



MYTHS AND REALITIES OF BATTERING

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| MYTH: | Battered women make up only a small percentage of the population. |
| REALITY: | Similar to rape, battering is a crime that often goes unreported. Conservative estimates state that over 6 million women are repeated victims of battering. |
| MYTH: | Wives batter husbands too. |
| REALITY: | Of all battering incidents, men are victims between 2% and 5% of the time. The significant difference is the extent of the violence. Women receive far greater physical injury than men. |
| MYTH: | Battering does not happen in my neighborhood, or it only happens in poor uneducated families. |
| REALITY: | Batterers come from all walks of life and many people are surprised at the unusually high percentage occurring in families of doctors, law enforcement, and others in the helping professions. |
| MYTH: | It is only natural that intimate partners fight; that is the way it has always been, so it cannot be that bad. |
| REALITY: | Battering is not an occasional domestic "spat." It is an extreme. Battering is purposely controlling behavior by someone who wants total control. It is criminal. Children growing up in homes with domestic violence think that it is okay and are at great risk of becoming batterers or victims themselves. |
| MYTH: | A slap never hurt anyone. |
| REALITY: | A recent study indicated that 1 out of every 5 women seen in emergency room visits is there due to battering. Black eyes, broken bones and teeth, burns and scalds, hair torn from scalps, and knife and gun wounds are just some of the injuries seen. A third of the murders in America are committed by other family members. Not even a slap is okay - you can see where it leads. |
| MYTH: | Battered women are masochistic and enjoy it; otherwise, they would not stay. |
| REALITY: | Nobody likes to be beaten. Women may be reluctant to leave for a variety of complex reasons. Shame, low self-esteem, economics, fear, or an unhealthy love for their abuser are some of them. These are things that the victim should face, and seek help. |
| MYTH: | If a woman stays, then she deserves it. |
| REALITY: | Many women who attempt to leave are physically stopped and, if they do leave, are persistently traced by their abusive partner and forced to come back. Even when a woman returns voluntarily, it is often with the mistaken belief that the batterer will change and the beatings will cease. |
| MYTH: | Some women provoke beatings and therefore deserve it. |
| REALITY: | Nobody deserves to be beaten. Violence is the result of a person being unable to cope with their own emotions. In most battering situations, it does not matter what the victim does, whether she is passive or aggressive. The batterer might even beat her because he/she got stuck in traffic on the way home. |



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| MYTH: | Battering ceases or gets better "When we get married." |
| REALITY: | Once battering begins, it gets progressively worse, particularly after marriage and increasing significantly when the woman becomes pregnant. It will not stop unless the batterer realizes the problem is with them and seeks professional help. |
| MYTH: | The batterer is not a loving person; they are psychopathic. |
| REALITY: | They are not always brutal. Particularly after a violent episode, the batterer is loving and promises it will not happen again. Batterers may lead very "normal" lives and appear to be very prominent and respectable members of the community, except for their violent, aggressive impulses within the family. |
| MYTH: | Alcohol and substance abuse cause violence. |
| REALITY: | There is a significant correlation in the number of alcohol/substance abusers and batterers. Control and inhibition over violent behavior may be lessened and used as an excuse, but women are usually beaten by their batterer whether the batterer is drunk or sober. |
| MYTH: | The law protects victims of domestic violence. |
| REALITY: | There are laws against spousal abuse. For a variety of reasons, law enforcement and the judicial system are inconsistent in their responses to this problem. Because domestic violence is still viewed as a "family" problem and not a "community" problem, authorities are reluctant to deal with the issue. Continued efforts are being made to legislate, enforce, and judge the issue which will not go away or remain behind closed doors. |
| MYTH: | Society does not condone domestic violence. |
| REALITY: | Wife beating existed and was legal for centuries before the feminist movement brought the problem before the public eye. As recently as 1980, a survey of UCLA undergraduates found that 60% of men and women thought it was okay to "slap" a wife. By tolerating it, society accepts it as normal. |
| MYTH: | Batterers also beat their children. |
| REALITY: | Batterers may not necessarily abuse their children, but several national studies have found that in 70% of families where a woman is battered, the children are abused themselves. |
| MYTH: | Once a batterer, always a batterer. |
| REALITY: | A batterer, once realizing they need help, can get professional counseling to find non-violent solutions to problems. The desire for assistance must be genuine. 9 out of 10 batterers do not believe they are doing wrong and need to end their violence. They never seek counseling. |