

PAGANS AGAINST ABUSE

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PAGANS AGAINST ABUSE

Pagans against Abuse is an initiative aimed at ensuring that people of all ages, races and genders are aware of this common societal problem, through empowering them with information on abuse, what it is considered as abuse and to enable people through knowledge and the application of it to take charge of their own safety: emotional, psychological and physical well-being. Hopefully, through the awareness raised as well as the assistance of the Pagan Community, Elders and RMO's we hope to reach those in need and assist them in believing in themselves, in acting wisely and realise that they really do not have to submit themselves to any form of abuse and that abuse is not a normal part of family or social life.

WHAT IS ABUSE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

Domestic violence occurs right across society, amongst people of all ethnicities, religious groups and social classes. Contrary to what is commonly believed, domestic violence/abuse is perpetrated by both men and women and can lead to severe psychological harm, injury and sometimes even to death. It has many forms and devastating effects in the lives of those involved. Abuse can be emotional, physical, verbal, financial and sexual.

The erosion of one's self-esteem and inward happiness is a form of abuse. Abuse does not need to be physical. Folk must realise this. Women marry men and expect to change his ways one tomorrow. One cannot mould one's spouse to one's liking. Your partner should not be asking you to change the way you live, your manners or habits, your hobbies, your friends, career, religion and so forth. Your spouse picked you the way you are, why should he/she feel he/she has the right to mould you into a different person? Your spouse should love you for whom you are. Faults and all.

Abusers have intense tempers that are triggered by minimal stress and trivial events. They were usually abused as children, have low self-esteem, come from an environment where abuse is part and parcel of their daily *ménage*, they want their partners to be totally submissive, so that they can feel that *they* are in control. Abusers have extreme expectations of their relationships (personal, social and business) and have the nasty habit of projecting all the errors and difficulties onto their partners, colleagues and friends. They are threatened by their spouse's success, friendships, etc. and have superficial relationships with most people. They are attracted to the qualities they do not possess and view their partner as a symbol and not as a person with his/her rights and this leads to resentful behaviour as the compensation is not sufficient and they end up having their insecurities and feelings of inadequacy reinforced by the very same person they have chosen. Abusers can be extremely charming, generous and convincing in company, but have a propensity for cruelty, cutting and selfish traits in private circumstances. Abusive partners are always right and are insanely jealous and possessive of their spouses.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE BRAINWASHES THE VICTIM

