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**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency

NANE Women's Rights Association  
Why Does She Stay?  
Domestic Violence and Intimate Partner Violence  
How to help?  
Handbook for Helping Professionals

NANE Association  
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# FORWARD

This book is dedicated first of all to those professionals who, because of their job, regularly meet abused women and children. In our experience, the sharing of up-to-date and scientifically proven information on the main characteristics of domestic abuse and how to tackle it, is variable and often missing in educational institutions. We hope that this short summary will provide useful information for their everyday work. Without a deep knowledge of domestic and intimate partner violence, the helper remains at a loss to understand “Why does she stay when she is abused?”.

This handbook has been written for professionals but we are convinced that it could be useful for all readers. It is a valuable tool for those who have met intimate partner violence in the family or have seen it among friends. More awareness and actions can turn us into non-professional but knowledgeable helpers. The help offered by friends, family, colleagues and acquaintances plays a key role in helping someone recognise abuse and leave an abusive relationship.

Myths and biases about domestic violence, its victims and perpetrators (for example: “it is her fault, she could leave the relationship if she really wanted to”) very often make prevention and intervention much more difficult. For want of more efficient effective? tools, social care professionals sometimes try to resolve the problem by taking children who are living in families dominated by an abuser into care, instead of making efforts to remove the family member who is putting the children at risk. The lack of safehouses for women and children who, because of the

abuse, are forced into hiding, presents a similar problem. A significant portion of psychologists, psychiatrists and other medical professionals fail to recognise the signs of domestic violence, or they intervene in a way that lets the victim down or puts her at risk. In legal practice, it is often the case that those who apply the law are not able to fully use the legal means at their disposal because they don't recognise or because they dismiss the facts of intimate partner violence.

We believe that intimate partner violence is not a private matter. It is apparent that victim-blaming reactions and the “why does she stay?” like questions produce no useful outcome. Instead of victim-blaming, attention should be focused on the fundamental rights of the victims. By raising and answering more relevant questions (“Why does he do that?”) we can shift the blame onto the perpetrators of the crime.<sup>1</sup>

In this handbook we assume that the abuser is a man and the victim is a woman. We base our assumptions on authentic research and surveys that were carried out between 1991 and 2014 on physical abuse in intimate partner violence and showed that the victims were 85-96% female and perpetrators were 90-99% male<sup>2</sup>. Based on all research available, the WHO and UN Women have established that intimate partner violence is a form of gender-based violence committed mainly by men against women. Therefore, in the scientific literature, intimate partner violence and domestic violence are classified and discussed as forms of violence against women. In the handbook we follow the same argument.

<sup>1</sup> Lundy Bancroft: *Why Does He Do That?: Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men*, Berkely, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> The outcome has been based on American and British statistics, scientific researches and meta-data analyses.

Violence is not a congenital condition but a learned behaviour based on choice. During gender socialisation men learn what they are entitled to. Sadly, often forms of violent and controlling behaviour and abuse of women are part of these presumed entitlements. It is our responsibility to question and to rewrite these rules and to make it clear for the next generations that violence is unacceptable whoever its perpetrator is.

The handbook has five parts.

*Chapter 1* explains the fundamental concepts of domestic abuse

*Chapter 2* looks at the statistics and at the most common myths and facts. Raising awareness and acquiring this information can help to identify intimate partner violence.

*Chapter 3* outlines the dynamics of the abusive relationship. This is necessary to know in order to understand the situation of women in abusive relationship, as well as to be able to differentiate between victim and perpetrator, abuse and conflict in the relationship.

*Chapter 4* explains what signs to look out for to identify the victim, the abuser and the child who has witnessed intimate partner violence.

*Chapter 5* serves the needs of the non-professional helper –supportive family members or acquaintances – by outlining which strategies can be used for an effective intervention.

The *Appendix* contains tools to assess the situation, to help counselling and the next steps to take.

January, 2015

## CHAPTER ONE

# DOMESTIC AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE: RUDIMENTS

*THE DEFINITION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE*

*FORMS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE*

*SPECIFIC FORMS OF INTIMATE PARTNER AND  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE*

## ***The Definition of Domestic Violence***

In connection with domestic violence, we generally distinguish five forms of violence: verbal, psychological, sexual, economic and social. These types of violence have a “domestic” character due to the nature of the relationship between perpetrator and victim. There is a close or even intimate relationship between the two. Therefore, the perpetrator of the domestic violence can be:

- a) (ex)husband, (ex) civil partner, (ex)partner (stalkers, who have never been in a relationship with the victim but don't accept her rejection, also belong to this group);
- b) parent, adult or child;
- c) other relative or person who lives with the victim.

***For the purposes of its Declaration, the United Nations uses the term „violence against women” which means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.***

***Violence against women shall be understood to encompass, but not be limited to, the following:***

***(a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, [...] marital rape, [...]***

*Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 1993*

Generally speaking, the targets of domestic violence are people who in some respects are in a vulnerable position in relation to the perpetrator. The two social groups more exposed to domestic violence are *women* and *children*. Our Association has been running a helpline for abused women for more than two decades and our main area of activism is intimate partner *violence against women*, a form of gender-based violence against women. Intimate partner violence against women has to be prioritised because of the following reasons:

- a) Very often, children of abused women also suffer physical or sexual violence by the perpetrator.
- b) Even if they are not directly abused by the perpetrator, children are harmed and hurt, because witnessing the mother being abused damages their sense of safety.
- c) Many of the men who abuse their partner grew up in families where the father hit the mother. Similarly, many abused women experienced abusive relationships between her parents. Therefore, efficient effective intervention can serve as a source of prevention and information for the children in the family.
- d) The abuse of elderly parents by adult children often has its roots in the repetition of violence suffered in their childhood, or in the continuation of the mother's abuse following the violent father's behaviour. A failure of intervention can contribute to complete the intergenerational cycle of violence.

*Although in this handbook we will focus on the characteristics of intimate partner violence, we are fully aware that the violence against children and the elderly has the very same dynamics: it has a cyclic quality and has similar effects on the victim.*

## ***Forms of Intimate Partner Violence***

Intimate partner violence has many forms, from scornful remarks to murder. Many of these are crimes in the eyes of the law. In the following we list the more representative examples.

**VERBAL ABUSE** is when the perpetrator speaks to intimidate, often shouting or screaming at his partner; he threatens to beat or kill her, to take away the children or to commit suicide; he makes misogynistic remarks, belittles and insults her or the people close to her; he makes fun of her, holds her up to ridicule (because of her appearance, habits or race); he finds fault with her all the time.

**PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE** is when the perpetrator denies events took place; he distances himself from the victim by excluding her from his thoughts and emotions; he exercises coercive control over her, dominates and manipulates her; his jealousy takes extreme forms; he methodically undermines the victim's self-esteem, by questioning her decisions or by ignoring them; he blames her for everything, including his own abusive behaviour; he discredits her experiences and feelings and he refuses to talk about problems; he is intimidating, deliberately smashes things and destroys the valuable or beloved objects of the victim; he often lashes out; he threatens the victim with weapons; he puts on frightening, angry looks and yells; he interrogates her in an intimidating way; he drives in a perilous way; he bombards the victim with threatening chat messages and texts demanding explanations for one thing or another.



**PHYSICAL ABUSE** is when the abuser pushes or hits the victim, slaps her in the face, tries to strangle her, punches her with fists, kicks her, bites her, shakes her, causes her burns, threatens or hurts her with a knife, blade, firearms or heavy objects.

He denies the victim's fundamental rights, restricts her freedom of movement and her basic needs, doesn't let her have an independent life on her own, locks her up, locks her out, ties her down, starves her or lets her be thirsty, cuts off her water or electricity supply or her heating system; doesn't let her get washed, hides her medication or doesn't give her money to buy them.

**SEXUAL VIOLENCE** is when the abuser forces the victim to take part in sexual activities she doesn't want; he hurts her by harmful sex; he forces her to take part in humiliating sexual activities; he rapes her; he wounds her intimate parts; he forces her to have intercourse with other men. Sexual violence includes the restriction of the victim's reproductive rights: the abuser doesn't let her use contraceptive methods or he refuses to use them, which causes unwanted pregnancies.

**ECONOMIC ABUSE** is when the abuser cuts the victim off from any economic and social sources of support. He doesn't let her have a job or her own money; if she has her own income, he takes it away, and gives her as much as he considers is right; he blackmails her with a business or company that is in both their names; he disputes any expenses the victim asks money for; while he has free hand over the resources, he keeps the victim (and the children) in "relative poverty". He isolates the victim, determines what she is allowed to do and what not, whom she can meet and talk to, where she can go, what she can put on; he doesn't let her to meet friends, talk to her family, have

a job and keep money on her; he controls every step of the victim's life; he travels with her everywhere, keeps checking on her while she is at home, in school or in her workplace; he regularly checks her pockets and her bag.



## ***Specific Forms of Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence***

### **VIOLENCE IN THE EARLY STAGES OF THE RELATIONSHIP:**

The abuser might show signs of violent behaviour in the early stages of the relationship but the manipulative forms of isolation and psychological terror are more common at this time. The perpetrator regularly checks what the victim wears, whom she meets and what she does. The victim often believes that this possessive jealousy is a sign of love and, only in the later stages of abuse, she will realise that the constant “attentiveness” has deprived her of important social connections. It isolated her and weakened her relationships. The early warning signals of intimate partner violence and how to recognise an abusive relationship are explained in detail in *Chapter 4*.

### **SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN MARRIAGE:**

This form of violence rarely happens by itself. It often occurs alongside physical violence or intimidation. In Hungary, rape in marriage has been considered a crime since 1997. Mutual consent is essential for every sexual interaction, regardless of whether it happens between strangers or spouses. A case of non-consensual sex is considered to be a form of sexual violence, even if the perpetrator is the spouse and even if he didn't use physical force but manipulation, gaslighting and psychological abuse in order to impose his will.

### **STALKING:**

Stalking is a specific form of intimate partner violence which includes many different behaviours. The common characteristic is that they start after the victim left the abusive partner or told him her decision to get a divorce or a separation. Stalking covers a wide spectrum of behaviours from retaliatory threats to manipulative peace offerings: showing up at the victim's work place, spying on her and her new partner, taking pictures of her, blackmailing her, damaging her car or other valuables, bombarding her with threatening messages or threatening her face to face, beating her up or causing her grave bodily harm. The abuser can file several court cases against her, especially for visitation and custody (this is called procedural stalking or “paper abuse”), or tries to drag out legal procedures in order to exercise control over the victim's time, mental state and financial situation.

It has been established that, in the majority of intimate partner violence cases that end in murder, the victim had already left the abuser or was going to leave him. Therefore, it is important to take into account that stalking is very likely to start when the victim tries to leave the abusive relationship. Risk assessment is highly recommended in these cases. In the following months, special attention should be paid to the designing of a personal safety plan and the application of relevant and available legal measures (such as restraining orders).

The stalker can also be a person who has never been the partner of the victim. In such a case, the perpetrator's goal is to get close to the victim, either to convince her by all possible means to get into a relationship with her, or to retaliate for her rejection. This type of stalking when the perpetrator is mainly unknown by the victim, is no less dangerous. The news regularly reports cases when

unwanted “courting” turns into the murder of the chosen woman or girl. Stalking is a crime in Hungary (see the short summary of the current legislation in the Appendix under *Important Laws and Regulations*).

### **PARENT AND ELDER ABUSE:**

In these cases, the abuser is the victim’s teenage or adult child, grandchild or their partner. Victim and perpetrator generally live in the same household. Sometimes the perpetrator is another elderly person himself. The perpetrator of parent abuse is very often a son who learned from his violent father that he is entitled to behave in an intimidating and controlling way towards his mother (or towards his sisters and brothers). The abusive father systematically undermines the mother’s authority and openly encourages violence against her, reinforcing the attitude that women have an inferior status in the family and in society.

Parent abuse can also happen as a retaliation for abuse suffered in childhood. In elder abuse, the victim is often an elderly person in need of care, who is unable to look after him or herself. Elder abuse includes physical and emotional neglect (failure to care), verbal, psychological, physical, sexual abuse and financial exploitation (taking away pension or the property).

### **CHILD ABUSE:**

Child abuse can have active forms (such as belittling or sexual abuse) and passive forms, such as neglect. Active abuse of children can be psychological, verbal, physical and sexual, the same as in the case of adults, but with the difference that in their case these types of violence don’t necessarily reinforce each other and they are not always intertwined. This is especially true in cases of sexual abuse

of children. This can happen in families with no history of physical violence against the children or other relatives.

Sexual abuse committed by a parent or other adult in charge of the child’s care has a special name. In this handbook we will use the expression “incest”.

Neglect can be physical and/or psychological: ignoring the child’s joys and sorrows, no care given in case of illness, no proper feeding and clothing.

In families where intimate partner violence is present, children are very often also abused. Much research shows that violent behaviour in adulthood can be linked to abuse indirectly suffered or witnessed in the childhood. For this reason, stopping child abuse has a particular importance for society. Social workers, teachers, community health nurses and general practitioners have a duty to report any suspicion of child abuse. Unfortunately, there is a real risk that, due to the lack of training in the field of domestic violence, the intervention of authorities and institutions makes no difference or, the reverse, causes harm. One of the many harmful interventions is the removal of the child – instead of the abuser – from the family. The helping professional must assess carefully how the intervention could really serve the victim’s interests.

### **DISABILITY ABUSE IN THE FAMILY:**

Because of physical or mental differences, members of the family with special needs or a disability depend on the people they live with. Their vulnerability sometimes leads to neglect and to verbal, psychological, physical, economic or sexual abuse. People with a disability find it especially hard or almost impossible to ask for help. It should be the responsibility of the care system to routinely check if they have suffered abuse.

## **VIOLENCE IN LESBIAN OR GAY RELATIONSHIPS:**

The dynamics of intimate partner violence in same sex relationships is very similar to straight couples. The most significant difference is that victims are even less likely to ask for help for fear of being stigmatised because of their sexual orientation.

Therefore, the victim in abusive lesbian and gay relationships might become even more isolated. In Hungary, there are not many organisations and institutions offering services specifically for gay and lesbian victims. Professionals of the helping organisations are often insensitive or openly biased against the specific problems people with minority sexual orientation have to face.

## **INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AND TRANSPeOPLE:**

A transwoman is a person who self identifies as woman, represents herself as woman and lives like a woman in spite of their sex at birth. In a similar way, “transman” is a person who self identifies as man, represents himself as a man and lives like a man instead of their sex at birth.

The abuser can easily make the transperson believe that they are ugly, worthless and crazy, and must be ashamed of themselves, because these messages are the same society has been giving to them for years. Transpeople and especially transwomen are more susceptible to emotional and verbal abuse because they can have low self-esteem and negative body image. Transpeople can find it more difficult to leave the abuser due to the discrimination they suffer; they have less supportive relationships; they are in less advantageous financial situation; it is more difficult

for them to find a job or a partner; and, in case of a divorce they would certainly lose the custody of their children against the abusive partner.

## **MANDATORY VISITATION:**

Institutions and authorities can impose mandatory visitations on the child and the non-abusive parent and force them to be in regular contact with the abusive parent or grandparent. At the same time, this measure forces the non-abusive parent to be in constant fear from the abuser –until the child’s come of age–, although this is the person whom she finally managed to leave with great difficulty. The abuser doesn’t give up his abusive attitude after separation or divorce. He seeks out every opportunity to bring the ex-partner back with promises, in order to control, intimidate and harass her. Visitations are a golden opportunity for him because the victim is forced to be in regular touch and meet him. (This can be very re-traumatising and can hinder recovery from the abuse.) Child welfare services and court professionals often lack knowledge on intimate partner violence, and instead of protecting the child, they help the abuser to exercise his power. In this way they take part in the abuse of the children and parent involved. A very typical example of this when visitation fails, the mother is blamed automatically without exploring the role of the father or assessing the risk he means for the child or for the mother.

CHAPTER TWO

FACTS AND MYTHS

STATISTICS ON DOMESTIC AND INTIMATE  
PARTNER VIOLENCE

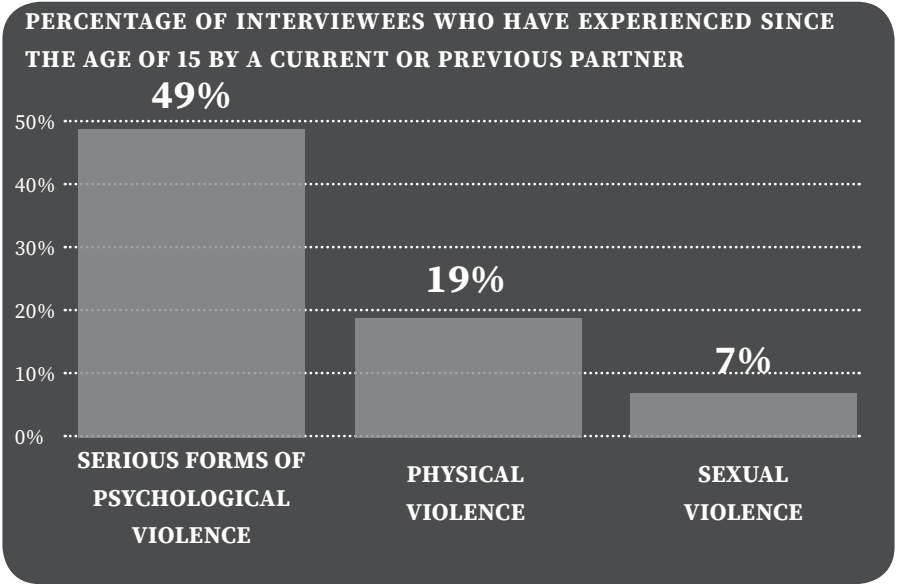
FACTS AND MYTHS ABOUT INTIMATE PARTNER  
VIOLENCE

*Statistics on domestic and intimate  
partner violence*

This chapter explains some basic data on the prevalence and extent of domestic violence and discusses the most common myths and misconceptions.

DATA ON THE INCIDENCE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The source of the data discussed here is the report of an EU-wide representative survey published in 2014 by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) that included Hungary<sup>3</sup> (interviews were taken in 2012). We projected the Hungarian results over the 2011 census data to see how many women have been affected in Hungary.



