

MAN TO MAN

Gondolf • Russell

Human Services Institute / Suizburger & Graham



A Guide for Men in Abusive Relationships

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Preface

All of us have troubles with our relationships from time to time. We may argue with our spouse or spitefully withdraw from her. Very often those bad times turn into abuse. In fact, a surprising number of men have abused their wives—often unknowingly, often not admitting it. When this happens, the relationship inevitably changes, whether we abuse again or not. It becomes an abusive relationship in which our wife (or partner) fears the potential for more wife abuse and consequently looks at us differently. If there is a chance you're in such a position, we want to talk with you about it—man to man.

Let's start with a fundamental question, so we know exactly what we're talking about:

What is wife abuse? Our definition is simple: a husband's actions that destroy his wife's sense of self-esteem. It's not just what we do, but also the psychological impact it has. We are, of course, most concerned with abuse in the form of physical violence, that is "battering." But we also realize that mental and controlling abuse can have severe consequences.

We use the term "wife abuse" throughout this book to refer to abuse directed at one's wife *or* at one's lover or partner. Abuse between live-in or dating couples, who are not legally married, can be just as severe as between those who are married. Neither getting married nor divorced necessarily stops abuse. Changes in the legal status of relationships may even intensify abuse.

The Purpose of This Book

This book doesn't present a secret formula or an instant cure for wife abuse. We can tell you right off there isn't any—and you should be suspicious of anyone who suggests one. What *Man To Man* offers are the lessons of other men who have been abusive and have changed. It is a way to pass along some of their wisdom to you—a man they would like to reach out to, a man they would call a "brother in change."

The point is you are not alone. Others of us are working at it, and want you to know that you can work at it too. Take from these pages what makes sense to you and use it the best you can. Get some support and help. Countless others are doing so. Your efforts can and will make a difference. *But*, above all you must have the guts to face the problem and do something about it.

You can put your guard down for a moment. This book is not some psychological "head-trip." At this point, we don't care why you might be abusive. A doctor doesn't care how you broke your leg before he sets it. The question is, How do we stop the abuse—and then stay stopped?

This book is also not a marriage treatment. We are not out to save your marriage or help you get your wife or lover back. Many abusive marriages are beyond saving. What's important is that you make it safe for others to be around you. This is the basis for improving old and new relationships.

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Chapter 1

FACING THE FACTS

We want to talk with you, *man to man*. No beating around the bush or fancy lingo; just some hard facts we men must face. A lot of us are abusive—often in ways we don't even realize. We put women down, we control them, we physically hurt them. Often we don't mean it. Often we're unaware of our effect on them. We may brush it off as no big deal. Or we may think they had it coming. We may think, like Charlie, that the abuse is natural or expected.

"SOMETHING SNAPS"

Charlie has been a conscientious furniture sales representative for some twenty years. He is also the devoted father of four children, two of whom are in college. He and Mary, his wife, have had their "tense times," but only in the last few years has he ever hit anyone. One day he slapped Mary and gave her a black eye. Since then he has been physically abusive again and again.

Charlie asks, "Why? Why? It just seems automatic. Something snaps and—wham!—I go off like a gun." He recalls recently throwing a bowl of chili at Mary, and swinging at her. "She knows I don't like chili cooked with those kind of beans. But I still shouldn't have hit her. I know that is the one thing you don't do. My father drummed that into me. You never hit a woman. I mean, that is about as low as you can go."

In recent years, the occasional outbursts worsened. Charlie started breaking Mary's favorite china and other possessions. Finally, his wife went "on a vacation" and sent the children to stay with a relative, leaving Charlie to fend for himself.

Charlie admits that he has some rigid attitudes that can lead to angry confrontations. He believes, for instance, that children should obey their parents, "especially in this time of confusion and doubt." So, if his younger daughter does not do the dishes when he tells her to—right after dinner—or leaves her room messy after being told to clean it up, "I let her know what I think about it. That's my duty. Someone has to keep them in line."

Charlie also explains that he feels he must always be on top of his work. "There are the end of the quarter reports to be completed, a new sales representative to train—who doesn't know what he is doing—and my wife's mother is in poor health." He sighs, "It does start to wear on a guy after a while." As the tensions mount so does Charlie's sense of responsibility. "Whenever Mary empties her basket of problems, I feel I have to fix them all."

In thinking about his style, Charlie says, "I admit I'm a perfectionist. If you're going to do something you might as well do it right. Why have the bricks out of line or a nail bent if, with a little more effort, you can do it right? I know Mary or the children offer to help me sometimes, but it isn't always worth it because I'm so demanding. I realize I should be a little more patient, but it's hard."

