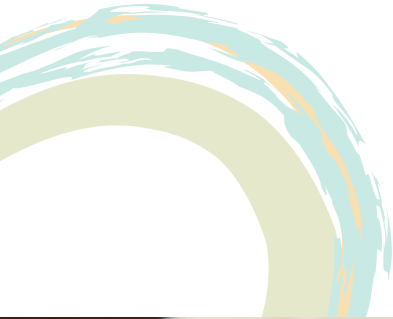


# charis

A Care and Counseling Initiative



## Domestic Violence

*promoting safety and offering support*



Charis is an Urban Alliance initiative. [www.urbanalliance.com](http://www.urbanalliance.com)

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*Through Charis, Urban Alliance works with churches and organizations to help them communicate about mental health in ways that offer hope and create safe environments where people feel comfortable seeking help.*

Many people who are struggling with their relational, emotional and mental health do not receive the support they need. They often do not know where to turn for help, or are embarrassed to acknowledge they are struggling. Additionally, a lack of resources in the community, poverty and stigma are barriers that keep people from receiving help.

Research shows that the church is one of the most common places people go to seek help when they are struggling emotionally. This is why it is so important for pastors and care providers to be equipped to offer care and connect people to appropriate help. Many churches offer support groups, care ministries or pastoral care. And, professional counselors who offer care from a Christian perspective provide services in the community.

Through Charis, Urban Alliance works with Christian churches and organizations to help them communicate about mental health in ways that offer hope and create safe environments where people feel comfortable seeking help. Urban Alliance also equips care providers to respond sensitively, effectively connect people who are seeking care to appropriate support, and provide care, so they may cope well and heal.

The Charis website is a tool, managed by Urban Alliance, that can be used by individuals and organizations to help connect people in need of support to high-quality professional counselors, support groups and specialized support services offered from a Christian perspective.

These collaborative efforts have helped hundreds of people overcome barriers and more effectively cope, have ongoing support, strengthen their relationships, experience hope, joy and peace, and persevere despite life's challenges.

To learn more about Charis, visit [www.urbanalliance.com/charis](http://www.urbanalliance.com/charis). To visit the Charis website, visit [www.charisnetworkct.org](http://www.charisnetworkct.org).



## Table of Contents

|                                      |    |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| Introduction.....                    | 2  |
| Unhealthy Verses Abusive.....        | 3  |
| Crises and Unhealthy Patterns.....   | 5  |
| Intimate Partner Violence.....       | 7  |
| Spiritual Abuse.....                 | 8  |
| Oppression.....                      | 9  |
| Cycle of Violence.....               | 10 |
| Gaslighting and Emotional Abuse..... | 11 |
| Offering Support.....                | 12 |
| Community Resources .....            | 16 |
| Printed Resources.....               | 17 |

Domestic violence, often referred to as intimate partner violence, includes violence or abuse from a family member. This type of violence is quite common in relationships:

- 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men will experience severe physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime. (CDC, 2017)
- 1 in 10 women in the United States will be raped by an intimate partner in her lifetime. (CDC, 2010)
- An estimated 9.7% of women and 2.3% of men have been stalked by an intimate partner during their lifetime. (CDC, 2017)
- Nearly half of all women and men in the United States will experience psychological aggression by an intimate partner in their lifetime. (CDC, 2017)
- Over half of female and male victims of rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner experienced some form of intimate partner violence for the first time before 25 years of age. (CDC, 2010)

It is essential for the Christian community to be informed and equipped to address abuse and offer support. This booklet will define domestic violence, the cycle of violence model, offer a Biblical perspective, tips for safety planning and information about important community resources that offer support.

## Qualities of Healthy, Unhealthy & Abusive Relationships

### Healthy

A healthy relationship means that both partners are:

- **Effectively communicating:** They talk openly about problems and listen to one another. They respect each other's opinions.
- **Respectful and kind:** They value each other as they are and treat each other with respect and kindness.
- **Trusting:** They believe what their partner has to say. They do not feel the need to "prove" each other's trustworthiness.
- **Honest:** They are honest with each other but can still keep some things private.
- **Sharing decision-making:** They make decisions together and hold each other to the same standard.
- **Enjoying personal time:** They enjoy spending time apart, alone or with others. They respect each other's need for time apart.
- **Making mutual sexual choices:** They talk openly about sexual and reproductive choices together. Both partners willingly consent to sexual activity and can safely discuss what they are and are not comfortable with.
- **Economic/financial partners:** Partners discuss and make decisions about finances together. Both partners have access to the resources they need.
- **Engaging in supportive parenting:** Both partners are able to parent in a way they feel comfortable with. They communicate together about the needs of their child(ren), as well as the needs of the parents.
- **Experiencing emotional connection:** Both partners feel safe and experience intimacy and emotional connection.

