

Stopping the Culture of Abuse

BY Eric Parsons, Outreach and Education Coordinator

Have you ever wondered why there is so much domestic and sexual violence? An underlying cause is “abuse culture.” Abuse culture encapsulates the social behaviors that contribute to violence.

Good news! Many of these behaviors are not that difficult to address once we become aware of them. This is why The Friendship Center is shining a light on abuse culture this October for Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

Exposure to abuse culture begins from the moment we are born. It is woven into the fabric of our society. It reinforces the idea that certain people are superior to others. It allows for sexism and objectification of women. A closer look into abuse culture helps us understand why predominantly women are subjected to this violence.

As we grow, we are conditioned to accept gender norms; for example, boys wear blue and play with trucks while girls wear pink and play with dolls. Nicknames like “Tiger” and “Chief” are early messages to boys that they should be tough and assertive. Calling girls “Princess” and “Sweetie” encourages them to be dainty and polite. Boys are told to “man up” while girls are reminded to be “ladylike.” Parents, family, teachers, faith leaders, and coaches are constantly reminding children about gender roles, often unintentionally.

Boys are taught, often unknowingly, to believe they are better than women. We expect them to take control and to hold in their emotions. They learn to solve conflict by yelling and fighting; the seemingly innocent phrase “boys will be boys” has led to generations of men who don’t know how to peacefully resolve conflict.

Meanwhile, girls learn it’s up to them to avoid becoming a victim. If a girl or woman becomes a victim of physical and/or sexual violence, we ask her what she was wearing, if she was drinking, why she put herself in a dangerous situation, or why she doesn’t just leave him.

Media and advertising reinforce these twisted notions. The content we devour does nothing but glamourize violence against women while teaching boys to be hyper-masculine and forceful. In addition, consent is often forgotten about within media content.

Pop culture sets nearly impossible expectations for how we “should” look, contributing to negative self-image within both genders. Modern media romanticizes the “battle of the sexes” trope.

A solution to this issue of abuse culture is not as difficult as it may sound. Just as we do with our clients,

we encourage you to take this one step at a time.

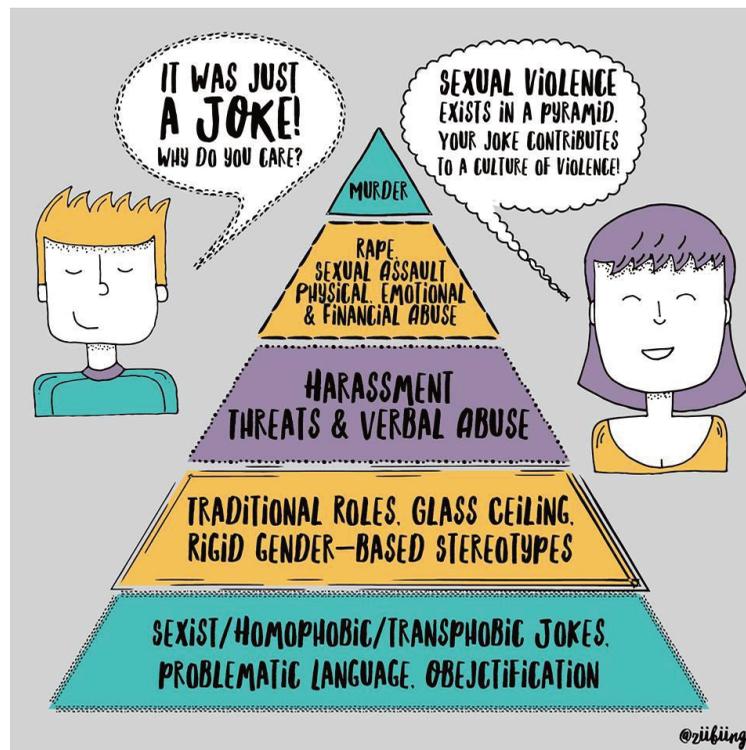
First step, Listen and Observe! Become aware of the language and actions we use and accept that certain language and actions are hurtful whether we intend them to be or not. Once we become attune to it, we will start to see and hear it almost everywhere.

Second, remember that abuse culture is woven into the fabric of our society. Don’t vilify yourself or others.

Finally, once we’re aware, we can stop perpetuating the culture, and we may even find the courage to call it to the attention of others.

We decide what words to use, what jokes to make, what media to consume, whom to befriend. It’s reasonable to believe we can stamp out abuse culture by deciding not to participate in it.