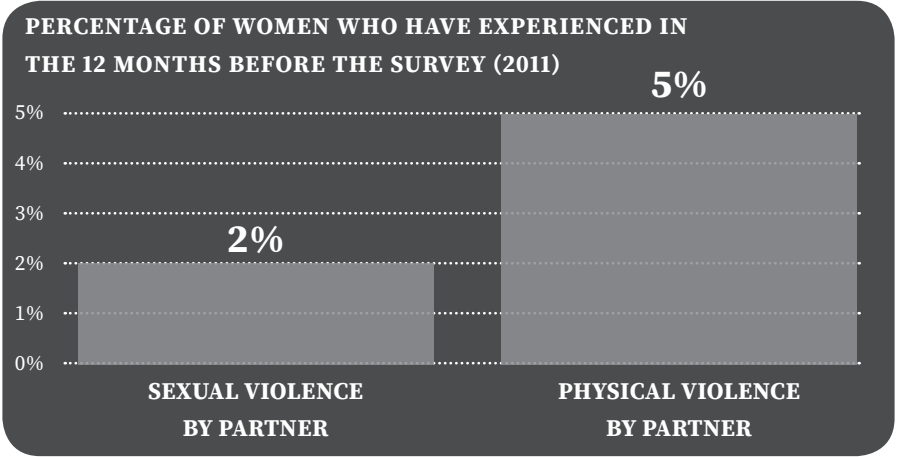
<sup>3</sup> <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2014/violence-against-women-eu-wide-survey-main-results-report>

**INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AGAINST ADULT VICTIMS  
(SINCE THE AGE OF 15):**

- Physical violence: 19% of women, one in five have experienced one or more acts of physical violence by a current or previous partner. (Projected onto the 2011 census data, approximately 763.000 women are currently affected in Hungary.)
- Psychological and verbal violence (controlling, belittling, intimidating, punishing, etc.): 49% of women have experienced psychological violence by a current or a previous partner. (Projected onto the 2011 census data, approximately 1.968.400 women are currently affected in Hungary.)

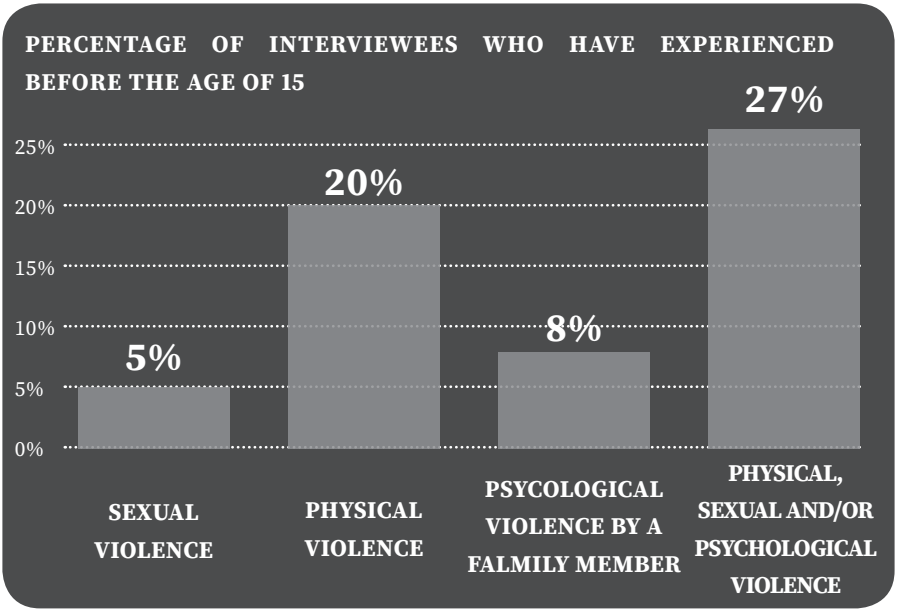
**STALKING AGAINST ADULT VICTIMS (SINCE THE AGE OF 15):**

- 12% of women have experienced stalking
- in 60% of the cases the perpetrator was the previous partner or someone else the victim knew
- in 44% of the cases the duration of the stalking was between 1 month and 1 year, in 42% of the cases it lasted longer than a year.



**SEXUAL VIOLENCE (IN ALL AGE GROUPS):**

- 9% of women have experienced sexual violence in her lifetime. 7% by a partner and 2% by a non-partner. (Projected onto the 2011 census data, approximately 361.500 women are currently affected in Hungary.)
- 3% of women experienced sexual violence in the 12 months before the survey interview. (Projected onto the 2011 census data, approximately 111.800 women are currently affected in Hungary.)
- 5% of the interviewees experienced sexual violence by an adult before the age of 15. (Projected onto the 2011 census data, approximately 35.220 women are affected in Hungary.)





### **VIOLENCE AGAINST YOUNG WOMEN AND GIRLS (UNDER THE AGE OF 15):**

- 27% of the interviewees experienced some form of physical, sexual or psychological violence before the age of 15.
- 20% of the interviewees experienced physical abuse before the age of 15. (Projected onto the 2011 census data, approximately 141.000 girls are currently affected in Hungary.)
- 8% of the interviewees experienced psychological violence by a family member before the age of 15. (Projected onto the 2011 census data, approximately 56.400 girls are currently affected in Hungary.)

### **SUMMARY:**

- Currently, there are approximately 2.000.000 women living in Hungary who by the age of 75 have experienced serious psychological violence by her partner.
- Almost 800.000 women experienced physical violence by her partner and 300.000 women suffered sexual violence during her lifetime.
- Currently, there are 261.000 women in Hungary living in a relationship where her partner uses physical and/or psychological violence against her.

Number of legal actions taken in cases of intimate partner violence and sexual violence:

In order to get some information on latent criminality and to see how many incidents were reported, we looked at the 2012 database of the Uniform Criminal Statistics System for Investigating and Prosecuting Authorities (Egységes Nyomozóhatósági és Ügyészési Bűnügyi Statisztika).<sup>4</sup> This is a common database that serves the Police and the Public Prosecutor's Office, and shows how many cases of a particular crime were registered in a given year. Therefore, the number doesn't tell how many cases ended in trial and sentencing. It only shows that the Prosecutor's Office registered them.

- Number of all sexual crime against female victims under 18: 429
- Number of all sexual crime against female victims over 18: 269
- Number of all serious physical violence incidents against female victims under 18: 126
- Number of all serious physical violence incidents against female victims over 18: 1535
- Number of all homicide committed against female victims under 18: 6
- Number of all homicide committed against female victims over 18: 49

The comparison of the two databases shows that, while victims are in the hundred thousands, the registered cases are in the hundreds or the thousands. Intimate partner violence against women hardly appears in the criminal justice system and the latency is enormous.

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<sup>4</sup> The calculation has been made by Judit Wirth. See more information in Hungarian: <https://nokjoga.hu/wp-content/uploads/nane-fra-nepesseg-enyubs-final-2014-w-w-2015jun19.pdf>

**Other data on abuse:**

The following data are the results of the representative survey by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth involving 10.000 participants<sup>5</sup>.

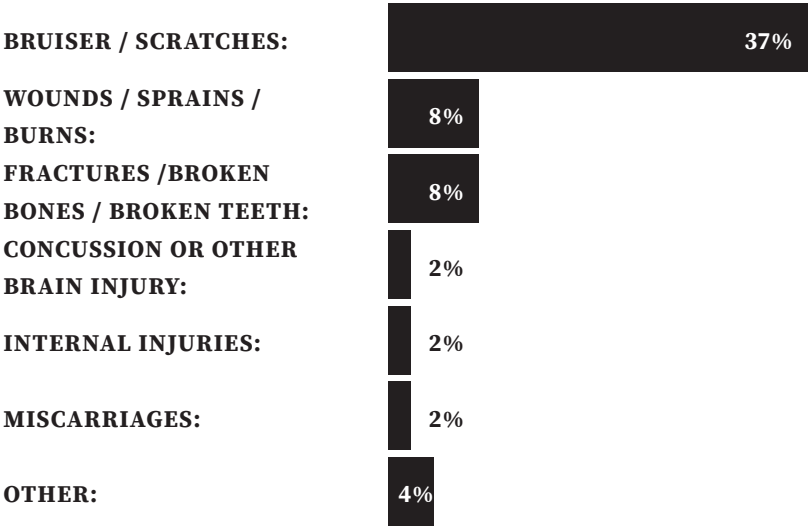
- The overwhelming majority of the perpetrators of violence against women are partners or ex-partners.
- During the period that follows a separation or a divorce, the incidence and the intensity of the violence against women increases significantly.
- 27% of women who have experienced abuse, reports that the partner was not under the influence of alcohol or drugs during the violent incidents.Data on the impacts of intimate partner violence:

The following data are from the representative survey by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA, 2014) that included Hungary.<sup>6</sup>

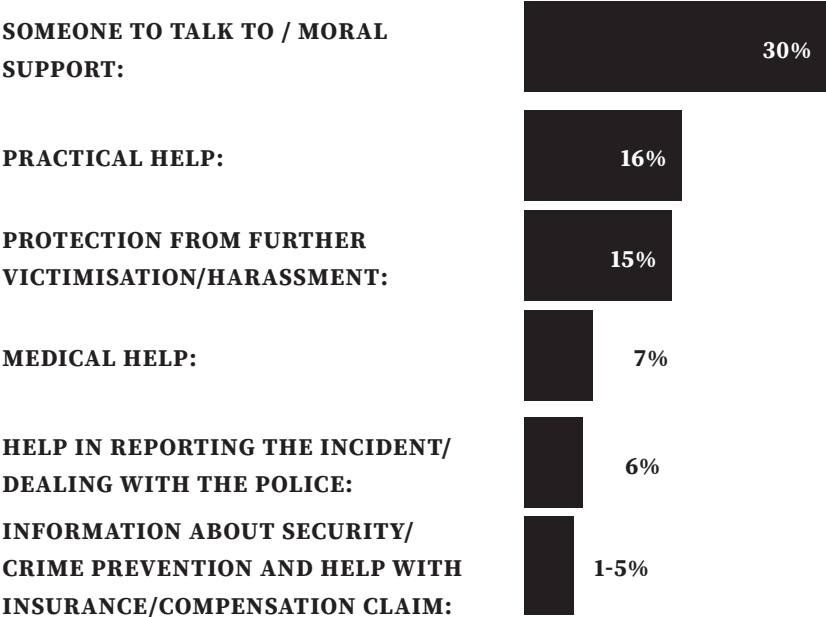
<sup>5</sup> Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth: Health, Well-being and Personal Safety of Women in Germany, 2003. <http://www.cahrv.uni-osnabrueck.de/conference/SummaryGermanVAWstudy.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2014-vaw-survey-main-results-apr14\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2014-vaw-survey-main-results-apr14_en.pdf)

**PHYSICAL INJURIES RESULTING FROM THE MOST SERIOUS INCIDENT OF VIOLENCE:**

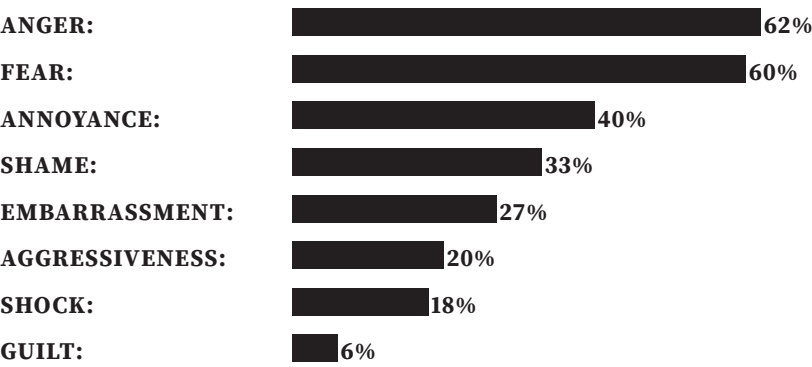


**VICTIMS' NEEDS FOR ASSISTANCE FOLLOWING THE MOST SERIOUS INCIDENT:**

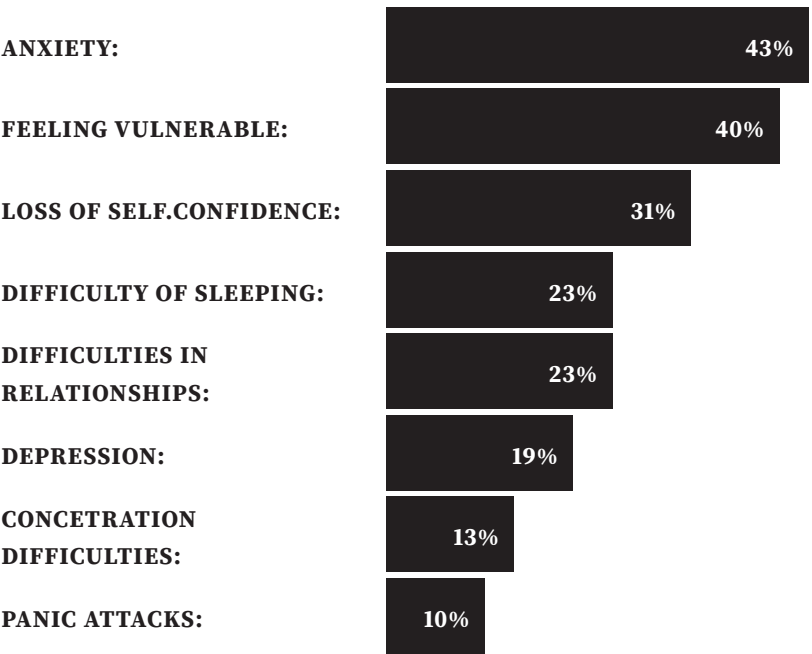




**EMOTIONAL RESPONSE FOLLOWING THE MOST SERIOUS INCIDENT OF PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE:**



**LONG-TERM PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE MOST SERIOUS INCIDENT OF PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE:**



***Facts and Myths about Intimate Partner Violence***

When supporting victims of intimate partner violence, helping professionals should thoroughly examine their ideas and attitudes towards abuse. It is very likely and almost inevitable that we all have been affected by the widespread myths on violence. Without being aware of them and questioning them, they could seriously hinder our discernment and the efficacy of our support. In order to be able to offer victims professional help, we have to re-examine these myths and become familiar with the facts. We have all heard stories about what the “reasons” could have been behind an abusive incident. Looking for reasons is a risky business because, instead of the perpetrator’s behaviour, it focuses on the victim’s responsibility. It gives the wrong impression that there are reasons that authorise and entitle men to abuse their partners. If intimate partner violence has a “reason” it can be found only in the male-centred, sexist social environment and in the perpetrator’s set of values. (More on this topic see *Why Does He Do That? Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men* by Lundy Bancroft, Berkely, 2003.)

Many of the ways the general public pictures domestic violence serves the same purpose: to facilitate victim-blaming and to shift the focus away from the perpetrator’s responsibility. What causes even more confusion is the fact that many myths on domestic violence contain half-truths and use double standards when considering the behaviour of the two parties. The more we know about the real nature of intimate partner violence, the more we will be able to help its victims. Read the following list of myths and think about the image you have about abused women and about domestic violence in general.

***“There are women who ask for a beating with their constant grumbling and nagging.”***

***“Women need guiding otherwise they wouldn’t know what to do.”***

***“If she was a good wife, her husband wouldn’t beat her.”***

***“It is understandable that poor man can’t stop himself. She denies him to have sex with her.”***

These statements unfairly blame the victim for the abuser’s oppressive and violent behaviour. Nobody deserves abuse, not even if she is acting in irritating, annoying and unacceptable ways. Nobody has the right to abuse his partner, and has even less right to justify his behaviour by saying that she needs to be “guided” or “educated”. The only person responsible for the abuse is the abuser.

Some men think that they are entitled to “teach women how to behave” because they believe that they have the right to assert their will by force, and to shape an adult person as they wish. Do not forget that due to the intimidating effect of abuse, many abused women are a “good wife”. She thinks that “good behaviour” can prevent further mistreatment, so she does everything in her power to please her partner.

The abuser himself uses very often the same argument. Victim-blaming is an important part of abuse. The abuser deep down knows that violence cannot be justified, and claiming no responsibility is an organic part of the dynamics of abuse. In any case, blaming somebody else

for his problems is part of the abuser’s characteristics, as we will see when talking about the peculiarities of the abusive behaviour.

***“Women don’t mind being beaten up sometimes. Subjection is the woman’s lot.”***

***“Many women choose a violent partner because that was what they saw in childhood and it makes them feel safe.”***

Just like men, women don’t choose pain and suffering freely. Unfortunately, in order to justify male dominance many pseudoscientific theories have been invented. One of the most popular psychological views is that, for evolutionary reasons, women are prone to self-sacrifice, masochism and passivity, while men tend to be aggressive, violent and active. However, we hear a totally different story from the survivors of intimate partner violence. They want the abuse to stop as soon as possible, and when choosing the next partner, they very consciously make an effort to find one who is not violent in any ways. In some cases, women go along with what is expected regarding their own behaviour; they are so indoctrinated that they are not aware of their choices or options. This is often the result of long term or extreme violence and isolation. (See in more detail the part on Stockholm-syndrome.)

***“Women can easily forget the beating if right after that they can make peace with the partner or have sex with him.”***

Popular literature, romantic movies, pornography and prostitution play a big part in promoting misconceptions about the connections between sex and violence. The well-known stereotype “a slap in the face and a kiss on the lips”

doesn't work in reality. A battered and intimidated woman whose personality is intact would show no kindness towards the abuser. It is him who quite often after the escalation of violence uses manipulative technics to seduce her, in order to stop a possible separation. In the "honeymoon" phase –detailed in the chapter about *The Cycle of Violence*– alongside the gifts, promises and compliments, sex can be another tool for manipulation. Cyclicity is part of the abuse and plays an important part in breaking the victim's will.

***"Abused women could leave any time they want."***

***"If a woman doesn't leave after the first beating, she deserves the next one."***

The victim often believes or tries to believe the abuser's promises that he would never touch her again. The chapter about the dynamics of abusive relationship will explain that the abuser can be very kind when he is not mistreating his victim. He keeps telling the woman how much he loves her, and what's more, he tries to convince her that his profound love justifies the abuse.

***"I love you so much that I can't let you leave me. I can't bear the thought."***

***"I love you immensely. It is understandable that I am crazy with jealousy."***

His arguing confuses the woman. She has to decide whether to believe her own feelings and experiences or the abuser's words, which are polar opposite.

The victim tends to believe his promises and the above-mentioned myths. not only because her own safety, but also because she is encouraged to do so by social conventions. The firm belief that the woman's task is to keep the family together urges the victim to trust the abuser's promises, giving him a second chance again and again and again. In the meanwhile, she blames herself for all the troubles in the relationship.

The man who is violent at home can be very often extremely affable and friendly with everybody outside the family. He is known to be the kindest husband and father, and a real people's person. On one hand, his dual personality makes difficult for the woman to see his real face, and to realise that the relationship is dangerous and cannot be saved. On the other, it impedes the others to give credit to the victim's words when she finally talks about his abuse.