*(National Domestic Violence Hotline Relationship Spectrum)*

### Unhealthy

A couple may be in an unhealthy relationship if one or both partners are:

- **Ineffectively communicating:** When problems arise, they fight or don't discuss them at all.
- **Disrespectful:** One or both partners are not considerate of the other.
- **Not trusting:** One partner doesn't believe what the other says or feels entitled to invade their partner's privacy.
- **Dishonest:** One or more partner tells lies.
- **Trying to take control:** One partner feels their desires and choices are more important.
- **Only spending time with their partner:** One partner's community is the only one both socialize in.
- **Pressured by the other into sexual activity:** One partner uses pressure or guilt on the other to have sex or do anything sexual at any point.
- **Ignoring a partner's boundaries:** It is assumed that only one partner is responsible for making informed decisions.
- **Unequal economically:** Finances are not discussed, and it is assumed only one partner is in charge of finances or makes decisions without input from the other partner.
- **Experiencing emotional distance or significant conflict:** One partner does not feel emotionally close to the other. There is a lack of intimacy and connection and/or a high level of conflict.

### Abusive

Abuse is occurring in a relationship when one partner:

- **Communicates harmfully:** Communicates in a way that is hurtful, threatening, insulting or demeaning.
- **Mistreats the other:** One partner does not respect the feelings, thoughts, decisions, opinions or physical safety of the other.
- **Accuses the other of cheating or having an affair when it's not true:** The accuser may hurt the other in a physical or verbal way as a result.
- **Denies that the abusive actions are abuse:** An abusive partner may try to blame the other for the harm they're doing, make excuses for abusive actions or minimize the abusive behavior.
- **Controls the other:** There is no equality in the relationship. One partner makes all decisions for the couple without the other's input.
- **Isolates the other partner:** One partner controls where the other one goes and who they talk to. They may isolate their partner from family and friends.
- **Forces sexual activity or pregnancy:** One partner forces the other to have sex or do anything their partner doesn't want to do sexually at any point. In relationships where pregnancy is a physical possibility, one partner may force the other to become pregnant.
- **Exerts economic control:** One partner controls the money and access to resources. Having an open dialogue about finances is not an option. This may include preventing a partner from earning an income or not allowing a partner access to their own income.
- **Engages in manipulative parenting:** One partner uses their child(ren) to gain power and control over the other partner, including telling the child(ren) lies or negative things about the other partner.
- **Experiences fear:** One partner experiences fear in response to the words or actions of the other.

## Qualities of Healthy, Unhealthy & Abusive Relationships



While there are a number of different models and frameworks available to describe healthy, unhealthy and abusive relationship patterns, National Domestic Violence Hotline Relationship Spectrum can be used as a tool to understand different types of relationships. When supporting a couple, it is important to first assess their relationship to determine if it is healthy, unhealthy or abusive. Often, when a couple meets with a pastor or leader seeking marital counseling or help, the relationship is unhealthy or abusive. It is common for couples to wait until a relationship problem is significant to seek help.

People in relationships that are healthy, unhealthy and abusive need different types of support from leaders at their church. Once a leader has assessed the health of a relationship, they can offer support or help connect the couple to counseling or other resources. Leaders can assess relationship health by asking questions such as:

- *How do you make important decisions (e.g. parenting, finances, work)?*
- *What happens when you disagree about something?*
- *What does it look like when you argue?*
- *What do you enjoy doing together?*

- *How do you show affection and love to each other?*
- *How do you support each other through difficult or stressful situations?*
- *Have you ever felt fearful around your partner?*
- *What is your marriage's greatest strength?*
- *What is the greatest challenge present in your marriage?*

It is often difficult for couples to share their struggles and they may try to hide them. It is important for pastors and church leaders to create a safe and nonjudgmental atmosphere when asking questions to understand a marriage. When abuse is present in a relationship, the victim often does not feel safe sharing honestly and openly. They may fear that they will be punished later.

In relationships where domestic violence is present, it is common for one partner to use fear and manipulation to control the other. These patterns can be difficult to detect and may require collecting information from each partner separately, if it can be done without compromising safety. Regardless, couples in unhealthy or abusive relationships will benefit most from a combination of support from community providers as well as lay-care within the church.

## Crisis in Couple Relationships

Many couples seek help when they are facing a crisis situation or experiencing significant relationship struggles. Mild challenges may be addressed with the self-help books or lay care and pastoral counseling. However, when a couple is well into the unhealthy range, they will likely benefit most from meeting with a professional counselor in addition to learning from the resources listed below. The Charis website ([www.charisnetworkct.org](http://www.charisnetworkct.org)) offers information about support groups and professional Christian counselors who offer services in central Connecticut and Psychology Today ([www.psychologytoday.com](http://www.psychologytoday.com)) provides a general lists of counselors in your community.

