



# Understanding Domestic Violence

## Table of Contents

1. About Domestic Violence .....	2
2. The Muslim Power & Control Wheel .....	3
3. Qur'anic Verses Supporting Peaceful Families .....	4
4. Have You Experienced Abuse? .....	5
5. How Friends and Community Members Can Help .....	6
6. How Imams and Community Leaders Can Help .....	8



## About Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behaviors used by someone to establish power and control over another person in a relationship. Domestic violence sometimes follows a cyclical pattern in which there are periods of calm, building up of tension, and then abuse. After a period of abuse, batterers are often apologetic, but as the cycle repeats the abuse usually gets worse over time. If abusers recognize that their behavior is wrong and sincerely want to change the way they act, they can get help through batterer's intervention programs, therapy, and spiritual counseling.

**Facts:** The statistics indicate that one in three women in the USA is, has been, or will be a victim of domestic violence. According to a study conducted in 1993 by Sharifa Alkhateeb, as president of the North American Council for Muslim Women (NACMW), physical violence occurs in about 10% of Muslim marriages in the USA. The rates of verbal and emotional abuse may be as high as 50% based upon international studies and preliminary research in the U.S.

**Children:** Many people think that domestic violence does not affect children. However, children who are in households where domestic violence is happening have the same symptoms as children who are abused themselves. Domestic violence can cause long-term developmental, emotional and other problems in children.

**Immigrants:** Many immigrants fear they will lose their legal status or get deported if they seek help. Calling any of these **organizations** will not result in loss of status for the victim. Please call the organizations directly to get more information about your particular situation.

**It is our responsibility as members of the Muslim Ummah  
to fight oppression and injustice.  
The Muslim community should support and assist  
individuals and families that are experiencing abuse in their homes,  
and speak out against domestic violence.**

# The Muslim Wheel of Domestic Violence



## Muslim Power and Control Wheel



By Sharifa Alkhateeb,  
Adapted from the Duluth Model  
Peaceful Families Project  
P.O. Box 771  
Great Falls, VA 22066  
703.474.6870  
[www.peacefulfamilies.org](http://www.peacefulfamilies.org)



## Qur'anic Verses Supporting Peaceful Families

### Peaceful Marriages:

And among His signs is this: that He created for you mates from among yourselves so that you may dwell in tranquility with them. He has put love and mercy between your hearts; in that are signs for those who reflect. (30:21)

...either remain together on equitable terms, or separate with kindness... (2:229)

...live with them on a footing of kindness and equity... (4:19)

### Community Responsibility to Stand for Justice:

You are the best community that has been created from mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong. (3:110)

### Individual Responsibility to Stand for Justice:

O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice as witnesses to God, even if it is against yourselves, or your parents, or your relatives; and whether it is against someone who is rich or poor. (4:135)

And why should you not fight in the cause of God and for those who, being weak, are ill-treated and oppressed? Men, women, and children, whose cry is, 'Our Lord! Rescue us from this place where there are oppressors, and raise for us from You one who will protect and help! (4:75)

### Responsibility Towards the Oppressed and the Oppressor:

If two parties among the believers fall into a quarrel, make peace between them. But, if one of them transgresses beyond bounds against the other, then all of you should fight against the one that transgresses until the person complies with the command of God; but if the person complies, then make peace between them with justice and be fair, for God loves those who are fair and just. (49:9)



## Have You Experienced Abuse?

You may be in an abusive relationship if your partner:

- Regularly finds fault with you and makes you feel guilty.
- Calls you names that hurt your feelings.
- Refuses to let you have friends or prevents you from seeing your family.
- Intimidates you by using looks, gestures, or actions such as displaying weapons or smashing things.
- Threatens to leave you, hurt you, or commit suicide.
- Prevents you from knowing about or having access to money.
- Threatens to take your children away and/or says things to turn your children against you.
- Beats, pushes, slaps or chokes you.
- Forces you to engage in unwanted sexual behavior.

**Once you recognize the abuse,  
know you are not to blame  
and you are not alone.  
No one deserves to be abused.  
This is not just the law in America,  
this is the law of Islam.**

## Helping Yourself

- ✓ Ensure your safety. Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800.799.SAFE(7233), 24 hours, toll-free.
- ✓ If you are injured due to domestic violence, get medical treatment as soon as possible. The doctor/nurse will be able to treat you best if they know exactly what happened. Keep notes or a diary of your injuries and the times you were abused. This may help if you decide to leave later.
- ✓ Tell someone trustworthy about it. Telling someone is a way of relieving your suffering, breaking the silence, and the first step in getting help.
- ✓ Keep copies of important documents, extra clothing, money, and an extra set of keys in a safe place (like the home of a friend or relative) in case you need to leave your situation quickly. Also, memorize important phone numbers.

