

**STRANGULATION IN
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
ASSAULTS**

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**Enabling Performance
Objectives**

- ❑ EPO 1#: Articulate the difference between strangulation and choking
- ❑ EPO 2#: Identify signs and symptoms of strangulation
- ❑ EPO 3#: Describe the lethality of strangulation

**Strangulation Study:
San Diego, CA**

- ❑ Studied 200 strangulation cases over a five year period.
- ❑ 62% of victims had no visible injury.
- ❑ 22% of victims had minor visible injuries.
- ❑ 16% had significant visible marks.
- ❑ 199 of the strangulation suspects were male and the average age was in the mid-twenties.

**Strangulation Study:
San Diego, CA *cont.***

- ❑ Most were employed in jobs in which they worked with their hands.
- ❑ A history of domestic violence exists in 90% of the cases.
- ❑ In 65% of the cases, children witnessed the strangulation.
- ❑ Only 3 of the 200 victims sought medical attention at the time of the call to law enforcement.

**Strangulation Study:
San Diego, CA *cont.***

- ❑ Officers rarely suggested that the victim seek medical attention.
- ❑ Officers didn't adequately document strangulation in their reports.
- ❑ Officers underestimated the seriousness of strangulation.

911 CALL



Strangulation vs. Choking

- ☐ Many victims will report they have been “choked” when in technical terms they were the victims of strangulation.
- ☐ *Choking* = an internal obstruction of the airway.
- ☐ *Strangulation* = a form of asphyxia characterized by closure of the blood vessels and air passages of the neck as a result of external pressures on the neck.

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Types of Strangulation

- ☐ Hanging -- nearly always suicide.
- ☐ Ligature Strangulation -- if death results, these are almost always homicides.
 - Garroting by telephone cord, rope, wire, clothing, or other means.
- ☐ Manual Strangulation
 - Hands
 - Forearms
 - Standing or kneeling on the neck

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The Lethality of Strangulation

“The use of an object in strangulation increases the likelihood of lethality. Similarly, if the victim blacks out, she is in great danger of not regaining consciousness or sustaining brain damage from lack of oxygen.”

— George McClain, MD, San Diego Emergency Department

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Signs and Symptoms

- ☐ Neck pain
- ☐ Sore throat
- ☐ Scratch marks
- ☐ Tiny red spots, red linear marks, bruising
- ☐ Hoarseness
- ☐ Loss of voice
- ☐ Difficulty swallowing
- ☐ Light headed or head rush

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Signs and Symptoms *cont.*

- ☐ Fainting or unconsciousness
- ☐ Nausea or vomiting
- ☐ Loss of bodily function
- ☐ Red eye (petechial hemorrhage)
- ☐ Rope or cord burns
- ☐ Neck swelling
- ☐ Miscarriage
- ☐ Chin abrasions

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Can't Breathe - 911 Call



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No Visible Injuries

- ❑ Officers should always call EMS due to potential internal injuries, that can be fatal, and might not be apparent.
- ❑ Because of underlying brain damage by lack of oxygen during strangling, victims have died up to several weeks later.

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Questions to Ask

- ❑ Routinely ask every abuse victim, "Did the suspect strangle ("choke") you?" If she says "no," then ask, "Did he put his hands or object around your neck?"
- ❑ Did the suspect use his hands? One or two?
- ❑ Did the suspect use an object? Plastic bag? Clothing?
- ❑ How long did the suspect strangle you?

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Questions to Ask *cont.*

- ❑ How hard did the suspect grab the victim's throat?
- ❑ Was the victim shaken simultaneous to being strangled?
- ❑ How much shaking? Little to whipping back and forth?
- ❑ Did the victim have difficulty breathing?
- ❑ Did the victim report urinating or defecating?

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Questions to Ask *cont.*

- ❑ Did the victim faint, black out, or lose consciousness?
- ❑ Did the victim complain of nausea or report vomiting?
- ❑ Any complaint of pain, discomfort, trouble swallowing or raspy voice?
- ❑ Any prior incidents of strangulation? How many? How often?
- ❑ Any pre-existing neck injuries?

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Questions to Ask *cont.*

- ❑ Was the suspect wearing any rings?
- ❑ What did the suspect say while he was strangling the victim?
- ❑ Describe the suspect's demeanor and facial expression.

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Points for Officers to Remember for the Report

- ❑ Have you described the visible injuries in detail and photographed them clearly?
- ❑ Have you taken follow-up photographs 1-3 days after the incident?
- ❑ If an object was used to strangle the victim, was it collected and photographed?

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Petechiae – Eyelid & Inside the eye



Subconjunctival Hemorrhage



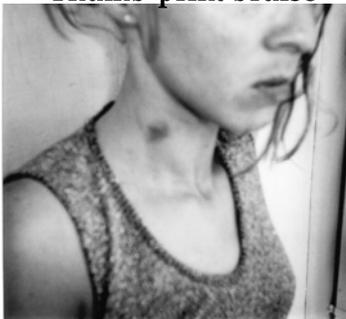
Scratches



SCRAPES



Thumb-print bruise



Finger Marks & Bruising



CLAW MARKS



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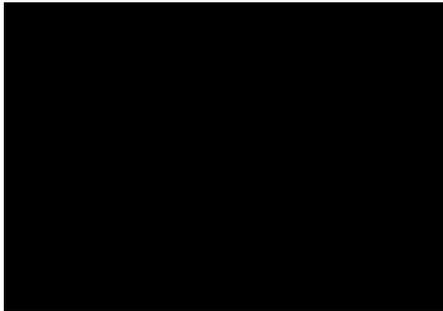


Actual Strangulation Clip

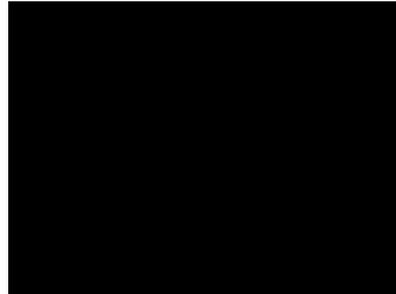
- ▣ 8 lbs. of pressure for 8 seconds.
- ▣ Victim told police "nothing happened."
- ▣ Offender ultimately convicted of Assault 2nd Degree.

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Actual Strangulation Clip



Strangulation Clip in Slow Motion



Enabling Performance Objectives

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