

# Preventing Domestic and Sexual Violence

## What is domestic and sexual violence?

Domestic violence (also called intimate partner violence) is a pattern of abusive behavior and coercive control that can happen in a dating, marital, or live-in intimate partner relationship. In an abusive relationship, one partner tries to maintain control over the other by using physical, psychological, verbal, and sexual violence. It is estimated that approximately 1 in 4 women and 1 in 10 men have experienced physical violence within an intimate partner relationship.<sup>1</sup>

Sexual violence includes a spectrum of behaviors such as sexual harassment, unwanted sexual comments, unwanted sexual touching, sexual assault, and rape. Sexual violence is often committed by someone known to the victim/survivor, such as a friend, intimate partner, neighbor, colleague, or family member. Approximately 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men have experienced some form of physical sexual violence in their lifetime.<sup>2</sup>

Sexual and domestic violence are **never** the fault of the victim/survivor.\*

These forms of violence can have lasting effects for the victim/survivor, including:

- Physical injury
- Negative health outcomes (such as gastrointestinal, cardiovascular, and sexual health issues)
- Psychological impacts (such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts)
- Economic consequences (such as loss of employment and/or loss of income from medical costs)

The estimated lifetime cost of sexual assault is over **\$122,000** per victim/survivor.<sup>2</sup>

\*DCADV recognizes and respects that individuals who have experienced some form of domestic or sexual violence may identify with one, both, or none of these terms.



Sexual and domestic violence are public health issues and a result of societal inequities that allow violence to occur in the first place – **but they can be prevented!**

## How can I contribute?

### Respecting boundaries.

Honoring boundaries in the simplest of forms can have a great impact. For example, asking someone if it's okay to post a picture of them on social media before doing so can help create a culture of respect where everyone's individual boundaries are appreciated. We can also do this with the young people in our lives! Allowing them to say "no" to giving their aunt a kiss on the cheek can help model boundaries early. By showing children that we respect their "no", it can in turn help them realize that they should respect the "no" of others in their lives. This can help build a healthy future generation that respects one another and creates a culture of consent.

### Speaking up.

Because violence is a spectrum of behaviors, we can practice intervening early when we see someone committing harmful behaviors. Sometimes it's easy to directly speak up and tell someone why their behavior isn't okay, but other times we may not feel comfortable intervening that way. Instead, try distracting the conversation and situation away by bringing up a different topic of discussion.

### Paying attention.

Domestic and sexual violence can show up in our society, such as our media, in subtle ways. When it comes to media representation, it can sometimes be difficult to recognize because it may be framed as romantic or funny. However, when we understand the dynamics of harmful interactions that may lead to sexual or domestic violence, we can view the media we consume with a critical eye, which will allow us to be less influenced by media's effects. Challenging the norms that media perpetuate can help us create new norms where violence isn't tolerated.



### Learn more about preventing violence:

Real Relationships  
[www.realrelationshipsde.org](http://www.realrelationshipsde.org)

Scarleteen  
[www.scarleteen.com](http://www.scarleteen.com)

Safe + Respectful  
[www.safeandrespectful.org](http://www.safeandrespectful.org)

Love is Respect  
[www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org)

<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2019). Preventing Intimate Partner Violence. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/fastfact.html>

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). Preventing Sexual Violence. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/fastfact.html>