

WIFE ABUSE: BRING IT OUT INTO THE LIGHT

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ID 499

May 1984

The problem of wife abuse is not a new one. It has been around for centuries. But it has only been within the last two decades that it has been recognized as a serious social problem. Steinmetz (1980) reports that somewhere between one half to three fourths of all women have probably experienced physical violence from their partner at some time. And for one out of every five of those women the violence occurs repeatedly. One out of every fifteen are beaten severely, and an estimated 1700 deaths occur every year as a result of wife abuse. The statistics are sobering. Another study (Straus, 1977-78) sampled over 200 American couples. The findings suggested that about eight million wives are physically abused by their partner in any one year.

Besides the number of women being abused, another important factor to consider is the frequency of the violence. In the same study, Straus reported that nineteen percent of the respondents received two beatings per week. But even these statistics may be well on the lenient side. Due to the highly personal nature of the problem, many cases are probably not even reported. But the attitude toward wife abuse is changing. Before the 1970's, cases of wife abuse were kept hushed and simply not discussed. "What would the neighbors think if they knew?" But with the onset of the feminist movement, wife abuse is being brought out into the light, and society is finally beginning to deal with it. While the public is becoming aware of violence in the home, getting factual information and a plan of action into the hands of the people is a slow and tedious process. The purpose of this paper is to present both fact and theory and to dispell some of the myths as to what happens, why it happens, and who it happens to, and to shed some light on what is currently being done and what still needs to be done about this tragic

problem.

What exactly is wife abuse? The problem in achieving a solid definition of wife abuse comes about because of the numerous variables involved. Even among the research there are different ways of categorizing and defining wife abuse. In some studies, wife abuse is seen on a continuum, focusing on the frequency of the batterings. Others consider the extent of physical harm (Peretti, 1978). Still others focus on the different types of behavior exhibited during the beatings (Straus, 1977-78). These are important variables to consider. Some people argue that a certain amount of violence is normal in any relationship as there is bound to be conflict and conflict resolution. Virtually every family member has participated in, or at least witnessed some form of violence against another family member. Parents spank children. Siblings have rivalries. Those behaviors are seen as normal and acceptable. And for some couples, a degree of spouse battering (a slap or a shove) is also normal. But the question remains, "Where does normal conflict resolution end and abuse begin?"

What happens in cases of wife abuse?

-She said that she was terribly afraid of him and that he had threatened her on many occasions. She describes brutal beatings.

-They had not been married very long, however, when he slapped her, and from then on his beatings were frequent and vicious.

-He threatened her with knives and told one of her girlfriends that someday he would kill her. He had beaten her.

-She said that she had been discharged from the hospital where she had undergone treatment because of a beating. She is afraid to press charges.

In answer to my question, she had said she did call the police but did

not receive any help. One her husband told the police she had deliberately injured herself.

-She had a hole in her neck where she said he had dug her with the end of a coat hanger. There were other marks and bruises and she was very upset. (Nichols, 1977)

The preceding are excerpts from the files of the psychologist who saw these women in therapy. They give but a glimpse of what actually goes on in cases of wife abuse. Some researchers have said that, in many ways, wife abuse is very similar to child abuse. The victim suffers both physically and emotionally, often under circumstances of no provocation at all. The physical abuse received could range anywhere from hitting and slapping to sexual abuse to attempted murder. For most women, it was found that the majority of physical abuse was directed to the head, neck, and shoulder areas, though many times women suffered blows to the chest, abdomen, back, and thighs because bruises in those areas are not usually detected by others (Star, Clark, Goetz, and O'Malia, 1979). According to Peretti (1978), ironically, for some couples the abuse takes place in the bedroom and afterwards culminates in a love making session. "For these males, they subconsciously view sex as an act of aggression, rather than an expression of affection. The sex act becomes yet a further act of aggressiveness toward the wives." In other cases, if the woman is pregnant, the abuser will beat her continuously in the abdomen area until she spontaneously aborts.