As he reexamines his abusive incidents, Charlie recalls that he "had just had it." When asked why he didn't do something about his feelings before they turned to violence, he explains, "I should not have to tell people that I'm fed up. They should have enough sense to know that they are out of line." He does not talk specifically about his wife without prodding. Rather than implicate her in the abuse, he criticizes her homemaking:

"I give Mary all sorts of things, too much in fact. I let her decorate the house the way she wanted and gave her the money she needed. I was giving, giving—and she was fretting about little things."

As Charlie realized, abuse is no good—for us or them. If it hasn't caught up with you yet, it is going to sooner or later. Many men we know who have been abusive find themselves deserted and alone, despised by their wives or lovers and children, shamed by their neighbors. More and more, men who abuse are even ending up in jail. Our society is starting to get tough with those who abuse!

ABUSE ISN'T WORTH IT

When we abuse women, we destroy those who we love. We harm women much more than we ever realize. We hurt them physically because we don't know our own strength. We hurt them emotionally because we don't know the impact of our words and actions. We hurt their self-esteem, their will, their love.

We also hurt our children. They will probably become emotionally crippled because of our abuse. Even more frightening, it's very likely that they will grow up to be abusive like their father and have troubled relationships of their own.

Do we want this for ourselves or for our loved ones? More and more men are saying, "*No!*" They are trying to do something to stop their abuse. We think you might want to join them.

STOPPING THE ABUSE

You can stop your abuse. Although it isn't easy, it can be done. If you accept the challenge, we know that you will appreciate the results. While gaining more control over your behavior—which is itself a good feeling—you may even discover a world of new friendships and better relationships. This may sound like a puffed-up promise. Nevertheless, it is a possibility—one we think is worth working for.

Our first goal is to help you stop any behavior that even approaches violence—especially any grabbing, pushing, shoving, hitting, or hair pulling. These are not only harmful, they are against the law. The ultimate goal to work toward is staying *stopped*. We have to begin to change not just our behavior, but ourselves, in order to do this.

Our experience convinces us that the choice, to abuse or not abuse, is ours. The abuse is part of our being a man—the wrong part. It is the wrong-headed part of our upbringing that says men solve problems by being violent, they get their way by being tough, they show they are better than women by putting women down.

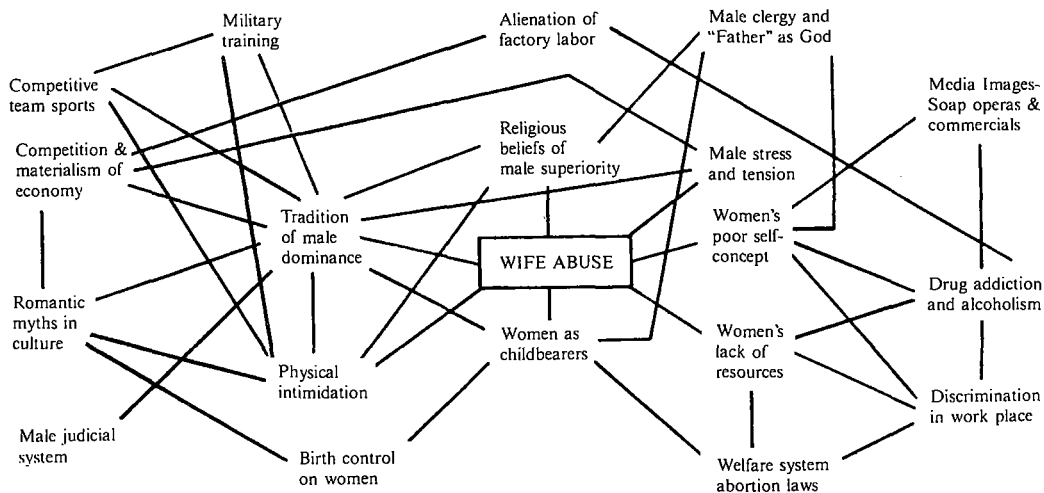
In other words, abuse is rooted in our society's glorification of violence and sexism. Men are in positions of power in politics, business, and religion. We portray women as our servants or sex objects. You may say, "But society is being turned around by things like the women's movement." Nevertheless, resistance accompanies the change. Society still provides plenty of encouragement to be abusive.

A *Macro-Analysis Diagram of Wife Abuse* shown in Figure 1 was constructed by a group of men in the RAVEN program. It illustrates the interrelationship of many causes of wife abuse. If you join a self-help group (see Chapter 3), your group might also "brainstorm" a series of causes of wife abuse. The approach can be used with other problems, too, such as child abuse. Notice that "wife abuse," appearing in the box at the center of the diagram, is the focal point of a network of social causes.