There are many reasons why a victim can't leave an abusive relationship: economic dependence, lack of housing, fear from retaliation. Her fear is never unfounded: the abuser becomes more dangerous when he has to face up to the fact that his partner has left him or she is ready to leave. The break up means for him losing his control over the victim, so he goes out of his way to stop this happening. The risk of murder is very high in the period right after the separation. When a woman says that she fears for her life, she must be in real danger. We should not forget that precaution and vigilance is very important in this period.

***"She should call the police and they can handle the problem."***

In Hungary, calling the police or reporting the abuse would not automatically secure the safety of the victim(s). The abuser and his violence become invisible in the legal process. (Some studies have traced this back in the court proceedings.<sup>7</sup>)

There many errors in the implementation of the law that make the legal protection of women and children impossible: life-threatening violence is often downgraded to assault during the legal proceedings; the abuser can keep custody of children in spite of having abused the mother of the children or the children themselves; the decrease in the number of restraining orders; strong resistance from the police and the court against the removal of the abuser; violation of restraining orders has no legal consequences; light sentencing, unsuitable for crime prevention (very often a fine or a suspended prison sentence); allowing the abuser to remain in the family for the whole period of legal proceedings that can last years; legal dues, fees and other expenses of proving a case, which the state passes onto the victim.

The lack of training in authorities on the subject of intimate partner violence makes proceedings even more difficult for the victim. Wide-spread biases and misconceptions lead to victim-blaming and other professional errors. The victims' experience is that the police either don't know or don't extensively apply instructions and legislations issued by the National Police Headquarters on the management of domestic violence cases (see the summary in the Appendix). This lack of determined actions together with the application of weak measures (such as "dispute resolution/mediation") only encourages the perpetrators.

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<sup>7</sup> *Rendszerbe zárva 25-58 Well this is a Hungarian publication I have to look it up if it exist in ENG.*

Many women know the danger they face if the abuser is let to go home, or if the police leave without issuing a restraining order. They often retract or withdraw the complaint out of fear when the police arrive.

In Hungary, it is a mistake to think that calling the police would resolve the situation. Whilst the authorities in charge have no mandatory training in the management of domestic violence, victims will be reluctant to ask help from the police, the prosecutor's office or the court. The current attitude and practice of the law enforcement serves to scare away the victims instead of encouraging the observance of the law.

***"There are men who gets arrested based on false accusations. That's the women's revenge on them."***

In those countries where research has been done about arrests in intimate partner violence and rape cases, the results show that the false accusations make up 1-2% of all cases. This number is not higher than the proportion of false arrests for other crimes. (There is only one crime, insurance fraud, where false reports are significantly higher than the average. However, nobody suggests that insurance as such should be abolished because many people take advantage of them.)

In Canada, two large representative studies were done on false accusations in connection to incest cases. The research accomplished in 2003 found that only 4% of the reported incest cases were based on malicious lies<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> *Trocme, N. – Fallon, B. – MacLaurin, B. – Daciuk, J. – Felstiner, C. – Black, T. – Tonmyr, L. – Blackstock, C. – Barter, K. – Turcotte, D. – Cloutier, R.: Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect – 2003: Major Findings. Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2005.*



The 1998 representative survey that looked at incest accusations in custody and visitation cases found the same results<sup>9</sup>. Deliberately false accusations made up 12% of the cases. 43% of the 12% of deliberately false accusations were brought by the noncustodial parent (in most cases the father), 19% by acquaintances, and only 12% (1,5% of all cases) were brought by the custodial parent (in most cases the mother), and 2% by the children. Therefore, it is fair to say that mothers don't use false incest claim to get the custody of children, on the contrary, it is more likely to be a measure taken by the fathers.

It is important to know that false accusations of abuse and rape can cause serious trouble to the victim. It is hard to believe –as many people think– that there are masses of women who would willingly take on these troubles. Surveys show that most cases remain unreported and invisible to the police and the criminal justice system. So, the opposite is true: most perpetrators are never accused of anything because their crime never gets reported. By comparing the available data, we can see that only 0,24% –2,4 per thousand– of all incidents of sexual violence against women aged 20-75 are registered by the authorities. Out of 415 cases only 1 is visible. And the percentage of perpetrators sentenced are even lower.

***“The man’s job is to keep order in the family.  
If it needs force, it needs force.”***

***“Unemployed men need to let out frustration.  
A slap is not the end of the world.”***

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<sup>9</sup> Trocmé, N. – Bala, N.: False allegations of abuse and neglect when parents separate. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 2005, 29, 1333–1345.

***“Men work a lot and violent behaviour  
helps them to ease the distress they endure.”***

Many forms of abusive behaviour are criminal offences in the eyes of the law, and they infringe on fundamental human rights. Nobody has the right to force his will upon another person, no matter how hard his life is. The main cause of violent behaviours is not work related or other stress, but the abuser's views on gender and relationships. A man who sees his partner as equal would never look for excuses to mistreat her. There are no family dynamics, fiery temperament, social role or external problem that would justify the use of violence.

***“There is no harm in it if kids see who is the  
boss at home. At least they would learn how to  
be a man.”***

International studies and experiences confirm that violence reproduces itself. A child who witnessed or endured abuse will have a higher chance to suffer from both mental and physical illnesses later in life. Without proper support he will be more likely to follow the violent behaviour pattern, because, in his experience, violence is acceptable and profitable too. A child growing up in an abusive family will learn a set of values based on a gender hierarchy that gives men the entitlement to dominate and control his family.

Sooner or later the son will learn that it is acceptable to mistreat his mother and will follow the steps of his father. The social expectations of motherhood make even more difficult for the mother to take determined actions against her abusive child. In this way the son's abusive behaviour pattern will be reinforced by both parents.

In turn, the daughter might learn that, in relationship conflicts, women have no chance to stand up for their opinion and interests, and later she will have problems to be assertive. Maybe she won't notice when her partner turns out to be violent, as she had no opportunity as a child to learn about relationships based on mutual respect. Or on the contrary, she might identify with her father and turns against the mother<sup>10</sup>.

The abuser's influence on children in most cases continues after the separation or the divorce. The father can continue abusing the children and the ex-partner by stalking and by using the opportunity of the mandatory visitations that he managed to impose on his family with the authorities' collaboration. He causes further damage to the children's development and undermines the relationship between mother and children.

***“A drunken man can't control his rough behaviour.”***

***“He can't help it, it is the booze talking for him.”***

Alcohol in itself doesn't trigger violence. There are many people addicted to alcohol who never do any harm to anybody, and many abusers don't consume alcohol or other substances. *Drinking and abusing are two different problems.* By eliminating one, the other might still prevail. Alcohol doesn't change one's views and attitudes. Even when sober, the abuser thinks that he has the right to exercise power over his partner. The influence of alcohol helps him to loosen his inhibitions regarding violent behaviour, and

<sup>10</sup> On abusers as parents see Lundy Bancroft, Jay G. Silverman and Daniel Ritchie: *The Batterer as Parent: Addressing the Impact of Domestic Violence on Family Dynamics*, SAGE Publications, 2012.

makes him more dangerous. Alcohol has no impact on whether a person becomes abusive or not, but it can make the abuse much more serious. It is deeply regrettable that the practical application of the criminal law that considers alcohol consumption an aggravating circumstance in life-threatening actions that can cause bodily harm (for example reckless driving), doesn't find the drunken state of the abuser an aggravating factor.

***“Abusive men are generally poor and not educated. In our circles abuse never happens.”***

***“Domestic violence is much more frequent in gipsy families than in white Hungarian ones.”<sup>11</sup>***

Several surveys state that low levels of education, lack of independent income, bad job market perspectives and racist discrimination make women more vulnerable to abuse. But the data shows that the extent of intimate partner violence is the same in families with higher social status and higher levels of education. The difference is that the abuser has more resources and sometimes applies more subtle forms of abuse, which makes more difficult for the victim to recognise the real root of the problems. Women in more favourable social situations have more chance to leave the abusive relationship, although they can feel ashamed of it –due to the above-mentioned misconception about social class–, and the feeling of shame can stop them to seek help.

***“Domestic violence is rarely serious. Generally, it is no more than a couple of slaps on the face.”***

<sup>11</sup> In Roma communities the reverse of this myth is prevalent: “only Hungarians beat their wives”.

***“Violence is extremely rare in relationships.”***

In Hungary 30 to 40 women are killed in a year by her (ex)husband or (ex)partner. Murders are only the top of the iceberg. Research shows that one in five women has an abusive relationship where she is exposed to systematic mistreatment during her lifetime. According to the FRA survey (2014) almost two million Hungarian women under the age of 75 have experienced violence by a partner at some point in their life. 800.000 have suffered physical and 300.000 sexual abuse. Currently there are 300.000 women living in abusive relationship where they have been victims of physical and/or sexual violence by their partner.

***“What happens in a relationship is not an outsider’s business.”***

Intimate partner violence includes acts that can be considered criminal offences or crimes and violate fundamental human rights. A state under the rule of law has the obligation to protect its citizens, no matter where the crime is committed against them. To use the integrity of private life as an argument for non-intervention only helps to exempt the perpetrator from liability. It is the responsibility of all of us to take side and stand up against all forms of violence.

***“Even a violent father is better for the children than growing up in a broken family.”***

***“If the father only abuses the mother that means no harm to the children.”***

The primary target of the intimate partner violence is the woman but it has long-lasting effects on the children in the same household.

Children witness how the abuser humiliates, exploits, hits, rapes, threatens and, in the worst case, kills the mother. Very often they are exposed to direct violence and the abuser tries to turn them against the abused mother or use them to spy on her. Sometimes the victim has no other alliance than the children living with her, which puts an enormous responsibility on them, which they can’t manage due to their age and situation.

Research shows a strong correlation between violence against mothers and children. When the mother is abused the chance of the child suffering direct violence increases. It has been acknowledged that in families where the children are abused, in 50% of the cases the mother is mistreated as well.

Intimate partner violence between parents causes a serious loyalty conflict in the children. They are afraid of the abusive parent’s rage and the escalation of violence. They hate him but at the same time they want his recognition and love, because they are dependent on him. In order to survive they need to adapt and please him. Those who grow up in abusive families often feel responsible for the perpetrator’s violence, as well as for the protection of their abused mother, or sisters and brothers. This is a terrible burden for a child. The relationship with the abused mother can deteriorate too. The children might find her helpless and weak, and sometimes neglecting and aggressive too. The abuse endured makes it difficult for the mother to exercise good parenting.

The abusive parent’s behaviour puts the children under serious distress, and it is harmful to their physical, mental and social development. If children are left alone with these upsetting experiences, they can develop posttraumatic stress disorder, stress related learning disorders, and acquire destructive attitudes about gender roles. A father



that abuses his partner or ex-partner cannot be a good parent. Intimate partner violence is a factor that puts children at risk, therefore must be taken seriously.

Attitudes that condemn divorce and apply social pressure to keep the family together at all costs carry its own dangers. The balanced development of the child is better guaranteed in a caring and emotionally supportive single parent family, than in the company of a violent family member that everybody fears.

***“Pregnant women are safe. Even violent men care for the baby to be born.”***

One in five of physically or sexually abused women experienced battering by their partner during pregnancy. 40% of all women abused while pregnant said that during pregnancy was the first time they experienced violence by the partner. The FRA survey found that 2% of abused women suffered miscarriage and other internal injuries as a direct consequence of violence. Violence escalates during pregnancy because the abuser wants to monopolise his partner's attention and can't stand that it will be focused on another person. Pregnancy –similar to marriage– makes more difficult for the woman to leave the relationship, and the abuser knows that he can act with even greater impunity.

***“Why did she have a child with a man who beats her? She deserves her fate.”***

Women are often made to believe that “things will get better” by having a child. This belief is reinforced by the widespread myth that love and children can change a person for good. However, experience shows that, without determination, strong will and significant pressure from

the outside, an abusive person won't change. Having a child makes the woman more vulnerable which leads to the escalation of violence.

Getting pregnant doesn't necessarily mean that the woman wanted to have more children. The restriction of woman's reproductive rights and the refusal to use or access contraceptive methods are forms of sexual violence. A child is often a means for the abuser to assert his power over the woman. The constant control and criticism of her child care gives new opportunities for further manipulation. By approving or keeping silent about it, institutions and the wider family contributes to this type of abuse.

***“Psychological abuse is easier to cope with than physical violence.”***

Emotional scars caused by psychological violence can hurt years after the physical injuries have healed. Psychological violence undermines the victim's self-esteem, confidence, competence, cause serious mental health issues, physical illnesses and it can lead to self-harm and suicide. It is important not to forget that psychological violence very often precedes physical and sexual violence. This is how the abuser prepares the terrain and pushes the partner to feel weak and helpless, isolated and unable to escape the abusive situation.

***“The woman who had several violent partners should start thinking about why does she attract this kind of people.”***

***“Women finish up in abusive relationships because they lack self-confidence.”***

Surveys show that all women have a high chance to get into a violent relationship. Some abusive men deliberately seek out a woman with low self-esteem –because of previous abuse suffered as a child or as an adult–, because he assumes that it will be easy to control her. Women who had opportunity to learn about good relationships and about the early warning signs of abuse, or had professional help as survivors to strengthen their self-confidence, are in a better position to avoid men with abusive tendencies.

How much self-esteem one has is not a question of personal choice. Young girl's self-confidence is undermined by the patriarchal system from a very early age, so they tend to have lower self-esteem than the boys. It is unfair to blame women for their victimization. By acknowledging that they have the right to be respected and to feel safe, and that violence is the perpetrator's responsibility in every case, we can offer them valuable help to reinforce and help build their self-esteem.

## CHAPTER THREE

# THE DYNAMICS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

*WHAT ARE THE REASONS BEHIND VIOLENT  
BEHAVIOUR?*

*WHAT IS THE REASON BEHIND MALE  
VIOLENCE?*

*WHAT STOPS WOMEN REACTING AND  
REJECTING ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR?*

*THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE*

*HIGHLY DANGEROUS PERIODS OF THE ABUSIVE  
RELATIONSHIP*

*WHAT KEEPS WOMEN IN AN ABUSIVE  
RELATIONSHIP?*

*WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE OUTCOMES OF AN  
ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP?*

*CAN THE ABUSER CHANGE?*

## ***What are the reasons behind violent behaviour?***

Violence is a learned behaviour; it is the repetition and adoption of behaviours and attitudes seen and experienced. Sexist attitudes and judgments make violence against women possible. According to this, women are inferior to men: they are not suitable for leadership, their main role in life is to do housework, have children, take care of the family; and, meet the men's physical, emotional and sexual needs. Sexism is deeply rooted in our culture, and its everyday manifestations among other things are the "blonde jokes", the degrading comments on women drivers, the objectification of the female body in advertisements and the different forms of sexual harassment on the streets. A man who abuses or rapes women adopts an extreme form of this sexist attitude in his private life. The woman abused by him is not a person equal to him, she is just "trouble", or a "whore", or a "bitch". Sexism and the social system based on it –called patriarchy– favours men: they are paid more for the same job; they get into powerful positions more easily; they have to do much less unpaid work at home; they are listened to, etc.

Violent behaviour has its roots in social attitudes and it is supported by the social system we live in, but it is also a question of choice. We all live in the same sexist culture, however, not all men are abusers. Personal involvement is required to develop forms of abusive behaviour against the female partner and to transform cultural messages into actions. Factors which influence a man to become an abuser include: the adoption of sexist attitudes; a willingness to use violence; not taking responsibility for his own actions; preferring hierarchy in personal relationships; together with the inability to learn how to cope with the distress and frustration that are part of normal life.

In general, men who commit intimate partner violence have sexist views on women as a whole. They see women as sexual toys or as housewives, although they sometimes treat other “ladies” with deep respect<sup>12</sup>. They don’t believe in equal relationships, they never learned to constructively manage their anger, they have difficulties with physical and emotional intimacy as well as expressing their emotions. They are convinced that, as men and fathers, they have a right to entitlements over the women and children “in their charge” whom they can educate, even by punishment. Perpetrators should ask themselves what social influences and personal experiences have made them become a person that terrifies their partner and family and is a danger to them.

### **What is the reason behind male violence?**

Since intimate partner violence is mainly male violence against women, when studying this phenomenon, we have to look at the socialisation of women and men and gender roles in society. The traditional view is that male and female gender roles are interdependent and they complement each other in the relationship. The power of men over women is “natural”. Society teaches that the “true” man:

- dominates the household and is highly respected by all.
- is responsible for the family’s financial security.
- controls and directs everybody in the family.
- voices his opinion openly.

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<sup>12</sup> Exaggerated courteousness and respect are forms of benevolent sexism. Similar to hostile sexism this attitude assumes that women are fundamentally different to men and they deserve differential treatment. But instead of open disdain it dresses up the unequal relationship with gallantry, politeness and superficial kindness to make it attractive for women.

- can expect certain services from the other members of the family (laundry, cooking, cleaning, waiting on him).
- can control all situations.
- doesn’t show his feelings (pain, fear, weakness).

Boys learn at an early age that they can exercise ownership over women and children who need control, guidance and discipline. To achieve this, if “necessary”, he can use violence: “Only hit a woman if...” It is up to the man to decide if he has enough reasons to apply force. Similarly, it is his choice to decide how far he can go with the abuse. Violence and abuse have many benefits for the perpetrator:

- He has the power and the control in all situations.
- He can quickly end all conflicts and disputes that matter to him, and things will turn out as he wants.
- He can offload his frustration on his partner.
- His partner does the unpaid work of cooking and washing for him, taking care of his children while he has as much free time as he wants.
- He is always the centre of attention.
- He has control over all the family’s income and he can take decisions on the family’s financial issues on his own.
- Primarily his personal interests and goals prevail in the relationship.
- He can enjoy the status of husband and father in front of others without having to do anything for it at home.
- Time to time he can enjoy the acknowledgement of his friends and acquaintances for his manly –abusive– behaviour.
- He can avoid closeness, intimacy and sharing feelings and emotions that might scare him.

- He doesn't have to assume responsibility for resolving problems in the relationship.

Violent behaviour can be learned not only from social expectations and modelling of behaviours but also from *feedback from the social environment*. An abusive man rarely has to take the negative consequences of his actions into consideration. Society's message to the abuser is that his behaviour is correct or at least excusable. The extended family and his acquaintances don't hold his violence against him. Nobody removes him from the household where he is a danger to the family; no legal actions are taken against him that would use as evidence all the bones, furniture and souls he has broken. Nobody sends him the message that if he doesn't change his behaviour, he won't be a good enough partner and father. The indifference and the silence of his social environment reinforces his belief that his actions are legitimate and acceptable.

The following arguments that men tell, show the widely accepted attitude behind domestic violence: that men must dominate the relationship and control women.

