

## Breaking Free From Violence and Abuse

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Violence against women is like a cyclone that leaves a swath of destruction behind as it rips through the lives of countless women and children. The revolving storms affect women coming from all walks of life and leave them destroyed in a plethora of different ways. Overcoming the scourge of violence against women demands attention to the root causes of the problem which include patriarchal customs, learned gender roles, power and control, childhood trauma, alcohol, pornography and other social influences. Violence against women can be prevented through the role of public awareness, physicians and the Church.

Through the role of public awareness, violence against women can be effectively deterred. By saturating the media with messages that promote individual involvement, people can reinforce and effect massive social change. For instance, a study was conducted by the University of South Carolina addressing this issue during 1992 in five American cities. It was ethnically proportioned in order to decrease chance of error. The study found that while most Americans were aware of the effects of domestic violence in their lives, they were truly unaware of the extent of the problem in the country. While eighty percent of the people were willing to participate in the deterrence of violence, only twenty percent knew what they could do in order to address the problem. This study revealed that Americans needed to be educated about the prevalence of the problem and be given some direction of action. Also, by means of creating a violence intolerant environment, victims of violence will begin to realize that they aren't alone and this type of behavior shouldn't be condoned. Victims of such violence fail to realize that by not speaking out about the violence committed against them, they in fact condone the behavior

and something as horrendous as death may result. When people are educated about the impacts of such a problem, they are able to voice their experiences and realize that no woman should have to be subjected to violence. They are also able to get therapy from physicians who can help them overcome the problem.

Also, through the role of physicians, programs can be implemented to prevent violence against women, and they can be then be evaluated rigorously for their effectiveness in deterrence. Since medical professionals are often on the front line while dealing with such violence as they are either the first to see the victim or the first to whom the victim will confide in, it affords them the opportunity to intervene and help stop the problem. For instance, if a battered woman is admitted to a the Emergency room after falling down multiple stairs, a physician can intervene with safety planning and can provide a myriad of resources that can help prevent further harm and possible homicide. One of the main jobs of a physician is to achieve and maintain good health in patients so in order to do so they should also ensure that the patient's safety is seen to be part of the paradigm. Also by means of writing clear medical records, physicians can help the criminal justice system to understand the severity of the problem and the injuries received. Many victims turn first to medical professionals so by having a clear medical record they can have the documented evidence of the abuse. If physicians were to document violence carefully, their diagnosis could trigger referrals to appropriate shelters and the development of a safety plan. Physicians can make invaluable contributions to increase victim safety and community involvement in the process of effectively preventing violence against women.

Finally, through the role of the Church, we can effectively combat abuse and bring about a change in the abuser's conduct. By means of preaching and teaching the word of God, men

could be taught of their role as husbands and fathers. One of the challenges that many countries globally face is the domination of men and the submissiveness of women in society. If people are given the spiritual guidance about how husbands ought to love their wives, they will understand that abuse is not only a social ill or criminal behavior but also a sin. Also, through the church, the victim can be provided an open and loving spiritual environment. Woman who are abused and are afraid of seeking help can discuss problems with their pastor or any other trustworthy person with full confidence. This way they won't have to carry the burden of the abuse alone and the church can help them seek therapy in order to create a violence intolerant environment.

Public awareness, physicians and Church can significantly prevent violence against women. Public awareness can saturate the media with messages that address the extent of the problem, educate people, and promote individual involvement. Physicians can implement medical programs and document evidence of the abuse. Whereas, the Church can be used to bring about a change in the abuser's conduct and provide the victim a supportive environment. Violence against women is not only a physical assault but also an attack on women's dignity and freedom, which is why we must galvanize the public to address the scourge of violence and eradicate this devastating societal norm.