Men, more than ever, are trying to keep women in their place. We sometimes feel women are taking something away that is rightfully ours: our jobs, our power, our fun. All this can trigger abuse, but none of it makes abuse right. Our wives or lovers may be the focus for our abuse, but there is no excuse for abusive behavior. They are not the "cause" of our problem.

Figure 1

Macro-Analysis Diagram of Wife Abuse



Source: The "Analysis Diagram of Wife Abuse" was developed by RAVEN (Rape and Violence End Now, PO Box 24159, St. Louis, MO 63130). Reprinted by permission.

Chapter 2

BUT I'M NOT ABUSIVE!

"SHE GOT HYSTERICAL"

During the summer while Joe was laid off from work, he and his wife decided to play cards. They had a disagreement over the rules. "She started arguing over nothing, so I grabbed her by the arm and told her to forget it." He admits to "yanking her pretty hard and giving her perhaps a bit of a shove." As Joe continues recalling the incident, "Then she got hysterical and started to run for the neighbors." Only when pressed does he admit, "I may have slapped her just to try to bring her to her senses."

His wife broke loose and managed to reach the neighbors. Joe went inside to wait for her, but she did not return alone. The police arrived, escorted her to get her clothes, and took her and the child to a shelter for women in crisis.

According to Joe, poor communication caused the problem. Joe points out:

"I remember being at work and expecting to come home and find the house clean, dinner on the table, and my wife with her pants off waiting for me. I'd get there and find just the opposite. The house is a mess and the last thing my wife wants is to go to bed. I realize now that she couldn't read my mind. I had all these expectations that were bound to make me disappointed when I got home."

Joe's battered wife had been leery about talking to him for some time "for fear of setting him off." Joe's expressionless face was hard to read. She had no bearings, until he reached his limits and had a fit of violence. "The anger leads to violence before you know it," observes Joe. "It just takes over and you become a different person." Joe's wife unfortunately bore the brunt of this "different person." "She thought I was about to kill her at least five different times."

Joe admits throwing her down on the bed after she danced with another man one night in a bar. He recalls another fight in which she said she lost her love for him when he threw her first child over the fence because she was crying. Joe claims that he was just "wrestling with the kid because I wanted her to grow up tough." Joe sees himself as considerate. He doesn't mind "doing the dishes once in a while, but just not all the time."

Joe's father always had his own way, according to Joe. His mother "still has to chop wood and really work for him." As Joe explains:

"My father ruled the house. His word was law. My mother would always say, 'You will have to wait until we talk to your father,' or if I did something wrong, 'Wait until your father comes home.' He did what he wanted. He would paint the house pink, if he felt like it, and you'd better like it...or else." Moreover, his father "never used to listen very well to other people." Joe notes that he has not communicated very well with his wife either. They have communicated best when she was at the shelter or over the phone.

"I knew I needed help, but I didn't know where to go. Sometimes I thought maybe I was cracking up and should be sent away. But no, I was normal."

Joe was sure the problem would go away with time. "I always felt I could handle it. I didn't need doctors. I didn't need counselors. I could handle it. It suddenly occurred to me that I wasn't handling it. When my wife left me, I sat down and thought, Hey, look what you've done to your life—to your nice family. The way I was

raised, everything that happens is the man's responsibility. I was taught not to cry. You don't show your feelings...I thought I could handle anything. Actually, I could take care of nothing." Joe went on to explain, "I didn't consider myself a wife beater at all. I thought I was the farthest thing from it—a conscientious husband."

DENIAL IS PART OF THE PROBLEM

The reaction of most men to abuse is, "I am not abusive to my wife!" We may even think that we have a right to "be physical" with our wives, or that what goes on in our house is our business. If someone suggests we have a problem we often feel defensive. Even if we admit we have a problem, like Joe, we think that it will go away on its own or that we can will it away.

It all adds up to the same thing: denial. We avoid taking a hard look at ourselves because we may not like what we see. Also, we fear that admitting problems may make us look weak. After all, being a "man" means being in charge, being in control, taking care of your own self. Therefore we deny any problems—physical, emotional or chemical. We swear never to lose that control again, and wind up trying to control "her" more.

Almost everyone has at some time been abusive in some form. And the best way to stop the abuse is to admit our abusiveness. That way we can become aware of it and start to guard against it. If you don't recognize you have a dirty room, you'll never clean it up. On a sheet of paper, complete the *CSR Abuse Index*, on page 10, to see where you stand.

