

Knowledge of violence tendencies helpful

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:

Domestic violence occurs within all age, racial, socioeconomic and religious groups.

The following four categories of assaultive behavior describe acts of violence that occur within families:

PHYSICAL ASSAULT: Physical assault includes pushing, hitting, beating, inflicting injury with weapons, homicide, suicide.

SEXUAL ASSAULT: The Alaska Criminal Code recognizes sexual assault between husband and wife in two instances. First, if the couple is separated and the husband sexually assaults his wife. Second, if the couple are living together and the husband causes physical injury to his wife in addition to the sexual assault.

Children are also victims of sexual assault within families. It is against the law for adults to have sexual intercourse or any other form of sexual contact with children.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE: Psychological abuse is more than verbal arguments between family members. Psychological abuse includes:

- Threats such as threatening suicide, threatening to use violence, threatening to take the children away;
- forcing the victim to do degrading things such as eating cigarettes left in an ash-tray;
- Depriving the victim of food or sleep;
- Doing things to intentionally frighten the victim, such as handling weapons.

DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY AND/OR PETS: In most cases the destruction of property and pets is not random but is directed at the victim's possessions. For example, an assailant may destroy pictures of the victim's family or strangle a pet that belongs to the victim. The message is clear, "This time it is your property; next time it may be you."

What distinguishes DOMESTIC VIOLENCE from stranger-to-stranger violence is the intimacy of the relationship between the assailant and the victim. Any of the four forms of violence above may be inflicted on one or more family members or people living in the same household as the assailant including one spouse against another, parent against child, teenager against parent, brother or sister against other siblings, teenager or adult against an elderly family member. In addition, domestic violence sometimes occurs after couples have separated or divorced.

In most cases the use of violence against a family member is a learned response to stress. Whether people use violence or not largely depends on how

they have learned to cope with tension and life stress.

WHERE DO PEOPLE LEARN TO USE VIOLENCE IN FAMILIES?

FAMILY ORIGIN: Many assailants were abused as children or witnessed physical assault between their parents.

CULTURE: Violence is seen as a way to solve problems in everything from cartoons to newspaper reports, jokes to advertisements.

PRIOR EXPERIENCES: An incident of assault is reinforced as acceptable behavior

when the assailants are not punished for their actions. They learn that violence works and they can get away with it.

The violence is not a function of the relationship between the victim and assailant. (Example: if a man assaults his wife and she leaves him, he will probably assault his next wife because he has not learned any way to deal with stress except by striking out in his family.)

Many batterers experience intense and mounting pressure and physiological tension prior to a violent episode. Usually this tension is from a number of sources including their work, how they feel about themselves, economics. When

violent behavior.

Alcohol and other drug abuse may increase the severity of the assault, but are not the cause of the violence.

THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

PHASE I: Tension-Building. Everyone experiences conflict and stress. Most people have healthy and perhaps some not-so-healthy ways of dealing with stress. Some ways that people deal with stress are jogging or other physical exercise, listening to music, talking, crying, eating, using alcohol and/or other drugs. People who use vio-

PHASE II: Explosion. The assailants use violence to release pent-up tension, often telling themselves they are angry and merely expressing that anger.

PHASE III: Honeymoon. During the "honeymoon" phase the assailant is repentant and often promises never to assault again. The victim, wanting to believe the violence will end and everything will be all right, accepts the assailant's apology and hopes for the best.

PHASE I: Unfortunately, once the stress starts to build again the cycle will be repeated because the assailant has not been punished for the violence or learned any new coping skills to handle the stress.

The majority of cases exhibit the Cycle of Violence. However, some do not. Some assailants progress through Phase I into Phase II and back to Phase I, skipping the Honeymoon Phase.

Over time, domestic violence increases in frequency and severity.

(The above information is from the Department of Public Safety, Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.)



batterers use violence, they experience a release from pent-up stress and tension. The feeling of release can be a powerful reinforcement for the use of

violence in their families generally have few coping skills for handling stress. They hold in their feelings and the tension builds within them.