Domestic Violence Doesn’t Discriminate

October is Domestic Violence Awareness month. Domestic violence is a national epidemic, and it is a situation that takes no favorites—all ages, genders, economic levels, and racial/ethnic groups are equally susceptible to its toxins, and it is a widespread disease that affects individuals, families, friends, relationships in the workplace, and the community as a whole.

Do you know someone who is being abused? Do you recognize the signs and symptoms? Do you know what to do or what to say? How can you help?

Signs and symptoms vary from person to person, and they may be very apparent or extremely subtle. Some very basic and frequent symptoms include:

- Reduced communication with family and friends
- Inability to concentrate
- Fear of leaving the house
- Obvious bruising and/or excessive headaches
- Constantly cancelling appointments or not making them in the first place
- Developing eating disorders or other negative behaviors (drinking, drug use, gambling, etc.)

- Displaying signs of anxiety, depression, anger, and/or extreme fatigue

What can you say to show support without creating a “shut down” situation? First of all, let the person know you believe him/her. Assure the individual you really care and realize it is hard to talk about. Let him/her know you are not going to pass judgment or make excuses. Offer to give the individual some numbers to call—the Employee Assistance number or the domestic violence hotline. Tell him/her about a safe house. Offer to make the call for him/her or to be with the person while he/she makes the call.

Conversely, avoid making statements such as— "Leave now." "Why did you go back?" “Did you do something to provoke the behavior?” These remarks will likely enhance the fear and defensiveness the person already carries.

Finally, once the person is more open and ready to share, reaffirm your desire to help. Point him or her in the direction of concrete help. Offer your assistance to drive the individual to a shelter, to file for a protection order, or for any other need that might be present. Be kind. Be open to his/her needs. Never be judgmental.

Don’t find fault; find a remedy.

Henry Ford
It’s That Time of Year Again

Goblins, turkeys, candles, elves, and celebrations are all making their way into the lives and hearts of young and old alike. Preparation can become overwhelming if we don’t plan, and while planning, it is a good idea to engage the rest of the family or those with whom you will be celebrating in the activities that prepare you to enjoy the days to their fullest. Consider how you can do some of these strategies:

➢ Dove tail your decorations. Wherever possible, put up things that can be used for more than one occasion. For example—use a green wreath on the door with white lights and some pine cones for Halloween. Add some colored lights and a bit of fruit for Thanksgiving; then you can top it off for Christmas/New Year’s with just a bit of glitter. One wreath—multiple uses.

➢ When you are picking up treats for Halloween, consider getting items that are in relatively plain packages, and they can be put in cups on the table for Thanksgiving as well. Pick up a few candy canes, and use the remainder of the treats in the Christmas stockings. This will save you money, and you won’t be left with a lot of extra candy that you will probably never eat.

➢ Cooking and baking are major activities for a lot of us. You more than likely don’t have any major cooking for Halloween besides a pot of chili and some popcorn. If you like popcorn trim on your tree, pop some extra, and put it in a large, tightly sealed container to be opened when it is time to trim the tree in December. Make extra chili so it can be used for a supper on a night or two in November and December. That way, you can concentrate on whatever costumes you want to assemble and be ready to start preparations for Thanksgiving. Determine what items you will be serving for both Thanksgiving and Christmas. Cook ahead what you can, and separate the dishes into right size for each holiday. Put them in the freezer, and make a note of what is done, and when it should be defrosted. This way, the more you have gradually done, the less there will be to do at the last minute. Now, the only big thing you will have to prepare is the main dish and cut up the fresh fruits and vegetables. Put together some leftovers for lunches between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

➢ Now that Christmas is on the horizon, check your list to see how many things you WON’T have to prepare. This will give you some time to prepare cookies for home and gifts. Let the kids or grandparents help out in this phase of your preparations. Decide which items you are going to prepare on which days, and then do so.

➢ Finally there is the gift giving phase. If you want to save time, use gift boxes that are pre-printed with holiday designs. Another idea is to use white or other plain color boxes and tie them with a ribbon. Add a name tag and all is done. The tree will probably have to be set up. This is another good opportunity to have everyone pitch in. You might even consider extended family, or a group of friends to help decorate the tree and end the evening with hot cocoa and some of the cookies you baked.

These are some ideas to relieve your stress over the holidays. Employ those that work for you, and be open to stress beating tips you may glean from friends and family members.

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