CSR Abuse Index

Directions: For each question, indicate the number from the designated scale that best describes your relationship with your wife or lover.

QUESTIONS #1 to 14

- | | 3 - Frequently | 2 - Sometimes | 1 - Rarely | 0 - Never |
|-------|----------------|--|------------|-----------|
| _____ | 1. | Do you continually monitor your wife's time and make her account for every minute (when she runs errands, visits friends, commutes to work, etc.)? | | |
| _____ | 2. | Do you ever accuse her of having affairs with other men or act suspicious of her? | | |
| _____ | 3. | Are you ever rude to your wife's friends? | | |
| _____ | 4. | Do you ever discourage her from starting friendships with other women? | | |
| _____ | 5. | Are you ever critical of things such as her cooking, her clothes or her appearance? | | |
| _____ | 6. | Do you demand a strict account of how your wife spends money? | | |
| _____ | 7. | Do your moods change radically, from very calm to very angry, or vice versa? | | |
| _____ | 8. | Are you disturbed by your wife's working or by the thought of her working? | | |
| _____ | 9. | Do you become angry more easily when you drink? | | |
| _____ | 10. | Do you pressure your wife for sex much more often than she likes? | | |
| _____ | 11. | Do you become angry if your wife does not want to go along with your requests for sex? | | |
| _____ | 12. | Do you and your wife quarrel much over financial matters? | | |
| _____ | 13. | Do you quarrel much about having children or raising them? | | |
| _____ | 14. | Do you ever strike your wife with your hands or feet (slap, punch, kick, etc.)? | | |

QUESTIONS #15 to 26

- | | 6 - Frequently | 5 - Sometimes | 4 - Rarely | 0 - Never |
|-------|----------------|--|------------|-----------|
| _____ | 15. | Do you ever strike her with an object? | | |
| _____ | 16. | Do you ever threaten her with an object or weapon? | | |
| _____ | 17. | Have you ever threatened to kill either her or yourself? | | |

- _____ 18. Do you ever give your wife visible injuries (such as welts, bruises, cuts, etc.)?
- _____ 19. Has your wife ever had to treat any injuries from your violence with first aid?
- _____ 20. Has she ever had to seek professional aid for any injury at a medical clinic, doctor's office, or hospital emergency room?
- _____ 21. Do you ever hurt your wife sexually or make her have intercourse against her will?
- _____ 22. Are you ever violent toward children?
- _____ 23. Are you ever violent toward other people outside your home and family?
- _____ 24. Do you ever throw objects or break things when you are angry?
- _____ 25. Have you ever been in trouble with the police?
- _____ 26. Has your wife ever called the police or tried to call them because she felt she or members of your family were in danger?

_____ Total

To score responses simply add up the points for each question. This sum is your Abuse Index Score. To get some idea of how abusive your relationship is, compare your Index score with the following chart:

| | |
|--------|---------------------|
| 120-92 | Dangerously abusive |
| 91-35 | Seriously abusive |
| 34-13 | Moderately abusive |
| 12-0 | Nonabusive |

If at all possible, your wife should also complete a CSR Abuse Index form. The differences in the results should be discussed with the program counselor. Do you grossly underestimate your abusiveness? If so, why?

Source: Adapted from the "CSR Abuse Index" in *THE FAMILY SECRET* by William A. Stacey and Anson Shupe. Copyright © 1983 by William Stacey and Anson Shupe. Adapted by permission of Beacon Press.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

You are far from alone. At least one third of all marriages suffer some physical abuse. About two million women are beaten each year and as many as 2,000 die at their husband's hands.

Sure, men are occasionally hit or slapped too—but it's a small proportion compared with the number of women seriously abused. Most

often a woman's attack on a man is in retaliation for long-standing abuse, or in self-defense. Even if we are attacked, there is a big difference in the outcome. We simply do more damage.

You may say, "But women know how to hurt a man emotionally." First of all, that doesn't justify returning the abuse. Second, we often make too much out of what they say. We need to learn the difference between criticism and an attack, and between ordinary demands and an attack. We also can and must learn to respond non-violently if we are ever "attacked."

TERRORISM IN THE HOME

The physical abuse, however, is only part of the problem. An occasional hit or shove may not seem like a big deal, but its impact goes well beyond the incident. Many battered women liken abuse to terrorism. You only need to strike once and the victims will live in fear of the possibility of another attack. A few terrorist acts in Europe were enough to keep American tourists away one summer. Battered women end up expressing the same fear and hesitation that so many of our tourists did (See *A Woman's Story*, Appendix A).

