

**ABUSE:** TO INTENTIONALLY OR UNCONSCIOUSLY injure or damage someone physically, psychologically/emotionally, or sexually, with intent to dominate, intimidate, control and/or exercise power over them. Abuse can be isolated or habitual, premeditated or spontaneous. The one who inflicts the abuse is typically called the abuser; the one who is abused is typically called the victim.

**TYPES OF ABUSE**

**PHYSICAL:** Actions that cause humiliation, physical pain, or injury such as kicking, pushing, or punching

**PSYCHOLOGICAL/EMOTIONAL:** Actions that cause loss of self-esteem and/or loss of self-determination such as name calling, isolation, or criticizing

**SEXUAL:** Actions of a sexual nature that are unwelcome, uncomfortable, or forced, including rape

**CHILD ABUSE:** All of the above definitions, as well as neglect. This includes not providing for a child's basic needs, such as food and clothing, and abandonment.

**ABUSE IS WRONG BECAUSE:**

**It destroys the body**

*Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.* 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17

**It robs children of their innocence**

*Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.* Matthew 18:6

**It lowers self-esteem**

*Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.* Ephesians 4:29

**It warps the perception about God**

*Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!* 1 John 3:1

**It is not God's plan for families**

*... The Lord desires His people to give in their homes a representation of the order and harmony that pervade the heavenly courts.* E.G. White, *Counsels On Health*, p. 101

**It is not God's plan for our lives**

*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future."* Jeremiah 29:11

**ABUSE OF ANY KIND, WHETHER PERPETRATED AGAINST WOMEN, MEN, GIRLS OR BOYS, IS EVIL.** Besides gender, abuse crosses all cultural, racial, socioeconomic, and religious or denominational boundaries. If you sense someone is facing abuse, offer empathetic help and hope. If you are the victim, seek help. You are not alone.

**enditnow**<sup>®</sup>

Break the Silence About Abuse

[www.EndItNowNorthAmerica.org](http://www.EndItNowNorthAmerica.org)

*In partnership with*

- Adventist Community Service
- Adult Ministries
- Children's Ministries
- Family Ministries
- Health Ministries
- Men's Ministries
- Ministerial Department
- Women's Ministries
- Youth Ministries
- Adventist Risk Management

*With gratitude and appreciation to*

- North American Division Women's Ministries
- General Conference Women's Ministries

**National Domestic Violence Hotlines**

USA: 800-799-SAFE [7233] Canada: 800-363-9010

For additional copies call 301-680-6427

# BREAKING THE SILENCE

YOU  
CAN  
STOP  
THE  
VIOLENCE



TO HEAL THE  
BROKEN HEARTED,  
TO PROCLAIM LIBERTY  
TO THE CAPTIVES,  
TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE  
OPPRESSED.

### YOUR PARTNER MAY BE ABUSIVE IF HE OR SHE:

- Constantly accuses you of having an affair
- Bites, slaps, punches, or kicks you
- Throws things at you or breaks objects during an argument
- Belittles you in front of your friends and family
- Makes you feel afraid to express your opinions or wishes
- Monitors who you speak to and whom you go out with
- Blames you for his/her appearance
- Threatens you or swears at you
- Criticizes all you do
- Disrespects you, your family, and your friends
- Refuses to let you have your own money or handle your finances
- Forces you to have sex
- Demonstrates extreme possessiveness or jealousy

### THESE COMMON BELIEFS ARE NOT TRUE:

- Abuse is only a momentary loss of temper
- Abuse only happens among uneducated people or in developing countries
- A victim could always leave an abusive relationship if they really wanted to
- Men cannot be abused by women
- Victims of abuse have psychological disorders
- Abuse is caused by the use of alcohol or drugs
- High levels of stress make people abusive
- Children are not affected when one parent abuses the other
- Abuse survivors exaggerate
- Some people ask, provoke, or want to be abused
- It is a sin for Christian victims to seek to prosecute their abusers
- Some people deserve to be abused

### BE CAREFUL!

Abuse is a frightening and traumatic experience. It is very important not to blame the victim. Avoid accusatory or dismissive statements such as:

- “I’m sure he/she didn’t really mean to hurt you.”
- “It’s no big deal; you’ll get over it.”
- “What did you do to provoke it?”
- “Are you making this up?”
- “Don’t tell anyone about this; it’s too embarrassing.”