*Adapted with permission from Chaya, Seattle, [www.chayaseattle.org](http://www.chayaseattle.org).*



## How Community Members and Friends Can Help...

1. **Educate Yourself:** Educate yourself about domestic violence. A good place to start is **this** resource list.
2. **Listen:** This is one of the most important things you can do. Remember, the person confiding in you has kept this problem a secret from others. Find a quiet place where you can talk safely and without interruption. Listening encourages victims to talk about the abuse.
3. **Believe:** Do not deny the abuse is happening. Do not pass judgment. Show your support no matter what decision is made about the abusive relationship.
4. **Validate Feelings:** Do not ignore the abuse as this will only serve to hide feelings and to worsen the problem, which is dangerous and destructive.
5. **Show Respect:** Show that you respect the person's ability to handle the situation and to cope with it. This will help with empowerment and developing confidence to deal with the abuse.
6. **Do Not Give Advice:** As difficult as it is, it is necessary to refrain from giving advice especially when your friend first confides in you. Allow the person in the situation to make decisions about what to do, and when to do it. Your role is to help identify options and consequences which might follow. Example: you could mention that if the victim does not seek help, children could be exposed to abuse as well. Empower the victim with information and the ability to make decisions by spelling out the options available.
7. **Do Not Blame the Victim:** This is important because blame is how the abuser often justifies the abuse. Make it clear that no one has the right to abuse another. Explain the dynamics of the cycle of violence. Talk about how Allah does not allow a man to abuse his wife. Similarly, Allah does not allow parents to abuse their children, or children to abuse their parents.
8. **Encourage Seeking Help:** Provide support in facing the problem and dealing with it for the sake of each member of the family. Provide support and transportation to places like shelters, legal aid, etc. If you have an Imam you can trust to deal with this situation appropriately, encourage seeking his help first. It is possible that your friend will feel more comfortable with an Imam and an Islamic center than in mainstream social services.
9. **Discuss Safety:** Talk to your friend about shelters and other safe places, how to access services, and help create a safety plan.
10. **Do Not Speak to the Abuser:** This can worsen the situation and create more danger. If the abuser finds out you know about the situation, the problem could escalate. The abuser may punish the victim for telling others about the problem.
11. **Stay in Touch:** One of the things abusers do is to isolate victims from family and friends. Keep in touch with your friend as much as possible, by phone or email if not in person. Make sure contact is made in a manner that does not attract the abuser's attention.



12. **Make Duaa'**: Duaa' (prayer) connects you with the Most Powerful One, our Creator. Pray for your friend. Our Prophet (May Allah's Peace and Blessings be upon him) said that your prayer for a person increases love between you and that person. Encouraging your friend to make dua'a' will provide a source of strength and spiritual support.

*Adapted with permission from Chaya, Seattle, [www.chayaseattle.org](http://www.chayaseattle.org).*



## How Imams and Leaders Can Help...

1. **Prepare to Be a Resource:** Research Qur'an, Sunnah and fiqh to better understand and respond to abuse from an Islamic perspective. Receive training from professionals in the fields of sexual and domestic violence.
2. **Become a Safe Place:** Make your mosque a safe place where victims of domestic violence can come for help. Display brochures and posters which include the telephone number of the domestic violence and sexual assault programs in your area. Publicize the National Domestic Violence Hotline number: 800.799.SAFE.
3. **Educate Community Members:** Provide ways for members of your mosque to learn as much as they can about domestic and sexual violence. Routinely include information in monthly newsletters, on bulletin boards, and in marriage preparation classes. Sponsor educational seminars on abuse in your mosque.
4. **Lead By Example:** Volunteer to serve on the board of directors at the local domestic violence/sexual assault program or attend a training to become a crisis volunteer.
5. **Speak Out:** Speak out about domestic violence and sexual assault in your khutbah's. As an imam or community leader, you can have a powerful impact on people's attitudes and beliefs.
6. **Offer Space:** Offer meeting space for educational seminars or weekly support groups, or serve as a supervised visitation site when parents need to safely visit their children.
7. **Partner With Existing Resources:** Include your local domestic violence or sexual assault program in donations and community service projects. Adopt a shelter for which your mosque provides material support, or provide similar support to families as they rebuild their lives following a shelter stay.
8. **Use Zakat to Help:** Earmark a percentage of zakat funds to specifically help victims of domestic violence.
9. **Support Professional Training:** Encourage and support training and education for imams and community leaders, hospital and university chaplains, and Islamic Studies students to increase awareness about sexual and domestic violence.
10. **Address Internal Issues:** Encourage continued efforts by mosques and Islamic centers to address allegations of abuse by Muslim leaders to insure that religious leaders remain a safe resource for victims and their children.
11. **Intervene:** If you suspect violence is occurring in a family, help the victim plan for safety and encourage accountability of the abuser. Let each know of the community resources available. Do not attempt couples counseling unless you have been trained in domestic violence, and only after the safety of the victim has been ensured.

*Adapted with permission from the Nebraska Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Coalition and FaithTrust Institute*