



rape and abuse  
crisis center  
advocacy, counseling, education.

## **Why Do People Stay in an Abusive Relationship?**

Instead of asking this question, we need to focus on the actions of the abusive person and ask "Why does he/she abuse their partner?"

Barriers to escaping a violent home or relationship may be invisible, but nonetheless, they are powerful.

### **People stay in abusive relationships for many reasons:**

- The victim loves the abuser and values that person's good qualities.
- The victim is economically dependent on the abusive partner.
- The victim fears losing children in a custody fight.
- The victim has no other emotional support because the abuser has destroyed her/his other relationships.
- The victim has a fear of failure-society finds value in successful relationships.
- The victim holds certain religious or cultural beliefs about marriage and divorce.
- The victim may not want to deprive her/his children of contact with their other parent.
- The victim believes the abuser's promises that each incident will be the last.
- The victim feels powerless.
- The victim is unaware of or unable to access services that could help him/her.
- The victim has a fear of the unknown-the thought is "If I stay, at least I know what to expect."
- The victim has a fear of reprisal—abusers often threaten their victim with more violence or death when they try to leave.

### **Three factors influencing actions of an abused partner:**

- The less severe and less frequent the violence, the more a person remains with an abusive partner, often to keep the family together for the sake of the children.
- Evidence that violence passes from generation to generation—boys who witness abuse of their mothers are more likely to become abusive to their partners later in life. Girls learn that society accepts violence against women.
- The fewer resources a victim has, the more likely she/he is to stay with an abusive partner.

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