Raise your awareness of how abuse culture pops up in our lives. Join us for a scavenger hunt during October, Domestic Violence Awareness Month. We will post prompts and challenges on Facebook & Instagram. Follow us & shift the culture one challenge at a time.



Building a Safer Future BY Gina Boesdorfer, Executive Director

We shoot the breeze. Push comes to shove. Knock it off. We need to nail it down. Let's kill some time. Etc.

How often do we think about the level of violence in daily language? These are the some of the more benign examples, too. This is not about being politically correct. Violence is woven into our lives in ways that we don't notice because it's become "normalized."

We chat a lot in our office about abuse culture and the cycle of violence. In my role at The Friendship Center, but also as a parent myself, whenever this topic comes up I find myself thinking about my kids and youth in general.

Sadly, abuse culture is threaded into almost every facet of our society. Sometimes it stays largely hidden because we don't realize how we might be unintentionally participating. It is so pervasive and normalized, we don't even see it. But, once we are aware of the ways abuse culture infiltrates our lives, we have the power to make the future a safer place for everyone.

I am convinced that the key to disrupting the way our society normalizes violence and puts people into certain boxes based on their gender is through our children; not only will this influence future generations, but it forces the current generation think about these issues as well.

Many people feel intimidated to talk with children about these topics, but the good news is that it does not have to be complicated or scary.

When we think about kids and parenting, boundaries are an essential first step. Talking about consent with kids

is: talking about personal space and how each person has their own level of comfort when it comes to contact; asking for permission – to play, to hug, to tickle, to share, at meals, to talk, etc.; and respecting someone's answer and trusting that they will tell us if they were joking or actually want something different.

Paying attention to our language is vital. As I mentioned earlier, violence is threaded throughout many frequently used phrases.

Additionally, although domestic and sexual violence can happen to anyone, it is much more common for women and girls to be victims. I think about the gender norms entrenched in our culture, and how even little things contribute to how our boys and girls see their roles in society. (See abuse culture article on page 3.) This is even further exacerbated and more complex for non-binary, gender non-conforming, and LGBTQ+ people.

I am struck by how much more challenging it is to find my daughter quality and functional outdoor wear than it is for my son or how narrow the toy options and book topics are when looking for gifts for my son.

I can't count the times I have heard a boy's behavior dismissed with, "He picks on you because he likes you." This normalizes inappropriate and abusive behaviors down the road, and these types of messages start when our kids are on the playground.

There are so many ways that our children are instructed about how to look, act, think, and feel, whether overtly or not. Gender-based violence is rooted in these harmful gender norms and attitudes.

Moreover, the stigma and lack of services for boys who experience sexual violence makes it even less likely that such incidents will be reported.

According to savethechildren.org, "traditional gender norms around masculinity will likely affect whether boys access mental health services, as well as how boys are treated by service providers when they do report sexual violence."

Noticing how we unintentionally confine our kids to certain attire, interests, or activities, is part of that awareness. Once we notice these issues, we have the power to make intentional choices around parenting to ensure we are not contributing to abuse culture.

I am not immune from contributing to abuse culture myself. The more I learn, the more I notice, and the more I see it everywhere. The way we change future generations and our generation is to find ways to notice the unnoticed and then choose a new way to move forward. 🌱

We have the power to make the future a safer place for everyone.



Gina Boesdorfer, Executive Director

THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The 47th Legislative Assembly amends the act pertaining to temporary injunctions and restraining orders filed against spouses in domestic abuse situations. The abused spouse can now file for a temporary injunction or restraining order without first filing a petition for the dissolution of marriage or a petition for legal separation. Marriage license fees are raised from \$25 to \$30 to allow for more money to go toward the fund set aside in 1979.

Montana State Legislature revises the laws relating to sexual contact without consent. Before this revision, a person could be charged with sexual contact within the marriage. Furthermore, this chapter now states that a person knowingly has sexual intercourse without consent with a spouse. In the law, the language reads that “a person who knowingly has sexual intercourse without consent.”

The National Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NCASA) is formed to combat sexual violence and promote services for rape victims.

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) is organized as a voice for the battered women’s movement on a national level.

Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Fund created by Congress to provide federal support to state and local programs that assist victims of crime. These funds support services provided by domestic violence shelters, rape crisis centers, and child abuse treatment programs.

NCADV establishes the first national toll-free domestic violence hotline.

