



JEWISH FAMILY SERVICES



Are Jews Really Victims of Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence occurs in millions of households every day, and a huge number of these incidents go unreported. Violence in the home affects everyone within the household, whether or not family members are victims of the abuse themselves, and it extends well beyond the confines of the home, affecting neighbors, family, friends, coworkers, and the community at large. Very often, people in abusive relationships can't or refuse to accept that they are victims of abuse. Particularly in the absence of physical abuse, it may be difficult to identify controlling behaviors, put-downs, and emotional manipulation as the ongoing abuse that it is.

As we try and raise awareness in October, Domestic Violence Awareness month, consider these national statistics:

* A woman is assaulted or beaten every nine seconds.

* 1 in 3 women — and 1 in 4 men — have been in abusive relationships, and 1 in 5 women and 1 in 7 men have faced severe physical violence.

* 20 people are abused by an intimate partner every minute, adding up to 10 million each year.

* More than 200,000 phone calls are placed to domestic violence hotlines every year.

Many believe that abuse does not happen in the Jewish community, yet according to the largest

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survey of its kind, The Jewish Women's Aid Study, one in four (26%) of the Jewish women and 17% of the male respondents indicated that they had been abused.

A third of those surveyed admitted that they thought abuse in the Jewish community would not be the same as the rest of society, but actually, the number of Jewish women abused is actually 2% higher than the national average. The study looked at all sects across the religious spectrum, from very liberal to the strict Orthodox.

Emma Bell, executive director of JWA, said: "There is a shocking, unacceptable level of domestic abuse in the Jewish community and this shows that we are not immune. We routinely hear from the community that 'surely we're not the same.'"

The majority of those interviewed by JWA said that the violence had caused them to feel

more distant from their religion. "I just felt cut off from the Jewish community because of all this," one woman said. "And it still hurts."

Domestic violence includes physical, psychological, financial or emotional abuse and can include dictating religious observance, withholding money, threatening to hurt or kill, stalking, threatening messages, or belittling someone so they feel worthless.

It's not easy to know what to do when someone you care about is in an abusive relationship. We must all do our part by abandoning false beliefs, embracing a culture of safety, and supporting the victims we know.

For the Jewish community in Charlotte, Jewish Family Services is a primary resource to reach out for support and assistance. JFS has staff who are licensed therapists, have been trained and certified by the North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence and are experienced in responding and serving victims who have been abused. Together, we establish a plan that ensures the safety of the adult being abused and the children in the home and connects them with the internal and community resources needed to heal from the trauma they have experienced.

No one should have to suffer

from physical or emotional abuse. If you are interested in learning more about how you can raise awareness about Domestic Violence or you know someone who is being abused, call JFS at 704-364-6594, or contact the 24/7 National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-7233. ☆

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