
Family Shelter Service

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EFFECTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON THE VICTIM

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Domestic violence will have a range of immediate and longer-term consequences for the victim/survivor. Any of the following individual reactions are considered to be normal reactions to a violation which threatens the person's life and personal integrity, involves a loss of power and control over one's physical well-being and environment, and degrades the victim/survivor:

- Shock: numbing, denial, shaking, feeling cold, crying, nausea, flashbacks, confusion, disorientation
- Powerlessness and loss of control
- Fear of: repeated violence and retaliation by offender, other's reactions, System's response, emotional and sexual intimacy
- Guilt, self-blame
- Shame, embarrassment
- Anger, rage
- Sadness, sense of loss, grief
- Sense of betrayal
- Self disgust, self hatred
- Degradation, humiliation
- Anxiety or panic attacks
- Sleep disturbances: insomnia, nightmares, night sweats
- Flashbacks, intrusive memories
- Loss of confidence, self-doubt
- Emotional and social isolation
- Feelings of entrapment and being under siege

LONGER TERM CONSEQUENCES OF INTIMATE VIOLENCE (some effects may reoccur for years)

- Depression
- Suicide (ideation, attempted, or actual)
- Homicide (ideation, attempted, or actual)
- Relationship problems (fear of emotional and sexual intimacy, loss of trust)
- Mood Swings (feelings of "going crazy")
- Inability to concentrate
- Sudden on-set of or increase in: eating disorders, substance abuse, compulsive behaviors (work, food, sex, etc.), self-harming behaviors, agoraphobia (fear of open spaces), anxiety/panic attacks, intrusive memories, flashbacks, ongoing sleep disturbances
- Emotional and social isolation
- Continued feelings of: fear, guilt and self-blame, self-hatred, powerlessness, betrayal, anger, rage, grief and sadness
- Questioning of: religious beliefs, social norms, personal integrity, relationships with family, friends,
- Diminished self-esteem, sense of worthlessness
- Chronic physical complaints: indigestion, headaches, muscle and joint pain, back pain, changes in menses, uterine and/or abdominal cramps, fatigue
- Often, in a variety of individual ways, a survivor of intimate violence will be motivated to reach out to others in the same situation, work for change in inadequate or negligent System's Response, and participate in education about and prevention of intimate violence.