### *Crisis and Unhealthy Patterns*

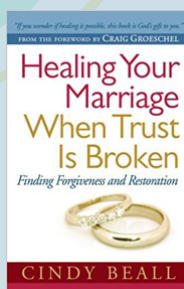
The following situations are more complex in nature and generally require professional help or significant intervention. When these types of situations occur, both individual partners and the relationship as a unit need time for healing and reconciliation.

**Infidelity.** Infidelity is the act or state of being unfaithful to a partner. Often, the term “affair” is used to describe an act of infidelity. In some cases, an affair is physical and involves a sexual encounter. In other cases, it is emotional, an affair of the heart, and involves a relationship with a person that is more than a friendship, lacks healthy boundaries and often includes an element of romantic attraction.

When an affair occurs, it is often devastating to the relationship. Trust is broken and feelings of hurt and betrayal are often overwhelming. Reconciliation is possible after an affair, but it is essential to build in support and counseling as early as possible and recognize that it takes time for trust to be restored and healing to occur.

**Mental Illness.** When one partner suffers from a mental illness it often results in significant marital stress. Mental health conditions can manifest in a number of different ways depending on the specific diagnosis. It is important for the struggling spouse to build adequate support and professional counseling into their life and daily routine. It is essential for the ‘healthy’ partner to offer support and empathy, but not take on the role of therapist or enabler. In addition to emotional support, they may also need extra practical support if they need to take on extra responsibilities as a result of the severity of their partners’ mental health symptoms.

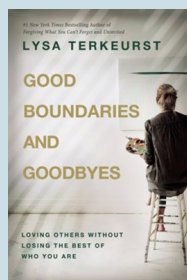
### Resources: Infidelity & Mental Illness



Cindy Beall

*Healing Your Marriage When Trust Is Broken*

Finding Forgiveness and Restoration. A few days after an ordinary Valentine’s Day, Cindy Beall’s life changed forever. She listened with disbelief to her husband, Chris, a respected pastor, confess to pornography addiction, numerous affairs, and the startling news that a woman was



Lysa TerKeurst

*Good Boundaries and Goodbyes: Loving Others Without Losing the Best of Who You Are*

TerKeurst shares the hard-won relationship advice she’s acquired in her own life! She’ll teach you five critical points to establishing healthy boundaries



[nami.org](http://nami.org)

NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, is the nation’s largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. Use their website to find a support group near you.

**Addiction.** Addiction can be described as a condition that results when a person ingests a substance (e.g. alcohol, marijuana or heroin) or engages in an activity (e.g. gambling, sex or eating) that is often initially enjoyable but becomes compulsive and causes harm over time. People who struggle with addiction have an intense focus on using certain substances or engaging in certain types of activities. In many cases, the substance or behavior interferes with overall functioning and a person's ability to carry out ordinary responsibilities, such as work, relationships and maintaining their health. It is important to take struggles with addiction seriously. Addictions are very difficult to overcome. One partner can not force the other to receive help. Instead, they can set healthy boundaries, communicate their needs and pray for the partner struggling with addiction to seek help. It is important for the healthy partner not to enable unhealthy behavior or take responsibility for the struggling partner's recovery.

**Pornography.** Over the last decade, access to pornographic images has dramatically increased. Increased access to the internet makes sexually explicit images just a click away at all times. In fact, 12% of all websites and 25% of all web searches are pornographic in nature. The prevalence of pornography consumption is alarmingly high; 70% of men aged 18-24 visit a porn site in a typical month. Pornography consumption is harmful to marriages. Real relationship is sacrificed for imitation, the true purpose of sex becomes twisted, partners' sexual expectations can become unrealistic, and many argue that pornography consumption can become a compulsive and addictive behavior and is a form of infidelity.

**Significant Conflict or Unhealthy Patterns.** When a couple engages in unhealthy relational patterns for a long period of time, they become difficult to break out of. Examples of unhealthy patterns include poor communication, a lack of emotional connection, ineffective conflict resolution, controlling or manipulative behaviors, poor boundaries, or unkind or disrespectful words or actions. Couples that engage in these types of behaviors for long periods of time report less marital satisfaction, more resentment and are more likely to divorce. Professional counselors can help couples identify and break out of their unhealthy patterns and learn to relate to one another in healthier ways.

Many books are available that can be used in conjunction with professional counseling to help relationships that are in crisis or struggling in significant ways.

## Resources: Addiction



**Celebrate Recovery** is a safe place to find community and freedom from the issues that are controlling our life. Find a group near you on the website: [www.celebrater-recovery.com](http://www.celebrater-recovery.com)



**Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous** are fellowships of people who come together to solve their drinking and substance problems. Visit their websites to find a group near you: [aa.org](http://aa.org) or [na.org](http://na.org).



Jen Ferguson & Craig Ferguson  
*Pure Eyes, Clean Heart: A Couple's Journey to Freedom from Pornography*

In this candid account, Craig and Jen Ferguson share their personal story of the shame, anger, and hopelessness associated with Craig's porn addiction. Marked by biblical and practical guidance for addressing the heart issues that lead to addiction, *Pure Eyes, Clean Heart* offers encouragement and hope to those who struggle or whose loved ones struggle with the lure of pornography.



