

# CALLED TO ACTION

*Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. Romans 14:19*

## **October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month**

The first Domestic Violence Awareness Month was observed in October 1987. This month evolved out of the first Day of Unity in October, 1981 by the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. The Day of Unity was started with the idea of connecting advocates across the country in their efforts to battle violence against women and children. It eventually became a special week which included many activities conducted at many levels, and now has activities scheduled throughout the whole month of October each year. The Day of Unity is still celebrated on the first Monday in October, which starts the month of awareness off in a powerful way.

### **What is Domestic Violence?**

Domestic violence can be defined as a pattern of behavior in any relationship that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. Abuse is physical, sexual, emotional, economic or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This includes any behaviors that frighten, intimidate, terrorize, manipulate, hurt, humiliate, blame, injure or wound someone. Domestic violence can happen to anyone of any race, age, sexual orientation, religion or gender. It can happen to couples who are married, living together or who are dating. Domestic violence affects people of all socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels and often includes children, elder adults and even pet animals.

### **Some examples of abuse:**

- Physical abuse is the use of physical force
- Sexual abuse means any forced sexual activity
- Emotional abuse includes threats, constant criticism and put-downs
- Controlling access to money and controlling activities are other abusive behaviors.

**If you are a victim of abuse or violence** at the hands of someone you know or love, or you are recovering from an assault by a stranger, you are not alone. To get immediate help and support call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-4673. For the North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence call toll-free (888) 232-9124 or (919) 682-1449, the web site address: <http://www.nccadv.org/>

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**If you know someone who is abused**, here are some things you can do as a friend:

- **Learn about domestic violence**, so you will understand her experience.
- **Let your friend know you're concerned** about her safety.
- **Be supportive** of her, but not of the abusive relationship.
- **Don't place shame, blame, or guilt** on your friend. Also, say nothing against him. Focus on her, her safety and your love for her.
- **If your friend decides to stay, continue to be supportive.** She may leave and then go back to the relationship many times.
- **Help her make a safety plan.**
- **If your friend decides to leave, continue to be supportive.** Even though the relationship was abusive, she may still feel sad and lonely once it is over.
- **Encourage your friend to talk to someone who can help.** Find a local domestic violence agency and offer to go with her to the agency.
- **Let your friend know that you will always be there no matter what.**

*Lucee was in high school when she became pregnant. She dropped out of school to be with her boyfriend and baby. Lucee was home alone most of the time as her boyfriend worked odd hours bussing tables at an all-night café and spent any free time he had with his buddies. When he was home all he did was yell at her. Her family convinced her to complete her GED so she went to the junior college. There she met the “love of her life” and married him hoping for security. When the second baby came along, her family convinced her to have her children baptized. The baptisms gave Lucee a connection with loving people in an accepting environment. The “love of her life” became jealous of the time she spent with her church friends and his emotional abuse soon became physical abuse. It took more than two years but her friends at church helped her see the options available to her and that none of the options included enduring more abuse. Now Lucee and her friends pray and visit and study and laugh and DANCE together as she experiences her new life.*

**READY :** Go to [www.ncwelca.org](http://www.ncwelca.org)--click on ‘committees’, then ‘Mission: Action’ to find a LIST of North Carolina shelters for anyone suffering domestic violence, a SAMPLE PLAN for leaving an abusive situation, and MANY OTHER IDEAS on stopping the abuse.

**SET :** Call your local domestic abuse program (there is one in every county). Ask how you and your church can best help them. To begin, collect toiletries for the shelters to use (travel size is OK) and anything else they need.

**DO :**

- 1-Volunteer at a local domestic violence shelter or another organization helping survivors or working to prevent violence.
- 2-Participate in a Take Back the Night march, a yearly march held in most major cities to raise awareness about violence against women.
- 3-Tell your congressional representatives that you expect their support for the funding of domestic violence survivor services and prevention programs.