



*We have a new guest columnist joining us here:  
**Joy McCreary**, A domestic violence survivor herself, is working towards becoming an advocate. She is currently enrolled in college, where she is double majoring in Nursing and Human Services. A mother of four, she and her family reside in Southern Oregon. Joy hopes to one day open a shelter of her own, and help other women break the bonds of abuse through advocacy, community education and improving awareness.*

## Part II: **Where Are We Today**

The current situation in our country, and even in our local community, isn't much better for the women than it was in the 1500's. With Josephine County losing funding for law enforcement, it isn't likely to get any better. It is always entertaining to see how the government likes to put a spin on the situation and say that crime is on the downswing, as well as how arrests are down. Sure they are; you have fewer police to arrest the violators! Women's Crisis Support Team, a local agency funded mainly by private grants begs to differ. In the year 2005, they received 4197 calls for help from our community alone. (Hoag P.i.) Interestingly enough, in that same year, the police and sheriffs in Josephine County had only 527 reported cases of domestic violence reported. Of those reported cases, there were only 170 arrests made (Crewse). The women have learned the lesson that the police aren't the answer to this equation.

Today, we live in a world of opportunity; that is, unless you live in the bondage of abuse. In a little while, you will have the opportunity to walk in the footsteps of women who lived in this situation. You may think to yourself, "Sure, these people had it rough, but it's only a few people "You would be right in the fact that I will only be covering a few stories. Before I do that, though, I want you to know that these situations are not isolated incidents. Domestic violence is indeed an epidemic. I am going to barrage you with statistical information, and just when you thought it couldn't get any more depressing, it will. I wish I could shower you with dewdrops and rainbows, but that just isn't reality. Still, I do want to acknowledge that domestic violence occurs by women against men, and in same sex couples, however more than 95% of all documented incidences are perpetrated by men against their female partners, so, in this paper, I will be referring to the vast majority (Stewart 23).

I think we could all agree that homelessness is a problem in our society. What you may not know, is that 90% of all women with children that are homeless are fleeing domestic violence. A shocking 80% of all homeless runaway children are also trying to escape DV

(Black Church ). If these families were given the support they needed, our homeless problem would decrease rapidly.

There are many women's health issues in the media today. A person can see articles, or public service announcements, urging women to get a mammogram, or perhaps an ad for teenage girls to get a vaccine that will help prevent cervical cancer. Why don't we hear that domestic violence it is the #1 health care concern of women today and that more women are injured annually by DV than by auto accidents, rapes and muggings combined? "That's not a healthcare concern," you might say, "Those are accidents." You would be correct. More women are treated for DV complications annually than for the combination of cancers, strokes and heart attacks combined. Battering is the single largest cause of injury to women (Stewart 23).

Being injured at work is a fairly common occurrence. Workman's Compensation insurance exists for just that fact. It is doubtful that domestic violence would even enter your mind when thinking of problems in your place of employment; however, homicide is the #1 cause of death for women in the workplace. The following statistics may surprise you. 60% of senior executives know that DV has a negative effect on the productivity of their company, 78% of human resource directors have identified DV as a 'substantial' employee problem, 94% of corporate security directors ranked DV as a 'high security risk' These are knowledgeable, educated people , and they see DV for the epidemic it truly is.

Domestic violence costs our country billions every year. "The financial cost of emergency room care, hospitalization, psychiatric treatment, counseling, lost wages from missed work, and rehabilitation is estimated by the National Crime Victim survey to cost \$150,000,000 per year." (Stewart, 24) When thinking of all that, add on the costs of prosecutors, judges, court staff, police, jails, court-appointed attorneys, child protective services, advocacy groups, shelters and public service organizations. There are so many hidden costs that arise; the cost is in the billions to taxpayers.

Although domestic violence touches all people, the ones my heart goes out to the most are the innocents, the children. The US Advisory Board on Child Abuse suggests that, "Domestic Violence may be the single major precursor to child abuse and neglect fatalities" (Family Violence Prevention Fund). Studies indicate that between 3.3 and 10 million children witness DV annually, and one study done that involved 2,245 children and teenagers found that recent exposure to DV was a reliable predictor of that child's violent behavior (Black Church). Another study that compared delinquent and non delinquent youths showed that a history of violence in the family was the most significant difference in these groups (Black Church). I feel the saddest of these facts is that 63% of boys and men aged 11 to 20 who are serving time for homicide killed their mother's abuser (Stewart, 23). They knew what I do, that no one would protect her, and so they took it upon themselves. What is this country coming to when the only protection a woman gets is from her eleven-year-old son?

Yet, another tragedy is what is happening to the most innocent of all, the unborn. 15-25% of all battered women are pregnant. (Stewart, 23) The March of Dimes states that the amount of birth defects have risen dramatically, and the amount of the defects caused by battering are

greater than all the diseases and illnesses pregnant women are immunized for. (Stewart, 23)

Why does she stay? It's a fair question, and one I've even asked myself. In high school, I had a friend named Ann. She, her step-sister Becky, and I were close friends. We spent most weekends together and goofed off the way most teenagers do. Years later, my mother had run into Ann's mother in the store. They realized we were both in Hawaii. Ann and I got in touch, and she told me that her husband, a very large Samoan man, was very physically abusive. She continued on to say that it was accepted in his culture, and she was trying to get him not to think in "the island way". I was haughty and told her that if he hit her once, and she chose to forgive him, then that was soft heartedness. If he hit her again after that, and she chose to stay, then she was just plain stupid. I actually told her that to her face. I felt so mature and worldly. (I was about 24). Years later, my mother ran into Ann and her mother in the grocery store. She had finally left her husband after he had hit their daughter, knocking her teeth out. My mother said that Ann wasn't "right". She had looked at my mother for a long time, and smiled slightly and crookedly. She said "I remember you, you were nice to me." Ann's mother had discreetly told mine that Ann had permanent brain damage. I remember talking to my mother about Ann, almost condescendingly, wondering why she didn't get any help. We knew it was available, we knew what he was doing was against the law. That was before I understood just how ineffective our laws are.