# What is Domestic Violence

Domestic violence (also called intimate partner violence) can be described as a pattern of behaviors used by one partner to maintain power and control over the other. It includes behaviors that physically harm, arouse fear, prevent a partner from doing what they wish or forcing them to behave in ways they do not want. Tactics such as physical and sexual violence, threats and intimidation, manipulation, emotional abuse, and economic deprivation are often used to maintain power and control. Anyone, regardless of race, age, sex, religion or gender, can be a victim or perpetrator of domestic violence. When the relationship is abusive or there are signs of domestic violence it is essential that professional counselors and domestic violence service providers are engaged.

The “Power and Control Wheel”, developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, MN, illustrates strategies used by perpetrators to maintain power and control over their victims.

Abuse in any relationship should be taken very seriously. In many cases, other entities such as the police or Child Protective Services need to be called to ensure the safety of the family.

## The Power and Control Wheel



*The “Power and Control Wheel”, developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, MN, illustrates strategies used by perpetrators to maintain power and control over their victims.*

### Spiritual Abuse Defined

According to Focus on the Family, spiritual abuse occurs when an oppressor establishes control and domination by using Scripture, doctrine or “leadership role” as a weapon. This form of abuse can be subtle, because it can mask itself as religious practice. If a husband exhibits control-oriented leadership over his wife, lords his power over her, demands submission from her or uses Scripture in shaming and punishing ways, these are signs of spiritual abuse. Spiritual abuse is often present in abusive relationships.

Oakley (2018) further defines spiritual abuse:

“Spiritual abuse is a form of emotional and psychological abuse. It is characterized by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behavior in a religious context. This abuse may include: manipulation and exploitation, enforced or coerced accountability, censorship of decision making, requirements for secrecy and silence, coercion to conform, control through the use of sacred texts or teaching, requirement of obedience to the abuser, the suggestion that the abuser has a ‘divine’ position, isolation as a means of punishment, and superiority and elitism’ (Oakley, 2018).”

### Warning Signs for Spiritual Abuse

According to Focus on the Family, spiritually oppressive husbands often exhibit the following characteristics.

- **Overemphasize their authority.** They may elevate their points of view above those of their pastors, above those of teachers and even above the Bible itself. Husbands who use spiritual abuse in marriage often require unconditional submission.
- **Are image-conscious.** They work hard to maintain an image of righteousness when they are in public. They deny or cover up their own sins and flaws. And they are good at performing acts that appear righteous and at bringing attention to their “holiness.”
- **Suppress criticism or feedback.** They will not allow questions, dissent or open discussions about issues.
- **Express theology that’s unbalanced.** They tend to focus on minor or peripheral theological matters or emphasize Scripture to get their way or manipulate a situation.
- **Have unfair standards.** They require others to have a high standard of righteousness while excusing their own failings.
- **Are not teachable.** They keep company only with like-minded people and reject views different than their own.
- **Are legalistic.** They make and enforce extra-biblical rules and connect righteousness with following these rules.
- **Do often not submit to authority.** They tend to flee church discipline and fail to submit to church leadership and secular authorities.
- **Use fear and shame as motivation.** They use fear, shame and coercion to persuade others to obey them or share their point of view.

Spiritual abuse often leaves victims isolated from God. Since it uses God and His Word to dominate and scold, victims can find it hard to separate the abuse from their understanding of who God is or of how He sees them. It is important for pastors, leaders, and counselors to assess for spiritual abuse in its various forms, acknowledge it, and offer support to victims.

## Domestic Violence as Oppression

While the word domestic violence is not found in Scripture, Strickland (2016) suggests the concept of “oppression,” which is frequently used in Scripture, can be applied to domestic violence. According to Strickland, “The biblical category of oppression describes the manipulative domination of one person by another. It captures the idea that someone is subject to another’s harsh control. Oppression is not a one-off incident, but the use of systematic punishments to maintain power and control in a relationship.” While it is often quoted in the faith community that God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16), it is important to remember that He also hates oppression in marriage relationships.

