

Your place of worship can make a difference, if you make an effort to:

- Educate church members about family violence issues.
- Mention it in sermons and prayers.
- Publish domestic abuse program phone numbers and hotlines, and display reading materials about the subject.
- Use marriage preparation classes to discuss abuse issues.
- Have a plan of action ready if a victim of violence or an abuser asks for help.

Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock.
Acts 20:28

If elders are abused

We abuse children who are our future, and we abuse elders who have given us so much."

—Alan Silvia, Coastline Elderly Services

As our country's population ages, elder abuse grows. Almost two thirds of the people who abuse elders are their adult children or spouses. Susan Rey Alvarez, who chairs the Lahey Clinic's Domestic Violence Initiative says, "Elder abuse...is frequently a result of stress and frustration of caretakers. It can often be prevented by education and increased awareness of resources."

Elder abuse can mean neglect or physical, psychological, or financial abuse. It is difficult

and embarrassing for the elderly to ask for help when the abuser is a family member. Recently, many states have established programs to address the problem and create improved methods for investigating cases.

The American Association of Retired Persons suggests that elders take the following steps to prevent abuse:

- Stay sociable as you age.
- Stay organized and keep your belongings neat and orderly.
- Have Social Security and pension checks deposited directly into your bank account.
- Do not sign a document unless someone you trust has reviewed it.
- Take care of your personal needs. Keep regular medical, dental, and hair appointments.

The glory of one's father is one's own glory, and it is a disgrace for children not to respect their mothers.
Sirach 3:11

New hope and healing

With time and support, both those who have been abused and those who have abused others can turn their lives around.

• Jim Hardeman of Plymouth, Massachusetts, who was physically abused by his father stayed out all night because it was safer than his home. He said, "I should have ended up in jail and probably would have, had there not been involved adults—Scout masters, teachers, a next-door neighbor—who told me I was somebody and let me know they cared." Jim Hardeman graduated from college and now manages Polaroid's Corporate Employee Assistance Program.

• "I was married for 16 years to an extremely abusive man," wrote a New Jersey woman in *Modern Maturity* magazine. "I was afraid to leave him. I thought he would or might, kill our children and me. We were divorced on his terms. 20 years later I met an intelligent, gentle

man. Ever so slowly our friendship turned to love. Marriage was the furthest thing from my mind until he took my hand and asked, 'Would you make me the happiest man in the world by becoming my wife?'"

• John, an emotionally abusive husband, participated in a program, sponsored by Catholic Charities of Erie, Pennsylvania. "All the men in our family hold our anger in. We vent our anger in a rage. But that doesn't solve the problem. Instead of dwelling on it and letting it get under my collar, I've been letting it go and offering it up...This is a growing process, my spiritual journey."

There is hope for your future says the Lord.
Jeremiah 31:17

If someone is being abused

If you see someone in immediate danger of physical harm, inform the police. If you suspect that a person is being abused, get advice from your doctor, a local shelter or agency for victims of family violence, or an abuse hotline. If you need help, call:

National Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-799-SAFE

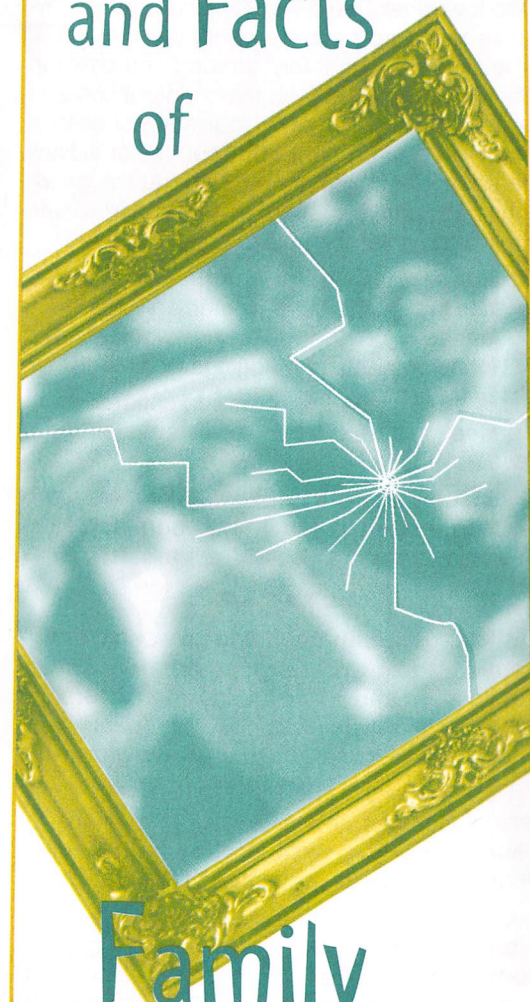
National Child Abuse Hotline
1-800-4-A-CHILD

National Center on Elder Abuse
1-800-677-1116

Now Available: Family Violence Resource List

Get a copy to share with your church, office, group, etc. Just write:
The Christophers, 12 East 48th Street,
New York, NY 10017. Call: 212-759-4050.
E-mail: tcj@idt.net. Or check our Web site:
www.christophers.org

The Faces and Facts of



Family Violence

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Coming Next

The Millennium—a look at how we can use this milestone as a time to make a difference in our lives, our world.

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A husband beats his wife....A mother and her boyfriend abuse their five-year-old son....A married couple repeatedly slap her 80-year-old father who lives with them....A wife shouts harsh insults at her husband every night.