October is designated as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month to commemorate battered women and those who serve them.

By this time, marital rape is recognized in most states continue to differ. The distinction between marital rape and non-marital rape is becoming blurred.

The passage of a law may be a sexual violence mother.

Congress enacts anti-stalking law.



The Friendship Center is established as a Model City project, one of many social-services programs funded by President Johnson’s Great Society Legislation. The Friendship Center is designed to serve as a homeless shelter for families and a safe haven for women experiencing domestic violence. Joe Stewart is the inaugural director.

Montana’s 45th Legislature establishes that if a victim does not immediately come forward in a criminal prosecution for rape, it does not raise any presumption as to the credibility of the victim. The Legislature mandates that the law enforcement agency with jurisdiction to investigate a rape must pay for the medical examination of the victim if the examination will provide evidence.

The U.S. Surgeon General issues a report identifying domestic violence as a major public health problem.

Formation of National Network to End Domestic Violence, leaders of the effort to pass the Violence Against Women Act

The 52^d Legislature expands the temporary restraining order laws and refines some definitions within the laws. The former phrase of “household member” is changed to “partner,” and “partner” is defined as a “spouse, former spouse, and persons who have been or are currently in a dating or ongoing intimate relationship with a person of the opposite sex.”

Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) creates the first federal legislation acknowledging that domestic violence and sexual assault are crimes; provides federal resources to encourage community-coordinated responses to combatting violence. VAWA is due for renewal every 5 years.

Following the passage of VAWA, under the leadership of Director Matt Dale, The Friendship Center expands its mission to include women who are victims of sexual assault.

The 46th Montana Legislature requires the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services to gather and analyze statistics on domestic violence and spousal abuse for a period of four years. The department is to create a check-off form for institutions like hospitals, sheriffs, city attorneys, and mental health centers to use in reporting domestic violence. The assembly also establishes a grant for the benefit of battered spouses. The money for programs to benefit battered spouses comes from marriage license fees and can be used to provide many services to victims of domestic abuse, including counseling, shelters or safe homes, advocacy programs, and educational programs for communities and hospitals.

Montana states pass a constitution.

MOVEMENT: 1971 – 2021



The Friendship Center

Celebrating
50 YEARS

Sexual assault is now defined as a person knowingly subjecting another person to any sexual act that the person could not sexually assault his or her spouse; now spouses have legal protection against unwanted sexual intercourse. The legislature revises the language on victims of sexual assault. Before this revision, the language read that “a person who has sexual intercourse with a person of the opposite sex commits the offense of sexual intercourse without consent.” As of this change, a person who knowingly has sexual intercourse without consent with another person commits the offense of sexual intercourse without consent.

Rape is a crime nationwide, although laws vary to differentiate between how marital rape are viewed and treated.

The 56th Legislature passes an act protecting the right of a mother to nurse her child in public. Breastfeeding may not be considered a nuisance, indecent exposure, lewd or obscene conduct, or obscenity, regardless of whether the mother's breast is covered while feeding her child.

The 59th Legislature expands on Chapter No. 520 from 2001. Now victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking are entitled to unemployment benefits if the victim had to leave work due to the crime committed against them.

Montana's sexual assault without consent law is updated to remove the requirement of force from the definition of consent. Before this, survivors had to prove that they fought back or were threatened into submission during the assault to prosecute their attackers. This left out survivors of incapacitated rape or a sexual act they were coerced into.

The legislature enacts a federal stalking law

Reauthorization of VAWA; creates a legal assistance program for victims and includes responses to dating violence and stalking

Reauthorization of VAWA; creates new response programs to meet emerging needs of survivors such as prevention, landmark housing protections, funding for rape crisis centers, and culturally and linguistically specific services

Montana's legislature establishes that it is a felony offense of strangulation if a person purposefully impedes the breathing or circulation of the blood of a partner of family member. This new law creates more opportunity for law enforcement to arrest an abuser and prosecution is far easier with a specific strangulation statute



Montana and three other states pass victims' rights constitutional amendments.

The Friendship Center opens its new building at 1430 N Sanders under the leadership of Director Holly Kaleczyc and with the generous support of our community.