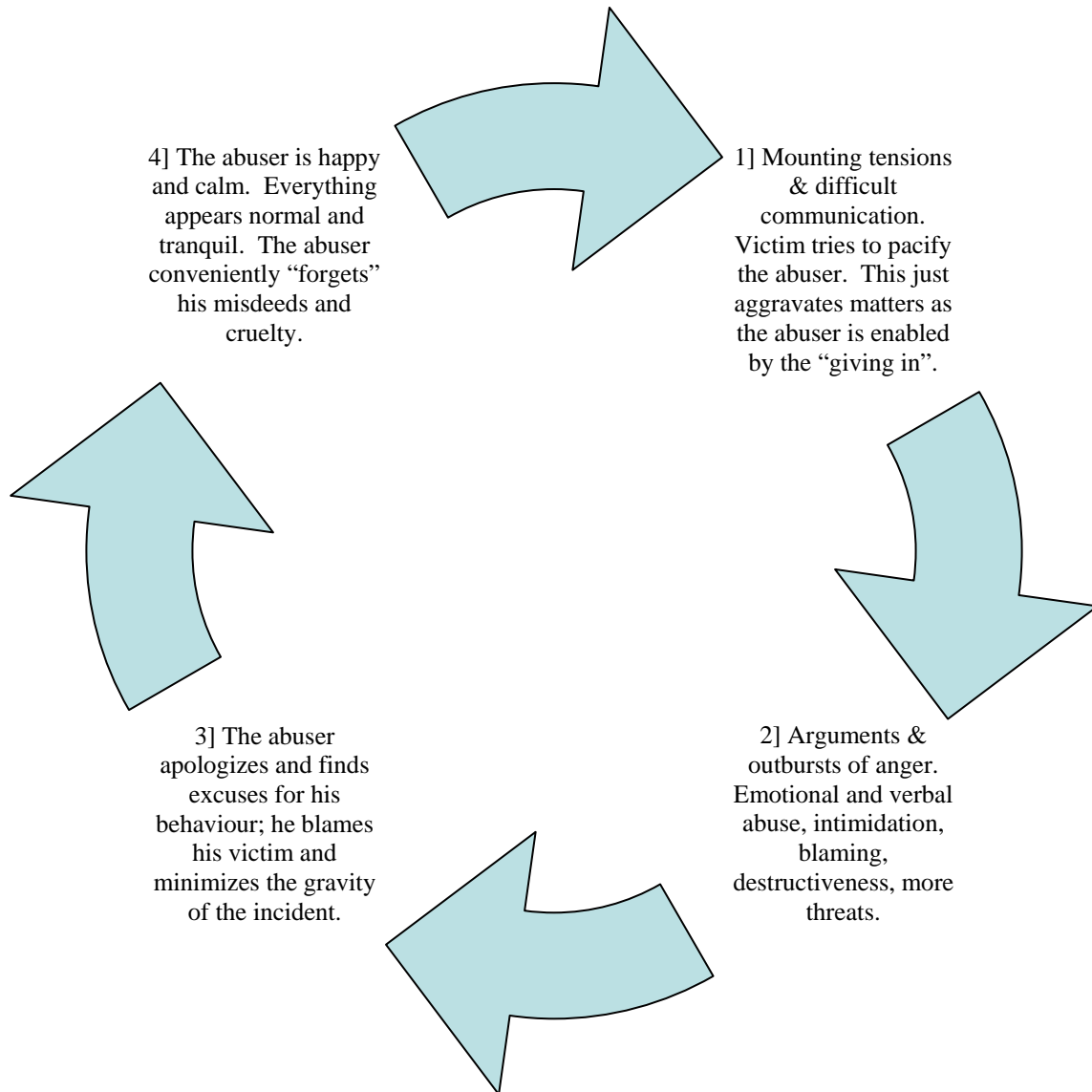
An abusive partner will be obsessed with the control of his/her mate (financial, environmental, social, etc.) creating within the victim a sense of total helplessness, dependency and fear. He/she instills in the passive party a lack of self-esteem and forces him/her over a period of time to succumb to his/her will and develops a sense of total dependency on the abuser.

Verbal and emotional abuse goes hand in hand and get worse with the passing of time. The victim does everything to change, but can never please the abuser, not even walking on egg shells around him/her is sufficient to prevent another outburst.

Abusive spouses have the habit of talking behind the spouses' back in the cruel attempt to alienate him/her even further from his/her family, friends and connections. The victim's self-confidence is slowly eroded away and the process of isolation begins. Abusers get this right by programming the spouse to behave in the way that they desire. They must, at all times, be in control of their situation.

Abusers are insufferent of criticism and fail to make any significant changes to him/herself despite the myriads of promises to fix things, improve and come right. Theirs is the way, or the "highway". They are very good at deceiving themselves and others, as they project the blame for everything onto others and refuse take responsibility for their own errors.

A representation of Dr. Leonore Walker's Cycle of Abuse



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: WHY DOES IT HAPPEN?

Abusers try very hard to maintain power and control over their spouses, thereby minimizing the power of their victims. It is often learned behaviour.

Domestic violence can be mental, physical and emotional. Usually the abuser denies the problem which is often aggravated and carried out by and through the use of alcohol or drug abuse.

According to the US Department of Justice a third of murdered women in the USA are killed by their spouses or ex-husbands or boyfriends.