In order to scientifically measure the actual behavior involved in wife abuse, Straus (1977-78) utilized the Physical Violence Index of the Conflict Resolution Techniques scales (CRT). An Overall Violence Index indicated the extent to which any of the following eight behaviors

were carried out during the previous twelve months.

1. Throwing things at spouse
2. Pushing, shoving or grabbing
3. Slapping
4. Kicking, biting, or hitting with fists
5. Hit or tried to hit with something
6. Beat up
7. Threatened with a knife or gun
8. Used a knife or gun

From this scale came his "severe violence index" or "Wife Beating Index" which represented the extent to which the last five items of the scale occurred. Only the last five behaviors were considered wife abuse as these behaviors produced a higher risk of serious injury.

Bruises, fractures, broken bones, lacerations - all of these are part of the physical aspect of this kind of abuse, but another more damaging beating is the emotional abuse these women suffer. When a woman is continually abused by someone she loves, she suffers much loss. She experiences a loss of things she had hoped for in a relationship, of self-esteem and self respect, a loss of a sense of security and trust for that man, and often times a loss of her emotional and physical health as well as the possible loss of her marriage (Lieberknecht, 1978).

Who does it happen to? A few years ago, people thought this type of domestic violence only occurred within lower socio-economic classes where often times the man was out of work or "down on his luck." And in fact, the lower socio-economic classes do have more reported cases of wife abuse as calculated by the police and hospitals. But the myth is easily dispelled with the realization that the middle and upper classes

simply may not be reporting cases because of social stigmas. The middle and upper class families, the more prominent people in the communities, have more to lose (McShane, 1979). One survey conducted in Maryland (Petersen, 1980) looked at this aspect of the problem. They defined social class as pertaining to the husband's education level, income, occupation, employment stability, and home ownership as opposed to rental. In each category, the situation most characteristic of a lower class produced a higher percentage of reported cases of wife abuse. McShane (1979) reported that "violence is most likely to occur when a wife's education or occupational status was greater than that of her husband's." But the bottom line to all the research is that the occurrence of wife abuse cuts across all socio-economic levels, all education levels, all ages of couples, and all sizes of families (those with children, as opposed to childless families) (Flynn, 1977).

"Data show abuse is not determined by geographic area, racial, ethnic, or religious backgrounds, or income levels, though there are differences in its frequency" (Steinmetz, 1980).

But what kinds of women are abused? There are many stereotypes as to what type of woman is abused. One stereotype is that those women are sadomasochistic and subconsciously enjoy being abused. Therefore, it is not a social problem, but a psychological problem of the victim. Another popular stereotype infers that the woman antagonizes and causes the violent behavior of the man - again putting the blame on the victim. A third stereotype says the woman is probably very masculine and domineering and that the man is just finally "fighting back." Here again the woman is to blame for her own beating (Carlson, 1977). But despite these stereotypes there are some common characteristics of battered women.

She tends to have a low self-esteem, and feels trapped and isolated from the rest of the world. She is typically a traditionalist in her beliefs concerning family unity and female sex roles. She accepts responsibility for the batterer's actions; she feels guilty, yet denies her fear and her anger. Many times she will use sex as a way to establish intimacy. And she sincerely believes that no one can help her.

What kind of man beats his wife? According to Margaret Elbow (1977) this man, through his violent behaviors, is projecting the blame for marital strife onto the wife. He is the type of man who cannot tolerate autonomy from his wife. He strictly adheres to his own expectancies for the marital relationship, and when those expectations are not met he lashes out at the only person, from his point of view, who could be responsible - his wife. The abusive husband often uses sex as an act of aggression or exercising power. But he too, tends to have a low self-esteem. And this man sincerely believes that his behavior is perfectly justified and should not result in negative consequences toward him.

