

## ENDING THE

Abusive relationships on campus is a sensitive topic, but that doesn't mean it shouldn't be discussed. Elon alumna Brittany Moore '12 opened up about her tumultuous past and how Elon allowed her to help others

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Sometimes on a college campus it's difficult to discuss or acknowledge serious problems within our society. College is a time for fun and friendship and memories, and Elon's particularly happy "bubble" environment only increases that sentiment. But the bubble offers limited protection from issues like relationship violence and sexual assault. One in three college relationships is estimated to experience some form of abuse, and Elon students are no exception.

The statistics only get worse. According to the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network, or RAINN, someone is sexually assaulted every two minutes in the United States. Two-thirds of these attacks are committed by someone the victim is familiar with. That number is higher among college students. 54 percent of cases will go unreported, and 97 percent of rapists will never spend a day in jail.

#### What defines abuse?

Relationship violence encompasses many types of abuse that we as college students may not immediately recognize as such. Becca Bishopric, Elon's Coordinator for Health Promotion and Violence Prevention and Response, broke down the various categories of abuse other than physical violence that college students may face.

"The other forms of violence that people don't often think of as violence may even be more prevalent [on campus]," Bishopric said. "We split it up into physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, social abuse, and economic abuse."

Bishopric also cites verbal abuse as one of the most common forms of abuse. "Tearing someone down or telling them that they're not pretty

or they're a crappy boyfriend or girlfriend or partner... even those kinds of things fall under the realm of relationship violence."

Another unsuspected yet common force of abuse amongst college-aged people and Elon students in particular is stalking or cyber-stalking. Bishopric includes things such as monitoring where a person parks each day, reading their text messages or hacking their Facebook as serious factors and warning signs of an abusive relationship.

"So often in unhealthy relationships we immediately go to sexual abuse and physical violence or threats," Bishopric said, "but relationship violence can also be coercion and manipulation or tearing down someone's self-image."

Bishopric described how an abusive relationship usually works in a cycle. The cycle begins with the tension building phase, in which one partner might act overly controlling or jealous of the other. Following this kind of behavior is an explosion. This doesn't necessarily mean physical harm, but can be any kind of heightened form of abuse, such as verbal or social. After the explosion comes the reconciliation phase, when the abusive partner makes an apology.

"It's an apology but there's always an excuse with the apology," Bishopric said. "And then [the cycle] will go back to a period of calm before the tension starts again."

This cycle is sometimes portrayed in pop culture references like television, movies and music. One such example is the music video for Rihanna and Eminem's "Love The Way You Lie," which features a man and a woman going back and forth between happy moments and physical violence towards one another.