



Domestic Violence - *are you a Victim?*

Jill Curtis

Violence in the home is a crime we are all becoming more aware of each year. In the UK a quarter of all reported violent crimes are domestic. In the US the estimate of the number ranges from 960,000 incidents of violence against a current or former partner to four million each year. But domestic violence is also a world-wide problem.

What is violence - or abuse? It is about power, and this can be about controlling a partner by either physical or emotional abuse. It is rarely a one-off event. There are also many different forms of abuse, and physical attack is only one of them. Perhaps most of us think of a black eye or broken arm, but sex can be used as a way of dominating a partner. So can ridicule. So can control of family finance. So, too, can shouting and screaming.

Does your partner accuse you of all manner of 'crimes'? These may even be everyday events, such as looking out of the car window to look at other men or talking for too long to friends and family on the telephone! Jealousy is a formidable spur for many attacks.

Do you feel under threat of violence? Have you been on the receiving end of a violent attack? Do you have to 'account' for time spent away from home? Does emotional or verbal abuse play a part in your relationship?

Psychological abuse can at times be even more damaging than physical abuse. It can be something which whittles away at your self-esteem until you may even begin to believe that you are 'stupid', 'useless' or that you 'deserve it'. Attempts at retaliating may bring further violence; tears of frustration and helplessness are ridiculed and mocked. If this is happening to you it may make it even more difficult to break away and do something about your situation. Loss of self-esteem, and being made to believe you are 'worthless' make it difficult to think about getting help. Does this sound familiar? You may also be on the receiving end of blackmail, for that is what it is, if you partner threatens to kill himself - or herself - if you leave. Or to harm the children.