***“A man can't let the woman to boss him around.”***

***“I am the man, I have the money, I decide.”***

***“Women knows no reason. They are more suggestible than man. In my opinion, they are emotionally weaker than men.”***

***“Yes, I am jealous, but only because my wife is important for me. Apart from her I have no interest in women.”***

***“If she didn't provoke me all the time, I wouldn't have to be rough with her. Sometimes I think that she wants me to beat her.”***

***“When I know I am right, I show it to her whatever the cost.”***

***“When she listens to me, we are fine together. But time to time I need to show her who is the boss.”***

***“Sometimes she needs to be cut down to size.”***

***“This is part of my upbringing. This how it was at home in my childhood.”***



### ***What stops women reacting and rejecting abusive behaviour?***

Women also learn a lot in their childhood about themselves and about relationships. They are brought up to believe that their main and, sometimes only goal in life, is to wait for Prince Charming, and then to become a good wife and mother and to fulfil the expectations of others. This female role model expects them to make their husband and family happy and repair the relationship if it deteriorates. Women have learned the same about violence as men.

- A true man dominates the family.
- A woman has to give into her husband's will and admit that he is right when he takes exception to her behaviour.
- The family, or the extended circle of friends and acquaintances, or the society will not condemn a husband's abuse against his wife.
- Problems can be solved by violence.

A woman who has been brought up with these sexist and patriarchal attitudes, who lives in an unequal or abusive relationship that undermines her self-esteem, and whose experience is that asking for help is futile, because she would be blamed for it or at least not taken seriously, that woman will lose faith that taking action has any sense and that she can be free of abuse.

### **The cycle of violence**

The American psychologist Dr. Lenore E. Walker spent many years studying the dynamics of abusive relationships. She created the concept of the 'cycle of violence' which helps to understand the pattern of the abusive relationship. According to Walker, abusive relationships follow a cyclical

pattern that has three easily distinguishable phases: tension building, incident of abuse and reconciliation or honeymoon phase. (see figure 01 on page 56.)

In the tension building phase, conflicts between the couple becomes more frequent and more serious. The abuser constantly finds fault with his partner, picks a quarrel at any chance and he is verbally abusive to her. The victim finds herself walking on eggshells, trying to fulfil the abuser's presumed and actual expectations hoping to reduce his irritability. The tension grows until the outburst of violence and it is "relieved" by an incident of abuse.

The incident of violence can be verbal or physical, can be a slap on the face, a breaking of a piece of furniture or even the rape of the victim in front of the children. After the outburst of violence, the perpetrator very often shows deep regret. He apologises, acts with love and kindness, promises that violence won't happen again and keeps repeating how much he loves his partner. In this phase, he recalls acts of kindness from times of the courtship, he buys smaller or larger gifts, flower, chocolate or jewellery. Therefore, this is called the "honeymoon" phase. According to Walker, the forced reconciliation is vital in breaking the victim's psychological resistance. The honeymoon phase is further complicated if the abuser struggles with alcohol dependency. His promises mixed with apparent guilt can involve giving up drinking and seeking professional help. This phase of temporary reconciliation and calmness is followed by the tension building up again.

Abusive relationships are not only cyclical but also characterised by the escalation of violence, meaning that the controlling behaviour becomes more frequent, less disguised, more damaging, and closer to lethal over time. The different phases follow each other quicker in time: in the beginning of the relationship might be months between

the incidents of abuse, but later on they can happen every day. The violence also becomes more serious. The first couple of times the perpetrator uses verbal violence but, over time, he resorts to more damaging methods. Sometimes the escalation can lead to “excess of battering”. Court records show that perpetrators often use the history of previous physical abuse as mitigating circumstance: “She used to be able to stand it fine. I don’t know what happened this time. I didn’t want to kill her.” Unfortunately, there are prosecutors and judges who agree with this argument, and the long history of serious violence appears in many sentences as mitigating circumstance.

It is important to point out that not all abusive relationships can be described by this model. Emotional and economic violence is often applied by the abuser as a continuous, permanent and not cyclical strategy.

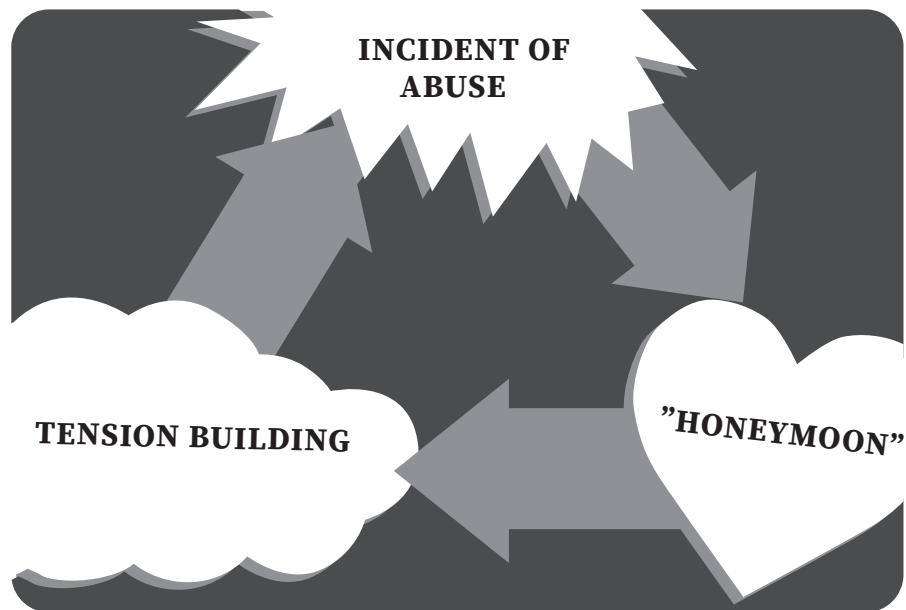


figure 01 The cycle of violence

### ***Highly dangerous periods of the abusive relationship***

Learning about the highly dangerous periods of the abusive relationship is essential for helpers in order to know when the victim enters a critical stage or life-threatening situation.

One of these situations is the outburst of violence which can lead to the victim’s death. During the reconciliation phase, the helper needs to be alert, since the problem hasn’t been settled. *Helpers need to be aware that the abuser’s promises of change are an organic part of the cycle of violence. In the “honeymoon” phase the relationship looks settled but the fundamental problem – the violent and controlling attitude of the abuser – remains the same.* The victim’s safety can only be warranted if the perpetrators abusive behaviour is stopped. The victim’s safety cannot depend on the abuser’s promises.

The other critical period – which many will find surprising – is when the victim tries to break the cycle and leave the relationship. As mentioned above, in the period following the separation or the announcement of the intent of separation, the violence escalates. The abuser frightens and intimidates the victim to dissuade her from leaving him. If the victim manages to move out, the abuser resorts to stalking and to more damaging forms of violence. A large percentage of killings happen in the period of escape or separation. Safety assessment and security planning have to be done *before* the victim leaves the abuser! With regard to stalking, the most dangerous period is the two years following the escape or separation.



A safety plan should include the possibility that the abuser will take revenge on the children. There are well-known cases when, in order to retaliate the woman's leaving, the abuser murdered the children born of their relationship.

Sometimes, during the tension building phase, the victim suffers such intense traumatic stress that she tries to prevent the next incident of violence by taking the perpetrator's life. She might choose to attack the abuser when he is helpless or sleeping.

### ***What are women's reasons to stay?***

Here we list the abused women's responses to the question 'why do they stay in the abusive relationship?'

**ECONOMIC DEPENDENCY:** "How would my children be cared for? Even if I find work, I wouldn't be able to earn enough to take care of them." "I have nowhere to go."

**THE ASSUMED INTEREST OF THE CHILDREN:** "A violent father is better than not having a father at all." "He doesn't beat the kids."

**FEAR OF BEING ALONE:** "My husband says that I wouldn't be able to cope without him. I don't know what to do all alone."

**LOVE:** "I love my husband, I married him because I love him. He is a good man when he is not angry."

**LOYALTY:** "This is a disease he has, and I must stay at his side for better or worst. I wouldn't leave him if he had a disability or cancer."

**PITY:** "In reality he is much weaker than me and he needs me. He couldn't live without me." "He doesn't know how to take care of himself. If I leave him, he will be totally lost and would neglect himself."

**IDENTITY:** "I can't live without a man by my side. I would feel like mutilated. There is no sense in it to live a life all alone."

**DENIAL:** "My situation is not that bad. Women have much worse than I do."

**SENSE OF DUTY AND RELIGION:** "When I married him, I said I take him as my wedded husband till death do us part."

**GENDER ROLES:** "This is the women's lot and I cannot wish for better." "Holding the family together is the wife's job."

**FEAR FOR HIS LIFE:** "He said he would kill himself, if I leave him."

**GUILT:** "My husband said that it is my fault that our marriage has gone to the dogs. We have so many problems because of me." "If I was a better partner, he wouldn't hit me."

**LOW SELF-ESTEEM:** "I wouldn't find anybody better." "That little love is better than nothing."

**SHAME, EMBARRASMENT, HUMILIATION:** "I don't want anybody to know the things he had done to me."

**HOPE:** "He will change soon, he will quit drinking and everything will be all right again."

**FEAR FROM HIS REVENGE:** "He threatened me to find me wherever I go, and then he will kill me and the children as well."

**FEELING OF HELPLESSNESS:** "He is stronger than me, and I am unable to protect myself." "Nobody can help me."

### ***What keeps women in an abusive relationship?***

Women who can't leave an abusive relationship give different reasons in the different stages of the cycle and of the relationship. Instead of asking the question "Why does she stay?" –which is unfair and useless– we should imagine what her experience is in the different stages of the relationship.

#### **In the beginning the victim stays because**

- she loves her partner.
- she believes his promises of change as she is not aware of the characteristics of an abusive relationship.
- she believes that, by doing what he wants, she can avoid or reduce his violence.
- she believes that if she is persistent, she will be able to convince him about her love and he won't be jealous anymore.
- she believes that, because she is a woman, it is her duty to keep the relationship going.
- she believes that he also wants a well-functioning and abuse-free relationship and he will listen to reasons.
- she believes his apologies and hopes that this will never happen again.
- she feels ashamed and she doesn't seek help outside of the family.
- she is afraid of the intervention of the police and other authorities.

#### **Later she stays because**

- she still hopes that he will change at some point, either when she succeeds to convince him or when he gets some help.
- she still believes his promises of change, that he would go to counselling, quit drinking or the drugs, and finally they will live a life she always dreamed off.
- she thinks that her partner loves her and needs her.
- her family and friends expect her to stay.
- he has isolated her from friends and social and economic resources, she has no income on her own, no property, and she thinks that she won't be able to maintain herself and the children.
- he confuses her, brainwashes her and constantly undermines her self-esteem (gaslighting)
- the violence has caused dependency, posttraumatic stress disorder, traumatic bonding or other mental health problems that stops her taking actions.
- she has a growing fear of his violence and she is worried for her and her children's safety.

#### **In the later stages of the relationship, she stays because**

- she is scared of the abuser who has –she feels– infinite power over her. (Warning! In many cases the victim has a more realistic view on what the abuser is capable of because she lives with him.)
- her partner threatens her with killing her, her children or her family.
- she thinks that nobody will love her anymore because her self-esteem has been undermined.
- she thinks that she couldn't cope alone.
- she feels hopeless, helpless and she thinks she has no choice.

- she is tormented by ambivalent feelings and guilt: “I am important for him. It must be my fault that he beats me. I must be doing something wrong, that I don’t live up to his expectations.”
- she is under constant scrutiny and control that paralyses her. She finds difficult to take decisions or she is unable to do so.
- she suffers of serious mental disorders; she has physical injuries and she struggles with psychosomatic problems.
- after several failed attempts of leaving him, she sees suicide or murder as the only way out.
- her negative experiences and his threats make her wary of the state authorities’ and institutions’ biases and damaging interventions (for example she can be afraid of losing her children.)
- violence and manipulation have made her believe that she is not in charge of her life anymore, and she develops learned helplessness. This feeling is aggravated by her environment, the authorities, the lack of knowledge, the indifference and the victim-blaming attitude of the helping professionals. So, she has the impression that she can trust no one.

Psychologists have described some mental and emotional symptoms that victims of violence develop and which stops them leaving the abusive relationship. Recognising them can help the victims, but professional helpers first need to assess and never underestimate the external factors that force the abused woman to stay (e.g., intimidation, isolation, economic dependence). In addition to empowering the victim, helpers need to tackle these issues. The following symptoms can develop in any abused person. They are not signs of any personality disorder or

weakness, but survivor strategies that the mind resorts to in extreme situations. They disappear when the victim feels safe and gets proper support.

Learned helplessness is a mental state that had been observed in animal experiments and in people in hostage and/or prison situations. After several failed attempts to find a way out of the danger, the person gives up trying, because she finds it useless and a perilous waste of energy. It gives others the impression that it is the victim who doesn’t want to change the situation.

### **Traumatic bonding**

The victim can be especially attached to people with whom she shared extreme experiences. Therefore, traumatic bonding supposes a stronger emotional attachment than a safe relationship. The abuser creates it by alternately hurting the victim and reinforcing her belief in his love (e.g., with kindness, sex, comforting and promises). Traumatic bonding is an exceptionally intensive mental state of dependency, accompanied by positive and negative feelings. Because it is an emotional roller-coaster, in the beginning of the relationship it looks like passionate love. Later the victim becomes isolated and that makes her completely vulnerable. She can only focus on the perpetrator, puts enormous energy into pleasing him and winning his love or into changing him. The main characteristic and maintaining factor of the traumatic bonding is the victim’s feeling that only the abuser that hurt her and can comfort her.

### Stockholm syndrome

This set of symptoms was observed first in hostages, and for its development four factors need to be present:

- The hostage's experience is that her life is in the hand of the captor, who can take it away at any moment.
- The captor makes small, positive gestures to the hostage.
- The hostage is isolated; she can only understand the captor's point of view.
- The hostage thinks that escape is impossible.

Since the captor exercises full control over the hostage's life and life conditions, she starts to be grateful for the sheer fact that he hasn't killed her. In order to survive, the victim adopts the captor's side and perspective. As he has unlimited power over her and has isolated her, in order to feel safe, the victim believes that the captor is fundamentally good, omnipotent, so she has neither reason or chance to escape. Those suffering from Stockholm syndrome find the authorities threatening, they are loyal to the captor (who expects this loyalty), and they don't even try to seize the most obvious opportunities for escaping.

The necessary factors to develop Stockholm syndrome are present in the abusive relationship. The victim's life is in the abuser's hands, who exercises full control over her and keeps threatening her to take her life. From time to time the abuser is kind. The abuser isolates his victim. Due to many failed attempts and the lack of support from her social environment, the victim thinks that escape is impossible. Women who are held by their partners, in addition to the constant fear and tension, develop a very special and very intense emotional bond and identify with the abuser, similar to what hostages feel. Similarly, they get confused, exhausted and have no energy for change. They feel helpless.

### *What are the possible outcomes of an abusive relationship?*

#### THE VICTIM LEAVES THE RELATIONSHIP

In most cases, abused women are fully aware of that the relationship is dangerous and they do their best to create a safe environment for themselves and for their children. Leaving an abusive relationship is not easy, it is risky and carries losses. Very often, the victim has to choose between which fundamental need to give up or which human right not to assert (e.g., she has to choose between her right to housing or her right to dignity). In this situation, the victim's fundamental needs won't be met, and more often than not, she will only enjoy the emotional and physical safety she aimed for long after she had given up her home, work, neighbourhood or close objects to achieve it.

Professional helpers should not forget that abuse doesn't stop after separation, because the perpetrator maintains his power over the victim at all cost. He tries everything: makes promises; tries to win her back; kidnaps the children; tries to obtain the custody of them through litigation; makes impossible for her to have independent life; stalks her; or even murders her. The two years following the separation can be a highly dangerous period for the victim. Risk assessment and a safety plan<sup>13</sup> are useful in these cases. How dangerous the abuser is needs to be thought through: what situations presents risks to the victim and her children; how she can avoid them; and what safety measures she can take. The victim's safety can be improved if the authorities issue a restraining order. Unfortunately, the current law in Hungary only offers temporary and short-term solutions.

<sup>13</sup> See in the Appendix the Assessment sheet BIG 26 and the Personal Safety Plan



Professional helpers who encourage the victim to leave without having assessed all risk and resources are wrong and make life dangerous for the woman. However, nobody has to resign themselves to being abused: with proper preparation many women successfully leave the abusive relationship.

### THE RELATIONSHIP CONTINUES

Without outside intervention, intimate partner violence can intensify up to the point when it can become dangerous and have fatal consequences.

During a violent eruption, the victim can suffer severe injuries and the abuser might kill her. It is important to be aware that in Hungary a woman is murdered each week by a partner or ex-partner. Some abusers commit suicide after killing the victim, others kill the children as well. It is possible that the woman kills the abuser in self-defence, or she commit suicide out of constant fear and hopelessness.

The majority of the cases don't lead to homicide, but the violent atmosphere is damaging for everybody. Due to the constant distress and recurring violent incidents, the victim may develop many mental health problems (e.g., posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, panic attacks). Very often, the victim consumes alcohol, drugs or medication to alleviate the physical and emotional pain of abuse, and this can cause addiction. Abused women are likely to develop certain type of illnesses: cancer, digestive and eating disorders, and chronic head and back aches. In addition, violence can distort the perpetrator's personality.

The characteristics of intimate partner violence can change with ageing. As his strength weakens, the abuser is compelled to give up physical violence. However, constant verbal and psychological terror continues and the abuser still makes everybody's life hell in the family. Sometimes the opposite happens and the elderly abuser's violence suddenly escalates; wife-killing in couples over seventy is not rare news. Sometimes, the abuser will stop being violent as, after decades of abuse, there is no longer necessary to obtain compliance because the victim is resigned and intimidated.

However, if the victim wants to change the relationship, the abuser resorts to violence again to crush her attempts.

### THE ABUSER LEAVES THE RELATIONSHIP

Sometimes it is the abuser who leaves the relationship. In many cases this is not a final step but a part of the cycle of violence. (This is the main characteristic of the type of abuser that Lundy Bancroft calls the Player in his book *Why Does He Do That?*.) This type of abuser keeps coming back into the woman's life to restart the relationship or just to have an affair. This cycle of breaking-up and re-establishing the connection (reconquering), together with the number of new partners he has, are used as a means to further hurt the victim.

It can be a painful loss for the victim when the abuser, who caused her emotional dependency and made her to believe that she is worthless, leaves her. It takes a lot of emotional work and counselling to regain self-esteem.

In order to prevent further violence, it is important to recognise that, over time, the abuser will also be violent to his new partner (It is so important to take the abuse of former partners seriously as there will be a repeating pattern of coercive control.)