Most men are surprised to learn that they don't have to hit or shove a woman to abuse her. Many women report that the most damaging abuse can be mental. We may throw things around, hit the wall, break a vase, or hurt the pets. We may use "put downs," suspicion, jealousy, or name-calling. We may deny our wife the car, contact with friends, money for the groceries, or the right to attend school. It all amounts to the same thing: manipulation of our wives in order to make us feel better about ourselves.

Some women even report brainwashing. They start to think that it is all their fault. They feel guilty and ashamed. They lose their self-esteem and that makes them even more vulnerable. It is a lot like getting a mental form of AIDS. Self-esteem is our mental immunity system. When it's affected, she is less able to ward off doubts and fears. She therefore becomes less able to change or meet the demands of the relationship.

ABUSE IS CONTROL

Abuse is about trying to control somebody else's life. We act like we own the other person. We want them to look, talk and think in a way that pleases us. A man with a weak ego prefers this. It makes him feel like he has power. He feels like he is in charge.

But there's little lasting satisfaction in building up our egos at somebody else's expense. The more we depend on others to prove we are "men," the less manly we are. It means we are insecure about ourselves. Also, the more we try to control another person, the less receptive they are going to be and the more we will try to remake them. It's all a vicious circle.

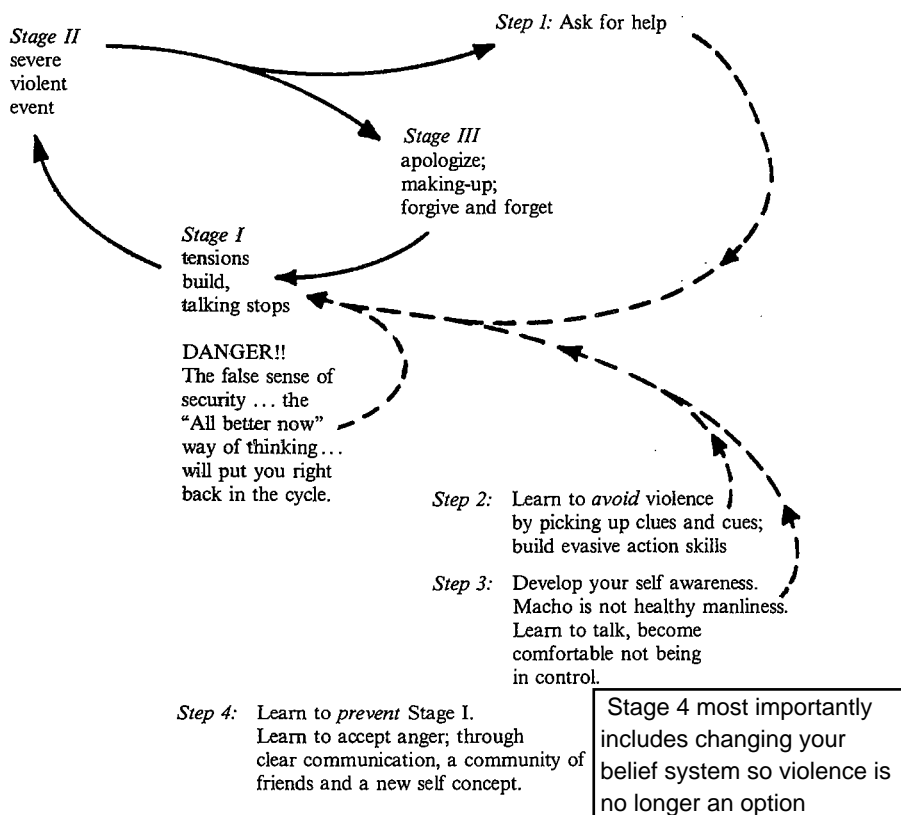
THE ABUSE CYCLE

You may have already heard that abuse happens in cycles (See Figure 2, page 14). This is important because it alerts us to a major pitfall men face. We tend to think that after an abusive incident is over and we have calmed down, and maybe even apologized, everything is O.K. This just adds to the denial. "Even if I did slap her once, I don't need to worry about it. I won't do it again." Or so we may think.

Experience reveals that an abusive incident is often followed by a "make up" period. We say we are sorry and won't do it again. Then tensions start to build. We start getting irritable and make occasional wise cracks. Then suddenly—wham!—we let her have it again. The cycle will repeat itself until something drastic happens to interrupt it. Usually this means the wife leaves. But that just interrupts the cycle until she returns. The problem doesn't simply go away with time. It usually gets worse. We men must therefore do something to get entirely free of such cycles. Ending the violence is the beginning of that long slow process of freedom.