Relationships are not easy things to handle; no matter the nature of the relationship. It is important to look at things realistically. Some of the things you will read about in this booklet occur only in the spouses' perception during a fight of if he/she has issues. If true abuse is present in your relationship, please remember that you should not try to handle it on your own. Therapy is necessary to heal the emotional wounds which result and to guide those involved to trust, peace, harmony, co-operation and a healthy relationship.

Friends, family and spiritual Elders can of course be invaluable where support and reassurance are concerned.

FIRST THINGS FIRST:

It is important to understand that it is not only men who abuse women. The reverse scenario is more and more common nowadays. What is imperative is to listen to the abused and to reassure him/her that they are not to blame for the abuse in their lives.

Nobody chooses to become a victim of abuse, but through "tapes" and "programs" the abused has the tendency of finding mates, partners or spouses who turn out to be the abusive types.

Through reassurance the victim is made stronger and less vulnerable to abuse. He/she learns that he/she is not at fault and how to deal with the situation and to find long term solutions to this potentially lethal problem. In this manner they can once again gain control over their lives.

Isolation must be avoided at all costs. Remember that Education is part of the empowering and healing process of recovery. Do not deny yourself this right.

WHAT IS REALLY ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR?

Within reasonable, acceptable behavioral parameters these are the tell-tale signs you have to look out for:

1. Does your spouse have sudden outbursts of anger and violent/destructive behaviour?
2. Does your spouse have an overbearing, overwhelming manner which intimidates you? Does he always get his way with things?
3. Are you afraid of your spouse?
4. Does your spouse bite, punch, shove, push, slap or hit you?
5. Does your spouse threaten to harm you, your children, pets, himself? Does he/she threaten to destroy your property or possessions? Does he threaten to leave you?

6. Is your spouse disturbingly jealous and possessive, limiting your interaction with friends and family?
7. Is your spouse overprotective? Does he/she not permit you to work but isolates you at home?
8. Does your spouse resort to name-calling and the use of derogatory terms towards you, even in the presence of others?
9. Does your partner insult, humiliate and undermine you in public or in front of your children?
10. Does your spouse control all the finances? Does he/she squander or hoard money and oblige you to account for every penny spent? Does he/she force you to depend on him/her?
11. Does your spouse force you to partake in sexual acts that you find demeaning and humiliating? Does he/she force himself/herself on you even when you are “not in the mood?”
12. Does your spouse threaten and manipulate you, in order to get his/her way?
13. Does your partner blame you for everything that goes wrong?
14. Does your partner permit you to express your opinion or to express the way you feel? Are you free to discuss how he/she makes you feel with him/her or does he/she complain that you do nothing but “bitch” and “whine”?
15. Does your spouse alternate between being affectionate and distant? Does he use this to manipulate you?
16. Does your spouse lie to/steal from you?
17. Does your relationship make you feel trapped and powerless?
18. Does your partner run debt up on your name?
19. Does your spouse continuously criticize you and tell you how lucky you are to have them?
20. Does your partner cheat on you and expect you to forgive him/her as if nothing happened, for after all you pushed him/her to it with your “bad” behaviour?
21. Does your partner tell you he loves you just so he can take advantage of you once you’ve reciprocated the sentiment?
22. Does your partner not allow you to make your own decisions?
23. Does your partner obsessively interrogate you as to your whereabouts, comings and goings? Perhaps even in public?

The above questions have been designed to ascertain whether or not you are experiencing abusive treatment or if you are simply paranoid and making up things in your mind. Answer them honestly and take action.

ABUSER TACTICS:

Abuser tactics are the trivialization of any abusive incident. It is never as bad as the victim makes it out to be. Everything he/she feels is petty or not important. It is imagined, a perceptive error because he/she is hypersensitive (*the fault inevitably lies with the abused*). These manipulative tactics are there to make you believe that you are exaggerating things and that reality is “way different” to the “make-believe” situation you have fabricated in your head.

