



TIP OF THE WEEK

Spousal Violence

Spousal violence cuts across every line of geography and income. Abuse is found in every community in our country and hundreds thousands of incidents of domestic violence occur every year. The sad news is, many of these incidents go unreported. Many of the households where spousal violence occurs also have a child present – which means there is usually more than one victim. Taking the enormous step to reach out is the first step towards change, the first step towards safety. No one deserves to be abused. Families no longer need to suffer for years in silence.

Spousal violence is a priority of the Edmonton Police Service, and to the community. It adversely affects all aspects of society. Violence in the home is a leading cause of injury. Children who grow up witnessing this violence are affected for life. Abusers, unless held accountable for their actions, continue to commit acts of violence and intimidation.

The collaborative partnership between the Edmonton Police Service and Edmonton Community Services is committed to working together to help families to find emotional and physical safety and to work with the community to end the cycle of violence that so often damages and destroys families.

The EPS is committed to providing the most appropriate and effective response to spousal violence with its five Spousal Violence Intervention Teams in the Family Support Services Section.

To deal with the more than 5,500 reports of family violence received each year, the EPS and Edmonton Community Services established intervention teams to provide services to individuals involved in spousal violence. The teams are comprised of a detective and a senior social worker and are responsible for completing a threat / risk assessment based on information from police reports, records, and other sources.

The teams provide intervention in selected cases where victims are assessed as high risk for serious violence or offenders are deemed at high risk to re-offend. Intervention includes further investigation of complex cases or issues not identified in the original file, developing a comprehensive safety plan with the victim, and proactively working with the victim and community agencies to: end the violence, help the parties involved make appropriate changes in their lives, and work with patrol members in developing appropriate responses to cases of spousal violence.

Cycle of Violence

Research and experience show that violence in a relationship follows a cycle.

The tension builds over a period of time – days, weeks, months or even years. Then comes the assault, which is followed by a period of peacemaking, often referred to as the ‘honeymoon’ phase. Many believe that abused partners do not experience a true ‘honeymoon’ phase once the cycle of abuse has begun. This may more accurately reflect the abuser’s state.

Phase one – tension build-up

- You can sense your partner’s edginess
- You are unable to discuss the underlying problem with you
- Your partner becomes verbally abusive
- You may feel the abuse is deserved.
- In order to cope, you deny that violence will occur and believe that it can be controlled.

Phase two – violent episode

- The tension builds until it becomes unbearable. You may even provoke violence to get it over with. Your partner loses control and acts violently.
- It may begin with a push or shove. With time, it escalates to a slap, kick or punch, then possibly to the use of weapons, resulting in more serious injuries.
- You partner claims not to want to hurt you, just to teach you a lesson.



TIP OF THE WEEK

- Your partner justifies his/her actions and blames you.
- Both you and your partner minimize the seriousness of the injuries.
- You accept the blame.

Phase three – honeymoon

Your partner:

- fears you will leave the relationship;
- is worried and tries to make up;
- becomes charming and manipulative;
- believes anger can be controlled and it will never happen again; and/or
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You:

- want to believe your partner;
- begin to feel responsible for the abuse; and/or
- in advanced stages of abuse, the honeymoon period may be reduced to a day without violence or be totally absent.

If you look at your own relationship with your partner, you may relate to this cycle of violence. As the violence is not constant, you can often be confused, particularly when the abusive partner has positive traits as well. Being needed can be a powerful incentive to stay in a relationship. It can create a strong belief that things will get better. But once violence has begun, it will need outside intervention to stop.

Effects on Children

Studies show that the effects on children living in an abusive environment may be harmful and lasting. Some children learn to accept violence as a normal part of family life and will often mimic their parents and become violent themselves.

If a parent remains in an abusive home, children learn there are few consequences for violent behaviour. They become confused in their feelings of love and hurt.

Their feelings toward their parents may also be confused and this may result in loss of respect for them or even directing abuse towards them. Children may grow up to abuse the partners they choose or accept violence in relationships because they think of violence as a normal part of a relationship.

Children who observe violence may:

- feel frightened, confused, and unhappy;
- behave aggressively, become belligerent or withdrawn and act fearful;
- become depressed or even suicidal;
- feel responsible for the violence;
- exhibit self-destructive, accident-prone behavior;
- Have physical complaints such as headaches and stomach aches;
- Have night-time difficulties such as insomnia, nightmares and bedwetting;
- Seek punishment with behaviors such as lying or stealing (believing punishment means love); and/or



TIP OF THE WEEK

- Adopt rigid gender role identification. Girls can become withdrawn, passive, and given to approval-seeking behavior; and boys can become aggressive, bullying and given to self-destructive behavior.

Your children deserve better. Although removing them from a violent home or having your abusive partner leave will not automatically remove the damage already done, it is a first step in encouraging a positive change in their lives. Counseling is available to help children with the confused emotions or trauma they are experiencing.

If you decide to leave an abusive situation, take your children with you. If the police are involved, they can escort you to a safe place.

As a parent, you have a responsibility to protect your children. The cycle of violence can be broken – you and your children deserve to be protected.

Reporting Abuse

- Call 911 if this is a spousal violence incident in progress, or if the threat of danger is immediate.
- Try to give the police your name, address and phone number. Provide as much additional information as circumstances allow.

Let them know if:

- your life is in danger
- you are injured and will need an ambulance
- there are weapons being used and if so, what type.
- there are drugs and alcohol involved.
- there are children (or others) present in the home.
- there is a history of violence.
- there is a protection order, peace bond or restraining order in effect.

If there is not an immediate concern for your safety, i.e. you are at a place of safety unknown to the abuser, report to the regular police line: 780-423-4567.

Distress & Crisis Lines

Police & Ambulance: 911

Police Complaint Line: 780-423-4567

Support Network 24-Hour Distress Line: 780-482-4357

Edmonton Sexual Assault Centre 24-Hour Crisis Line: 780-423-4121

Suicide Prevention Line (Salvation Army): 780-429-0230

Kids Help Line: 1-800-668-6868

Child Abuse Hot Line: 1-800-387-5437

Teens Helping Teens: 780-428-8336

To obtain EPO's or other protection orders please contact the Edmonton Protection Order Program at 780-422-9222.

Information obtained from the Edmonton Police Service

If you have information a crime, contact Protective Services at 780-471-7477. If you wish to remain anonymous, contact Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477). Your identity will remain anonymous, and if the information you provide leads to a conviction, you could be eligible for a reward of up to \$2000.00.

Everybody benefits, except the criminal.