### What God Says about Oppression

According to Darby Strickland (2018), there is much the Lord has to say about domestic violence, a form of oppression. While it can be devastating to come to the realization that a spouse is violating a covenant relationship, much comfort can be found in Scripture:

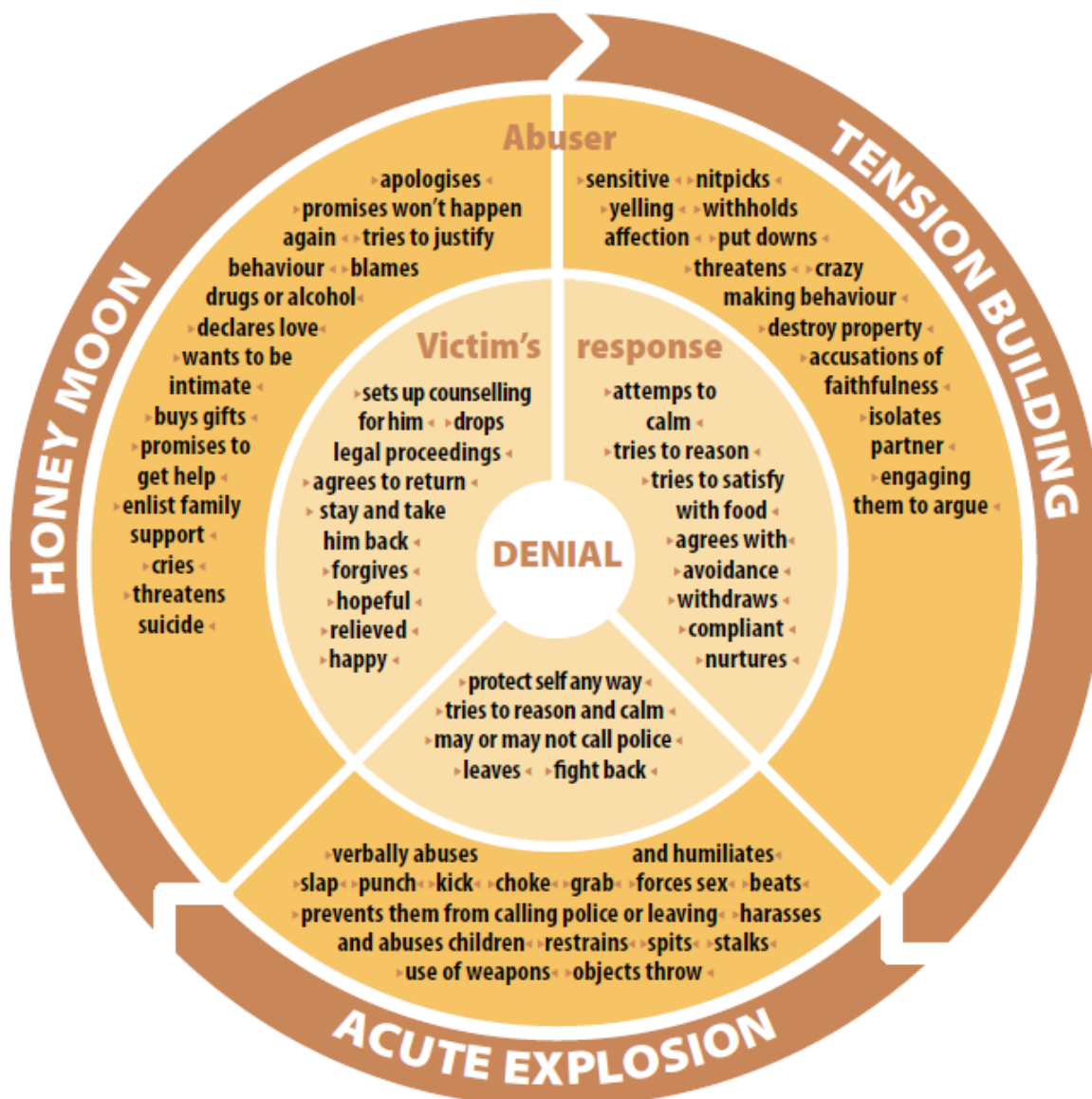
- 1. Abuse is not the fault of the victim.** Victims are often blamed for abuse; however, there is nothing anyone can do or say that causes another to oppress. On the contrary, Mark 7:20-23 says, “*What comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person.*”
- 2. The victim does not deserve abuse.** No one deserves abuse. It is common for victims to feel they must have done something to deserve the abuse or that God is punishing them. On the contrary, God’s desire for His child is that they are loved and cared for.
- 3. God hates oppression.** God is clear throughout Scripture that He hates oppression. God’s response to Pharaoh’s oppression of the Israelites is just one example. Scriptures that demonstrate God’s contempt for injustice and oppression include: Amos 5:11, Proverbs 22:8-16 and Zephaniah 3:1-8.
- 4. Oppression violates God’s design for marriage.** Marriage is a covenant relationship designed to be a place of mutual trust, love, kindness, sacrificial love, and honesty. It is a reflection of the way Christ loves His church. There is no place for oppression in God’s design for marriage.
- 5. God sees all suffering.** Jesus sees and understands all oppression. Isaiah 53: 7 describes Jesus as “*oppressed and afflicted*” himself. Psalm 34:18 says, “*He is near to the broken hearted and close to the crushed in spirit.*”
- 6. God desires to rescue people from oppression.** Just as he rescued the Israelites from Pharaoh’s oppression, He desires for all of his children to experience freedom and healing. Psalm 9:9 says, “*The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.*” And Psalm 103:6 says, “*The Lord works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed.*”
- 7. Leaders have a responsibility to address oppression.** Isaiah 1:17 says, “*Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause.*” Leaders in churches have a responsibility to acknowledge oppression, respond, and support victims. That’s one way to “*seek justice and correct oppression.*”