Do not fall for the trick for what he/she wants is for you to ultimately feel guilty and start apologizing, action which exonerates them from his/her guilt or gives the perfect excuse to have an outburst.

Abusers also have the habit of discounting the spouse’s grievances. He/she will tell you not to take life/yourself so seriously and try to make a joke of the matter. What you must realize, is that this is nothing other than an attack on your person. Do not allow it to happen.

HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH THESE ATTACKS?

Do not walk on egg-shells around him/her. Do not enable his abusive behaviour by allowing him/her to trivialize or discount your feelings or reactions to his/her abusive behaviour. Don’t try to reason with them as to the unjust, unfair, unreasonable way they are acting towards you. That will just give him/her the gap he/she is awaiting in order to behave despicably towards you.

UNDERSTANDING: WHY DO SOME PARTNERS RESORT TO THREATS, CONTROL TACTICS AND HURT?

People normally resort to threats to force someone to give in to their requirements or demands. It is a way of coercing someone to submit to their will. They do it to show you “just who is the boss”.

If you find that you are being abused (in any way or form), please do not find excuses for your abusive spouse’s behaviour. Don’t accept his/her justifications as these amount to nothing else but excuses, cleverly thought out to manipulate you into handing all control over to him/her and to get you to do what he/she wishes you to do.

Please find help.

Misogyny

Misogyny is simply speaking the prejudice or general antipathy against women and the treatment of females in a manner that can be defined as sexist or harmful. It prevents one from having normal relationships with women, because his/her views consider women to be shallow, fickle, less intelligent. It is the negative attitude towards women as a group.

Throughout the ages, some very brilliant minds have expressed their feelings on women: Women are not by nature meant to obey (Schopenhauer). Though he also made unsavory comments about men, Nietzsche believed that women were primarily mothers and “less than shallow” some of his comments may be interpreted as misogynistic. He advocated stricter controls on women. Euripides, Sophocles and Heracles, Giacomo Casanova and Don Juan (two great lovers of women) were all considered to be misogynists

Misandry

Misandry is *man-hating* or the hostility towards men as a group. Misandry is a cultural phenomenon that prevents women from having normal relationships with men. Contrary to popular belief, it has nothing to do with feminism.

Abuse gradually erodes your self-esteem; it conveys the message that you are not worthy, not good enough to be respected, loved, encouraged, spoiled, trusted or treated in a decent and civil manner. This repeated message insinuates itself into the subconscious mind giving rise to feelings of uncertainty and self-doubt.

Breaking things which are important to you is another way of striking you where it most hurts. Abusive people are bullies who validate their shortcomings by hurting and breaking down others. Breaking your things is just a round about way of doing this. Those things are more important, worth more than you, after all.

WHAT IF YOU RECOGNIZE SOME TYPICALLY “YOU” ISSUES HERE?

If you read this manual and realise that you are abusing someone, if you can come to the roots of your abusive nature and behaviour, go for counseling and help first to heal yourself and second the relationship you have with a person whom you utterly admire but who currently makes you feel weak and inadequate.

Give yourself the opportunity to see that a healthy, well-balanced, happy and fulfilling relationship is possible, where there is no need for worries, competition, getting even, controlling, manipulating or distrusting.

It is possible and it happens through the power of love and trust.

You can transform your life and that of your loved ones. The power to do this is in your hands and your hands alone.

DANGERS OF ALLOWING ABUSE TO CONTINUE:

Statistics prove that abusers begin to abuse their own children and other family members at some point of their lives. It is their way of securing and maintaining power. The abuse could be only emotional or verbal, however remember the scars these two forms of abuse leave, though invisible that they might be, have debilitating consequences, especially to the mind of the young and vulnerable. Children assimilate and imitate behaviour. They will grow up to be abusers and the vicious and ugly cycle of abuse will rear its head in yet another generation of your loved ones.

Abuse does not get better, so stop hoping. It is repetitive and cyclical behaviour.

