



Domestic violence occurs when a family member, partner, or ex-partner attempts to physically or psychologically dominate the victim. Most often the term refers to violence between spouses, but can also include co-habitants and non-married intimate partners. The United States Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) defines domestic violence as a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner. Domestic abuse can be physical and range from throwing objects, the threat of violence, harm to pets, unwanted physical contact, or rape and murder. Violence can also be psychological involving mental and emotional abuse, and economic and/or social control, such as controlling victim's money or not allowing contact with friends or family. Victims in this situation find themselves totally isolated from the outside world because of the fear they have of the perpetrator.

Increased attention to domestic abuse began during the women's movement, and violence against women has continued to be a major focus of modern feminism, and is now synonymously known as intimate partner violence or IPV. Domestic violence shouldn't ever happen to anyone, but it does. It is never a pleasant subject, and the best solution is to prevent violence before it starts. For more information on news and research about coping with abuse and violence, symptoms, prevention and screening, law and policy, and statistics, go online to the National Institute of Health website at www.nlm.nih.gov. Other good resources can be found at www.endabuse.org and www.womenslaw.org, which features free, easy to understand legal information and resources to battered women. It takes great effort to get out of a physically or psychologically abusive relationship, but there is help if you know where to find it.