The Crime Victims' Rights Act is signed into federal law; it grants victims in federal cases:

1. The right to be reasonably protected from the accused.
2. The right to reasonable, accurate, and timely notice of any public court proceeding, or any parole proceeding, involving the crime or of any release or escape of the accused.
3. The right not to be excluded from any such public court proceeding, unless the court, after receiving clear and convincing evidence, determines that testimony by the victim would be materially altered if the victim heard other testimony at that proceeding.
4. The right to be reasonably heard at any public proceeding in the district court involving release, plea, sentencing, or any parole proceeding.
5. The reasonable right to confer with the attorney for the Government in the case.
6. The right to full and timely restitution as provided in law.
7. The right to proceedings free from unreasonable delay.
8. The right to be treated with fairness and with respect for the victim's dignity and privacy.

TFC adopts a new logo and overhauls our website in an effort to ensure that our branding communicates that we serve all victims of these crimes, regardless of race, gender or gender identity, age, economic status or disability.

Reauthorization of VAWA enhances access to safety and justice for Native American and LGBTQ survivors

VAWA Reauthorization Act is passed by the U.S. House of Representatives; new investments in prevention programs, strengthens protections for vulnerable victims (immigrants, Native Americans, LGBTQ survivors, women of color), improves criminal justice & health care system responses to domestic violence, closes loopholes in federal domestic violence related firearms laws, improves economic justice responses and clarifies economic abuse; non-discrimination requirements guarantee equal access to VAWA protections regardless of gender.

Get To Know Us: Staff & Volunteer Spotlights

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: Deb Bakke, Direct Service Advocate

Victim advocacy is a complex, emotionally demanding career. People often ask how I've been able to continue advocating for domestic violence and sexual assault victims for so long. Over 26 years to be exact. I attribute my long career with The Friendship Center to the



Direct Service Advocate Deb Bakke and one of her two sons

deep satisfaction I feel when I can help a victim achieve safety, and make an individualized plan that serves them well for the short term and beyond. The importance of my work with survivors crystalized when I retired for 11 months in 2015. I began my encore job with The Friendship Center in 2016 after realizing my continued need for purpose and meaningful engagement in the community. I jumped on the "invitation" to come back when The Friendship Center was experiencing numerous staff vacancies. I've always been proud to say I work for The Friendship Center, and it's always been a great place to work.

I've worn many hats over the years. Currently I'm a part-time Direct Service Advocate. As a Direct Service Advocate I provide trauma-informed, victim-centered crisis response services to those who call or walk in to the office seeking emergency services such as shelter, safety planning, relocation, legal advocacy and court accompaniment, material and/or financial assistance, referrals to community partners, and coordination with law enforcement. Additionally, I respond to the hospital to provide advocacy for rape victims who are in the ER for a forensic exam. I also serve on the local High Risk Offenders Task Force.

I have been married to Joe for 29 wonderful years. I have two adult sons and three awesome grandchildren, Aase, Astri and Felix. One of my greatest joys has been the closeness I have with my grandkids. They are all strong, smart, and curious individuals who have achieved a lot in their short lives.

My interests outside of work include reading, baking, traveling with Joe (we have visited 16 countries), running (for over 40 years), exploring Montana, and playing with my French Bulldog, Frankie. We also have two senior kitties who mostly take up space on our furniture!

Since I began doing this work, social problems have vastly changed, and we are now dealing with more complex situations affected by homelessness, addiction, mental illness, and with a gap in resources to address the problems. The Friendship Center is working on strategies to assist victims who are suffering these additional hardships. I feel confident that with our leadership, our team will soon have the resources that victims need to effectively and holistically address these additional barriers. 🌍

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: Clare Kearns

Clare Kearns has been a volunteer at Friendship Center for several years, initially working the crisis phone during the work-week (Monday thru Friday morning) and then transitioning to working The Friendship Center phone one day/month while staff have meetings.



Volunteer Clare Kearns

Volunteering at the Friendship Center is a great follow-up to a 36 year career as a social worker. Clare retired in 2016.

Additionally, Clare also is active in the League of Women Voters and has been co-president for the past 2 and a half years. You may have seen her at farmers markets and other locations around Helena registering people to vote.

Besides her passion for voting rights, she has a passion for rock and roll music and dancing. She is a big supporter of local bands. Her favorite foods are anything curry. Her favorite soap opera is Young & The Restless.

When Someone You Care About Lives With Domestic Violence

BY Jaime Gabrielli, Direct Service Advocate

It is difficult to watch someone you care about struggling in an abusive relationship. It is even harder watching them leave and return to their partner, time and time again. You might feel frustrated, angry, or like giving up on your friend or family member. You might also feel clueless about the best way to help.