But you may want to work at it, to remain in the relationship because you truly love your spouse. To do this you will still need help, create a web of support amongst friends and family (who are there for you (no matter what) and who do not gradually become annoyed with the unsettling episodes) as well as to develop the necessary faculties that will allow you to survive emotionally, physically and spiritually. That means that your heart, your mind and your soul have to remain intact.

Do not lie to yourself or your support group. Get help and advice on how to best handle your abusive situation or your internal turmoil will result in physical symptoms or manifestations.

The following are some titles of specific literature on abusive relationships and how to deal with them:

The Verbally Abusive Relationship – by Patricia Evans.

Co-Dependant No More – by Melody Beattie

No Visible Wounds – by Mary Susan Miller

Before it's Too Late: Helping Women in Controlling or Abusive Relationships – by Robert Jackerman and Susan Pickering

CHILD ABUSE

This term refers to the maltreatment of children, on a psychological, physical or sexual level, to child neglect as well as verbal abuse children suffer at the hands of those whom they trust. . The curious thing is that most of child abuse happens in the child's own environment or home. Abused children run the risk of developing psychiatric problems: depression, anxiety and acting-out and trauma related symptoms, post-traumatic disorders, aggression and defiance. Abused children need help to develop pro-social behaviour and offending parents need to be included in the healing process in order to get them to improve their parenting skills and practices. Infants as young as 3 years old and 9 months old have been repeatedly raped by their neighbours and family members.

MENTORING BOYS TO MANHOOD and GIRLS TO WOMANDOM

The lack of ritual passages to commemorate and celebrate the male and female mysteries and the milestones that go hand in hand with them have been neglected for too long in our society. Boys and girls need assistance in order to grow into healthy, well balanced and responsible adults.

Associations, entertainment [television, movies and computer games] all affect a child's perception of the world and how eventually he will view this. Many of us raise our children in front of television sets and the have come to perceive violence and crime as normal since it the viewing of both these is what we consider entertainment. Gone are the days of the bloodless Westerns, Hollywood Epics and Broadway musicals.

Young men should be taught how to express anger and frustration. Resorting to violence is not the way. Teach them that life isn't "fair" as well as the concepts of sharing and respect for difference is. Remember that it is never too early to instill these good principles and ethics in a child's heart. Teach them how to channel their anger and their frustration in productive ways, to walk it out. Girls should be taught to expect respect by giving respect and that violence is not what is to be expected in a relationship.

Be supportive and let your presence be steadfast, reliable and constant. Instill in them the belief in friendship and that it is good to be true or loyal to these bonds. Let them know that you are there for them. Let them know what your opinion is on abuse and issues of violence (of any form) towards women and what a healthy relationship is. Be a positive role model for your boys. A good example means far more than one thousand lectures. Children loathe weakness in adults, so if you are not able to practice what you preach, they will disdain your incongruence and despise your weakness. Nothing you will ever say or do will convince them to follow your advice. Lead by example therefore!

Be there for your young ones, listen to what they've got to say, guide them, answer their questions, be honest, be consistent, tell them and show them how!

RAPE AND VIOLENCE IN OUR SOCIETY

South Africa has got the highest incidence of rape in the world. Violence to women is so common that most of the time it is not even recognised as a social illness or as a sign that something is terribly wrong with our society. Young girls are likely victims because there is a smaller chance that they are infected with HIV than older women. Teachers, uncles and peers abuse and rape more and more young girls, before they turn 15. Case studies show that gangs of youths [as young as 13 years old] commonly abduct young girls and that 10% of teenagers think that gang rape is cool. 25% of men have admitted to having sex with unconsenting females before the age of 25 and that 77% of surveyed women had experienced abuse or violence at

some point in their life. 40% of sexual violence has been committed by children. It has become a societal problem which indirectly also involves the fathers, husbands, life partners, brothers of the victims. 30% of men interviewed believe that women “ask” to be raped, by wearing provocative clothing and being in the wrong places at the wrong time of the night.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE OR SCHOOL

If someone’s overtly sexual behaviour towards you makes you feel uncomfortable, please listen to your instincts and believe that this behaviour is not acceptable. Tell him/her that his/her advances are not appropriate and that you would like him/her to desists immediately.