### ***Can the abuser change?***

Most victims hope that their partner will change at some point, especially if the arguments are explained him or if he gets counselling. Those who don't know the nature and the logic of abuse, often think that violent behaviour is a consequence of mental health issues or addiction. According to several surveys, the incidence rate of narcissistic and antisocial personality disorders is higher than average in abusers. These personality disorders are accompanied by self-centeredness, manipulative behaviours, and unscrupulous exploitation of others. The treatment is difficult and not particularly effective. It is also true that some abusers are often more violent when under the influence of drugs and alcohol. However, the treatment of the above-mentioned problems on their own will not generally result in the stopping of violence. The abuser's agreement to go into counselling or his promises of change, are generally part of the honeymoon phase, and serves to keep the victim in the abusive relationship.

The overwhelming majority of abusive men do not change, namely because abuse and the learned attitudes behind it, that the perpetrator has the right to abuse and harm his family—offer many advantages to him<sup>14</sup>. Many victims, relatives and friends who try to help think that the abuser also wants a harmonious and peaceful relationship. Unfortunately, this is not true. Perpetrators of intimate partner violence want an unequal relationship, exactly

the one they have created. Instead of compromises and mutual understanding, they want total control at whatever cost. Instead of peace they prefer uninhibited expressions of anger. Instead of a happy and fulfilled partner they want a woman with a broken soul that serves them as a maid.

Most perpetrators would prefer to lose or let their partner go and find another whom they can control, rather than give up their presumed entitlements and have to learn to behave in a non-violent way. Since society and the legal system do not really sanction intimate partner violence, the benefits of being abusive are much higher than the cost of changing. It simply isn't worth the effort to change.

A helper should be aware of those interventions have a potentially good impact on the perpetrators and those which are ineffective or outright damaging.

### **SPECIAL PROGRAMS FOR ABUSERS**

Many years ago, some countries started to run programs for perpetrators. They tackled sexist attitudes and the feeling of entitlement that are the basis of abusive behaviour and they paid close attention to the safety of the victims. However, even these programs developed especially with abusers in mind, only showed modest results. They were generally successful with abusers who had a lot to lose if they didn't change (e.g., they have to go to jail).

The perpetrator needs to engage with a program for at least a year in order to significantly increase the physical safety of the abused partner and her children. Giving up the violent behaviour must be a prerequisite for joining a program and program facilitators should expect the abuser to have stopped using violence against his partner and children. The program should specifically target intimate

<sup>14</sup> For more information see [XXXX](#) chapter in *Why Does He Do That?*

partner violence, not only at an individual level, but also at a social level. It must show the participants that sexism and traditional gender roles play a big part in the abuse. It should also be run in close cooperation with the victims, since only they can judge if the programme is having a positive effect.

The work done in the program should be radically different from personal counselling or therapy, as these can be easily exploited by the abuser to justify his behaviour. The work should be done in a group and, instead of understanding his feelings, it should challenge attitudes that entitle him to abuse. It should require mandatory –and not voluntary– participation. The focus must be on the woman's support and not on supporting him.

Programs for abusive men generally don't result in saving the relationship. After severe emotional or physical abuse, survivors who might finally feel safe, often choose not to continue living with their abuser. However, the program can make the separation a safer process for the victim, and to a lesser degree, might result in the abuser not using violence in his next relationship.

#### **INTERVENTIONS THAT ARE UNSUITABLE TO TACKLE ABUSERS AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE**

Helping strategies that don't focus specifically on violent behaviour and its supporting attitudes (sexist views and feeling of entitlement) will have no success, and what's more, they will put partner's and children's safety at greater risk. These interventions give the victim a false illusion that the perpetrator now is being managed by a professional and everything will be fine. In reality, professionals without training in the field of domestic and/or intimate partner violence, more often than not, offer

the abuser space and encouragement. They often don't stand up for the victim, or even blame her for triggering the violence, thereby increasing her feeling of shame and guilt as well as reinforcing the excuses of the perpetrator.

**Alcohol or drug rehabilitation** won't be enough on its own to urge the perpetrator to face up to his attitudes regarding power and control. These treatments reinforce the myth that the main reason behind abuse is alcohol, and once that is gone, things will be automatically fine in the family.

**Anger management** has no impact because of the same reasons, since the abuser has no real motivation to apply what he learns.

**Individual counselling or self-knowledge/self-awareness groups** are also misleading. The abuser who tends to blame others will use these therapeutic approaches – which are effective in other cases– to absolve himself of any responsibility. And what's more, he will do that under the support of the counsellor or the group. Abusers are likely to lie in therapy and manipulate the professionals, therefore all interventions that are not specifically developed to target this type of abuser will inevitably fail.

**Family therapy and mediation** are contraindicated in cases of domestic and intimate partner violence because these methods could work only between equal parties. In an abusive relationship one party is vulnerable and the other is manipulative with a strong interest in maintaining the inequality. Therefore, these interventions can worsen the victim's situation. Unfortunately, in Hungary this fundamental argument is hardly understood or not taken seriously by family therapists and mediators. So, they unwittingly cause damage to the victim.



As the abuser is also present during joint explorations of the relationship, the victim is generally afraid of telling the whole truth. That can lead to mistaken conclusions by the therapist. If the victim risks full disclosure, it can intensify violence at home because the abuser will think that he has been betrayed and assaulted by her. Mediation in domestic violence cases in many countries is considered a professional wrongdoing. In Hungary there is a growing number of mediators who reject mediation in abuse cases.

### **SIGNS OF REAL CHANGE**

If the helper sees positive changes in the abuser's behaviour, he might just want to give a good impression to avoid jail or sanctions, or win back his partner. It is necessary to find out if the improvement is long-lasting and deep, or if the perpetrator temporarily modifies his behaviour in order to manipulate his environment.

If all of the following conditions are fulfilled for a substantial period of time, there is a chance that real change is happening.

- He has stopped all forms of abuse and/or coercive control.
- He has fully acknowledged that his behaviour was abusive and caused pain.
- He has stopped looking for excuses and blaming others.
- He tries to make it up to the victims.
- He respects his (ex) partner's boundaries and the decisions.
- He takes responsibility for the violence committed and acknowledges that the abuse was his choice.
- He accepts that giving up the abusive behaviours is a long process and doesn't declare himself "cured".

- He expects no recognition for his development, nor that his relapses should be forgiven.
- He behaves in a respectful, kind and supportive way.
- He shares work (including housework) and power with his partner in an equal way.
- He understands and accepts his partner's or ex-partner's anger and resentment because of his abuse.
- He doesn't behave in an intimidating or controlling way in conflicts.
- He accepts the consequences of his actions (including the break-up or the divorce), and doesn't expect to be piti

When judging if these conditions are met or not, professionals should not prioritise the views of the abuser. They should pay attention to the victim's experiences and feelings, as well as their own impressions.

Professionals should be aware that the victim will really want to believe in change, and she will consider small improvements to be a huge relief and a sign of lasting change. Professionals need to share their critical view and to warn the victim of possible manipulation.

It is important to remember that an abuser can stop violence and "change" in order to win back his partner, and then bind her tighter to him with children or marriage before he starts mistreating her again. It is often true that those who have behaved in an abusive way, cannot be considered safe partners again.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# RECOGNISING THE ABUSER AND THE VICTIM: WARNING SIGNS

*THE ABUSER*

*THE ABUSED WOMAN*

*THE CHILDREN*

### ***The Abuser***

Although every abuser has a different personal history, there are some common behavioural features that can usefully predict violent behaviour. Recognising these early warning signs is important to prevent abuse and, later, to process the trauma. We suggest that Youth Workers and Youth Educators professionals talk about these early warning signs with girls and boys. In this way, the next generation will see the clear difference between love and possession and so help both parties to avoid abusive relationships.

The more warning signs which are evident, the more likely it is that the man has abusive tendencies.

### **WARNING SIGNS OF ABUSIVE MAN:**

- He thinks that women can't be as clever, experienced, confident, strong, determined and independent as men. He ridicules women because they are "stupid" or "oversensitive" and makes fun of their "typically female characteristics". He makes denigrating or misogynist remarks especially regarding their mental capabilities, sex and body.
- He doesn't think that his rude behaviour is wrong or that it can have negative consequences.
- He has low self-esteem, but he blames others (his parents, his boss, his partner) for his lack of success.
- He was abused as a child or had to witness his mother being abused.
- He reacts in extreme ways to distress. To handle it, he resorts to alcohol, drugs or violent measures. When frustrated, he loses his patience and retaliates against the alleged insult.

- He uses his anger to control others. Anger is a tool of communication for him. He is explosive, passive-aggressive and he is often in a sulk. He blames others and smashes things to pieces. He lets his anger run wild and be out of control.
- He has difficulty to express his wishes in a positive and modest way.
- He is aggressive in sex and he prefers poses that proves his power and domination. He likes violent sex.

#### **EARLY WARNING SIGNS IN THE BEHAVIOUR OF AN ABUSIVE MAN:**

- He is jealous: he blames his partner and expects her to limit her contacts and restrict her life.
- He is controlling; he controls his partner's time, clothing, friendships, diet, money (and later on, even her bowel movements and sleeping time).
- He favours early commitment; he is capable of asking a woman to marry on the second date and to start planning their new life together.
- He has unrealistic expectations; he expects the woman to be always neat, beautiful, sexually available, and her household should be immaculate all the time.
- He isolates the woman; he intervenes in her personal relationships with her family, friends and colleagues.
- He sees other people as the source of his problems. He doesn't take responsibility for his actions or feelings. He blames others or his partner for his violent behaviour or for losing control over himself.
- He ends disputes with total refusal or by manipulating his partner.

- He is oversensitive; his feelings and his problems should always be the centre of attention. He reacts to any discomfort by attacking.
- He insists on either having sex or he refuses it as forms of punishment.
- He insults his partner or makes hurtful and humiliating remarks on her.
- He finds sexual violence and violence against women amusing
- He makes a rigid distinction between female and male gender roles. He thinks that he has right to “educate” and “punish” women and children. He thinks that women are for housework, child bearing and sex.
- His behaviour is like “Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde”. He is different in other people's presence than when alone with his partner. He only behaves in an abusive way when he is alone with the victim and he is expressly kind to her in front of others. Or, he is only aggressive in company and is kind to her in private. (This pattern is often true in the case of adolescent boys.)

Immediate warning signs that make it instantly recognisable that the man in question will not shy away from using physical violence:

- He throws or smashes object in his partner's presence
- He threatens physical violence or the possibility of physical violence comes up in the relationship.
- He is generally brusque or impatient with children and animals. He also mistreats animals and pets.
- He has an abusive past with an ex-partner.

## ***The Abused Woman***

Abused women often feel that talking about intimate partner violence is not safe because they never know if they will be blamed for it, or if they will be looked down on because they “let it happen to them”.

Abused women generally feel ashamed of the violence they suffer and blame themselves for it. Feeling responsible for violence is typical in any victims of crime, but in case of intimate partner violence, the victim-blaming social attitude reinforces this feeling of guilt. Therefore, professionals shouldn't expect the victim to say “I am an abused woman”. There are victims who are genuinely convinced that what happening to them is not violence. In these cases, recognising the signs of abuse is the task of the professional.

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF ABUSED WOMEN:**

- She suggests that she is frightened of her partner's anger. She is exclusively focused on her partner's feelings and moods. She gives the impression that she can't act according to her own interests.
- She has low self-esteem.
- She is often depressed, feels low or anxious.
- She is convinced that nobody can help her and any possible intervention would worsen her situation.
- She feels embarrassed when she has to talk about the violence she suffers. She tries to avoid the topic and she is ashamed of her injuries.
- Faced with her children's problems at home or in school, she gives the impression that she has given up and is resigned to them.

- She is determined to please the abuser, hoping that, by satisfying all his whims, she will be able to avoid the next incident of violence. She schedules her time to ensure that she can meet his needs.
- She has had several abortions or she has many children while her relationship clearly doesn't look right.
- She gets extremely upset if there is any hitch in the daily routine (e.g., if she leaves her work later than usual).
- She complains of depression, anxiety or other psychological and psychosomatic symptoms.
- She has suicidal thoughts or had several suicide attempts.
- She uses alcohol or drugs to avoid facing up to the reality of her relationship and her pain.

### **PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS OF ABUSED WOMAN:**

- She has wounds and injuries especially on her arms, head, face, chest and abdomen which are normally covered by clothes. The risk of physical violence is particularly high during pregnancy.
- She has injuries at different stages of healing.
- When explaining her injuries, her stories are vague and implausible (“I fell off the ladder.”; “I fell off the stairs.”; “I bumped into the doorframe.”; “I stepped on the rake.”)
- She wears long sleeve, rollneck tops and sunglasses which are not appropriate to the weather.
- She has a history of attending the accident and emergency unit several times, or she regularly visits the general practitioner's surgery. She might have some medical reports.
- She plays down the seriousness of her injuries.

- She is often absent from her work without adequate excuse.
- She has a high tolerance of pain.
- When touched, she withdraws, gets scared or startled and looks frightened.
- She looks worn out, exhausted and older than her age. Her health is deteriorating, and there is a general feeling of neglect about her. She might have lost a lot of weight.

#### **SIGNS TO LOOK FOR WHEN THE ABUSED WOMAN IS WITH HER PARTNER:**

- The man treats her in a jealous and possessive way.
- The man is overly caring and overprotective towards her.
- She is constantly dependent on the man's every reaction and she is hanging on his every word (e.g., she establishes eye-contact with him more than usual).
- When asked, her partner replies instead of her and takes the objects given to her.
- Her behaviour changes when the man leaves the room.
- Her partner ignores her or talks to her disparagingly in public (e.g., he slams the door on her, or ridicules her).

### ***The Children***

Children growing up in abusive families are victims as well. They are in constant fear of abuse happening again either to the mother or to them. These children develop a trauma-based attitude. They experience the world around them as unfair and unpredictable, full of danger, where they are hurt by those who should care for them and love them.

Children in abusive families are full of anger that can be expressed in several ways. Many turn the anger against themselves, and they display signs of self-blaming and guilt. The most recurring coping mechanism is when the child's anger turns against other people, and it is expressed in violent behaviour against his or her peers, sisters and brothers. The child can be violent against the abuser too.

Sometimes the child identifies with the abuser's point of view, and blames the mother for tension at home and for incidents of violence. In those cases, the child expresses disdain toward the mother, or behaves towards her in a violent and aggressive way.

In families dominated by an abuser, children are often emotionally and physically neglected. A man who abuses his partner and undermines her care is not a suitable parent, even when he is not directly abusive to the children<sup>15</sup>. A mother who lives in constant danger, fear and uncertainty, can't give her children the emotional and physical security, the patience and the attention they need.

Children often learn and copy their parents' behaviour patterns. Unfortunately, society is generally not in a position to counterbalance these patterns. Indeed, on the contrary, society often empowers and encourages men to control. Peer groups and the surrounding societal culture even have a huge impact on men who have been brought up in non-violent families. Societal values encourage them to identify with the traditional male role and to consider their partner an object, expecting total submission and compliance from her.

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<sup>15</sup> See Lundy Bancroft: *Why Does He Do That? And When Dad Hurts Mom*.



### **CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN LIVING IN AN ABUSIVE FAMILY:**

The following list of characteristics is useful to help assess if a child is at risk. The presence of a couple of these elements indicates to the professional or the relative that more attention should be paid to the child.

#### **Physical signs:**

- The child has injuries that
  - » have marks of a human hand or tool (suggesting hits, burns or breaks).
  - » don't correspond to the child's explanation.
  - » the child tries to conceal and cover (by refusing to undress at physical education class or at the school surgery).
  - » are at different stages of healing.
  - » have clearly healed without medical intervention.
- The child shows symptoms of regressing: bed-wetting, nail-biting, thumb-sucking, speech development stops or regression.
- The child has a nervous tic (habitual spasmodic contraction of the muscles, most often in the face) or stutter.
- The child starts masturbating well before adolescence. This can be a form of self-awarding activity to avoid the painful reality.
- The child's physical and mental development is slower than others of their age.

- The child suffers different illnesses that repeat since the root of the problem is not treated (e.g., chronic digestive disorders, bowel-irritation, chronic headache).

### **WARNING SIGNS ABOUT THE SENSE OF SELF AND SELF-ESTEEM OF THE CHILD:**

- feeling alone with the problem of domestic violence.
- feelings of guilt and shame because of the situation at home.
- feelings of helplessness and vulnerability.
- feeling unsafe, or attaching a sense of security to places instead of people.
- feeling they have a false self; not being the child the outside world sees but instead, they are a bad and despicable person.
- strong feelings of inferiority, self-hatred and guilt together with feeling responsible for the troubles at home.
- a desire to be perfect and a hope that their own improvement will resolve the problems and everybody will be happy.
- Extreme physical or sexual violence can cause total memory loss (traumatic amnesia). The child can unconsciously and hermetically disconnect the personality that has experienced the violence or the emotions related to the violent incident (dissociation).

### **Behaviour patterns**

In nursery and primary school the children

- consider it normal to be aggressive and cruel, and hurt other children to alleviate their frustration, anger and tension.
- are alienated and isolated from other children.
- are extremely compliant compared to their age; they are trying hard to win the adults' acknowledgement and recognition; they are very sociable, "good student" (pseudo-maturity).
- have attention and learning difficulties.
- are ill and miss on school very often.
- drop out of school and miss school regularly.
- are visibly scared or frightened of their father or mother.
- develop behaviour disorders.
- replay the trauma –the beating or the sexual abuse– with dolls or with peers.
- have overdeveloped fantasy-world; they do story-telling and tell implausible lies. Warning! If the children report violence at home, it might sound unbelievable, but they should be believed and their words should never be confused with story-telling.
- do traumatic playing; the children's play is tense, repetitive and lacks spontaneity.

### **The children in the family**

- try to influence the parent's actions, emotions and behaviour to stop the violence.
- during escalation of abuse, they try to attract the abuser's attention, or attack him in order to protect the mother.
- feel and show hatred towards the father because of the beatings, or on the contrary, blame and hurt the mother.

- have fantasies about the killing and the death of the abuser.
- feel strong solidarity with the abuser, try to please him and show signs of traumatic bonding. (In many psychological reports the helping professional wrongly interprets this behaviour by stating that "the children love their father".)
- mistreat the other brothers and sisters.
- have nightmares.
- when drawing the family, their pictures have a nightmarish feeling about them.
- have attempted to run away many times since an early age; they might marry early or move out of the family home and live independently with no support.

### **Social connections**

- The children often get into trouble and use intimidating behaviour against their schoolmates.
- They commit small crimes (shoplifting, truancy or gangs).
- They are preoccupied with violence and horror stories.
- They are lonely, have no real friends, are distrusting towards their peers and don't develop intimate relationships.
- They never take friends home.
- They are hypersensitive to other's feelings and needs (pseudo-sociability).