There are those who believe some marriages are more prone to the occurrence of wife abuse than others. Symonds (1979) categorized wife abuse cases into two groups. The first is a marriage that is prone to violence. In this relationship the husband exhibited violent behavior before the marriage and before the relationship even began. He is the type of person who chooses to use violence to resolve conflict. In this case, the woman is obviously not to blame for his violent behavior, but merely becomes his scapegoat or an outlet for his frustration. The second type of marriage is one in which the violence results from conflict in the relationship. It "occurs later in the marriage and is a product of the relationship." This second category is not to suggest that here the woman

is to blame for the violence, or that violent behavior is an acceptable means of resolving conflict. Yet, this second group is more likely to be open to seeking outside help and the success rate for therapy in this type of situation is much higher.

Throughout this paper wife abuse has been referred to only in the context of an actual marriage relationship. It is important to note that this violence also occurs in boyfriend-girlfriend relationships, with couples who are living together, anytime there is an intimate relationship involved. And, just to be fair, it is also true that husband abuse occurs - probably with greater frequency than one would imagine. There are women who are physically violent toward their husbands. The statistics show an equal number of fatalities for husband abuse as in cases of wife abuse. But the truth is that this figure merely reflects the fact that women are more apt to use weapons, thus accounting for a high fatality rate in cases of husband abuse. But the fact remains that there is an overwhelmingly greater number of wife abuse cases than husband abuse cases (Flynn, 1977).

Why does it happen? Though there is a myriad of possible reasons for each individual case, currently there are two overriding theories to explain why wife abuse occurs. One theory states that it is because of the "sexist structure and traditions of society." The other theory explains that this abuse comes as a result of social structure stress and violent behavior either witnessed or experienced in the family of origin (Petersen, 1980).

Historically, countless civilizations have viewed the woman as chattel of the man. When she was given in marriage to him, she became his property. And being his property, he had the right to do whatever

pleased him. If this meant physically abusing her, well, he was within his legal rights. Even today that notion still exists, though in more subtle ways. Many people still view society as a "man's world", a "patriarchal society." In situations of wife abuse this is evident in the fact that often the victim is accused of provoking the attacks despite the fact that the perpetrator was behaving in an unacceptable manner. Sometimes it appears as if the abuser is almost being protected, while the victim is forced to defend her actions or lack of actions (Nichols, 1977; Straus, 1977-78). There are even those who claim that aggression in males is biological, as is passivity in females (Star, 1970). Therefore aggressive behavior is a natural physiological reaction for men.

The second theory is expressed by Hanks and Rosenbaum (1977) when they say "It is suggested that the women carry the conditions of their early family situations into the marriage." Some studies have shown that there is a definite relationship between violence in the family of origin and violence in the present marriage. This relationship occurred for both men and women. It seems that if violence was common with the man or woman's parents, violence was more likely to occur in the marriage. And the violence was greater the more violence was witnessed or experienced in childhood. A very small percentage of battered women claim not to have come from homes where one parent acted violently toward the other or toward the children, or both.

But what about this question of violence or at least aggressive behavior in any family? There are those who believe that violence is at the very foundation of our society. Straus (1977-78) states three theoretical bases for the presence of wife abuse in our society. First, "the family is a type of social group characterized by a high

level of conflict." The conflict comes as a result of there being a greater amount of time at risk with family members than with non-family members. The more time spent with an individual or group of individuals, the more likely the potential conflict. There is also a greater intensity of involvement between family members and a broader range of activities over which to dispute. Actually the family life cycle is probably more stressful than any other interpersonal relationship. But if the family is so prone to conflict, why is violence the avenue of choice? Straus explains this when he says that "the United States is a nation which is fundamentally committed to the use of violence to maintain the status quo or to achieve desirable changes.", and "the child rearing patterns typically employed by American parents train children to be violent." Culturally, it is acceptable to deal with certain types of conflict in an aggressive manner. But is this the basis for the wife abuse syndrome? The research remains inconclusive.