Figure 2**Getting Out of the Violence Cycle**

Introduction: The following diagram represents the usual three-stage cycle of violence (solid lines) and the ways men drift back into the cycle after attempting to stop their violence (dashed lines). Also, the steps to break the cycle are indicated (asterisks). Men most often look for help soon after a violent episode, but are often easily fooled into thinking that they are better before making substantial changes. As suggested in the diagram, several additional steps are needed to successfully break the cycle.



Source: "Getting Out of the Violence Cycle" was developed by RAVEN
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Chapter 3

IT'S NOT MY FAULT!

"SHE'S JUST INTOLERABLE"

Dan first struck Janet, his woman friend, once several years ago while at a party. The blow cut her lip badly enough to require stitches. Janet reportedly was drinking and threw beer on him as a joke in front of his friends—"Something that was just intolerable!" according to Dan.

Another time, Dan was working on a school paper and asked Janet, now his wife, to get him a glass of orange juice. "She made some wisecrack about 'Say please' and then brought me O.J. in a soapy glass," recalls Dan. In response, he kicked the chair and threw a container of pencils at her.

Most recently, Dan and Janet argued about their lost dog. Janet had left the dog out after Dan had said not to, and the dog did not return. "She got all hysterical—crying and yelling—when I tried to calm her down by shaking her," recounts Dan. "I finally had to let her leave the house."

The "disagreements," according to Dan's cool analysis, are a product of excessive demands on him. "I feel like I'm carrying twenty brief cases!" On the other hand, Dan wants most of all to get A's in graduate school, so he spends much of his time studying. In his frequent bickering with Janet, she usually mentions the times that he has been unfaithful to her, or beaten her, as evidence that he

doesn't care. "So what am I supposed to do? I work 50 to 60 hours a week at school plus at an internship job."

Moreover, Janet supposedly does "dumb things" that Dan has to correct. For instance, he "carefully" gave her explicit instructions on how to use the bank card to get money, how to photocopy a paper for him, and how to maintain food stamps. In each case, "she did something wrong." Recently, Dan took the checking account away from Janet because she was "just not stable enough to handle it." Dan also tries to tutor her in some of her subjects, "but without much success."

Dan fought with his Janet who "pushed me to my limit until I finally left." As Dan reports:

"We'd have arguments over what I'd buy. I would buy the best there is. I'd tell her to look at the TV—it has lasted ten years. You buy the best and it will last longer. But no, she'd want to get something cheap that wouldn't last. So we'd get into a fight."

"SHE KEEPS TESTING ME"

George, while confessing to his violence and its impact, still sees his wife as playing a major part in the beatings. "She's as looney as I am, yet I'm the one in counseling. She won't go." He tells of trying to keep her from going to taverns at night. Supposedly, one night she "grabbed some guy in his crotch," when they were both slightly drunk. George threw beer in the man's face and broke a mug over his head, before pulling his wife outside to "slap some sense into her." "She thinks I remember it and still hold it against her...I guess I do, to some extent."

There had been abuse over sexual relations, as well. George admits forcing his wife to have sex 'on occasion.' "Yes, you could call it rape if you want to, but I did it because she got stubborn." As he reflects on the problem, "Maybe I'm oversexed, but when we first got married she was too. We'd go to bed two times a day and then—wham!—she goes cold on me."

Moreover, George claims that his wife can be a *bitch*. According to George:

"When my wife starts bitching it just doesn't stop. She bitches about the kids, bitches about not being with the kids, bitches about too much work, bitches about me not helping enough in the basement. She bitches about bitches. There's no way to stop it. You know that can really get to you."

"Furthermore, she keeps testing me with criticisms and complaints, probably just to see if I'll beat her again." George says that all he needs from her is a little encouragement once in a while. "That's not asking too much, is it?"

"It would help if just once she'd say 'nice job.' I like to fix cars and build things. That's one thing I feel I'm half good at. And what do you get? Just complaints about why I didn't do it this way or that...instead of 'That's O.K.,' or 'I like that!' You know, just showing some appreciation for you."

According to George his wife "can play mind games with you. She is much smarter than I am, or acts like she is." Reportedly, she was married to a motorcycle gang member "who just left her one day for parts unknown." But she conveniently leaves his letters around "when she wants to eat at me."

SHE DID NOT MAKE YOU DO IT

Most of us feel it takes two to tango. Like Dan or George, we might say, "Even if I was abusive to my wife, she had it coming." It may seem to us like she even "caused" the abuse: "She nagged me... She kicked me out of the house... She was acting crazy... so I had to hit her." Many men claim that their wives "know how to push their buttons." Women can manipulate us whenever they want, or so we claim. But none of this justifies abuse. You may disagree, argue, or sulk—but there is no reason to emotionally or physically abuse. It always makes things worse, no matter how justified you feel.

