

WHAT KEEPS PEOPLE IN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS?

- **FEAR** – Fear can immobilize a victim; one may feel trapped, often torn between fear of leaving and fear of staying.
- **FINANCIAL DEPENDENCE** – It may be difficult finding work, affordable housing, food and clothing for a victim and their children, they may have few, or outdated job skills or little relevant experience. Working/career persons often depend on joint family resources to maintain their lifestyle and face this loss for themselves or their children in case of separation or divorce.
- **SELF ESTEEM AND GUILT** – A victim may feel that it is somehow their fault that they are being abused. Frequent battering reinforces feelings of worthlessness.
- **TRADITIONAL VALUE SYSTEM** – Cultural and religious influences regarding the sanctity of marriage or a committed relationship may make the victim try to hold on at all costs. They may have been advised by authority figures that this is their obligation.
- **ISOLATION** – Victims are often not aware of their legal rights. They may not know where to turn for emotional support. A victim may find it humiliating to tell others about the abusive situation. They may worry about the stigma of being labeled a “victim of domestic violence”. The system sometimes victimizes people looking for help and intervention.
- **EMOTIONAL DEPENDENCE** – A victim may love their partner, who may be affectionate at times. The “good” part of the cycle may reinforce a victim’s hope for change and reduce their resolve to leave.
- **HOUSING** – Lack of housing alternatives forces many victims to remain where they are. Low incomes, large families or unstable households are not attractive to potential landlords.
- **PHYSICAL ILLNESS/EXHAUSTION** – Coping with abuse demands great energy. A victim may have no reserves to resist illness, or they may be trying to recover from injuries.