## Cycle of Violence

The theory of the *Cycle of Violence* was developed by Dr. Lenore Walker. It has three distinct phases which are generally present in violent relationships:

1. **Tension Building Phase:** In this phase, the perpetrator gets edgy and tension begins to build up. This is where the abused person may feel like they are walking on eggshells.
2. **Violent Episode Phase:** Where the abuse occurs. It can last from a few minutes to several hours.
3. **Remorseful/Honeymoon Phase:** The perpetrator may be sorry or act like nothing happened; but is still interested in making up and may even promise never to do it again. However, the tension almost always starts to build again, thus continuing the cycle.

Outlined below are typical feelings and behaviors exhibited by family members in the various phases of the cycle of violence.



## Gaslighting and Emotional Abuse

While physical and sexual abuse are often easier to spot, psychological and emotional abuse can be more subtle. Gaslighting is broadly defined as a type of psychological abuse that makes someone seem or feel “crazy.” Gaslighting is a method of gaining control over someone else.

It resembles other forms of psychological abuse and can be thought of as a subset of this larger category. The term is based on the stage play and movie “Gaslight,” in which a husband attempts to drive his wife crazy by dimming the lights in their home, and then denying the lights were dimmed when his wife points out this fact. It is a form of emotional abuse because it causes victims to question their own feelings, memory, instincts and sense of reality.

According to the National Domestic Violence Hotline, gaslighting can happen in a variety of ways. Some examples include:

- **Countering:** This is when someone questions a person’s memory. They may say things such as, “Are you sure about that? You have a bad memory,” or “I think you are forgetting what really happened.”
- **Withholding:** This involves someone pretending they do not understand the conversation, or refusing to listen, to make a person doubt themselves. For example, they might say, “Now you are just confusing me,” or “I do not know what you are talking about.”
- **Trivializing:** This occurs when a person belittles or disregards how someone else feels. They may accuse them of being “too sensitive” or overreacting in response to valid and reasonable concerns.
- **Denial** involves a person refusing to take responsibility for their actions. They may do this by pretending to forget what happened, saying they did not do it, or blaming their behavior on someone else.
- **Diverting:** With this technique, a person changes the focus of a discussion by questioning the other person’s credibility. For example, they might say, “That is just nonsense you read on the internet. It is not real.”
- **Stereotyping:** An article in the American Sociological Review says that a person may intentionally use negative stereotypes about someone’s gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, or age to gaslight them. For example, they may say that no one will believe a woman if she reports abuse.

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*“Righteousness  
and justice are  
the foundation  
of your throne;  
steadfast love  
and faithfulness  
go before you”  
(Psalm 89:14)*

*“The LORD  
detests lying  
lips, but he  
delights in  
people who are  
trustworthy.”  
(Proverbs 12:22)*

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## Offering Support and Promoting Safety

### *Starting a Conversation about Abuse*

It is common for couples, as well as victims of abuse to approach pastors and leaders at churches for support. These conversations create a unique opportunity to offer wisdom, support and help connect people to community resources. While every situation is unique, there are several basic ways to facilitate conversations that meet survivors where they're at.

- ✓ **Acknowledge that they're in a difficult and scary situation.** Let them know that the abuse is not their fault. Reassure them that they're not alone and that there's help and support available, including from yourself.
- ✓ **Be supportive and listen.** It is often difficult to talk about abuse. Start by providing safe space where the person feels heard and supported. While there may be a temptation to tell the person what they should do or offer advice, your first priority should always be to support them as they make their own decisions.
- ✓ **Be non-judgmental.** Respect the decisions that a person makes. There are many reasons why they might stay in an abusive situation. They might leave and return to the relationship many times. Remember not to criticize their decisions or guilt them. Keep in mind that experiencing shame and guilt from friends and family may not only widen the gap between their support system, but also further expand the isolation tactic their partner may already perpetuate in the relationship.
- ✓ **Remember that you cannot "rescue them."** It's difficult to watch someone you care about get hurt, but ultimately they are the only one with the right to make a decision about what to do. It's important to support them no matter what they decide, even if you don't agree. Remember that abuse is about power and control and making decisions for them can only add to the disempowerment they're already experiencing from their partner.
- ✓ **Help them develop a safety plan.** A safety plan is a set of actions that can help lower a person's risk of being hurt by their partner. The following sections offers more information about safety planning. Keep in mind that leaving is not always an option for everyone and a safety plan may mean focusing on how to stay safe while remaining in the relationship.
- ✓ **Encourage them to participate in activities with friends and family.** Help identify and build support networks that can help them recognize alternatives to the abusive situations they're experiencing and build the confidence they need to leave their relationship.
- ✓ **Encourage them to talk to people who can offer further help.** Identify local service providers for counseling or support. Offer to go with them to any service provider or legal setting for moral support.

