

“Why Can’t I Get It Right?”

The effects of abuse can include psychological characteristics that greatly resemble those of hostages. The characteristics ***are the result of*** being in a life-threatening relationship, ***not the reason for*** being in an abusive relationship.

Some **RESULTS** of domestic abuse are:

LOWERED SELF-ESTEEM

- Maintaining a positive sense of self is a daily effort for the abused victim
- The victim starts to believe they deserve nothing better because the abuser has told them exactly that
- Abused victims will eventually begin to internalize the abusers criticisms and start to believe them

ACCEPTING BLAME FOR THE ABUSE

- The abused victim will accept responsibility for the abusive partner’s actions
- Abuser will try to convince the victim that it is their fault. “If the dishes were done, the laundry clean but not folded, the grass been cut...this would not have happened!”
- Victims of abuse will try to do everything to please the abuser. They will never be able to please the abuser and only receive a sense of failure from the abuser. No matter what the victim does to please the abuser, they will never get it right!

GUILT

- Feelings of failure contribute to and enhance the feelings of guilt
- Victims are not allowed to express their feelings and frustrations
- The discounted feelings begin to internalize and turn to feelings of anger
- Guilt will start to erode self-esteem

FEELING OF HELPLESSNESS AND PASSIVITY

- Someone who is being abused may develop strategies for keeping the abuser happy and staying alive
- Survival strategies may include denial, attentiveness to the abuser’s wants, fear of interference by police, and adoption of the abuser’s perspective “I should have supper ready when they get home, or I should have the house clean at all times!”

DENIAL AND MINIMIZATION OF ABUSE

- The abused may deny the seriousness of the abuse or minimize the abuse they face
- Some feelings of denial that the abused will express may include:
 - Assumption that the abuser is a good person who’s actions stem from problems that they can help them solve
 - Abused victims will start to believe that the abuser is not responsible for the abuse, which instead they attribute to some outside cause (bad day at work, only physically abusive when he drinks, if the kids didn’t make so much noise!)
 - The abused feels they instigated the abuse and thus deserves the punishment
 - The victim is lead to believe that they would not be able to survive without the abuser’s support (emotional and financial)
 - Cultural or religious beliefs that may tell them to obey the abuser, are more important than their personal welfare
- The abused victim claims the abuse was not bad enough to require a trip to the hospital.
- “He/she didn’t beat me up bad enough to break any bones”