"The question itself derives from the elementary assumption that any reasonable individual, having been beaten and battered by another person, would avoid being victimized again (or at least avoid the attacker)." (Gelles, 1976) Surprisingly, this is not the case in situations of wife abuse. An overwhelming number of battered women remain and endure the relationship despite the physical and psychological abuse. Why is it that so many battered women stay with their husband? And why is it that those who do leave often times will return again and again? Hendrix, La Godna, and Bohem (1978) state that the biggest reason for not getting out of the situation is fear. She may fear retaliation by her husband. She may fear for her children. She may be afraid of simply being on her own or afraid of what others would think of her. Other reasons for

remaining may include a belief that the husband will eventually change, economic hardship - her own or the family's, children who need a father's economic support, doubt as to her ability to accept the severing of that emotional tie, a negative self concept, stigmatization of divorce, or the difficulty of women with children to find work (Gelles, 1976). Eisenberg and Seymour (1978) conducted a study of women who had been battered. Their reasons for staying included the husband's pleading and promising to change, the husband's threats and or performance of further acts of violence, they had no where else to go, the children were still in the marital home, and fear. There are many factors which affect the decision of whether to go or stay. "How much is enough?" is a question many women ask themselves. "What is an intolerable level of violence?" This threshold differs for each woman, and is usually looked at in terms of the ratio between rewards and punishments. (Rewards being security, companionship, etc.) Studies have shown that the more severe the violence, the more likely the woman will seek outside help. Also, the frequency of the abuse has an effect on whether or not she will seek help (Gelles, 1976; Bass, 1979). The women who are beaten only about once a month or less tend to stay longer in the situation. They also many times never report the abuse and never seek outside aid, or even medical attention.

Many of these women already have a lowered self image and the thought of defying their husbands or fighting back in any way is just not feasible in their minds. This is similar to the idea of learned helplessness. They would rather endure the beatings and hope that things will change rather than allow anyone to think they cannot handle their marriage commitment.

There are those who claim that the phenomenon of the battered wife

staying in the relationship is evidence of Freudian theory of female masochism. The reasoning behind this is that if she is not actively seeking to get out of the abusive situation, she must be somehow enjoying the beatings, or they must not be as severe as she claims. But recent study in victimology may be able to more clearly explain why the women may feel compelled to remain. Attorney Alan D. Eisenberg says, "This (the fear experienced) can be compared to the Bettelheim syndrome where concentration camp prisoners identified with the guards to prolong their survival. Most women in that position simply feel imprisoned. The man's physical, financial, and social advantage has convinced her it is not only impossible, but immoral to escape his brutality." (Eisenberg, 1978)

Symonds (1979) lists three phases of reaction of victims to violent crimes. 1. Impact phase - This phase is one of shock, denial, and disbelief. The victim tries to "normalize" the situation, rationalizing that it is not so unusual for a husband to hit his wife. 2. Traumatic Psychological Infantilism - In this phase the victim "cries, clings to the perpetrator, or becomes ingratiating and appeasing." and 3. Depressive phase - Here the victim becomes withdrawn, self accusatory, believing that this is the way it has to be.

In severe cases, often the key ingredient to this mind control game is isolation. This has been found to be true in other victim situations such as POW's, rape victims, child abuse victims, etc. In wife abuse this isolation comes about in two ways. First, in many cases the husband is extremely jealous and suspicious of his wife and her interaction and contact with other people, especially men. Often the beatings come as a result of his suspicions. So, in order to avoid the beatings, the

woman will refrain from social activities. She many spend all her time at home, fearing even a simple trip to the grocery store might arouse his anger. In doing this she becomes physically isolated from normal social interaction, so she clings to him. The second way a wife abuse victim is isolated is because of the embarrassment or shame she may feel. She feels she cannot talk to family or friends about the beatings and therefore lacks the social support network that is necessary for her to stand up to her husband and to deal effectively with the situation.