It is likely that your objection/rejection will make him/her try to make you look guilty, like you provoked him/her with your wardrobe, lewd speech, overfriendly manner or body language. He/she might try to make you feel that it is “entirely your fault”. They might try to make you feel like you are not a man, a prude or a “cock-teaser”. They will try to make you feel like an accomplice and to keeping the episode silent. This of course allows them to try their luck again as they perceive your silence as condoning their advances.

If you finally decide to talk, he will try to get other’s opinion on his side and to ridicule you.

THE CRIME OF SILENCE

Most women are reluctant to speak about the violence perpetrated against them because they fear that it will bring ulterior shame on them. For the very same reasons men do not report violence perpetrated against them. Rape and domestic violence is therefore rarely reported. One because they are naïve enough to believe their abusive spouse’s promise of changing and two because they do not wish to aggravate the trauma by having to go for tests in order to open a police docket or .

STALKING BEHAVIOUR

Stalking may also be regarded as a social crime. It is pathological behaviour closely linked with obsession and in many cases a personality disorder. The stalker’s behaviour may consists of threats, repeated phone calls, the writing of letters and emails, following and confronting one in public places, being on the victim’s property without his/her permission, and any other behaviour which causes tremendous stress and fear in the heart of the victim. Of concern is that the obsessive behaviour also includes psychotic disorders that may even lead to homicidal behaviour.

In such cases, obtaining an interdict against the stalker would be a magnificent preventative measure. Let everyone around you know that the individual may not come near you. They will assist you to remain safe. More women encounter stalking behaviour in an obsessive partner – 2% versus 8%

Recidivism is common, especially amongst stalkers that have a history of alcohol and substance abuse.

Do not underestimate the dangers of being stalked. This mistake could be a fatal mistake. Become familiar with the law. How does the system protect you against a stalker?

Stalking arouses intense fear in the victim, but since fear and other emotions are self-inflicted, we are not sure if stalking is to be regarded as a form of abuse between those who are or were intimate.

ACT AGAINST ABUSE

Get help now! Report violence, rape and sexual harassment to the authorities. Don't allow anyone to abuse you or children, no matter how much you love or care for them, do not permit anyone to instill in you feelings of guilt and inadequacy. Do something. Consult a divorce lawyer. Stop the madness, right away!

Please don't try to handle the situation on your own. Therapy is necessary to heal the emotional wounds and to guide those involved, to learn trust, peace, harmony, co-operation and what entails a healthy relationship.

WHAT IS POWA?

People Opposing Woman Abuse was established in 1979 with the aim of finding solutions to and eradicating violence against women as well as providing support services to those abused and their children. The first shelter for women was set up as early as 1984 in Gauteng.

Furthermore POWA offer legal advice and court preparation to abused women, the facilitation of economic empowerment, lobbying, advocacy, networking with other organizations, counseling, public awareness campaigns and education for women.

For more information, phone numbers in your area (referrals for family support), please visit the POWA website or contact them on info@powa.co.za and contact NICRO (National Institute for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation of Offenders) in your area:

<http://www.powa.co.za/Display.asp?ID=37> as well as <http://www.powa.co.za/Display.asp?ID=25>

For support call POWA's helpline (011)642-4345.

DISCLAIMER

The above information was cited merely to assist and direct those in need of help and support. The SAPC is in no way affiliated to the abovementioned organizations.

PAGAN ASSISTANCE

SA Paganism is still young and as such lacks the necessary infrastructures to assist those in need. Should you however, be in need of advice and guidance, please do not hesitate to contact Morgause Fontelève on info@pagancouncil.co.za

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