

## IF YOU ARE ABUSING YOUR SPOUSE...

**Get professional help.** The violence must stop! For your sake and – more important – your family’s sake, seek professional help. If you are violently losing your temper a lot and do not get the help you need, it will only get worse. You may seriously injure your spouse or child and eventually lose your family through death, divorce, separation, or incarceration.

In our current society, it is very likely that you will be reported and that a caseworker from a department of social services will contact you to initiate immediate intervention to stop the violence. Domestic violence is a crime. It is against the laws of our society to commit aggravated or simple assault on your children, spouse, any other family member, or dating partner. Incarceration may not be the best choice, but it may be the ultimate social response to what you are doing.

**Treatment is the smartest choice.** It can keep the relationship together and facilitate healing of the deep wounds inflicted by your violence. You can learn new and better ways of being intimate with your spouse.

You are probably doing what you learned to do and repeating what was done to you as a child or what you saw being done in your family. Your parents probably were repeating what they had learned, and so on, back through the generations of unskilled parenting and enslaving ideas about women and children. We are all partners in life; separate citizens with equal rights and needs.

Our task is to improve on past generations. We know today that hitting another human being always sets up angry reactions and breakdowns in the relationship. Professional help can provide marriage enrichment and nonviolent conflict management that work. Get help before it’s too late.

**Remember, violence is learned behavior.** New behaviors for resolving conflict can be learned. Like any new behavioral skill, they will need to be practiced over and over. Old habits die hard! As Mark Twain once said, “Habit is habit, and not to be flung out of the window by any man, but coaxed downstairs a step at a time.”

**Stop the violence.** After calling for an appointment to get professional help, make a commitment to stop the violence. Practice “time-outs” on yourself. Separate from stressful situations with your spouse and children. If you need to, move out temporarily until you can begin recovery. If you stay home and feel yourself getting angry, withdraw, take a walk, go jogging – do anything constructive, noting destructive. Have a designated friend whom you can call and talk with when you’re feeling stressed and approaching a breaking point.

**Talk to as many people as you can.** Get it out in the open. Violent behavior is learned and becomes habitual. If kept secret, it gets worse. One thing is certain: IT MUST STOP! It is not a private matter. It is a serious crime.