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Domestic violence is a pattern of assaultive behaviors that are used to control a partner. The effects of domestic violence can often be seen in bruises and physical injury, but there are unseen emotional and psychological effects as well. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the direct health care costs of domestic violence are approximately \$4.1 billion, with an additional \$1.8 billion in productivity losses associated with premature death. In 2010, the St. Louis Circuit Attorney's Victim Services Unit handled 673 new domestic violence cases. Domestic violence cases accounted for 42% of all new cases opened by the Victim Services Unit.

There is no typical profile of someone who commits domestic violence. Domestic violence occurs regardless of class, race or socioeconomic status. Some warning signs in a relationship include intimidation and violence, substance abuse, and a history of violence. While domestic violence may start with verbal abuse, it can quickly escalate into a more severe situation. In fact, a study done by the US Department of Justice says that women are more likely to be killed by an intimate partner than by anyone else. In Missouri in 2010, there were 41 intimate partner homicides.

Domestic abuse can come in many different forms. Physical abuse is easiest to recognize, as it can leave physical indicators. The other types of abuse are just as harmful, but are more difficult to detect. Sexual abuse is one of the most difficult types of abuse for a victim to talk about. 25% of women are raped by an intimate partner in their lifetime. Psychological and economical abuses are other ways that an abuser can control the victim. Having a verbally abusive partner is one of the largest predictors that a woman will be victimized by that partner.

Domestic violence affects not only the victim, but the family as well. Besides the damage that can affect a child's emotional, behavior and psychological development, there are physical dangers as well. In a national survey of America families, 50% of men who abuse their wives also abuse their children. The effect of domestic violence on children is a widespread problem. It is estimated that between 2.3 and 10 million children are exposed to domestic violence each year.

If you suspect someone you know is a victim of domestic violence, there are different ways to approach the issue. One way to help is by offering confidential and safe place for a woman to talk. While it is ok to offer advice, it is also important to respect her autonomy. You can also help by letting her know about available community resources.

Domestic violence is rarely an isolated event. It usually involves a pattern of behavior intended to intimidate or control the victim. Although a woman may feel isolated, there are many local and national resources dedicated to helping victims of domestic violence. The St. Louis domestic violence hotline is 314-531-2003. They can provide a variety of different resources including crisis intervention, counseling, and legal advocacy.