What services are available for battered women? The abused wife has a myriad of needs. Fortunately, an increasing number of services are available to her. Higgins (1978) breaks down the services into three categories. One category consists of the emergency and transition services. Included are crisis hotlines, information and referral services, hospital emergency rooms, victim aid centers, the police department, and other emergency contacts such as clergy, doctors, attorneys, etc. This category of services is designed to meet the immediate needs of safety, medical attention, and shelter. These services can also be instrumental in helping a woman find temporary housing, legal help, and financial assistance. The second category includes counseling services for the woman, her husband, and joint sessions for the couple to come together, though frequently the husband will refuse to take part in any type of counseling. The two major purposes of counseling are to ventilate emotions such as anger, guilt, or frustration, while objectively analyzing the marriage relationship and then to devise a plan of action considering all the possible alternatives and their consequences. The abused woman has special counseling needs which will be discussed later. The third category of services deals with public information and planning.

The goals are threefold: to make the public aware of the problem, to plan and coordinate services and to publicize the available services.

"The objective is to provide the battered woman with service that is comprehensive, continuous, and coordinated." (Costantino, 1981)

For this reason a multidisciplinary approach is necessary because of the variety of needs of the abused woman. In order to prevent services from contradicting or rendering ineffective other services, a four component plan for the coordination of services is proposed by Costantino. The first part is the Intake Component, which is designed to assess needs, educate the woman as to what services are available, and to plan the initial strategy for intervention. Next, the Social Work Component is to assist with the psychological and emotional trauma and referral to appropriate services and organizations. Counseling within this component should be time limited and goal specific. Third is the Legal Component. This is geared to provide legal assistance in the form of legal advice or actual representation. This step helps the woman generate all possible avenues of action - protection orders, divorce proceedings, child custody, etc. And the final component is the Collaboration Component. This consists of a coordination by representatives of each referral agency for a comprehensive strategy and inter-services understanding and communication. This final step also helps to assess progress, to redefine goals, reevaluate strategies, and to assess weaknesses in the overall intervention process.

In cases of wife abuse, though psychological and legal counseling are important factors in intervention, they are clearly secondary to the immediate needs for physical safety. These women have special housing needs, whether overnight or long term, because of special

either locked into the situation or, as a few desperate women have done, take justice into their own hands. Recently, a number of court cases have appeared where women are on trial for manslaughter because they refused to be abused any further and have killed their husbands - some in self defense, some premeditated.

Another problem, though less dramatic, is the controversy over free legal services. Often, free legal services are refused women because their husbands earn too much money, making them ineligible for financial or legal assistance (Eisenberg and Seymour, 1979).

Among the social services there are also problems, the greatest being a lack of cooperation among the various social services and agencies. Disunity in dealing with the problems of the abused women leads to fragmentation and isolation of service agencies which in turn results in compounding the problems of the battered woman in, many times, their weak attempts to find comprehensive aid. Bass and Rice (1979) conducted a study surveying the varying attitudes and responses of service agencies to the plight of the battered woman. In this study, nine agencies, each considered likely to come in contact with family problems and domestic violence, were interviewed. They were all located in the same urban area and the format of the interview dealt with the agencies' awareness of violence in the family setting, awareness of the relationship between violence and other problems in the family, the agencies' procedures when encountering cases of family violence, and most importantly, the agencies' awareness of referral and resource services in the community. The data showed that many professionals were unaware of other services; some even had inaccurate information as to the provisions of other service agencies. And of those who knew of various professional services, many

circumstances. Often when these women choose to leave the violent situation they have no money, no place to go, and they lack the confidence to find alternative housing arrangements. Currently, housing officials are being sensitized to the needs of battered women. A few years ago a series of White House meetings on family violence made three recommendations:

1. battered women should be given priority in public housing
2. rent subsidies should be provided to battered women and their children
3. social service programs should be given higher priority for community development block grant funding (CDBG funding)

With temporary housing, most women stay approximately three to six weeks. After that, many are forced to go back to their spouse because they cannot afford long-term housing on their own. But efforts are being made to create more affordable long term housing (Golde, 1980).