Abuse often appears as part of an argument or a showdown. We are not in the business of saying who is right or wrong in the argument. That is another issue. We can say, however, that abuse is breaking the rules. It is no longer a fair fight if you abuse—no matter what she says or does to you!

We abuse to get what we want, when we want it. The old saying is "two wrongs don't make a right"—usually two wrongs just make things twice as dangerous. Abuse, anytime, is overstepping the boundaries.

THE PROBLEM WITH BLAME

Responsibility for your behavior is yours alone. You are the one behind the hand that shoves, grabs or hits. You and no one else. Admitting to this simple but hard fact is the beginning of change. As long as we blame someone or something else for our abuse, we won't stop.

Blaming someone else says that abuse is out of our control. Blaming is another way of saying: "We have to wait for someone else to change for us to change." We tell ourselves that we can't do anything about it. But we *can* exercise some control over *ourselves* instead of over other people. You and only you can stop your abuse.

ALCOHOL OR ANGER IS NOT AN EXCUSE

The list of excuses is endless. Many of them sound legitimate. Some excuses even sound like we are trying to do something about the abuse—by not denying it. Even though the excuses sound as if we are searching for causes, the search is just a delay, and the causes are merely something to blame. We have to look at ourselves; that's where the problem starts and ends.

Some of the most familiar excuses are blaming alcohol, stress, unemployment, the kids, or anger. "I hit her because I was drunk," or "I hit her because I was angry." This is the same as saying, "It wasn't my fault. All I need to do is get rid of the alcohol or get rid of the anger and everything will be O.K."

Well it just isn't so! Men who stop drinking or control their anger may still abuse. Sure, we need to stop the drinking and redirect the anger. But, more important, we have to face our tendency to control women. We must control ourselves better and expand our sense of manhood.

BOOZE MEANS MORE BRUISES

We don't mean that alcohol and drugs play no part in abuse. More booze means more bruises. But alcohol is not the cause of abuse. Alcohol or drugs just make it easier for us to abuse; it is something we can hide behind. Alcohol also deadens some of our senses. When we are drunk, we lose our sense of how hard we are hitting. Therefore the drinking makes things worse.

Use of alcohol or drugs is usually a cover up for pain, bad feelings or lack of confidence. As men, we are taught to "gut it out." Therefore, rather than resolve these feelings, we "drown" them. If we think about it, our feelings can be downright scary. There is so much inside there—it's a bit overwhelming. That leads us to yet another excuse.

OUR PAIN IS SELF-CENTERED

The most devious excuse is that we abuse because we are in pain. We may feel hurt by the other person. Maybe we're harboring some bad feelings about our childhood. Our fathers may have put us down or neglected us. We may feel hurt because we are not the man we think we should be. Perhaps we just lost a job, or a friend is acting pushy. Maybe we feel embarrassed by our abuse and hurt by the loss of privilege we have to face. It is possible for us to feel like victims, too.

But no matter the case, feeling hurt doesn't justify abuse. Focusing on our own pain can be self-centered. You must recognize that other people have been hurt too—but they don't abuse. Remember, the victims of our abuse have suffered in ways that we may never realize. We ought to think more about what we have put them through. That will help make our own pain seem small by comparison and move us toward positive change.

Some men may feel that women as a whole are making it tough for men. They are getting more and more jobs. They seem to get more sympathy from the police or more aid from social agencies. The courts seem to make decisions in their favor.

In reality, the score is still overwhelmingly in men's favor. Just look at who runs the government or heads the businesses in your area or throughout the country. Anyway, we should be more secure in ourselves than to feel threatened by a little sharing. Aren't there some advantages to having women be less dependent? We have enough problems of our own to worry about.

Dwelling on our own pain can make us downright depressed. Depression is like being stuck in the mud. It is not uncommon for men who batter to think about committing suicide because they get to feeling so down. As we look ahead to the prospects of changing our lives, and as we accept our right and power to be more than we are now, the depression fades. Talking with others—those who are working on changing; others who have been there—can also help us lift our sights and move on.

Chapter 4

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT ABUSE?

"I LOST SO MUCH"

Bill is a deceptively sensitive and caring man within his formidable stature (6 ft. 6 in., 230 lbs.). Unfortunately, he has "a temper which just snaps" and leads him to do something "stupid," hurting someone dear to him. He explains often how much he loves his family—his second wife, Diane, and four stepchildren. His 13-year-old son of his first marriage is also a big part of his life. It is this son who has given him "a reason for going on" during the recent separation from his present wife. Bill adds that he "loves kids" and for a long while considered adopting more or becoming a Big Brother.

