

Men who batter, their selective behaviors and societal influences

Domestic violence is not impulsive but purposeful and instrumental. Batterers can be perfectly agreeable with or conciliatory to police officers, employers, neighbors, co-workers and friends. But batterers don't use those skills with their intimate partners because they choose not to. Individual men beat individual women to make those women do what they want.

The violent man is not "out of control." He is at work on his own agenda, which is to condition his victim to be what he wants her to be all the time. This is impossible because he constantly changes his demands. The batterer chooses tactics that work to achieve compliance or control. His behavior is directed at controlling most aspects of his partner's life.

Men batter because battering works. Domestic violence is a socially supported behavior, learned through observation, experience and reinforcement. It is learned through our culture, families, schools and peer groups. Domestic violence is not caused by illness, genetics, substance abuse, stress, the behavior of the victim or problems in the relationship.

Domestic violence is a crime, and it should be accorded the same prosecution efforts as any other violent offense. Communities and the justice system have an obligation to reduce the prevalence of domestic violence and hold the perpetrators responsible. Prosecution of offenders can protect the victim from additional acts of violence, reduce children's exposure and possible injury, deter the abuser from committing further acts of violence, and reinforce a community's refusal to tolerate domestic abuse. Unless men who batter are truly held accountable, they have little incentive to stop their abusive behaviors.

ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS OF MEN WHO BATTER

There is no way to spot a batterer in a crowd. Domestic violence is not a matter of class, race or socioeconomic status. It is a gender issue. Most batterers are male; however, most men are not batterers. Batterers often share the following characteristics:

- Intimidation and violence
- Verbally abusive
- Minimizes abuse
- Substance abuse
- Breaks or strikes things in anger
- History of violence
- Projects blame
- Cruelty to animals or children
- Extreme jealousy
- Controlling behavior
- Isolation
- Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde
- Rape or use of force in sex
- Spiritual and religious abuse
- Use of privilege