What are the problems with these services and why are they sometimes ineffective? At a glance, the number of services available and the coverage of concerns would tend to indicate that everything is being done to alliviate the problem of wife abuse. Upon close examination, it is clear that each of the services in some way fails to fully deal with the problem.

The police force in itself is a very useful tool in the prevention of most violence. That is not always the case with wife abuse. The law enforcement services, if called at all, are usually called upon because of an immediate need for protection. The problem comes with the realization that the police regard this domestic violence as

"personal disturbances." They hesitate to get involved in any family disputes such as this. Many times, if and when they respond to a call of this nature, they simply try to calm down the two parties and then leave. No action is taken to prevent the husband from continuing his rage, which is likely to be even more severe because of his embarrassment in being confronted by the police. Eisenberg and Seymour (1978, 1979) submit that calling the police is not always profitable. They cite a situation where one woman called the police because her husband threatened to kill her. The police did not respond to the call and later she was found dead. They also argue that in no other situation of violence do the police advise the victim to reason with the attacker except in cases of domestic violence. But the statistics give good reason for police to be wary of domestic violence calls. It seems more officers are killed responding to this type of call than any other.

Another problem arises once charges have been filed against a batterer. Currently, there are no provisions in our judicial system to deal with domestic violence. The judicial system plays a "hands off" game when it comes to domestic disputes. The women who do press charges against their husbands have a hard time seeing results. One woman brought charges against her husband five times. Each time the judge made the husband promise to stay away from her and then the man was set free. This happens frequently in court situations such as these. The batterer is brought to court where he receives a reprimand and is ordered to stay away. There is no protection provided for the woman and nothing prevents him from going back and beating her again - only this time worse because he is enraged by the public measures she has taken against him. If the courts and the police cannot offer adequate assistance many women are

were not likely to share this information with their clients. Bass and Rice suggest on possible explanation for this was because they dealt with wife abuse in the same manner as any family problem - therefore eliminating the need for specialized services. Another problem between services was in competition for funding. Overall, most agencies failed to realize that the battered woman has a myriad of needs that no one organization can adequately meet.

Besides a lack of inter-service coordination, many times there are deficiencies within an organization. McEvoy, Brookings, and Brown (1983) looked at a community organization in terms of its effectiveness and strategy. The study focused primarily on the staff - their potential problems and deficiencies, and the network referral system. The methods of investigation consisted of interviews with the organization's staff, interviews with different staff from each of the services in the referral network, and the organization's records. As a result of the study, it was found that there were critical deficiencies in important aspects of the training of the staff. Some of the areas of need included crisis intervention counseling, legal expertise, training in both information and the process of legal counseling, and public information techniques such as reaching target audiences with adequate information. Also, there was a problem with "staff burn-out", in that sometimes individuals were given too much responsibility in the coordination of all the facets of the service. The other area of problems dealt again with the network of referral services. There tended to be little or no consultation and education as to what the other agencies had to offer the battered woman. Therefore referral was limited. There was a lack of coordination of treatment planning across services which could result in a level of mistrust.

This study suggests that these two major needs can be met at the same time. The organization should utilize professionals from each of the referral services as trainers for their staff. The network should include agencies such as law enforcement, legal services, community housing, psychological counseling, etc. A contact person should be established in each agency with the goal of educating them as to the services the organization provides.

What are the special counseling needs of the battered wife?

Research shows that "initially the universal reaction to victims of violence is to reject them." One reason for this is that it is hard for people to see the victim as completely innocent (Symonds, 1979). "What did you do to provoke him?" is a question commonly asked of the wife. It is suggested that the wife's behavior, rather than the husband's is dysfunctional." (Nichols, 1977) This is a pitfall those in the counseling professions must avoid. An abused woman needs compassion and security. She needs to learn to deal constructively with her emotions and to be able to think through her options clearly. Star, et al (1979) suggest seven principles in treatment and intervention:

1. Assess the immediate crisis - this requires a supportive response on the part of the counselor. The woman needs assurance that seeking help will actually be successful and beneficial.
2. Take an in-depth history - this includes information concerning her role in the relationship, her expectations, her feelings about herself and her spouse and any childhood experiences with violence.
3. Know the local resources - most women are unfamiliar with what services are available and what they can do.
4. Increase the client's mastery of her environment - help her to

renew confidence and self-esteem, while helping her to gain autonomy and decision making ability.