"Families, we like to believe, are places filled with love where we can grow safely, learn how to behave and become healthy individuals. The sad truth is that for...women and children the home has been a far more violent place to be than the streets," says Courtney Esposito, a domestic abuse survivor and counselor at New Jersey's WomanSpace. Add to that the growing cases of elder abuse and you start to see the picture of family violence.

- Battering is the major cause of injury to women in the U.S. More women are beaten by husbands or boyfriends than are hurt in auto accidents, rapes and muggings combined.

- In 1994, more than 1 million children were abused. In 1998, 2,000 children died as a result of abuse.

- In 1997 more than 2 million elders were abused—often by family members and relatives. Only one in 14 cases was reported.



Violence within the home crosses all economic, ethnic and religious boundaries. Its seriousness and scope are too often ignored or viewed as a private matter. But in recent years, public awareness and concern have grown.

Researchers find that in families with a pattern of violence, the behavior can continue for generations. Support services and prevention efforts can greatly reduce cycles of violence.

One woman wrote to a victim services program: "Because of your stand against domestic violence, I'm on the road to a productive life. You gave me a place to come to learn, to be heard and to be healed."

Get rid of...anger, wrath, malice, slander and abusive language.
Colossians 3:8

When our children hurt

"Sometimes I wish I lived deep in the woods, so nobody could hear Jimmy screaming when I hit him."
—Christine

Tragic stories of terror inflicted on the most vulnerable family members like Jimmy are rising. Child abuse is a non-accidental injury or pattern of injuries to a youngster for which there is no reasonable explanation. It includes physical injury, neglect, sexual molestation and emotional abuse. Child abusers are almost equally divided between men and women.

There are many reasons why children are abused: a failure of support systems for single parents, a revolving door of fathers in the household, poverty, stress, very young parents, and mothers and fathers who were not parented well by their own moms and dads.

Author Susan Jacoby describes an incident she witnessed: "While leaving a swim club I overheard a mother berating a child who'd apparently been afraid to put her face in the water, 'You little coward,' she hissed. 'Your daddy will be so ashamed.'" The "little coward," who appeared to be about three, began to cry.

Jacoby continues: "That mother was assaulting her daughter—inflicting wounds that would leave scars on her heart and soul—as surely as if she'd been beating her."

There is hope for the littlest victims of abuse through educational and health programs, hot lines, and a network of support services. But every member of society needs to take responsibility—and speak up—for our next generation.

'Whoever welcomes this child in My name welcomes Me, and whoever welcomes Me welcomes the one who sent me.'
Luke 9:48

Facing domestic violence

"If the media were to announce a new disease that, over the past year, has afflicted 3 to 4 million citizens, few would fail to appreciate the seriousness of the illness. Yet, when it comes to the 3 to 4 million women who are victimized by violence each year, the alarms ring softly."
—Joseph Biden, former chairman, U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee

Domestic violence is defined as the actual or threatened physical, sexual, emotional or economic abuse of an individual by someone with whom they have or have had an intimate relationship. Men are 95 to 98 percent of abusers.

"Why do women stay?"

In a letter to the editor of the New York Times a battered wife explained: "You stay because: Anywhere you go, he can go. When he finds you, his rage will make former abuse seem mild. He has told you that if you try to leave, he will find your child at school and take it out on her, on your pet, or on your parents. Your friends have become alienated and you have nowhere to go. He lies convincingly."

"Men don't suddenly appear in life armed and dangerous. It takes years and years of training to turn boys into violent men," according to Paul Kivel, author of *Men's Work*.

A man who saw violence between his own parents is three times more likely to beat his own spouse as a man who did not. According to experts, he is often jealous, controlling, has low self-esteem, feels powerless, and has a fear of abandonment.

Sheila Garcia, advisor to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops on women's issues, says "Domestic violence is the most common form of violence in our society, yet it is the least reported crime...many women come to believe that they are responsible and somehow to blame."

Because victims do not immediately recognize abuse, the New York Coalition Against Domestic Violence suggests the following questions. Does your partner...

- Hit, punch, slap, shove or bite you?
 - Threaten to hurt you, your children, family members, or friends?
 - Have sudden outbursts of anger or rage?
 - Behave in an overly protective or jealous manner?
 - Prevent you from working or from seeing family and friends?
 - Destroy personal or sentimental items?
 - Force you to have sex against your will?
 - Insult or humiliate you?
 - Abuse or threaten to abuse pets?
 - Turn minor incidents into major ones?
- If you say "yes" to any question, get help. Now.

How churches can help

"I can't leave this relationship. The Bible says it would be wrong."... "If I pray more, the beatings will stop."... "How can I leave? We're told to turn the other cheek and to forgive."

Pastors and other spiritual advisors often hear comments like these from battered women. Many endure abusive relationships because they believe, and may have been told, that their faith requires them to stay in their marriages. The good news is that more religions are now addressing these issues.

In *A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence Against Women*, the U.S. Catholic bishops wrote: "We condemn the use of the Bible to condone abusive behavior. Violence against women, in the home or outside the home is never justified. Violence in any form—physical, sexual, psychological or verbal—is sinful; many times it is a crime as well."

- In St. Louis, Project Tamar, an ecumenical counseling agency has trained hundreds of members of the clergy how to aid both victims and abusers.

- A member of the clergy in Washington, D.C. found that after he spoke about domestic abuse in one of his sermons, several women came to him for counseling.

- Michigan's Catholic Social Services of Washentaw County offers Alternatives to Domestic Violence for men of all religious affiliations. They also sponsor Know Excuses, a public service campaign which teaches that though batterers justify themselves and lie about their abusive behavior, there are "no excuses" for domestic violence.