



SAME SEX DOMESTIC & SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Similarities to Heterosexual Violence:

- **Power and Control**
- **Cycle of Violence**
- **Abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional, or verbal**
- **No one deserves to be abused**
- **Abuse can be lethal**
- **Abused feels isolated, afraid, and often self-blaming**

Special Challenges of Same Sex Violence:

- **Lack of Acknowledgment that women do batter**
 1. **Only men batter**
 2. **Lesbian “utopia” – not in our families -- reinforcement of ideas that lesbians are “sick”**
 3. **“Mutual battering” fallacy**

- **HOMOPHOBIA**
 1. **Outing as a form of control**
 2. **Utilizing services is “coming out”**
 3. **Lack of legal resources – not eligible for “order of protection” or “CDV” charges – SC one of 7 states which defines eligible petitioners as opposite sex couples**
 4. **Lack of appropriate services**
 - **Services not available – safety issues/screening**
 - **Homophobic/heterosexist service staff, law enforcement, judicial**
 - **Ignorance of staff on dealing with gay issues**
 5. **Internalized homophobia**
 6. **Closed community issues – potential for continued contact**



SAME SEX VIOLENCE MYTHS AND FACTS

MYTH: **Battering and abuse do not exist in lesbian and gay communities.**

FACT: Approximately 1 in 3 same sex couples experience violence in their relationships, approximately the same ratio as in heterosexual relationships.

MYTH: **In lesbian and gay relationships, the problem is “mutual battering” and not domestic violence.**

FACT: Domestic violence is an issue of power and control. In an abusive relationship, fighting back or defending oneself is not “mutual battering.”

MYTH: **Rape does not occur in lesbian relationships.**

FACT: Because rape is often narrowly defined as “forced penetration,” sexual assault by one woman on another is often not understood as rape. Broadening the definition of rape or sexual assault to include any non-consensual sexual act forced on one person by another allows us to understand that rape can occur in lesbian relationships. National studies estimate that one third of lesbians experience sexual violence from another woman.

MYTH: **Same sex partners can easily leave an abusive or violent relationship.**

FACT: As with heterosexual partners, batterers are often loving and caring to their partners. This can leave a survivor feeling emotionally confused and ambivalent about leaving. Lack of legal protections and homophobic responses of law enforcement and service providers can make leaving very difficult.



Signs of A Healthy Relationship

Definition of Healthy Relationship - A healthy relationship is an ongoing process involving commitment, flexibility, respect, and honesty.

Characteristics of Healthy Relationship

- You feel safe and comfortable with each other. You play, laugh, and have fun.
- Communication is open and spontaneous – you listen to each other and feel that you are heard. You decide things together.
- You can express your feelings without fear of your partner's reactions. You can talk about conflict directly, and resolve it with win-win outcomes.
- Rules and boundaries are clear and defined, yet allow for flexibility if you desire change. Both of you feel free to express your needs.
- Feelings and needs are expressed, appreciated and respected by both.
- You can be together as a couple without losing your sense of yourself.
- Personal growth, change and exploration are encouraged for each and by each.
- Your lives outside the relationship make your relationship stronger. Other meaningful relationships and interests exist for both partners.
- You take responsibility for your own behaviors and happiness.
- Your partner does not try to change or control you when you disagree.
- You can say “no” without feeling guilty about it.
- You can really trust each other. You must feel trust and you have reason to trust. You each work hard to be trustworthy for the other.
- There is a balance of giving and receiving in your relationship. Equality is both affirmed and celebrated.
- Each person can enjoy being alone, and requests for privacy are respected.
- Both people recognize that any violence is unacceptable.

The already significant problems of battered women are likely exacerbated by rural factors. Poverty, lack of public transportation systems, shortages of health care providers, under-insurance or lack of health insurance, and decreased access to many resources (such as advanced education, job opportunities and adequate child care) all make it more difficult for rural women to escape abusive relationships. In addition, rural health care providers may be acquainted with or related to their patients and their families, creating a barrier to disclosing abuse confidentially and thus further isolating these women. Geographical isolation and cultural values, including strong allegiance to the land, kinship ties and traditional gender roles also increase the challenges faced by rural women when they attempt to end the abuse in their lives. The increased availability of weapons (such as firearms and knives) common in rural households also increases both the risks and lethality of domestic attacks upon rural women."