5. Encourage emotional monitoring - the abuse wife must learn to express her emotions as she has probably spent a great amount of time focusing on her spouse's problems and feelings while ignoring her own.
6. Offer a role model - establish a trust relationship as a peer.  
"Offer new ways to perceive reality."
7. Anticipate ambivalence - realize that she will experience uncertainty about even seeking help. Do not force her into decisions because of personal views, values and feelings. It may be quite awhile before she is ready to make any decisions about the situation.

This last point is stressed by Hendricks-Matthews (1982). She contends that many times intervention fails, not because of deficiencies in the therapy techniques, but because the woman is not yet ready for therapy. Those working with wife abuse victims must be sensitive to a woman's readiness for therapy, examining each case's individual differences, the extent of learned helplessness, the woman's perception of the causes of the violence and her locus of control. As in any counseling situation, inappropriate or poorly timed therapy could result in serious setbacks. The woman's feelings of hopelessness may be compounded or she may develop a disregard for a service agency because she felt pushed into something she was not prepared for. She may claim the ineffectiveness of the therapy to be the fault of the agency, when in actuality, there may be nothing wrong with the intervention techniques. As with a physical problem, an assessment of the situation is necessary before the prescription

of intervention. Chances of therapeutic success increase when specific individual needs are assessed and a specific strategy and timing of therapy can be developed (Hendricks-Matthews, 1982; Snyder, 1981).

There are several therapy options available to the battered woman. There is individual therapy, group therapy, and family counseling. There are support groups, consciousness raising groups and programs designed to provide assertiveness training. One such program was conducted in Dayton, Ohio. This pilot program, the Battered Women Project, in conjunction with the YWCA, offered a series of assertiveness training sessions. The program consisted of a twelve week plan where participants met three times a week for two hour sessions. The training focused on development of communication skills and assertiveness training within a supportive and positively reinforcing environment. According to the format, each session consisted of a sharing time where participants were encouraged to share their experiences, promoting an attitude of "you're not alone." This time was also used to discuss how the specific situations could have had positive outcomes with the use of assertiveness and communication techniques. Next, there was a time of role playing. The role playing was limited to actual situations and all possible outcomes were explored along with all possible patterns of response. Then a lecture was presented dealing with a specific assertiveness skill such as personal rights of an individual, verbal and non-verbal communication, compromise, making and refusing requests, clarifying messages or dealing with emotions. Assignments were made for the women to use those skills in not only their marriage/boyfriend relationships, but also in other interpersonal communications. Each woman was asked to keep a journal of experiences while using the assertiveness techniques. In the analysis

of the program, the study gathered self-reports from the participants. These self-reports showed the program to be successful in certain areas of behavior changes. Yet, the study is inconclusive and follow-up research is necessary to attain long term effects of the program (Jansen and Meyers-Abell, 1981).

Assertiveness training is but one type of coping skill available for the intervention process. Yet, the most crucial thing to remember is that each case of wife abuse has its own set of unique circumstances. Intervention strategies should be tailored to the specific situation. There will never be a pat answer to the problem of wife abuse. Its cures are as complex as its causes. Fortunately, headway is being made in areas of research and education of the public. Government and private funding has given a much needed boost to the services available to help the battered woman, but the battle is far from over. Wife abuse affects thousands of families each year. Its destruction is both physical and emotional. It cripples. It scars. It tears relationships apart. But progress in stopping it can only be made as the myths are dispelled and the truth about wife abuse is brought out into the light.

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