**The children in relation to their body:**

- they relate to the body in a self-harming way (nail- and lips-biting, hair-tearing, self-cutting, -burning and -pinching).
- they have suicidal thoughts or attempts.
- they abuse substance (drugs, alcohol or sedatives).

It is important to highlight that, in the case of children who witness domestic abuse, many traditional interventions are not effective. Calling in the mother to the school or to the social services won't be enough, as an abused mother has no means to change the family dynamics. In these cases, the mother often tries to play down the real risk. She is ashamed of being abused by the husband, and she is afraid of him. At the same time, she is afraid of the authorities too, and in many cases her fear is not unfounded. The most recurrent reaction of the social services is still the "removal" of the child from the family, and understandingly, the mother doesn't want to contribute to this outcome. The removal doesn't serve the child's interest either. Abuse can be stopped only by stopping the abusive behaviour which is the source of the problem. The abuser needs to be held to account and kept away from the family if necessary.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# THE MEANS OF EFFECTIVE HELP

*FIRST STEP: IDENTIFYING WHO IS WHO*

*SECOND STEP: CLARIFYING THE GOALS OF THE  
INTERVENTION*

*THIRD STEP: THE FOUNDATIONS OF  
COOPERATION*

*GOOD PRACTICES OF EFFECTIVE HELP*

*WHAT NOT TO DO?*

*THE HELPING CONVERSATION*

*SOME RECURRING PROBLEMS*

*THE HELPER'S SELF-CARE*

### ***First step: identifying who is who***

Before any intervention, the people involved should be identified. The victim, the perpetrator and the children – whether directly abused or witnessing violence – will have different needs. First and foremost, helpers should focus on identifying and supporting the abused woman, since she can be in immediate danger of death.

Helpers should enable the victim to trust and feel safe and comfortable. When accompanied by the abusive partner, ensure that she has the chance to talk privately in a separate room where the perpetrator can't see or hear her.

Helpers should assess the signs of abuse. Does she talk about it? Does she have visible injuries? Does her behaviour suggest abuse? And his behaviour? The following sentences are often used by abused women:

***“Things are not fine at home.”***

***“My husband is very nervous lately.”***

***“We fall out a lot recently.”***

***“I am afraid to go home.”***

If the helper can see that the woman has injuries, she can approach her by saying:

***“I can see you have bruises in your arm.***

***Have anybody hurt you?”***

***“I have met many women who had the same  
type of injuries after being hit by their partner.  
May I ask you if this is your case?”***

If the victim withdraws, looks sad, anxious, fearful or cries, or she says anything that suggests that she is abused, the helper can ask the following questions:

***“What makes you so sad?”***

***“What’s the matter? Why do you feel so low?”***

***“I can see that you are sad/anxious/afraid. Can you tell me why?”***

***“You are saying that [the helper repeats what the woman has said]. Is it because your partner/husband is mistreating you?”***

If the partner’s behaviour suggests anger, jealousy, control and/or threats towards the woman, the helper can say:

***“I have noticed how your partner behaves. Has he ever hit you?”***

***“Your husband looks angry. Has he ever hurt you?”***

If the helper discovers that the partner has been physically abusive, she can move on to discuss the situation with the woman. Remember that it is extremely difficult for the woman to acknowledge that she is abused. She might insist that she is not “an abused woman”. In this case you shouldn’t discuss what this label means. Instead, you should explore what is happening to her, how does she feel and what does she need. She might have never talked to anybody yet about her situation.

## ***Second step: clarifying the goals of the intervention***

After identifying the problem but before any intervention takes place, helpers should discuss what the woman wants to happen. **Many helping relationships have failed because the victim and the helper didn’t have the same outcome in mind. In theory, the goal is to help the abused woman to get into safety, to take back control over her life and to empower her to act.** However, it is possible that the woman is in such a mental and emotional state or her conditions are such that, at the moment she can’t aim that high. The helper sometimes needs to be contented with smaller scale steps: an honest conversation, a new realisation regarding the future of the relationship, or escape into a sheltered house (where the victim finds temporary safety even if she later goes back to the abuser.)

In this phase the most frequent errors are that the helper has very high expectations of the woman (e.g., that she should finally recognise that her marriage is dangerous and she should file for divorce), or the abused woman expects services from the helper that she can’t provide (e.g., finding for her and her two children a place in a sheltered house close to her home and in a short notice, or making her husband understand that he shouldn’t beat her anymore). Interventions that stop abusive relationships can only be successful when the woman is emotionally and mentally ready, or her attitude has changed, or she has dispelled all illusions about the relationship and the abuser, and she is determined to create a new life for herself and her children. Real, long-lasting changes need many months or even years of cooperation with the helper.



The woman's decision to leave the relationship depends on many factors: physical security (remember that the period right before and after the separation can be more dangerous than the life with the abuser), financial situation, difficulties in moving house, nursery, school and finding a new job. Therefore, the woman's fear, caution and reluctance regarding the divorce or the moving out can be more than justified. She might not trust herself enough to get on with the break up or she doesn't want a divorce, but only wants the violence to stop.

Helpers should be aware that intimate partner violence can only be controlled by threatening or resorting to real sanctions against the abuser. Research shows that, only those programs that encouraged change by threatening retribution, were modestly successful in changing abuser behaviour

### ***Third step: the foundations of cooperation***

#### **ASSESSING AND CREATING SAFETY**

The most important principle of helping abused women is that all intervention should serve the victim's safety. Women seek help because they are in danger, so the helpers first task is to assess and reduce the danger.

Decades of research and good practice has led to the development of risk assessment tools. The aim of these is not so much the prognosis, but the prevention of violence. Systematic collection of information, experiences and knowledge enables helpers to assess the danger to victims. A safety plan can be made based on this information. Sharing information is crucial in a multiagency approach.

Risk assessment should be done in cooperation with the victim within a supportive and trusting relationship between the helper and the abused woman. Seeking help from an organisation specialised in domestic violence against women and children is highly recommended. Risk assessment can be done with the questionnaire "BIG 26" found in the Appendix. Risk assessment should always be followed by a safety plan.

Crisis intervention is required to ensure safety if the danger is immediate and direct. The priority should be helping the victim to safe accommodation, either a sheltered house, crisis accommodation, or a relative or a friends' home. The second priority is to remove the perpetrator by arrest or restraining order.

Medium- and longer-term security can be achieved by developing a *personal safety plan*. This can include planning escape routes that can be used at the next violence incident or securing a new home. (See Personal Safety Plan in the Appendix.)

Legal action, sectioning or imprisonment of the abuser as ways of sanctioning are also relevant to women's safety.

Safety measures are the only area where the helper can intervene against the expressed wish of the victim. Temporary restraining orders (by the police for 72 hours) can be issued without the victim's explicit request (*point a) of subsection (2) of section 6 of Act LXXII of 2009 on Restraining Orders Applicable in Cases of Domestic Violence*). It can be issued on the request of a relative of the victim, or on the report of a professional of the child protection services (*point b-d) under subsection (2) of section 6*). This information should be remembered as police staff very often aren't familiar with it or they are poorly-informed.

It is important to know that several forms of violence are regulated under the legal framework of endangering the welfare of a minor (208 section of Criminal Code). In relation to partner violence (subsection (2) of section 212/A of Criminal Code), the police have the right to take legal action. All agencies of the child protection system (including the court) are obliged to start legal procedures (e.g., report to the police) if they discover that the child is at risk by the abuser. They have to act even if the case has come to their attention outside of a legal case (e.g., divorce or custody trial). In August 2014 the Ministry of Human Resources issued guidance based on the child protection law (*Sector-neutral uniform principles and methodology for the identification and elimination of child abuse in the context of the operation of the child protection detection and signalling system*) which says:

***“If the child witness violence among relatives, he or she has to be considered being at risk, and being the target of the abuse.” (18.p.)***

Therefore, the mother's abuse is considered endangerment of a minor and, in the case of good judicial practice, it is seen as intimate partner violence against a child.

#### **SOCIAL PROBLEM – STATE RESPONSIBILITY**

Countries with effective response systems in place all acknowledge that domestic violence is not a private matter. The origin of partner abuse is not the fault of either the victim and perpetrator, nor it is rooted in bad habits of conflict management. Domestic violence reflects a social problem in the private sphere: the subjection of women

to men. Therefore, when intervening, domestic violence should not be treated as an individual, psychological problem.

It is important to remember that, by signing several international agreements, Hungary has committed to endorse this view. Therefore, professional reports and opinions of those working in state institutions should reflect this commitment. In the spirit of those agreements, it is the responsibility of the Hungarian government to provide safety and legal protection to its citizens who fall victims of intimate partner violence.

Applying existing legal measures in the victims' defence can be very effective in eliminating abuse. For example, judges can order the restriction or the withdrawal of the abuser's rights to visitation, and suspension or the withdrawal of his rights to custody. Professionals from different fields can form work teams and write a joint letter to ask for professional guidance and more efficient regulation. They can also point out the typical problems they are facing (e.g., the need to eliminate mandatory visitations).<sup>16</sup>

We should make it clear at every opportunity that abuse is not a private matter, and that holding the perpetrators to account is the state's obligation.

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<sup>16</sup> A handbook has been put together by our association to help the work of professionals of different fields that handle cases of domestic abuse. Szakmai módszertani útmutató a párkapcsolati erőszak elleni hatékony fellépésre [Methodological Guidance for Professionals to Improve the Tackling of Intimate Partner Violence] can be accessed in Hungarian from the website [www.nokjoga.hu](http://www.nokjoga.hu).

## MORAL STATEMENT

When working with people who have experienced intimate partner violence, helpers cannot remain “impartial” or “neutral”. Those who don’t take sides and who “try to understand both parties”, are not neutral because in reality they support the perpetrator by relativising and normalising his violence. Therefore, it is a helper’s duty to express to the abused woman that what happened to her was wrong and nobody deserves to be abused. This moral stance should be present both in verbal communication and in the intervention’s aims and methods.

It is possible to take a moral stand by giving supportive messages to the victim, such as the following: “Everybody deserves to live in peace and safety.”; “Nobody has the right to hit another person.”

Using non-judgmental and professionally accurate terms in conversation with the abused woman can also communicate moral messages. When the woman says “My man often tries to force me in bed”, it can be paraphrased by saying “You mean that your husband is regularly uses sexual violence against you?”. When she says “He sometimes takes it out on the child”, helpers can be more precise by saying “You mean that he also hit the child?”. The victims’ wording sometimes downplays the violence they suffered, and by highlighting their “fault”, they often try to reduce the abuser’s responsibility. The helper’s constant moral support shows to the woman that no behaviour deserves abuse.

At the same time, moral commitment determines the goal of the intervention. The victim’s safety and recovery are always more urgent and more important than the perpetrator’s needs, because the victim is the one who suffered a severe trauma and injustice.

## EMPOWERMENT

Supporting the development of the victim’s own resources is the foundation of empowerment.

This means providing a wide range of information to the victim: the effects of abuse, the dynamics of intimate partner violence, moral and legal rights, individual and institutional possibilities of housing, legal protection, medical treatment, psychological recovery and ways to improve safety. In addition to providing all the information needed, accepting the victim’s decision can be very empowering to her, even if the helper is not satisfied or doesn’t agree with it.

Empowerment includes the assessment of the victim’s internal resources and helping her to become aware of them: her academic qualifications, her dreams and wishes, current plans and her plans before the relationship started. Her external resources should also be assessed: assets, financial, emotional, logistical, practical, legal, medical, together with therapeutic support from friends, professionals and institutions during the different phases. Literature on intimate partner violence should be considered an external resource.

The aim is to enable the victim to be independent in setting goals, taking decisions and actions while encouraging her to use the social support available. To achieve this, the helper should not take over tasks that abused woman is perfectly able to do for herself, such as making phone calls or applying for benefits.

After the danger has passed, the survivor needs to think about what kind of socialisation she had in her life; what she had learned about women’s duties, the ideal man and the good relationship. Constant adapting and subordination

are part of the traditional female role. The characteristics that our culture presents as masculine and attractive are very often early warning signs of abuse. By recognising these signs and by reassessing gender roles in society, the survivor can learn how to recognise abusive men and how to establish a relationship based on mutual respect.<sup>17</sup>

### KNOWING THE CONTRA-INDICATIONS

The final professional principle is that helpers should not recommend or use methods that are contraindicated according to international standards and practices.

They should avoid the recommendation or application of any professional programs that blame the perpetrator and victim of violence in equal measure. Recommending *couples and family therapy, mediation and conciliation* is a harmful and potentially dangerous practice. These methods can only help to reduce the tension between two persons of equal power in the relationship. In an abusive relationship it is not the case because one party –the abuser– has the power to exercise domination and control over the other party. Since the woman is vulnerable and afraid of the man, she won't be able to be honest and cooperative with the helping professional. If the abused woman cooperates, the abuser will retaliate right after the meeting, because she was disrespectful of him or discredited him in front of a stranger. Joint meetings with the couple can lead to the escalation of violence or a serious incident of abuse. *Therefore, applying conciliatory and conflict management techniques are not permitted in cases of intimate partner violence.*

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17 *The Power to Change Handbook* about how to set up and run support groups for victims and survivors of domestic violence, can help to tackle these issues. Please find the English version here: <http://mek.oszk.hu/17600/17612/17612.pdf>

The encouragement of divorce or separation without any preparatory work and safety plan in place is also contraindicated. The victim's decision to leave generally triggers more serious violence, more control and harassment from the abuser.

Another common mistake is to recommend “forgive and move on” (to the victim) after the divorce, stating that it would help a fast recovery. An abused woman who has just left an abusive relationship doesn't need (after possibly years of control) to be told what to feel and what to remember. Ordering or suggesting forgiveness and forgetting will stop her accessing those cathartic emotional resources that could help her recovery. They take away the abused woman's justified anger and stifle her desire to say the truth.

### *Good practices of effective help*

The following recommendations are for both for professional and non-professional helpers.

*Create a trusting atmosphere* by clearly taking a stand: abuse is the perpetrator's responsibility, not the victim's.

*Enable the victim to feel safe.* She needs a compassionate environment that is free of victim-blaming. She might be too afraid to talk about her problems or she blames herself for the abuse.

*Gain the victim's trust so that she is to talk openly about her feelings and the violence she has suffered in her relationship.* Help her to feel respected and safe by stating you won't break her confidence. Emphasise that her safety is important and you take her problems seriously.



*Acknowledge the victim's experiences.* Do not question or challenge her feelings and the gravity of her experiences, otherwise you are in danger of repeating the abuser's attitude.

*Express unequivocally that you condemn violence.* The abused woman probably has been told a hundred times that "violence is wrong, but you can't dwell on it all the time". Encouraging her to forget the violence is not helpful.

*Help her realise that she is allowed to seek help.* Inform her that she can call a helpline, ask for a place in a shelter, see a psychologist or social worker who understands the dynamics of intimate partner violence. Help her to get support from many sources.

Encourage her to think whom to tell about the abuse, and to consider which friends, relatives, colleagues or neighbours may be supportive. It might turn out that she is not alone, there might be others who live, or who have lived in an abusive relationship with whom she can share her experiences.

*Help her explore appropriate possibilities and resources.* Base the intervention on her creativity and her knowledge of the situation, rather than using ready-made advice. Ask her what solutions she has been thinking about, what she has already tried or has made steps to achieve. Provide information about other means available to her (e. g., tell her about which legislation and legal tools –such as a restraining order– are at her disposition, if she wants to report the abuse). Make suggestions and recommend solutions which the victim hasn't thought about. Together, examine the institutional, legal, emotional and financial help she could get. As well, explore her internal resources

(skills, strengths, knowledge, previous successes) and stress that the abuser often makes the victim believe that she is worthless.

*Enable her to trust her own strength.* Strength, persistence and organisational skills are needed to survive and raise kids in an abusive relationship. Even helpers tend to forget this truth and see abused women as weak persons. They are not weak by any means. Their real power shows when they finally can turn their energy into something they really want. Reinforce her trust and believe in her power and strength.

Experience shows that abused women spend on average seven years in the relationship and returns to the relationship between four and seven times before leaving definitely. Be prepared for the possibility that the woman may return to the relationship. Remember that she knows her situation better than anybody else. Your duty as a helper is to provide information and support the victim, not to influence her decision by your own feelings.

*Let her tell her story.* Make her feel that you believe her and you want to hear her story. Don't interrupt her, be patient and show interest.

*Let her express her feeling freely.* She has the right to be angry, afraid and tearful. Maybe this is the first opportunity for her after long years of abuse to feel safe enough to express her feelings about the abuse. Be patient and show empathy.

*Express your worries about her and her children's safety.* Many abused women don't recognise that they are victims of violence, or they deny being at risk. Expressing your worries in a trusting environment can help her to face the gravity of her situation.



*Remind her that she is not alone.* Discovering that masses of women are in the same situation can surprise the victim. Share with her the data on how widespread violence against women is, mention famous women who are survivors of intimate partner violence and recommend to her self-help or support groups. By contacting other women, she can break out of isolation, which is one of the main pillars of abuse.

*Tell her that there is a way out.* Although state intervention is not yet satisfactory, many women have succeeded in leaving the abuser. Be ready to give her leaflets about helplines, shelters and other crisis accommodations, websites, social benefits and other institutional possibilities.

*Reinforce her believe that nobody has the right to hurt her.* Remind her that the abuse wasn't caused by her personality or behaviour. Those are the abuser's excuses to make her feel guilty. Her partner will not give up the abuse even if she changes. This will have been backed up by her own experiences. Nobody is responsible for the violence they suffer.

*Be aware that the victim might feel embarrassed or humiliated due to having suffered abuse.* Since she is convinced that the quality of the relationship relies on the woman, she might feel responsible for the relationship "going wrong". It might be the case that previously she denied the violence but now she seeks help. She might have left the abuser and returned to him many times and now she is afraid that she is not going to be taken seriously. Reassure her that the abuse is not her shame and she deserves respect and support.

*Be aware of the mental state of traumatic bonding.* Understand and accept that the abused woman's feeling towards the perpetrator are ambivalent, contradictory and confused. She might be very attached to him. She might feel she loves him and hopes that the relationship will improve. At the same time, she might be angry with him, feel hatred because he ruined her life. Mixed feelings are normal, don't judge the victim if she is confused.

*Recognise her beliefs are based on myths around domestic violence.* Myths around domestic violence –explained in a separate chapter of this handbook– are still part of public thinking. Very often women believe them even when their own experiences contradict these stereotypical attitudes. One of the most effective tools of help is providing facts and information to dispel these myths around abuse.

*Respect the cultural conditions that determine the abused woman's behaviour.* Take into consideration that, for many women, certain values of their family, culture and religion can make more difficult to stand up to abuse. Don't expect anything that is contradictory to her beliefs but give her space to examine and reevaluate the attitudes of her social environment.

