**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:**

**Domestic Violence** is very widespread and has INCREASED dramatically, since the onset of the COVID-19 Virus.

Often, families may live with domestic abuse for a significant period of time before reaching out to seek help. This violence not only affects domestic partners, but the abuse and dysfunction affect the *entire* family as a whole.

**Domestic violence** is, more often than not, a secret skeleton in most family closets.

Most victims are too embarrassed or too fearful of the perpetrator to reach out for help.

These callers must be handled with patience, empathy and most importantly: NON-judgment.

**Q: But WHY? WHY REMAIN IN A VIOLENT SITUATION?**

***? Why can’t victims SEE that the LOGICAL answer would be to simply, “leave”?***

**A:**  In midst of experiencing a crisis, one is often in a “bubble”, where the focus is *limited*, similar to “tunnel vision”. What may seem “simple” or “logical” to those looking in from the outside, is a very different view on the inside.

**Emotionally**:

1. They have been alienated from their loved ones and/or have been told they don’t “care about them” anymore.
   1. This emotional separation from the family results in the victim feeling ashamed or embarrassed to reach out to them for help.
   2. Often the families have attempted to intervene multiple times in the past and therefore the victim may feel they NOW deserve the abuse.
2. Victims believe what their abusers have repeatedly told them, ie, they are:
   1. Worthless/Useless/Ugly/Lazy/Stupid/Unloved/Unwanted/Undeserving, etc. The constant derogatory comments set the basis and take root under foot of the victim, to where they ultimately believe it themselves.
   2. Victims believe they deserve to be abused and that they have no worthwhile qualities.This affects the self-esteem and ability to react proactively on their own behalf.
3. Victims become so emotionally and financially dependent upon the abuser and may believe that “**no-action**” is better [*safer*] than **any** action, due to fear of the unknown. They also desperately want to believe the abuser will change, *especially* if the *victim* behaves better.

**Physically/Financially**:

1. Victims are so alienated from the “outside” world, they have become completely dependent upon their abuser, who controls the finances and every movement of the victim. Ultimately, the victim feels helpless, undeserving and unable to reach out for help.

Accompanying the mental abuse, are physical injuries which often require Medical intervention. Along with the doctor visits, are lies upon lies, to cover up for the abuser. Eventually this becomes the victims “job”: To protect her abuser at all costs.

**Bottom Line:**

* On average, victims live with domestic abuse for 2-3 years and experience 50 incidents of abuse before getting effective help.
* 85% of victims sought help approximately 5 times from professionals, before they eventually received effective help to stop the abuse.

**Additional contributing factors for a victim to remain with their abuser:**

* Physical violence / Sexual abuse / Financial abuse
* Cyberstalking / Stalking / Blackmailed, threatened or intimidated to gain compliance
* Shamed, mocked, or criticized [alone or in front of others]
* Isolation from friends and family / Told they're worthless on their own
* May be made to believe there is no way out of the relationship.

**Crisis Situation:**

If a call is received from a caller regarding Domestic Violence, the Crisis helpline Specialist is to take the following steps:

1. **ALWAYS access the caller's SAFETY**

**If the Caller feels threatened:**

1. The CONTACT Helpline Specialist is to **instruct the caller** to hang up and call 9-1-1- **IMMEDIATELY**

**If the caller is SAFE at the time of the call:**

1. Utilize your Active Listening Skills and convey empathy and create a connection.
2. DO NOT JUDGE the abused OR abuser.
3. Use FEELINGS [NOT advice] to help the caller understand and see on their **OWN**, the magnitude of their situation to help them clearly regain focus.
4. Providence House/ Catholic Charities (800-246-8910) is the appropriate referral that should be given.