

Why Do Victims Stay? What Are the Barriers to Leaving?

FEAR... Of being killed, of the abuser committing suicide, of not being believed about the abuse, of being stalked by the abuser, of placing their kids at risk via unsupervised visitation with the abuser - note that 75% of domestic violence homicides occur during or after the victim has left the abuser

ISOLATION... By the abuser often results in a lack of a support system for the victim including helpful friends or family members, a job or money, transportation, childcare, housing, and social services

ECONOMIC REALITY... May be that a victim is not able to support her/himself and the children without the abuser's income, may not possess marketable skills, may have limited access to government assistance, may dread welfare, and due to an abuser's control of money may have no access to cash, checks, or important documents. If she has children, it becomes more difficult to leave without having the ability to get affordable housing, transportation, childcare, etc. She may also fear that her house or her car may be taken away.

CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES... Of living in a home where abuse was perpetrated by one parent against the other may leave a victim feeling that abuse is unavoidable in relationships, or that it is okay to abuse people you love when they have done something wrong

BELIEFS ABOUT THE ABUSER... Often include strong feelings of love and emotional connection, as well as the belief that the abuser is all-powerful and will be able to find the victim anywhere, or due to compassion or pity a victim may feel that s/he is the only one who can help the abuser overcome problems

BELIEFS ABOUT THEMSELVES... Over time include an acceptance of responsibility for the problems in a relationship, due to repeated blame placed on a victim by the abuser, as well as low self-esteem due to repeated acts of abuse and a feeling that abusive behavior is all the victim deserves

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS...Not wanting to break the vows of marriage. Religious and extended family pressure to keep the family together. She may feel, if she leaves or divorces her partner, her religious community may ostracize her or maybe no one will even believe her.

We encourage each woman to decide when it is an appropriate time to leave, and how to carry out that decision. To leave an abusive situation can be incredibly challenging. However, it is equally important to remember that in many communities, there are extensive support networks for battered women. If you are currently in an abusive situation, be active in your liberation... seek help.

Battered Women's Project

24-hour hotline

1-800-439-2323 / out of state 207-769-8251