

The most common question asked about domestic violence victims is "Why do they stay?" A more appropriate question would be: "Why does he/she abuse?" or "Why can't they be stopped from hurting their family?" Victims and the dynamics of domestic violence are often misunderstood. The question "Why do they stay?" puts the responsibility back on the victim. People stay in abusive relationships for different reasons. They do not stay because they "want to be abused".

THE BATTERED PERSON MAY BELIEVE:

- Their partner's violence is temporary
- With loyalty and love, they can make their partner change
- Their partner when they promise "it will never happen again"
- It is their responsibility to keep the family together
- There will be more good times

THEY MAY TELL THEMSELVES:

- Their partner has had a hard life
- Their partner needs them
- All men are violent; that is to be expected

The abused individual may minimize the violence. They may believe their abuser when he/she tells them the abuse is their fault.

Many abused individuals do not want the relationship to end; they want the violence to end.

Many individuals believe their abuser's threats. They believe their partner will kill them if they try to leave the relationship.

THERE ARE MANY OTHER REASONS PEOPLE STAY IN RELATIONSHIPS.

SOME INCLUDE:

1. Guilt

- Guilt about failure of the relationship
- Guilt about choosing an abuser
- Feelings of personal incompetence
- Concern about independence
- Fear or feelings of loneliness

2. Economics

- Few job skills
- Limited education or work experience
- Limited cash

- No access to the bank account
- Fear of poverty

3. Pressure from Community of Faith/Family

- Family expectation to stay in marriage "at any cost"
- Family denial of the violence
- Family blame for the violence
- Religion may disapprove of divorce
- Religious leader may tell them to "stay and pray"

4. Fear

- Fear of more severe abuse
- Retaliation if their partner finds them
- Destruction of belongings or home
- Harm to their job or reputation
- Stalking
- Charging them with a crime
- Harming children, pets, family, or friends
- Partner may threaten to commit suicide
- Court or police involvement

5. The Children

- Fear that abuser may charge them with kidnapping or sue for custody
- Fear that abuser may abduct or abuse the children
- Questions whether they can care for and support the children on their own
- Fears losing custody of the children
- Believes the children need the other parent
- Fears their partner will turn the children against them

6. Lack of Community Support

- Unaware of services available to battered individuals
- Lack of adequate child care
- Few jobs
- Negative experiences with service providers
- Lack of affordable housing
- Isolated from community services
- No support from family and friends

Sometimes, individuals may leave the relationship. They may return with the abuser begs them to come back, or when they cannot find the resources to live on their own. They may return because they love their partner.