*Examine your own attitudes.* Have an honest look at your attitudes to violence, your reactions and experiences. Seek to eliminate all biases in your helping conversations. If you recognise that full support is impossible for you, send the victim to another helper or supporting organisation.

*Don't give the impression of being a know-it-all type professional.* The abused woman has heard many people –including the perpetrator–telling her what she should do. It is likely that, for a long time, she hasn't had the chance

to take independent decisions that serve her own interests. Therefore, it is important that your communication increases her self-esteem, not your own reputation or ego.

*Be aware of your own frustrations.* Abused women, especially when they are not safe, can't change their life as fast as you would like them to do so. Get to know your own impatience and feelings of helplessness and learn how to manage them. Even if you don't see immediate improvement, your work is not pointless. The help you are providing now might enable the victim to seek change later.

### ***What not to do?***

The following recommendations are for both professional and non-professional helpers.

*Don't forget that constant threat has a negative impact on the victim's decision taking and agency capacity.* Explain the different possibilities to the victim carefully and comprehensibly. Provide her with enough information and give her positive feedback when she suggests other steps to take.

*Don't forget that she can have troubles that need immediate intervention.* Due to abuse or other reasons, she can be a danger to herself or to others; she might have no food, no medication or housing, and she might not be able to take care of herself or her children. Get in touch with other organisations or institutions to resolve these problems.

*Don't punish the victim if she takes a "wrong" decision.* Hiding disappointment when the victim takes a seemingly bad decision is not easy, especially when you have put a lot of work into the case. One of the biggest mistakes to make as a helper is withdrawing support when the woman returns to the abusive relationship. Remember that abused

women on average return to the abuser between four and seven times before they leave the relationship definitely. When this happens remind the victim of the cycle of violence, but respect her decision and reassure her that she can call on your help again.

*Remember the impact isolation and oppression can have on the victim.* Nobody can function in an adequate way without a supportive social network. The woman can be isolated physically and socially due to the location of her home, her mother tongue, health, economic dependency, level of education and citizenship.

*Don't make decisions for her.* Remember that the victim needs information and support, not advice and instructions.

*Don't blame her for what happened to her.* Blaming happens when the helper feels helpless or unqualified for the work. When feeling anger and resentment toward the victim, try to understand deeper her situation and seek support for yourself from other helpers.

*Don't take actions in the victim's name.* Experiencing that she is able to act independently enables the victim to regain her self-esteem and strength. By acting in her name, you reinforce her belief that she is helpless, useless and dependent on others. At the same time provide supportive company when really needed.

*Don't talk badly about the abuser.* The woman's negative emotions on the surface can hide traumatic bonding, pity, love and affection. Judgmental words can trigger protection and excuses in the victim, saying that "he is not at all a bad man". When criticising the abuser, you condemn the woman for her choice of partner. Condemn the violence not the person.

*Don't rush her decision.* Abused women need time and a safe and supportive environment to take a well thought-out decision.

*Don't belittle her experiences and feelings.* By trivialising her experiences, you undermine her trust in you.

*Don't shift her attention to other problems.* Even if it feels uncomfortable, don't distract her from talking about the abuse. The most important issue to tackle is her safety.

*Don't accuse her of being a bad mother.* Abused women find as hard to protect their children as themselves. Instead of criticism she needs support to be able to change.

*Don't try to convince her to "change" in order to avoid the abuse.* This attitude shifts the attention from her behaviour to the abuser. She can't control the violence and she can't prevent it either.

*Don't make her believe that by being more assertive, she can stop the abuse.* Assertiveness can trigger even more violence in an abusive relationship, because the perpetrator's goal is to undermine the victim's self-esteem and break her will for full control. Trust the victim's gut feelings, since she has a lot of experience in how the abuser functions and she can assess what she can do and say to preserve her relative safety.

## ***The helping conversation***

Effective communication with abused people is different from everyday conversations; the helper has to gain the trust of a person who is in crisis or whose life is at risk. This is in a context where the victim has possibly suffered recent serious physical and emotional trauma. So, when talking to her the helper needs to be mindful about communication methods. The helper who has had no training needs to learn these relevant techniques to become effective: mirroring, understanding/giving attention, articulating, rewording and paraphrasing, using open and closed questions, and taking a stand. See the following list of appropriate and inappropriate reactions and responses to statements abused women often say.

STATEMENT: „My husband has beaten me, but this time he really had no reason to do that.”

**APPROPRIATE REACTION:** „Do you think is there any situation when one deserves beating?”

INAPPROPRIATE REACTION: „What did you do to make him beat you? How do you usually trigger his anger?”  
(*victim-blaming*)

STATEMENT: „He beat me so much I had to go to the hospital. He broke my nose and cut my face.”

**APPROPRIATE REACTION:** “How do you feel about having been beaten/injured by your husband?”

INAPPROPRIATE REACTION: “Why don't you just leave him? You shouldn't stay with a man like that!” (*instruction*)

STATEMENT: "I am worried about the children. They are scared of him too. Sometimes he hits them as well."

**APPROPRIATE REACTION: "I can hear that you are worried about your partner hurting the children."**

INAPPROPRIATE REACTION: "Having a father is always the best for the children. Have you tried mediation or couple counselling?" (*misinformation*)

STATEMENT: "He thinks that I sleep with other men. He loves me so much, that's why he is so jealous."

**APPROPRIATE REACTION: "Are you sure that jealousy is a sign of love and not a sign of possession?"**

INAPPROPRIATE REACTION: "Your husband will be less jealous, if you really love him and help him to be able to trust you." (*misinformation*)

STATEMENT: "He yells at me and makes fun of me. It really hurts! He can be terribly angry. It feels like he is not the same person."

**APPROPRIATE REACTION: "That must have been humiliating for you."**

INAPPROPRIATE REACTION: "Don't worry, he just blows off steam. He also needs to relax sometimes." (*trivializing*)

STATEMENT: "I am afraid to go home. He is out again in the pub. When he comes back, he will beat me."

**APPROPRIATE REACTION: "This situation is very dangerous for you. You have the right to feel safe and live a peaceful life."**

INAPPROPRIATE REACTION: "If you don't give him opportunity to drink, he won't drink, and won't beat you ever again." (*victim-blaming, misinformation, giving false hope*)

STATEMENT: "The vicar says I shouldn't leave him. I made a vow to stay with my husband until death do us apart. I have no right to break my marriage. Marriages are made in heaven."

**APPROPRIATE REACTION: "Looks like the vicar wants you to stay with him at all costs. What do you think about it?"**

INAPPROPRIATE REACTION: "That vicar is a fool. Don't listen to him!"; "The vicar is right. A marriage can't be broken just because." (*passing judgement*)

STATEMENT: "He said that he was really sorry, and he would seek counselling. Everything will be all right."

**APPROPRIATE REACTION: "Has he ever made you promises before that dispelled your worries for a while?"**

INAPPROPRIATE REACTION: "This is a good decision. With some help from the outside, you will be able to talk about problems in your relationship." (*misinformation, false hopes*)

STATEMENT: "He keeps saying that I am ugly and fat. Sometimes I think he is right. Nobody will love me like this."

**APPROPRIATE REACTION:** "It sounds to me that you are worried about that if you leave the relationship, you will be alone for the rest of your life."

INAPPROPRIATE REACTION: "You might feel better, if you lose a bit of weight." (*passing judgement, victim-shaming*)

STATEMENT: "He says he will kill himself if I leave him. I think I should go back to him if he pulls himself together a little bit."

**APPROPRIATE REACTION:** "Are you worried about that it would be your fault if you husband commits suicide?"

INAPPROPRIATE REACTION: "You should talk to him and try to calm him. He will feel better if you are at his side." (*misinformation, false hopes*)

## ***Some recurring problems***

*The abused woman is afraid of the perpetrator.* The victim might be afraid the abuser will beat her or kill her. As explained earlier, leaving the relationship can trigger the abuser's fury as it means that he will lose his power over her. In most cases, the abuser would be outraged by his partner seeking professional help or talking to her friends and family about her troubles. The victim knows how violent the perpetrator can be, so she is often afraid of his revenge even after leaving him. These worries need to be taken seriously. Her safety is of utmost importance and nobody knows better than her what the abuser is capable of. The situation can be further complicated when the perpetrator threatens the children as well as the woman's wider family and friends.

*The abuser threatens to kill himself.* The abused woman often worries about her partner and feels responsible for his well-being. Her worries are easily abused and manipulated by the perpetrator.

The abused woman chooses to stay with the abuser and expects the helper to teach him how to unlearn his violent behaviour. Helpers can help many changes but they can't stop incidents of violence happening again and again. Without adequate intervention, the violence inevitably will be back. In order to change his behaviour, the abuser needs specialised help, the prospect of real sanctions as well as being held to account consistently. Couple therapy or simple psychotherapy are not suitable to stop abusive behaviour and, in fact, it can put the victim at further risk.

*The abused woman is afraid to leave her partner and start a life alone.* It is possible that she has never lived alone. Her worries can include the following:



The children: she fears that all the burden of child-raising will fall on her.

Financial difficulties: she worries that she will have to provide food, accommodation and clothing.

Job: she is afraid of not finding job, maybe because of lack of qualifications.

Intimate relationship: she fears that she would never find somebody else who would like her, love her or live with her.

Losing the relationship: the loss is painful for her; she misses her partner to whom she is still attached.

Loneliness: she feels that nobody will support or take care of her. Due to years of isolation, her relationships with friends and family may have deteriorated.

*The victim has mixed feelings.* She hates violence but she is attached to her partner. She finds it difficult to accept that her hopes and dreams about the relationship have been ruined. She is afraid of the disadvantages of becoming a divorcee and a single mother. The possible losses and the fear from the future –with or without the abuser– can undermine the victim's determination to take decisions and steps.

*Due to her low self-esteem, the victim has a difficulty to start anything new.* She thinks herself as worthless, since she is living with the abuser who keeps insulting and belittling her.

*The victim feels hopeless.* Due to the nature of intimate partner violence, all her attempts to understand and change the relationship have failed. She has to face the threat of violence in her everyday life. Her experiences make her believe that the abuser is omnipotent and she

is incapable to control or influence anything in her own life. In psychology this state of mind is called learned helplessness.

*The victim feels alone.* The abuser succeeded to isolate her from her family and friends. Most abused woman have a very reduced social network.

*Her misconceptions stop her moving forward.* Victims can also believe in the myths about abuse as much anybody else. The values of her community and religion –for example, those that consider divorce a sin– can make it even more difficult for her to leave the abusive relationship. The abuser's manipulation makes the isolated victim believe that she has no other option than to obey him (which is called brainwashing). This can also have an impact on her decision-making. She might believe that she has not got the opportunity, or the right to change her situation.

*The victim is worried about how her family and friends will see her decision to either leave or to stay in the relationship.* The role of the victim's social environment varies. Since most of people still believe the myths about intimate partner violence, the victim's guilt can be reinforced. Those who have helped her, can get tired of giving constant support. Breaking the victim's isolation is of key importance, and the assessment and mobilisation of all possible supporters have to happen at beginning of the helping process.

*The victim is worried about her children's safety.* Threats about abusing the children or taking them away from the mother, can paralyse the abused woman. Many victims deny that the children are aware of the abuse or it has any impact on them. The helper should inform them that the abuser is not a good enough parent, even when he is not directly abusive to the children.

*The victim can have a tendency to depression, self-harm or suicide.* Extremely strong emotions can accompany the decision to leave or to stay. If she decides to leave, in addition to the upsetting emotion of the trauma, she will have to cope with the feeling of loss. Abuse often leads to depression and suicide.

*The victim can feel confused.* The victims mixed feelings and her attempts to understand the relationship can confuse her. It is difficult to comprehend how the abuser can mistreat her while he states he loves her. The abuser very often blames her for the failing of the relationship, belittles, humiliates her and tells her how stupid she is to think what she thinks. The victim, therefore, concludes that she can't trust her feelings and her experiences.

### ***The helper's self-care***

Dealing with violence is a heavy burden, so the helper needs to pay attention to her own well-being. Experience shows that many in the helping professions have not enough time and space to take care of their personal needs and this leads to burning-out.

*Burn-out* can have many symptoms: losing faith in the case, withdrawing from clients or from colleagues, developing mental or physical illnesses.

*Secondary victimisation or vicarious trauma* is another common symptom that helping professionals develop. Listening to accounts of violence can cause symptoms similar to post traumatic stress disorder. A burn-out, fatigued and depressed helper often creates more damage than good to their clients. The following can enable committed and well-balanced helping work in the long-term.

*Always work in team with supportive colleagues.* Nobody can cope alone with destructive behaviour. It is even more true in the case of domestic violence, which has its roots in society and, directly or indirectly, affects millions of people. Without a supportive community and movement, efforts for social change can feel like an uphill battle.

*Form a network with members of other helping organisations* in order to explore and use all the available support from professional communities. Personal relationships not only facilitate the client referral but also provides sources of knowledge and power to all professional parties participating.

*Be aware of your personal involvement.* Many helpers have some kind of personal experience about domestic violence as survivors or witnesses. Coming to terms with your own trauma and your past is a precondition of helping others.

We don't subscribe to the principle that those who have personal involvement are not suited to become helpers. Experience-based knowledge and understanding can enable empathy with the client's situation and help develop mutual trust. Don't be wary of mentioning your own personal experiences if you think it would help the victim. If the conversation's focus is the victim, and not the fulfilling of your needs, the personal tone can give a lot of impetus to the joint work of recovery.

*Go to supervision regularly.* Supervision is an organic part of the helping profession. It can help to tackle the following topics: stressful cases, processing the resulting trauma from listening to the experiences of abused clients, as well as conflicts and other relationship issues between colleagues. When choosing a supervisor, focus

on a professional who has a profound knowledge about the nature, the facts and the myths of intimate partner violence against women.

*Keep clear and precise boundaries.* Boundaries serve to separate work and private life. They include: when and how you want to be contacted, with whom you want to work with, and so on. Be unambiguous and clear in your communication about boundaries to your clients as well as to your colleagues. If necessary, warn your co-workers if they don't understand or respect them. For professional and smooth functioning, members of the same team need to have the same boundaries. Say no if you find yourself in a situation that pushes your boundaries and inform your colleagues. Boundaries can change, but you have to be aware of your decisions to be flexible, and not be swept away by events and clients' expectations.

*Take care of your stress management and your well-being.* Take care of your physical, emotional and mental health, so you can be a useful member of the community that tackles domestic violence for a long time.

*Be aware of that tackling violence is only one part of your life.* Don't let the reality of domestic violence ruin your quality of life and fill you with bitterness, anger and impatience. Seek emotional recharge by talking to friends, nurturing loving relationships, reading, listening to music, enjoying art or any other activity that unlike human suffering, will provide you with hope, beauty and faith.

# EPILOGUE

Peace and equality can only happen in society if we all reject violence and control in families and relationships. This large-scale goal can only be reached by taking small steps. We hope that this handbook has given the reader comprehensive information on the nature of domestic violence, and explained why we believe that abuse can be prevented, recognised and stopped. To all helpers who have read this book –either professionals or helping friends– we wish faith and success.

*Women For Women Together Against Violence Association*  
(NANE)

# APPENDICES

These texts can be used to facilitate the helping conversation, and they can be given as a handout to the women you support. This way, after the meeting she can keep thinking about the relevant issues.

## 1. Am I abused?

Many women are reluctant to call themselves abused, or they are not sure that what they are experiencing is abuse. The handout lists the common experiences of abused women and helps the client to assess if she lives in an abusive relationship.

## 2. Declaration about the rights of abused women

Many women never have the chance to think through what rights they have in a relationship. Go through the declaration with the client and talk about ways to assert her rights.

## 3. Personal safety plan

Women who either live in an abusive relationship, or have recently returned to one, or who are planning to leave one, need good strategies and tools to increase their security. With the help of this handout, helpers can make a safety plan with the client and ask her talk it through with people she trusts (e.g., her children, neighbours or friends who help her to hide).

## 4. The cycle of violence

Many women think that their partners are not abusive because they are unaware of the patterns of intimate partner violence. Understanding the dynamics of abuse can help them to trust their feelings and perceptions. Look at the page together and ask her to talk about what feelings and forms of behaviour she has experienced in the different phases. Ask her about her children's and her partner's reaction during and after the incident of abuse.

## 5. "BIG 26" Questions to Assess the Dangerousness of a Perpetrator

The American Duluth-model, the Domestic Abuse Intervention Program, put together a questionnaire with 26 questions to assess the risk the perpetrator is to his partner and children. We recommend it to any institution or helper when they suspect intimate partner violence. A higher risk of serious abuse is indicated when there are more affirmative answers.

## 6. Important laws and regulations

Victims of intimate partner violence have the right to be safe. The state's obligation is to provide safety to partners and punish perpetrators. This handout summarises relevant laws and regulations and can be referred to when victims of violence ask for intervention from the authorities.



**Am I abused?**

*You might be an abused woman if...*

- ... you are afraid of your partner's anger.
- ... you do what your partner wants because you are scared of him and his changes of mood.
- ... you apologise to others for your partner's behaviour when in reality he was abusive to you.
- ... you are frightened by your partner's jealousy.
- ... you think about what your partner will say before deciding to go out and meet friends and family.
- ... you limit meeting your friends and family because your partner is not happy about it.
- ... you feel threatened when your partner is jealous or angry.
- ... you feel that you need to help your partner manage his violence.
- ... you use alcohol or drugs to cope with the troubles in your relationship.
- ... you feel your stomach tightened when you hear your partner being back home or when he calls you on phone.
- ... you keep telling to the children to be quiet and not to disturb your partner.
- ... you get presents from your partner that serve his needs or his control over you (e.g., mobile phone).
- ... you don't feel like saying anything when others are present because you are afraid that your partner will ridicule you and mock at you.
- ... you are afraid to talk freely in your partner's presence or to contradict him.

... you are afraid to seek help from the authorities because you are afraid of his revenge.

*You might be an abused woman if your partner...*

- ... is jealous of you.
- ... can't express his emotions.
- ... has pushed, hit or kicked you.
- ... has smashed or thrown objects at you in an angry outburst.
- ... is moody, unpredictable and short-tempered.
- ... criticises you often.
- ... controls your behaviour.
- ... doesn't let you have money on you.
- ... forces you to have sex with him.
- ... mocks or threatens you.
- ... blames you for his own problems and feelings, especially for his anger.
- ... searches your bag, pockets, looks at your phone and computer.
- ... doesn't like when you talk to your friends and family.
- ... tries to make you and others believe that you have mental health issues.
- ... abused his partner in his previous relationship.
- ... is irritated if you look happy and successful.
- ... tries to stop you working or spending time with your friends and family.
- ... stops you to have any ambitions (e.g., doesn't let you to learn to drive or to attend language courses).
- ... mistreats animals or has a pet you are afraid of.