Don't let fear of saying the wrong thing prevent you from reaching out. Victims need and deserve nonjudgmental support but often feel afraid or too ashamed to ask for help. They feel lonely, depressed, confused, isolated, and frequently blame themselves for the abuse. Sometimes just reaching out and letting them know you care and are there for them can provide tremendous relief. Waiting for the perfect words can prevent us from seizing the opportunity to change a life.

Domestic violence is an extremely complex issue. In essence, it evolves from the need for power and control over someone else. Abusers feel entitled to gain and maintain power and control by breaking down the victim's self-esteem and sense of self-worth.

Your loved one likely believes they have little control over their lives. Their abusive partner is constantly taking away *their right* to make their own choices and have their

own thoughts and feelings.

Offer them information, resources, choices, and support. Let them know that you trust them to know what's best for them and their children. This will place power back in their hands.

How to approach the conversation

- Approach the other person at a time and place that is **safe and confidential**.
- Start by expressing concern (i.e., "I am concerned someone may be hurting you, and I am worried about your safety.")
- Take the time to **listen and believe** what they say.
- Tell them the abuse is not their fault.
- Communicate that you care about them, and they do not deserve to be hurt.
- Let them know they are not alone, and you are there to help.
- Offer to help them contact **The Friendship Center**. Tell them our services are **free, confidential, and available 24/7**.
- Respect their choices.

You may feel a natural impulse to try to "rescue" someone you care about from domestic violence. However, the person being abused needs to make the ultimate decision of whether (and when) to leave and get help.

It is normal for victims to leave and return to an abusive partner seven or more times before leaving for good. Keeping this in mind will help ensure you support them no matter what their decision and continue to provide them with a loving and safe friendship.

It can be tough to support a person's decision to return or stay with their abusive partner, but avoid giving advice or telling them what you would do. Remember, if

a person does not leave on their own terms when they are ready, they are more likely to return to their abusive partner. As frustrating as this may be, someone in a position to support a survivor can play a crucial role in empowering them to stay safe or even leave for good. 🌱



Bringing Healing to Helena in concert with the Helena Symphony

MASTERWORKS CONCERT II

CONSOLATION & REMEMBRANCE

Saturday, 23 Oct  Helena Civic Center

As part of their dedication to the health and wellness of the Helena community, the Helena Symphony selected The Friendship Center as a community partner for their October concert.

Buy tickets and learn more at helenasympphony.org OR
Join via free live stream at: www.youtube.com/helenasympphony/live

Donate

to support ending
domestic and sexual violence
in our community:

Visit thefriendshipcenter.org
to give online

Join the Empowerment Club by
making a **RECURRING GIFT**

Make a **PLANNED GIFT** to invest
in a future free from violence

If you are 70.5 years or older, talk to your
financial adviser to donate your
REQUIRED MINIMUM DISTRIBUTION

Give through **SECGC to #3707**
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Recommended Reading:

Man Enough: Undefining My Masculinity by Justin Baldoni

The Friendship Center is raising awareness about abuse culture and how it contributes to domestic and sexual violence. (see page 3) This fall, we recommend you read *Man Enough: Undefining My Masculinity* by Justin Baldoni. Regardless of your gender, this book provides insight into the messages our boys and men receive about masculinity as it is traditionally defined.

Read it for a book club or just read it to deepen your understanding. There is some strong language and adult content, but the message is powerful.

Montana Book Co. will donate proceeds from this book to The Friendship Center during October. Order a copy by e-mailing montanabookco@gmail.com.

"In a world drowning in harmful ideas about masculinity, *Man Enough* is the life raft we desperately need. Wise, vulnerable, trustworthy, and hilarious, this book will liberate lives, redeem relationships, and help carry us all to higher ground," said Glenn Doyle.

If you want to learn more about how we are addressing abuse culture or schedule a staff person to speak to your group, contact Eric Parsons, Outreach and Education Coordinator at 442-6800 or e-mail eric.p@thefriendshipcenter.org.

Crisis Line Volunteer Training

Make an incredible impact by becoming a Crisis Line Advocate. We will host a training this October/November. Contact Sarah at 442-6800 for more info.

Save The Date

HOPE

BENEFIT LUNCHEON

April 8, 2022

This annual event brings our community together to learn firsthand from survivors. Learn about the services we provide to the community and how you can help.