

Written by: WRAP Staff

Domestic violence affects an estimated 1 in 4 women and 1 in 9 men. It is estimated that domestic violence impacts 10 million people a year, in the United States alone. If we look at just a single incident per victim, someone would face a domestic violence incident every 3 seconds. We know that domestic violence is not just one incident but a repeated pattern. On a typical day, domestic violence hotlines will receive 19,159 calls, this is an average of 13 calls every minute.

Domestic violence can leave both visible and invisible wounds. Those who face domestic violence often have trauma that comes from domestic violence. Sometimes this is acute trauma and sometimes this can develop into Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). June is PTSD Awareness Month. It is important to understand the intersection of PTSD and domestic violence, as well as understanding that PTSD does not just come from war experiences. PTSD can develop from a variety of situations and circumstances. The rate of PTSD in survivors of domestic violence ranges from 31%-84.4%. The rate of PTSD in the general population is about 3.5%. This shows the repeated trauma faced by victims of domestic violence. PTSD can also develop in the children of victims who have faced domestic violence, just from witnessing the violence. PTSD can be triggered months or years later.

Some symptoms of PTSD include flashbacks, nightmares, severe anxiety, panic attacks, uncontrollable thoughts, problems sleeping, as well as not being able to function as one normally would without the PTSD. Examples of that include struggling to go to work, having trouble being in large group settings, struggling to leave the house, among other things. This is a very short list of the many symptoms that can come with PTSD. Oftentimes, after experience a traumatic event many people may have trouble coping and adjusting. It is important to find someone to talk to and healthy ways to cope with the trauma.

Trauma from domestic violence does not just impact someone's mind but impacts the mind, body, spirit, and sense of self. PTSD occurs from domestic violence due to the repeated trauma, including physical, emotional, and mental trauma. No one deserves abuse but often a victim will blame themselves for the violence. This leads to guilt and shame. The guilt or shame a victim feels can prevent healing. It is important to realize that PTSD is a normal mind/body response to trauma. Unfortunately, if left untreated, PTSD symptoms can worsen. They can also lead to severe depression, suicidal thoughts, increased isolation, anger-management issues, outburst of rage, substance abuse, even partner or child abuse.

Fortunately, there is hope and help available to treat Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Researchers and Psychologists have found the brain to be "fixable" when trauma affects our responses to certain memories, but it does take time. The experts urge those struggling with PTSD to not rush the healing process. There are many resources for those experiencing PTSD or suffering trauma. Some resources include National Center for PTSD, local counselors, or BetterHelp (an online counseling service). You can also contact the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) 24/7 at 1-800-487-4889. SAMHSA offers free and confidential services. WRAP provides services to victims of domestic violence and/or human trafficking and can be reached at 1-800-639-2350 (after business hours calls are forwarded to Safe Avenues in Willmar. If you need assistance, please reach out.

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