

"It is not an enemy who taunts me — then I could bear it; it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me — then I could hide from him. But it is you, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend. We used to hold sweet converse together; within God's house we walked in fellowship". (Psalms 55:12-14)



To the outside world, Charlotte Fedders had it all: a handsome husband who was a successful lawyer, five healthy sons, a five-

bedroom home and membership at the most exclusive country club.

But, behind the doors of her beautiful home lay a shocking secret: a nightmare of physical and emotional abuse that touched her and her sons, abuse she tolerated, silently, for 17 years.

Charlotte Fedders was eventually able to leave her abusive husband. She is now an advocate for women in similar situations, having authored a book ("Shattered Dreams") and testified before Congress.

Her goals are to raise consciousness and prompt legislative reform in the area of domestic violence. "I want to help other wives understand that no person has the right to make another afraid," she states.

Domestic Violence: The Facts

People are more likely to be physically assaulted, beaten or even killed by a loved one in their own home than any place else, or by any one else. Street crime occurs at a rate only a fraction of the rate of domestic violence.

Such violence is not limited to one economic or racial or ethnic group. The "madness" cuts across all lines and encompasses varying forms of cruelty: physical violence (throwing an object at another; pushing, slapping, beating, threatening to use or using a weapon against another); psychological abuse (depriving a person of food or sleep or undermining, in any number of ways, her/his self-worth); neglect; sexual abuse; destruction of property shared by or belonging to the abused person.

The statistics are startling:

- A woman is battered every 18 seconds in this country. Although less frequent, there are also cases in which the victims are men and the abusers are women.
- Two million children are abused each year by one or both parents, or by another relative.
- Of the nation's two to three million homeless, 500,000 are under 21. Tens of thousands of these young people are runaways fleeing from physical and/or emotional abuse at home.
- One in 10 parents has been hit at least once by one of their children. Three in 100, or between 700,000 and 1.1 million, older Americans are subject to physical or verbal abuse each year.

Not for Hitting

"Knowledge can make a difference. People can too," say sociologists Richard J. Gelles and Murray A. Straus in their book, "Intimate Violence."

"We believe that each individual is a valuable human being who is entitled to a healthy physical, social and psychological development," they write. After more than a decade of research, they say:

"We are hopeful. We can choose to be non-violent. We can raise a generation of non-violent children who will never perceive violence as a legitimate means of self-expression or problem-solving."

Their bottom line: "People are not for hitting."

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Local Help is available to anyone who needs it.

See Telephone Book
or
Ask Social Services.



Road to Resurrection

The wife of a prominent physician documented her abuse at the hands of her spouse, gave the information to the staff at a refuge for battered women and asked that her story be made public if anything happened to her. She then returned home and told her husband what she had done. He never laid a finger on her again.

For the victim of domestic violence, breaking that cycle involves many things. If you are being abused, you must:

- **Fight against secrecy** and against the isolation that results from living a lie. Don't worry about protecting your reputation or your abuser's.

- **Seek professional help.** Discover that you don't cause or deserve such treatment.
- **Make contact** with someone you can trust and turn to in time of need.
- **Anticipate the worst** and prepare for it. Remember you may end up back with your abuser not because you want to be there but because you feel there is no alternative. Find a "safe" place to go—a place where you can think about what to do next and where you can find support from someone who understands your problem and believes in you.
- **Believe in yourself.** Know that you are not to blame for another's violent behaviour. Know, too, that you are created in God's image and likeness, that you deserve respect, that you can make changes in your life and that you are not alone — you can get help.
- **Pray** for the strength to do what you fear to do: Leave the situation.

Ending the Violence

To paraphrase a saying: Evil triumphs when good people do nothing. Recognising that domestic violence exists in your community requires that you act to end or prevent it.

- **Shun violence** — Help educate parents to raise their children “non-violently.” If you are a parent, follow these alternatives to violence: talk to children, using the spoken word to identify and solve problems; control children with appropriate rewards and punishments; call “time-outs,” removing children from the scene of misbehaviour.
- **Report abuse** — Each of us has the duty to report incidents of domestic violence, says Dr. Frederick Schiavone of Stony Brook University Hospital, Long Island. Even the medical profession has let down victims of abuse by not reporting patients with identifiable patterns of abuse, he admits.
- **Know the services available** — Be aware of the agencies and services in your community for victims of domestic violence; make sure they are well publicised and accessible to victims.
- **Dare to be different** — A domestic violence counsellor in Irvington, N.J., Leonardo Marano,

urges that men assume leadership roles in the fight against family violence. “If a man is with friends or relatives who offer violence as a way to deal with domestic situations, that man must speak up and say ‘no’ to that solution,” he explains. “He must risk losing friendships... because he must stand up for what is right.”

- **Change perceptions** — Don't perpetuate stereotypes that contribute to family violence. Consider assigning “girl only” tasks to the male members of your household, as well as boys' jobs to the girls.
- **Live a non-violent life** — Examine your behaviour for signs of controlling, potentially violent behaviour.
- **Listen** — If a victim of domestic violence comes to you, listen, assure the person of safety, and refer him or her to someone trained in the area of abuse.

And (Jesus) came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and He went to the synagogue. And He stood up to read; and there was given to Him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.” (Lk. 4:16-18)