Instead, use comforting statements such as these:

- “I’m so sorry you had to go through this; no one should have to hurt.”
- “I believe you, and I know that you’re telling the truth.”
- “It’s not your fault; you didn’t do anything to deserve this.”
- “I’m here for you whenever you feel like sharing and praying.”
- “I’m glad you confided in me; together we can find you some help.”

### VICTIMS MAY EXPERIENCE ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING AS A RESULT OF ABUSE:

- Depression
- Suicidal thoughts
- Sleeping/eating/sexual/physical disorders
- Distrust of authority figures or people in general
- Loss of self-esteem, feelings of helplessness or hopelessness
- Feeling of isolation
- Drug and/or alcohol addiction

### A VICTIM OF ABUSE MAY STAY WITH HIS/HER ABUSER FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

- Fearful for his/her life
- He/she will lose his/her children
- Embarrassment
- Feels it is his/her Christian duty to keep the marriage together no matter what
- Guilt for what may happen to the abuser if he/she leaves
- Feels responsible for abuser’s actions (deserved abuse)
- He/she may not get support from family and friends
- Abuse may get worse if he/she tries to leave
- Fearful about surviving financially without spouse
- Hopes that the abuser may change

### IF YOU SUSPECT SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS BEING ABUSED, YOU CAN HELP

- Call the authorities and report the abuse
- Find out about abuse prevention agencies in your area; call the Domestic Violence Hotline and initiate the help needed
- Listen without interrupting and don’t feel as though you have to offer advice
- Encourage him/her to seek professional counseling
- Don’t criticize the abuser
- Offer to be a prayer partner
- Invite him/her to join you on outings without bringing up the abuse situation
- Keep your word and frequently follow-up to see how he/she is doing

### IF YOU HAVE BEEN ABUSED, HELP IS AVAILABLE TO YOU!

Reading this brochure is a healthy step toward finding the help you need. No one deserves to be abused; God does not want any of His children to suffer. You are not alone: your pastor, church leaders, doctor, family members, friends, or a Christian therapist may all serve as wonderful resources. There is help available!

- Contact the authorities, your pastor, doctor, family member, or friend and let them know that you have been abused.
- Call the Domestic Violence Hotline to get help and to find out about the laws in your area.
- The abuse may have left you with many emotional scars. Try to schedule regular counseling sessions with a licensed therapist.
- You may have been hurt physically; ask your doctor for a thorough examination.

- Ask someone you feel comfortable with to be your prayer partner—to daily pray with you and offer encouragement whenever you feel weak or lonely.
- Ask the Lord to give you emotional, physical, and spiritual strength.

### HAS YOUR CHILD BEEN ABUSED?

- Stay calm.
- Respect the child’s privacy; find a quiet and comfortable place and carefully listen to what he/she is saying.
- Believe the child and take him/her seriously. Let the child know that the abuse was not his/her fault.
- Report the abuse to the authorities.
- Do not confront the abuser yourself.
- Take the child to the doctor for immediate medical attention.
- Find a licensed therapist who specializes in child abuse.
- Pray with the child and reassure them that Jesus loves them; create a safety net around the child so that he/she will feel protected.

### SAFETY MEASURES FOR PARENTS

- Network with your children’s friends and their parents.
- Explain to children that people who want them to keep secrets from their parents are not safe.
- Encourage children to tell you if anything frightens or disturbs them.
- Instruct children to always check with you before going anywhere—even if it is with someone they know.
- Instruct them never to open the door when home alone.
- Teach children how to say “no” to anyone who tries to touch them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable.
- Show them how to phone emergency personnel.
- Screen baby-sitters very carefully.
- Question the motives of adults and older children who constantly want to spend time alone with your child.

### FALSE THEORIES ABOUT CHILD ABUSE

- Parents will be able to tell if their child has been sexually abused.
- Children need to be physically disciplined to learn to respect their elders.
- Boys cannot be sexually abused.
- Playing with a child’s genitalia is harmless.
- Children are not affected when one parent abuses the other.
- Only strangers molest children.
- Children will quickly outgrow effects of abuse.
- Denying a child food or other basic needs is not considered abuse.
- If a child’s body reacts to fondling, it is because he/she enjoys it.
- Children lie about being abused in order to get adults in trouble.

### FOR HELP IN ENGLISH OR SPANISH:

Call the confidential National Domestic Violence Hotline (see back panel) for referrals to resources in your area.