A study was done in 1999 to try to understand just why the woman stays. Income was one of the main reasons. 60% of the women stated that they earned less than \$20,000 a year and were unable to support themselves. 32 % of women had no income. 55% of the women had false hope; they thought that they would repair the relationship. They learned what I learned too late, that the only person you can fix is yourself. Fear prevented 45% of the women from leaving (Wexler 44). They didn't think they would be able to take their children with them. 44% of women stated that they didn't feel there was enough opportunity available to them to support themselves and their families financially. Education was also a deciding factor for many. 40% of the women questioned had no education beyond high school. I find the saddest is that 36% of the women responding did not know of any help available to them (Wexler 44).

Domestic violence has many women in its manacles, but why? One reason is something called Stockholm Syndrome, or SS. This condition was given validity after a bank robbery in Stockholm Sweden on August 23rd, 1973. The bank robbers held four hostages for over one hundred and thirty hours. They were strapped with dynamite and held in a bank vault until their rescue. These captives shockingly showed concern for their captors and fear from the law enforcement that came to deliver them. The hostages came to believe they were being protected from the police by the bank robbers, and one of the captives eventually became engaged to a captor (Hoag 30). This condition is frequently seen in abused children, prisoners of war, cult members, concentration camp prisoners and abused women to just name a few.

Another study was done by Albert D. Biderman, who wrote *The Manipulation of Human Behavior*. In this study, he found his "Chart of Coercion." This study was performed after the Korean War, in response to an incident where American Soldiers acted in treasonous ways or

otherwise out of character. These techniques used by the prison guards at the POW camp are very similar to what abusers do to control their partners. They are: isolation, monopolization of perception, induced debility and exhaustion, threats, occasional indulgences, demonstrating "omnipotence," enforcing trivial demands and degradation. (Hoag 32 ) Furthermore, it is stated that both POW's and women fleeing from abuse act in similar puzzling ways. According to Biderman:

When prisoners of war return to their homeland, they sometimes act in ways that are socially unacceptable. They have been isolated, brainwashed, tortured, forced to do things that are despicable to them, they have also learned to rely on their captors for food, shelter and life itself. They learn that the only way to survive is to keep the guards happy. So it is with domestic violence (qtd in Hoag 33).

An important thing to understand in situations of domestic violence is the cycle of abuse. This is a cyclic phenomenon that reoccurs again and again over time. Sometimes the cycles are far and few between, while sometimes a whole cycle can be completed in one day.



Never was there a woman who did not recognize this cycle. It all begins with the set up, and is followed by the abuse, then the guilt, followed by rationalization, then the honeymoon stage. This is followed by fantasy about future abuse and planning, and then she is set up again. Let me walk you through a typical example. The set up is a situation that the abuser creates in which the woman can't help but fail. For example, she is supposed to cook a special dinner, but she doesn't have all the ingredients, or maybe she doesn't have money to buy them, or she doesn't own a car to get to the store. Now he has a reason to be angry.

He feels justified in his anger and is violent. The violence will escalate over time. It usually starts with verbal abuse and then moves to the physical when the woman gets used to the verbal, and it doesn't have the desired effect. After the explosion, he will feel his version of "guilt". This is not true guilt that contains remorse, but more of a concern about getting in trouble. Because he is very important to himself, he shouldn't feel guilty, so he quickly shifts the blame, rationalizes, and tells her how it is her fault.

"You should have had that dinner made. If you had, I wouldn't have gotten so angry," he justifies. If the woman tries to defend herself, there is a new onslaught. "You always have an excuse, you can't do anything right." Then what every woman waits for: the Honeymoon stage. Here, it's all hearts and flowers. He courts her, loves her, and is kind. This is the way she wants it to be forever. He quickly gets bored of this and becomes restless, she senses what is happening. He fantasizes about past abuse and plans a new set up.

He has a new accusation, often based on her heightened sense of what is about to happen. The woman is often blamed for hiding something or having an affair. I mailed a Christmas card to an American soldier serving in Iraq. Obviously, I was having an affair with this man. Abusers don't need to behave logically; they just need to make sense to themselves. This is called "Crazy making."

"Crazy making" is another tool in the abuser's box. Abusers like to twist things around so much; you really start to question your own sanity. I remember my ex-husband shoving me across the kitchen and into a counter. The result was a large bruise across the top of my buttocks. It was about four inches wide and ten inches long. I remember a few days later, when it was at its worst, I showed it to him. "Look what you did to me," I said.

"I don't see anything," he said blandly.

"It's right here." I stated emphatically.

"I don't know what you are talking about," He stated evenly. I remember going back into the bathroom and again looking in the mirror, making sure it was indeed still there. I wondered why he couldn't see what was plain to me. The reason is that he didn't see what he didn't want to see. He also liked to mess with my head. Lundy Bancroft, an expert in the field, describes it this way: "Using confusion tactics in arguments, subtly or overtly changing the subject, insisting that you are thinking or feeling things you aren't, twisting your words, and many other tactics that serve as glue to pour into your brain. You may leave arguments with him feeling like you are losing your mind" (Bancroft 67). Mr. Bancroft further states, "One of the most frequent complaints I get from abused women is that their partners lie repeatedly, a form of psychological abuse that in itself can be highly destructive over time" (Bancroft 67).

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*We invite any of you to contribute on this subject. We feel it is important to continue the discussion of domestic violence.*