and also in later life; for example, panic attacks and acute anxiety” (McGarry 12). Domestic abuse is a traumatic experience as it is essentially beating and belittling you. Trauma isn't something that goes away either it lingers. It can haunt you, so it makes sense that it would cause anxiety or panic attacks after experiencing someone slam your head against the wall or describe how worthless your life. That is painful. It hurts; it lasts. Further in the article it states “women who have experienced domestic abuse at an earlier time in their life and which may remain unresolved in later life may also experience a number of emotional issues relating to their experiences such as frustration, anger, helplessness, hopelessness and low self-esteem” (McGarry 16). Domestic violence causes so many problems for so many people bother during and after the abuse stops. If someone beats you or yells at you, it can make one wonder why? Why is he screaming? Why is she yelling? Why are they hurting me? These questions answers don't have to do with the victims themselves but the world as a hole so the answers can be confusing and perpetrators rather than answering or even knowing the truth blame the victims, and sometimes the victims believe it. The experience of watching someone go through so much pain, cause so much pain then blame it all on you is
crushing, isolating. No one should feel that pain; no one should cause that pain, yet they do and we need to do something as well. We need to stop it.

Your Help

While there are many solutions to ending domestic violence, one solution that we must pay attention to is simply being a resource to people experiencing domestic violence and to the organizations helping end it as well. DomesticShelters.org describes the best way to help is:

- **Don’t ignore it.** Police officers hear the same thing from witnesses again and again—I heard/saw/perceived domestic violence but didn’t want to get involved. If you hear your neighbors engaged in a violent situation, call the police.

- **Lend an ear.** If someone ever confides in you they are experiencing domestic violence, listen without judgment. Believe what they are telling you and ask how you can help.

- **Be available.** If someone you know is thinking about leaving or is in fear the violence will escalate, be ready to help. Keep your phone with you and the ringer on, make sure you have gas in your car and discuss an escape plan or meeting place ahead of time.

- **Be a resource.** Someone experiencing violence may not be able to research shelters, escape plans or set up necessities like bank accounts and cell phones while living with his or her abuser. Offer to do the legwork to help ease stress and keep things confidential (DomesticShelters.org).

The best thing you can do is be there for people experiencing domestic violence. If you can be there for them and give any help, you should. Large scale shelters and hotlines are only able to help if they are alerted and often times that's not an option because of the danger it could pose. By calling the shelter for them, notifying officials, or providing sanctuary you are helping them get out of a bad situation the may otherwise not be able to escape. In another article on the domesticshelter.org website it describes others ways to help end domestic abuse even if you don't know someone specifically experiencing it:

- **Reach Out.** Invite a local domestic violence nonprofit to come speak at your school or place of employment and learn more about what they do in your community, who they help and how people can access their services. You never know who may be influenced
by such a talk.

- **Talk to a Child.** Helping to teach the next generation about healthy relationships is also vitally important… Help children understand that they can say no in situations where they feel unsafe. Teach them about defining personal boundaries and never being afraid to disclose to an adult when something feels awry with another person.

- **Donate Time.** Volunteer at a local domestic violence agency, such as a shelter or help line… Your time is invaluable to organizations that are often short-staffed and overextended(domesticshelters.org).

There are ways to be a resource even if you don't personally know someone experiencing domestic abuse. These are great examples. Simply by talking with your child about the subject you are preventing this issue from affecting another person. It may seem mountainous to try and tackle such a topic, or to try and help so many people, when actually a solution to this problem much like most problems is in people. We as people have to help.

**The Hope**

This problem isn't just going to go away. We won't be able to stop it just by closing our eyes and wishing for it. We need to be their; we need to support the survivors and the charities that help them like the [Community Safety Network](#). The Community Safety Network “provides a safe place for people affected by domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking in Jackson, Wyoming. Every year, we offer shelter and support to hundreds of clients and their children, and we serve thousands more through education and outreach”(csnjh.org). They help so many people who experience domestic abuse, but they cannot do it alone. Stand up against the fear that holds you back and help the people who have to overcome so much worse.

I made flyers, brochures, and sold treats in order to raise money for the Community Safety Network and the idea of doing this scared me. I was afraid no one would buy anything; I was afraid I wouldn't make enough money; I was afraid no one would care, but I still went out and I still did it. I made one hundred and three dollars which is going straight to the charity. I just couldn't let my fears get in the way of helping
men, women, and children who have to experience things far worse than I'll ever have to face. We can't sit back knowing that somewhere a little boy is sitting on the stairs crying and hoping his mother won't slam his head against the wall and leave him alone to cry some more. Donate and give him hope.

Works Cited


I would like to thank Grace Hale for giving an amazing interview. Allie Kopcho and Erin O’Brien for assisting in the fundraising and anyone else who contributed to our donation

*Certain names have been changed in the article to provide privacy*