(Taken from the National Domestic Violence Hotline)



## Creating Safety

When a person is in an abusive relationship, the first thing to consider is safety. If a person is in danger, it is important for them to get to a safe place immediately. For some this means staying with friends or family until a longer-term plan can be made. For others, it involves staying at a hotel or domestic violence shelter. Once a person is in a safe place it is important for them to build a support network of people who will help them make very difficult decisions about their next steps. In many cases, it is best for the perpetrator to not know the location of his/her partner and family. Victims of domestic violence are more likely to be harmed after they have left the home or relationship.

Sometimes a pastor or leader has the opportunity to create a safety plan with a person before they leave the home or when a person is living in an abusive situation but is not ready to leave. A safety plan is a specific plan that helps a person anticipate danger, problem solve about potentially dangerous situations, and increase control and safety in various situations. They can be made for a variety of situations,

including leaving a relationship, dealing with an emergency, continuing to live with or date a partner, or protecting oneself once they have left the relationship.

See below for examples of safety plan considerations during episodes of violence and when getting ready to leave.

### *Example: Safety Plan During Episodes of Violence*

- *I will leave if \_\_\_\_\_.*
- *I can keep a bag ready and put it \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ so I can leave quickly.*
- *I can tell \_\_\_\_\_ about the  
violence and have them call the police when  
violence erupts.*
- *I can teach my children to use the telephone to call 911.*

- I will use the code word \_\_\_\_\_ for my children, friends or family to call for help.
- If I have to leave my home, I will go \_\_\_\_\_. (Be prepared even if you think you will never have to leave).
- When an argument erupts, I will move to a safer room such as \_\_\_\_\_.
- I can teach these strategies to my children: \_\_\_\_\_.
- I will use my instincts, intuition and judgment. I will protect myself and my children until we are out of danger.

### *Example: Safety When Getting Ready to Leave*

- I will leave money and an extra set of keys with \_\_\_\_\_.
- I will keep important documents and keys at \_\_\_\_\_.
- I will open a savings account by this date \_\_\_\_\_ to increase my independence.
- Other things I can do to increase my independence are: \_\_\_\_\_.
- The domestic violence hotline is \_\_\_\_\_.
- The shelter's hotline is \_\_\_\_\_.
- I will check with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to know who will let me stay with them or who will lend me money.
- I can leave extra clothes with \_\_\_\_\_.
- I will review my safety plan every \_\_\_\_\_ (time frame) in order to plan the safest route.
- I will review the plan with \_\_\_\_\_ (a friend, counselor or advocate).

### *Free Interactive Safety Plan Guide*

Use the National Domestic Violence Hotline's interactive guide to creating a safety plan tailored to a person's unique situation.

**[www.thehotline.org/plan-for-safety/create-a-safety-plan](http://www.thehotline.org/plan-for-safety/create-a-safety-plan)**



## Advocacy Empowerment Wheel

Created by the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence, this wheel depicts the major components which engender empowerment through advocacy. It asks that advocates respect confidentiality, believe their victim and validate her experiences, acknowledge the injustice, respect their victim's autonomy, help their victim plan for future safety, and promote access to community services.



Church staff and leaders can consider how they can equip others to be advocates and ensure they apply each component in pastoral care and counseling.



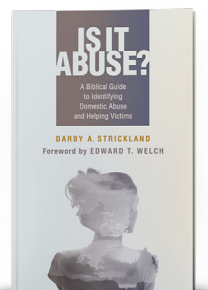
## Important Community Resources

### Connecting to Support

There are a number of programs in the community that help victims of abuse. These include the CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Greater Hartford Legal Aid, CT Legal Services, professional counselors, and law enforcement. Church leaders, family and friends can also play an important role in helping victims of abuse connect to support, set healthy boundaries, and make wise choices.

