

Family Shelter Service

605 EAST ROOSEVELT ROAD • WHEATON, ILLINOIS 60187 • HOTLINE: (630) 469-5650

BARRIERS TO LEAVING

Victims of domestic abuse continually assess their reality and make choices based on what they find. They are not passive; they engage in step-like, logical behavior as they attempt to stop the violence or leave the relationship. Staying, especially given the lack of resources and social supports for leaving, should never be read as accepting abuse.

- fear that abuser would harm/kill me, our children or others I care about
- abuser may have threatened / attempted suicide or homicide
- lack of information regarding my alternatives
- insufficient financial resources
- fear of losing my children in a custody battle
- concern that leaving would have a negative emotional impact on the children
- loss of housing
- undeveloped or underdeveloped job skills
- exhaustion from constant abuse, control and trying to stay safe and protect the children
- belief that by changing the things the abuser has said are a problem, the abuse will stop
- loss of health insurance for self and children
- fear of involvement in court processes, lack of legal assistance
- abusive partner may have connections within the law enforcement and legal community
- belief that the abuse is a temporary problem and will stop
- family, cultural and religious messages to stay together
- children in special education classes may lose a specialized education plan
- family members or friends of either partner may interfere and disclose my location
- a counselor, therapist or clergy member have advised me to stay and work on problems
- abuser entered counseling or a batterers treatment program
- pets may not be able to leave with the victim and may be in danger if left with the abuser
- I depend upon the abuser for health care
- I relied on abuser to supply me with the drugs / alcohol I had become dependent upon
- I feared deportation, loss of required sponsorship to become a citizen
- gay and lesbian victims may lose family, employment, housing, etc. if abuser "outs" the victim
- the bad times may be few and far between so there is not a constant feeling of discontent
- fear of loneliness
- insecurity over potential independence
- insufficient support from family or friends
- concern that I will not be able to make it alone
- guilt about failure of relationship
- fear that partner is not able to survive alone
- belief that partner will change / victim will find a way to stop the abuse
- ambivalence and fear over making extreme life changes
- clinical depression may be immobilizing