Domestic Abuse

You are being battered or abused if someone close to you hits, pushes, or physically hurts you in any way. You also are being abused if you are forced into activities without concern for your rights. You are being sexually abused if you are forced to have sexual contact of any kind (vaginal, oral or anal). You are emotionally abused if you are made to feel worthless or your self-esteem or well-being is constantly attacked or threatened. Abuse of women is the most common form of abuse. At least 1 in every 6 women is hit sometime during their relationship and at least 1 million women each year are severely and repeatedly beaten by their husbands or boyfriends. Abuse may get more severe with time and even end in death. It is important to remember help is available. No one has the right to abuse you.

STEPS YOU CAN TAKE

- Leave if you feel that violence is going to occur. Learn the warning signs of danger. This varies with situations but may include: use of alcohol; weapon threats; threats to children, other family members or pets; forced sexual contact; or less frequent apologies.
- If you are attacked or beaten, report it to the police so the abuse is documented. You do not have to press charges. The police can protect you while you or the attackers are leaving. Get the officer's name and badge number, and a copy of the report.
- Find someone you can trust and tell them what is happening to you: your caregiver, a nurse, clergy member, close friend or family member. You may feel better if you tell someone about the abuse. Feeling ashamed is natural, but keep in mind that no one deserves abuse.
- It is important to have a safety plan in case you are threatened:
  - Keep extra clothing for you and your children, medicines, money, important phone numbers and papers, and an extra set of car and house keys at a friend's or neighbor's house.
  - Tell a supportive friend or family member that you may show up at any time of day or night in an emergency.
  - If you do not have a close friend or family member, make a list of other safe places to go (shelters, crisis centers, etc.) Keep an abuse hotline number available. They can help you.
- Many victims do not leave their situation because they do not have money or a job. Planning ahead may help you in the future. Try to save money in a safe place. Keep your job or try to get a job. If you cannot get a job, try to obtain training you may need to prepare you for one.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have new problems because of your injuries.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You are afraid of being threatened, beaten or abused; call your local emergency services (911 in the U.S.) for help.
- You receive new injuries related to abuse.

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