

Addictions and Family Violence, What's the Connection?

In the United States a woman is beaten every 15 seconds. At least 30 percent of female trauma victims (excluding traffic accident victims) have been the victims of domestic violence. The costs of treating the injuries done to women by their partners total more than 45 million dollars annually.

While little study has been done of the connection between domestic violence and substance abuse, one thing is certain, and that is that there is a connection between these two social problems though its precise nature remains unclear. However, one researcher has written that the largest contributing factor to domestic violence is the use of alcohol. Other research has found that **one fourth to one half of the men who commit acts of domestic violence also have substance abuse problems.**

Men who abuse their partners often turn to substances of abuse for their numbing effects. Though it cannot be stated that substance abuse "causes" domestic violence, the fact remains that substance abuse programs see substantial numbers of batterers and victims among their patient populations. It is important that practitioners of both the domestic violence as well as the substance abuse fields be attuned to the connections between the two problems.

Evidence that there is a connection between domestic violence and substance abuse includes the following data:

1. About 40% of children from violent homes believed their fathers had a drinking problem and they were more abusive when drinking
2. Fifty percent of batterers are believed to have had "addiction" problems
3. Substance abuse by one parent increases the likelihood that the nonsubstance abusing parent will be unable to protect children if the other parent is violent
4. A Department of Justice study of murder in families found that more than half of the defendants accused of murdering their spouses had been drinking alcohol at the time of the incident
5. Women in recovery are likely to have a history of violent trauma and are at high risk of being diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder
6. Alcoholic women are more likely to report a history of childhood physical and emotional abuse than are nonalcoholic women

(This data was compiled by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)

Much like patterns of substance abuse, violence between intimate partners tends to escalate in frequency and severity over time. Severe physical assaults occur in 8 to 13 percent of all marriages and in two-thirds of those marriages the assaults reoccur. The importance of identifying and intervening in domestic violence cases, especially those that are combined with substance abuse, is critical as early as possible in the treatment process. If it is

determined that a client has been the victim of domestic violence an immediate assessment of the client's safety needs must be done and a referral made to a domestic violence shelter or other appropriate service if it is warranted. .

Other factors to consider when discussing the relationship between domestic violence cases and substance abuse are the fact that research indicates that women who abuse alcohol and other drugs are more likely to become victims of domestic violence and that victims of domestic violence are more likely to receive prescriptions for and become dependent on tranquilizers, sedatives, stimulants and painkillers and are more likely to abuse alcohol.

Listed below are some signs or behaviors that may be indicative that a woman is being battered by her partner and requires intervention. Behaviors include:

1. Isolating her (keeping her away from family, friends, and others)
2. Creating financial dependence. Taking her money. Forcing her to ask for money when she needs anything
3. Sexual abuse (Forcing her to have sex against her will etc.)
4. Use of intimidation (Making her afraid by using looks, actions, gestures. Destroying her property. Displaying weapons)
5. Psychological Abuse (Threats made or carried out with the intent of financial or emotional injury, blackmail etc. Also threatening to take the children away)
6. Physical Abuse (Use of slaps, kicks, punches, shoves, to control her behavior)
7. Use of Male Privilege (Treating her like a servant. Having the last word about everything)

The use of any of these battering tactics when combined with substance abuse is often intensified. For men who use alcohol it can and often does create an illusion of power, and these are men who have a need to exert power and control over their partners. A batterer who abuses his wife when he is drunk can gain instant control over his wife by terrorizing her and possibly their children. They also often use nonphysical forms of abuse such as targeting the victim's sense of well-being and autonomy. Emotional abuse is denigrating, shaming, ridiculing or criticizing the victim and otherwise attempting to damage or destroy her self-esteem.

The emotional and behavioral effects of violence on children can include aggression; hostility; destructive behavior toward others, objects or self; inappropriate sexual behavior; and regressive behaviors such as bedwetting, thumb-sucking, rocking, not speaking, and other dependent behaviors. Children's responses to family violence vary for a variety of factors but often include Posttraumatic symptoms, including sleeplessness and agitation. Children may also experience other development delays such as language disorders when they have been exposed to family violence. Adolescents who have observed violence in their homes may exhibit high levels of aggression and acting out, anxiety, learning difficulties in school, revenge seeking, and truancy.

If you or someone you know is in an abusive relationship, or is abusing alcohol or other drugs, KeySolutions EAP can help. KeySolutions EAP has professional staff that can help with these problems in a caring and confidential manner.

Living With Adult ADHD

Many adults are living with Adult Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and are unaware of it. The symptoms are frequently attributed to stress or anxiety, and may go misdiagnosed for years. The unfortunate consequences are that Adult ADHD sufferers may experience problems at work and in personal relationships, because they have not been treated properly.

Until recent years, ADHD was viewed as strictly a childhood disorder that eventually was outgrown. Over time healthcare professionals learned that the attention and impulsive symptoms of the disorder carried over into adulthood. Common symptoms in adults include lack of focus, restlessness, disorganization, difficulty finishing projects, fidgetiness, and losing things.

Below are a few questions that can help you identify the signs and symptoms of Adult ADHD. Assess your life over the last six months and see if any of these criteria fit your life.

1. Do you often have trouble wrapping up the final details of a project?
2. Do you often have difficulty getting things in order when you have a task to do that requires organization?
3. Do you often have problems remembering appointments or other obligations?
4. When you have a task that requires a lot of thought, do you often procrastinate getting started?
5. Do you find that you fidget with your hands, or squirm when you have to sit quietly?
6. Do you have the feeling that you are driven by a motor, or feel overly active?

If you answered yes to 4 or more of these questions, it may indicate that your symptoms may be consistent with Adult ADHD. It is common that adults do not realize that they have the disorder until their own children have been diagnosed with it. They are relieved that there is a name for the troubling symptoms that they have experienced all of their lives.

Regardless of your answers to the questions, if you have any concerns about diagnosis or treatment of ADHD contact KeySolutions EAP or your physician to discuss it further. There are both medication and behavior therapies that can help treat the symptoms.

What Happens When I Call KeySolutions EAP? (please put on the back lower pg of newsletter)

When you contact KeySolutions, we will schedule a time for you to come in and visit with one of our counselors. During your appointment, you will meet with one of our experienced professionals and together, with the counselor, will discuss the problem, consider alternatives, and decide on a plan of action.

Your Employee Assistance Program provides, if necessary, up to five consultations at no charge to you or your family member. If long-term counseling is necessary, the sessions may be covered by your medical insurance, depending of the assessed problem. All calls and appointments are confidential. Utilizing KeySolutions does not place any obligation for additional services.

If you live outside the Sioux Falls area, the EAP is still accessible to you. We can refer you to a counselor in your area who has agreed to work with KeySolutions to provide EAP services. It is important and necessary to call KeySolutions first, before you make an appointment with any provider.

KeySolutions is available to all employees and their immediate family members (spouse & dependent children). You can visit us on the world wide web at www.keysolutionseap.com or you can reach us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 605-334-5850 or toll-free at 888-450-7844.

Blurb

Watch for the **NEW** KeySolutions website in January. Our website will provide you valuable information regarding several different topics which may be impacting your life!