| Agency  | Contact   | Description   |
|---|---|---|
| <p><i>The Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence</i></p>  | <p>Website:<br/><a href="http://www.ctcadv.org">www.ctcadv.org</a></p> <p>Hotline:<br/>Call 888.774.2900 for help or to talk to someone</p>             | <p>Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) is the state's leading voice for victims of domestic violence and those organizations that serve them. Their website offers a wealth of information about domestic violence in CT and their hotline is staffed with advocates who help victims think through their options and determine which steps and services will work best. They help connect victims to counselors, shelters and safe homes, support groups, children's programs, and court and advocacy support located in CT.</p> |
| <p><i>The National Domestic Violence Hotline</i></p>              | <p>Website:<br/><a href="http://www.thehotline.org">www.thehotline.org</a></p> <p>Hotline:<br/>1.800.799.SAFE (7233)</p>                                | <p>The National Domestic Violence Hotline is the only 24/7 center in the nation that has access to service providers and shelters across the U.S. Their website provides valuable information about domestic violence, safety planning, healthy relationships and resources in the community.</p>   |
| <p><i>Free Legal Services:</i></p> <p><i>Greater Hartford Legal Aid</i></p> <p><i>CT Legal Services</i></p>   | <p><a href="http://www.ghla.org">www.ghla.org</a><br/>860.541.5000</p> <p><a href="http://www.ctlegal.org">www.ctlegal.org</a><br/>860.344.0447</p>     | <p>Offer free legal services to transform the lives of low-income people facing issues such as homelessness, a lack of medical care, and domestic violence.</p>   |
| <p><i>Professional Counseling</i></p> <p><i>Charis Network</i></p> <p><i>Psychology Today</i></p> <p><i>Outpatient Providers</i></p>                | <p><a href="http://www.charisnetworkct.org">www.charisnetworkct.org</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.psychologytoday.com">www.psychologytoday.com</a></p> | <p>Counseling is a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals. There are a variety of options including Christian counselors listed on the Charis website, counselors in private practice listed on psychology today and outpatient clinics such as Community Health Resources (<a href="http://www.chrhealth.org">www.chrhealth.org</a>) or Intercommunity (<a href="http://www.intercommunityct.org">www.intercommunityct.org</a>).</p>   |
| <p><i>Emergency Help</i></p>  | <p><i>Dial 9-1-1 when someone's life, safety, health, or property is in immediate danger.</i></p>   |   |

## Books on Domestic Violence



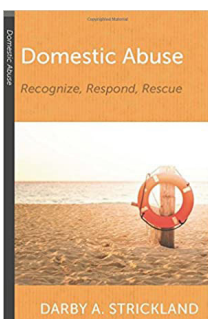
**Darby Strickland (2020)**  
*Is It Abuse?: A Biblical Guide to Identifying Domestic Abuse and Helping Victims*

For years, biblical counselor Darby Strickland has served women in oppressive marriages. Now she writes to anyone who wants to help, regardless of their level of experience. You will become equipped to provide wise and Christ-centered counsel and to empower and advocate for victims while navigating the complex dynamics of oppression in a marriage.



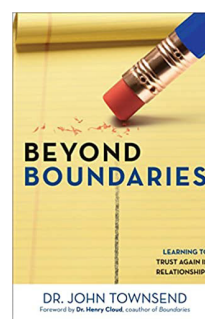
**Brad Hambrick, M. (2019).**  
*Becoming a Church that Cares for the Abused*

Is your church prepared to care for individuals who have experienced various forms of abuse? As we continue to learn of more individuals experiencing sexual abuse, domestic violence, and other forms of abuse, it's clear that resources are needed to help ministries and leaders care for these individuals with love, support, and in cooperation with civil authorities. This handbook seeks to help the church take a significant step forward in its care for those who have been abused.



**Darby Strickland (2018)**  
*Domestic Abuse: Recognize, Respond, Rescue*

What hope is there when a loved one's marriage is abusive? One spouse seeking to control and dominate the other is a prevalent problem, and even Christian marriages are not safe from it. But how can counselors and concerned family and friends know how to approach it . . . or even recognize it? Experienced Christian counselor Darby Strickland demonstrates how to recognize and uncover oppression, then uses Scripture to show what is truly

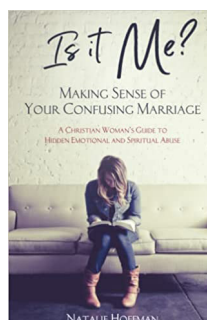


**John Townsend. (2013).**  
*Beyond Boundaries: Learning to Trust Again in Relationships*

Painful relationships violate our trust, causing us to close our hearts. But to experience the freedom and love God designed us for, we eventually have to take another risk. In this breakthrough book, bestselling author Dr. John Townsend takes you beyond the pain of the past to discover how to re-enter a life of intimate relationships. Whether you're trying to restore a current relationship or begin a new one, Townsend gives practical tools for establishing trust and finding the intimacy you long for.

### Citations:

- The Duluth Model-Power and Control Wheel (Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, n.d. circa 1993)
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- Strickland, D. (2016). Identifying oppression in marriage. *Journal of Biblical Counseling*, 30:2, 7-21.
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- Widom, C. S. (1989). The cycle of violence. *Science*, 244(4901), 160-166. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.2704995>



**Natalie Hoffman (2018).**  
*Is It Me? Making Sense of Your Confusing Marriage: A Christian Woman's Guide to Hidden Emotional and Spiritual Abuse*

If this sounds like you, join me on a journey of discovery that will change your life. We'll look at exactly what is going on in your marriage (no more confusion!) and what a normal marriage looks like. You'll learn about the roles your husband, your church, your friends, and your counselors are playing in your confusing marriage. We'll look at your role and how to change it.