### **Declaration of the rights of abused women**

I have the right to not to be hurt.

I have the right to not to be perfect.

I have the right to not to be blamed for the perpetrator's acts.

I have the right to decide to change my situation.

I have the right to leave the place where I am mistreated.

I have the right to seek and to get help from the police and other organisations and institutions.

I have the right to report the abuser.

I have the right to express my thoughts and my feelings freely.

I have the right to be angry about the violence I have suffered.

I have the right to share my feelings with others and to break the silence.

I have the right to offer a better communication and role model to my children.

I have the right to develop my abilities and unfold my potential.

I have the right to have a private life independently of my partner.

I have the right to be treated with respect.

I have the right to live without fear and violence.

### **Personal safety plan**

The following advice is for abused women. Due to her circumstances, your client might not be able to take on all advice, but every step she takes will take her closer to a better and safer life.

#### **I. SAFETY ALONGSIDE A VIOLENT PARTNER**

##### **Safety during the outburst of violent behaviour**

- a) If your partner's violence is unavoidable, try to move him to a room which has an exit. Try to avoid cul-de-sacs –like a bathroom, kitchen and bedroom– or other rooms that contains weapon or objects that can be used as weapons.
- b) Practice how to leave your home in a safe way. Walk the planned itinerary (stairs, doors, windows, lift, etc.). If you are certain that they won't let you down, tell your plan to your children.
- c) Pack luggage with essential and necessary kit and leave it at your relative's or at a friend's place.
- d) Seek the help of an empathetic neighbour to whom you can talk to about the violence committed against you. Ask her or him to call the police immediately when hearing noises of abuse from your home. The police have to visit the scene according to the regulation 32/2007 of the National Police Headquarters.
- e) Agree a secret password with your children, relatives, friends and neighbours that can signal to them the need to call the police without the abuser noticing it.
- f) Make a plan where you are going to go if you have to flee your home. Plan it even if you think that, at the moment, this won't be necessary.

- g) Listen to your instincts and trust your judgment. If the situation turns dangerous, think about how to calm down the abuser. You shouldn't be ashamed of doing what he wants if it keeps you safe. You have the right to act in the way you consider the best in order to avoid immediate risk.
- h) Remember: you don't deserve to be threatened or hurt.

#### **Safety plan when preparing the leave**

- a) Open a bank account in your name in order to establish or increase your economic independence. Think about all possible ways to increase your autonomy and independence.
- b) Leave money, copies of your keys (car keys too) and important documents, medication, clothing and other indispensable essentials in a safe place.
- c) Think about where you could stay for a period of time, who could give you some money, and then talk to them about possibility of this happening. If you have pets (dog, cat, etc) and you are worried about them, think about a possible solution until you are able to have them back.
- d) Have your mobile always on you, as well as the numbers to call in an emergency. Have some cash too.
- e) Go through the safety plan of leaving the abuser several times. Leaving the abuser is often the beginning of the most dangerous period. Having a good safety plan reduces the risk.

## **II. SAFETY AFTER LEAVING OR MOVING OUT**

### **Safety in your home**

- a) Change the locks as soon as you can. Put new locks, grating and other security equipment on the windows.
- b) Make a security plan with your children how to act when you are not with them.
- c) Explain your situation to the staff in your children's school, afterschool, kindergarten, nursery or to the sport coach, etc. Tell them who has the right to pick up the child in case of temporary or withdrawn custody. Give them a copy of the handbook *Why Does She Stay?*.
- d) Tell the neighbours or your landlord and landlady that your partner is not living with you anymore. Ask them to notify you immediately if they see him close to your home.
- e) If legal actions have been taken against your partner, you can ask for a restraining order. (The maximum time of which is 60 days.)
- f) Find a self-defence course for women, like aikido or Krav Maga.

### **Safety in the workplace and in public places**

- a) Choose which colleague(s) to tell in your workplace. If the building has security or reception, talk to the staff about what to do if the abuser shows up. If possible, give them a picture.
- b) If the abuser harasses and threatens you on phone, record his calls if it is possible. If you consider it safer, ask somebody else to answer your phone or wait until the voice mail is activated. You can always block the perpetrator's number. Have the emergency number always ready on your phone, so when attacked or assaulted you can dial it easily.
- c) Make a safety plan about how to go home after work. Ask somebody to accompany you to your car or the bus, and to wait with you until you can leave. Try to use several different routes to home. Think about what to do if you are assaulted on your way home in the car or in public transport.

### **Safety and support**

- a) If you are thinking of making yourself vulnerable to a potential assault, first talk to somebody you trust.
- b) If you need to talk to your partner, find a time and place when you are safer (e.g., meet in public places or in the presence of a person who is not dependent on the abuser).
- c) Think about yourself positively, recognise your own needs and express them in an assertive way if it is safe to do so. (Standing up to the abuser is not always safe.)
- d) Think about who to talk to openly about your situation and who can support you.

- e) Call the help-line of NANE Association, write a letter to them or use the chat service. You can ask if there is a help-line worker who speaks your language in a letter or in the chat.
- f) Ask the police to take legal actions. You have the right to safety even when the threat is your own partner or husband. If you are not happy with the officer's acts, ask for his name and his service number, and file a complaint.
- g) Ask for the victim protection officer (every police station must have one), or call the Victim Support Services (Áldozatsegítő Szolgálat) as they can give financial support too.

**What will you need when fleeing the relationship?**

**PERSONAL DOCUMENTS**

- ☐ ID card
- ☐ Driving licence
- ☐ Passport
- ☐ Residency permits or any other legal document that you need to stay in Hungary
- ☐ The children's birth certificate, passport and health card or booklets
- ☐ Birth certificate
- ☐ Marriage certificate
- ☐ Social security card
- ☐ Tax card

**FINANCES**

- ☐ Money, debit and credit cards
- ☐ Saving books, cheque book
- ☐ Bank statements and contracts

**LEGAL DOCUMENTS**

- ☐ Documents regarding the house or flat (sale contracts, mortgage papers and land registry documents)
- ☐ Documents regarding the car
- ☐ Health and life insurance
- ☐ Documents of healthcare from hospitals and GP surgeries (of the children as well as yours)
- ☐ Residence permit, work permit, visa
- ☐ Divorce papers
- ☐ Custody papers
- ☐ Business papers

**OTHERS**

- ☐ Door and car keys
- ☐ Medication
- ☐ Jewellery, watches and other small valuable items
- ☐ Mobile phone
- ☐ Addresses
- ☐ Pictures of you, the children and the perpetrator (for others to help identification)
- ☐ The children's favourite toys
- ☐ Body care and hygiene products
- ☐ Nappies



**Cycle of Violence**

Abusive relationships have three easily distinguishable phases that keep repeating:

**First phase:** tension building

**Second phase:** incident of abuse

**Third phase:** “honeymoon

**FIRST PHASE: TENSION BUILDING**

ABUSED WOMAN’S FEELINGS: anger, unfairness, hopeless, fear, confusion, humiliation, despair.

ABUSED WOMEN’S BEHAVIOUR: caring, consenting, accepting, trying to solve her partner’s anger and irritation. She expresses her anger verbally, consumes alcohol or drugs to avoid thinking about her relationship troubles.

ABUSER’S FEELINGS: tension, irritation, disgust, disdain, entitlement, increased jealousy.

ABUSER’S BEHAVIOUR: verbal abuse, outbursts of anger, punishing silence, controlling, consuming alcohol or drugs, trying to possess the children, making demands, easily angered.

CHILDREN’S FEELINGS: fear, tension, confusion, anger towards the mother because she can’t stop the abuser.

CHILDREN’S BEHAVIOUR: takes side by one parent, hides, denies violence, tries to distract the parents.

**SECOND PHASE: INCIDENT OF ABUSE**

ABUSED WOMAN’S FEELINGS: scared, trapped, helpless and paralysed.

ABUSED WOMEN’S BEHAVIOUR: tries to protect herself, hits back, gives up fighting, fakes to be unconscious, tries to flee and call for help.

ABUSER’S FEELINGS: anger, irritation, disgust, righteousness, jealousy, frustration.

ABUSER’S BEHAVIOUR: violent physical outburst – hit, punch, squeeze, burn, break, shout, scream, hunt. Psychological abuse – silence, denigrate, threats, control, refuse to give food and drink, imprison.

CHILDREN’S FEELINGS: scared, trapped, helpless.

CHILDREN’S BEHAVIOUR: powerless when witnessing abuse, hiding, trying to stop the abuse, trying to protect the mother or getting involved in the beating.

THIRD PHASE: “HONEYMOON”

ABUSED WOMAN’S FEELINGS: relief, anger, guilt, hope that he will change.

ABUSED WOMEN’S BEHAVIOUR: forgiving, agreeing, humouring, “discussing it” with her partner, trying to manage, prevent or avoid the next incident of abuse.

ABUSER’S FEELINGS: apologetic, guilty, regretful, forgets or trivialises the gravity of his violence, thinks that he is right, and can’t understand why the woman is still angry with him.

ABUSER’S BEHAVIOUR: kind, promises change, offers treats, overly affectionate, blames the woman or other circumstances (alcohol, other people) for the situation and his actions.

CHILDREN’S FEELINGS: confusion, humiliation, relief, guilt, anger.

CHILDREN’S BEHAVIOUR: trying to please the adults and not to think about fear and pain.

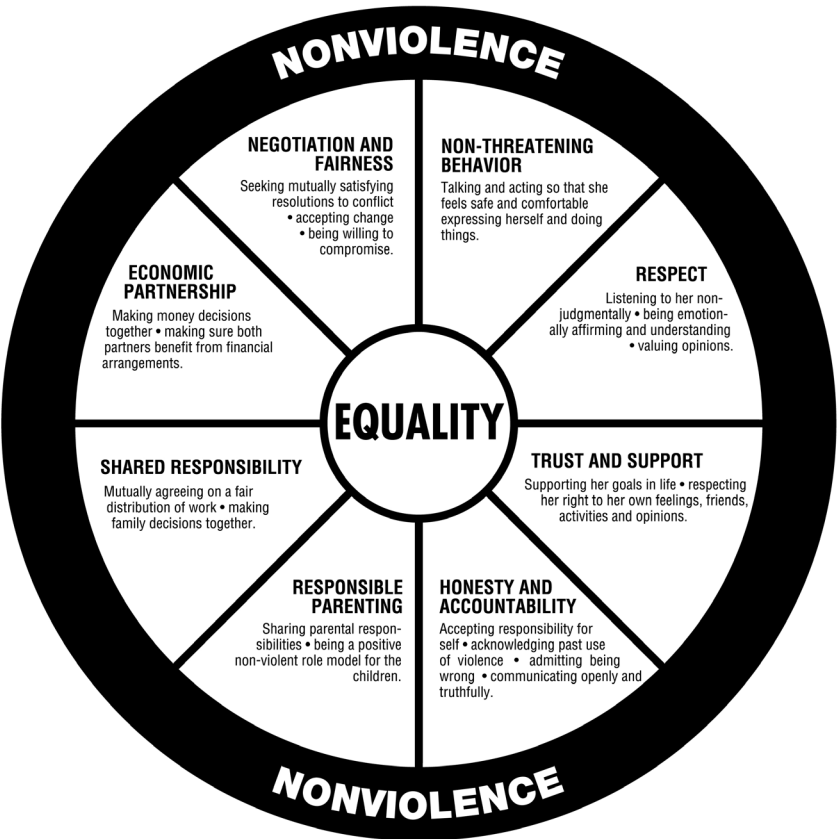
The incidents of abuse become more serious over time. The “honeymoon” phase might disappear in the later stages of the relationship. Verbal, physical, emotional and economic violence is constantly present.

Wheel of Power and Control



Source:  
<https://www.theduluthmodel.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/PowerandControl.pdf>

# Wheel Of Equality



Source:  
<https://www.theduluthmodel.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Equality.pdf>

## Important legislation and other regulations:

### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (SECTION A OF 2012 ON THE CRIMINAL CODE)

The statutory element in the Criminal Code (Act C of 2012) penalises the different forms of intimate partner violence. It can be applied to events that have happened at least twice after the 1st of July 2013. In a case of regularly causing actual bodily harm, according to this law a private motion won't be necessary, because the police have to start proceedings ex officio. It penalises some forms of economic violence too.

### HARASSMENT (SECTION 222 ON THE CRIMINAL CODE)

Hungarian law has been protecting the victims of harassment since January 2008. "A conduct related to a protected characteristic of a person, of sexual or other nature that violates human dignity, and the purpose or effect of which is creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person."

### ACT LXXII OF 2009 ON RESTRAINING ORDERS APPLICABLE IN CASE OF VIOLENCE BETWEEN RELATIVES

A Restraining Order is a measure which may be imposed in the event of an act or omission by the abuser which is harmful to the abused person and which seriously and directly threatens the dignity, life, sexual autonomy or physical and mental health of the abused person. The abuser is obliged to leave the home of the abused woman, and keep away for the time set by court. He has to keep away from the victim and abstain from getting in contact with her by phone, mail or text.

TEMPORARY PREVENTIVE RESTRAINING ORDER  
(ISSUED BY THE POLICE)

In 2009, Hungary adopted a law allowing restraining orders for victims of domestic violence; however, the police-issued “temporary preventive restraining order” can only be valid for 72 hours. The police issue the order ex officio when violence is stated in the home. It can be issued after the victim, her relatives, social services, child protection services or health services report the abuse. It is ordered by the police for 72 hours and they send it automatically to the court to be extended if necessary.

PREVENTIVE RESTRAINING ORDER  
(ISSUED BY THE COURT):

Temporary preventive restraining order can be extended into a “preventive restraining order” only by the court and can last only up to 60 days and is not renewable. It can be initiated by the victim or a close relative without previous temporary restraining order. It is issued in three days.

MEASURE ON THE OBLIGATIONS OF POLICE OFFICERS  
IN CASES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (32/2007) ISSUED BY  
THE NATIONAL POLICE HEADQUARTER.

The measure requires the police to respond immediately to a report of domestic violence and to act in a manner which is clearly defined in the document, taking into account the safety of the victim. The responding police officer must interview the abuser and the abused separately and may not attempt to conciliate. It is his or her duty to ensure that the assault can be proven and to inform the victim of the possibilities for legal and supportive services and to ask the perpetrator to refrain from any further unlawful conduct. In all cases where domestic violence has been witnessed or suffered by a minor, the police officer taking action must investigate whether the endangerment of the minor is a criminal offence and, if so, must initiate proceedings ex officio.

**BIG 26**

Questions to Assess the Dangerousness of a Perpetrator

YES: ● NO: ○ DON'T KNOW ●

QUESTIONS

In the course of your relationship, has the perpetrator ...

- 1. become increasingly violent, brutal and / or dangerous? ● ○ ●
- 2. ever injured you so badly that you needed medical attention? ● ○ ●
- 3. ever choked you? ● ○ ●
- 4. ever injured or killed a pet? ● ○ ●
- 5. ever threatened to kill you? ● ○ ●
- 6. been sexually abusive to you? ● ○ ●
- 7. used or threatened to use a weapon against you? If so, what kind of weapon? ● ○ ●
- 8. seemed preoccupied or obsessed with you (following you, checking up on your whereabouts, stalking, very jealous, etc.)? ● ○ ●
- 9. increased the frequency of assaults on you? ● ○ ●
- 10. ever threatened or attempted to commit suicide? ● ○ ●
- 11. ever assaulted you while you were pregnant? ● ○ ●
- 12. Have you separated or tried to separate from the perpetrator in the past twelve months? ● ○ ●
- 13. Have you sought outside help (Order for Protection, police, shelter, counselling) during the past 12 months? ● ○ ●
- 14. Do you feel isolated from sources of help (car, phone, family, friends, etc.)? ● ○ ●

- 15. Has the perpetrator experienced any unusually severe stress in the past 12 months (loss of job, death, financial crisis, etc.)? ● ○ ●
- 16. Does the perpetrator drink excessively / have an alcohol problem? ● ○ ●
- 17. Has the perpetrator ever undergone alcohol / drug treatment? ● ○ ●
- 18. Does the perpetrator own, carry, or have ready access to a gun? Specify: ● ○ ●
- 19. Do you believe the perpetrator could seriously injure or kill you? ● ○ ●
- 20. Have you been protective of the perpetrator (trying to change or withdraw your statement to the police, reduce bail, charges, etc.)? ● ○ ●
- 21. To your knowledge, was the perpetrator abused as a child by a family member? ● ○ ●
- 22. To your knowledge, did the perpetrator witness the physical abuse of his mother? ● ○ ●
- 23. Does the perpetrator show remorse or sadness about the incident? ● ○ ●
- 24. Does the perpetrator commit non-violent crimes? ● ○ ●
- 25. Does the perpetrator have a history of violence to others (other than family members)? ● ○ ●
- 26. Does the perpetrator use street drugs (speed, cocaine, steroids, crack, etc.)? ● ○ ●

Source: Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, Duluth, Minnesota, USA

The more affirmative answers the victim is giving, the higher the risk of serious abuse is. Do not trivialise the gravity of abuse.



[illegible][illegible]

[illegible][illegible]

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal dotted lines, typical of primary school writing paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal dashed lines, typical of primary school writing paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

SELECTED LITERATURE

*The books bellow have been translated into Hungarian, but here we list the original English-language editions.*

*Patricia Evans: The Verbally Abusive Relationship, 2010, Adams Media.*

*Susan Forward: Toxic Parents; Overcoming Their Hurtful Legacy and Reclaiming Your Life, 2002, Bantam.*

*Judith Lewis Herman: Trauma and Recovery, 1997, Basic Books.*

*Lundy Bancroft, Jay G. Silverman and Daniel Ritchie: The Batterer as Parent: Addressing the Impact of Domestic Violence on Family Dynamics, 2011, SAGE Publications.*

*Lundy Bancroft: Why Does He Do That? Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men, 2003, Berkely.*

*Dina McMillan: But He Says He Loves Me: How To Avoid Being Trapped In A Manipulative Relationship, 2008, No Imprint.*

WEBSITES

- [www.nane.hu](http://www.nane.hu)
- [www.facebook.com/NANEegyesulet](http://www.facebook.com/NANEegyesulet)
- [www.patent.org.hu](http://www.patent.org.hu)
- [www.facebook.com/patent.egyesulet.ngo](http://www.facebook.com/patent.egyesulet.ngo)
- [www.nokjoga.hu](http://www.nokjoga.hu)
- [www.stop-ferfieroszak.hu/kiadvanyok](http://www.stop-ferfieroszak.hu/kiadvanyok)
- [www.muszajmunkacsoport.hu](http://www.muszajmunkacsoport.hu)