Ironically, Bill has hurt most of those he claims to love so much. During the five years of marriage to his second wife, Bill has often abused her and the four stepchildren, ages eight to sixteen. As often as once a month he has verbally attacked one or more of them, but insists that he "slapped one in the face only once." He did, however, strike his younger daughter with a pool stick across her back, severely bruising her. She accidentally broke the cue during a pool game in their basement and Bill, "punishing her for her carelessness," overreacted.

Bill says he and Diane have had arguments as often as twice a month, although Diane insists it's more often. When they do argue,

it's loud and forcefully. "She gives it back as hard to me as I give it to her," insists Bill. His wife, he concedes, is trying to help him, but he simply explodes. In most of the verbal bouts, Bill would eventually grab his 5 ft. 2 in. wife by the arm or wrist "with the force sufficient to yank it off at the socket." But Bill claims that he never struck her as he has the children, even though Diane claims that he has on occasion.

Eventually, Diane had enough. She left a note one day and took the children to a shelter. With an "order of protection" in hand, Diane pressed Bill to move to his aunt's residence so she could return to the family house with the children. Diane also firmly threatened to have Bill put in jail if he "so much as talked to her or the children." Furthermore, she initiated divorce proceedings.

Bill fell into a severe depression after "losing so much." "There were times I just wanted to drive head-on into a tree." He became, as he says, "very nervous and unable to sleep." He found himself smoking again, but continued not to drink or use drugs. His dejection was in part over "not doing something about his abuse four or five years ago before it was too late." But Bill always believed he should "work it out on his own." Controlled by this belief, he resisted encouragement to seek help.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF ABUSE

Our main point is that *you* should do something about abuse. If not for your own sake, do it for your kids, for your wife. Don't make them the victims—the ones that have to leave. Don't end up like Bill. Abuse just isn't worth it. Some obvious reasons to stop abuse are:

Abuse is a crime. You can get an "order of protection" filed against you that prohibits you from living in your own house and seeing your wife. You can be thrown in jail. You can have assault charges filed against you. Being a criminal isn't fun and games. Some of your buddies may joke about it, but in the long run it will hurt you. Abuse charges can undermine your job chances and ultimately make you lose face.

Abuse will eventually break up your family. More and more women are leaving abusive relationships. They may go to a shelter or escape to a friend's house. The result is you are left alone. You may think that you want to get rid of her and the kids. But when it comes to being by yourself day in and day out—suddenly with no one to share your life—your outlook will change.

What's more, even if you do find somebody else to live with, the chances are that the abuse will start all over again. Yes, simply changing wives or lovers doesn't stop abuse. At best it just postpones it. So start to do something about the abuse *now*, before you lose your family and everything else important to you.

Abuse destroys lives. Even though some women are "fighting back," abuse is a form of slow destruction for most. As a woman loses her self-esteem through brainwashing and terrorism, she may lose her will to live. She gradually becomes what we have made her: *unresponsive and unloving*.

The abuse also destroys us. We might not feel it happening, but being abusive to another person is a form of slow suicide. We are so busy controlling the other person that we fail to care for ourselves. In the process, we lose touch with what is worthwhile or good about us as individuals. Eventually, we end up desperate and pathetic people, having to scare others into caring for us.

Use the exercise on the next page to appraise the personal consequences of abuse for you and your family.

Exercise 1

Weighing the Costs of Wife Abuse

Instructions: Let's frankly consider the costs and benefits of abuse. On a separate sheet of paper, fill in each category below as best you can (Some examples are inserted to get you started). Then ask yourself, Is abuse really worth it? Most reformed abusers insist that becoming non-abusive is not always easy, but that it is rewarding in the long run. After reviewing your finished chart, can you see why they feel this way?

THE BENEFITS OF ABUSE

- 1) I get my way
- 2) It shuts her up for awhile
- 3) It releases tension
- 4) It keeps me from feeling hurt
- 5)
- 6)
- 7)
- 8)
- 9)
- 10)
- 11)
- 12)

THE COSTS OF ABUSE

- 1) It harms my wife
- 2) It makes her not trust me
- 3) I feel guilty afterward
- 4) My kids pick up the violence
- 5)
- 6)
- 7)
- 8)
- 9)
- 10)
- 11)
- 12)

THE BENEFITS OF NON-VIOLENCE

- 1) It allows me to be myself
- 2) I feel less ashamed
- 3) I experience intimacy
- 4) Our communication is better
- 5)
- 6)
- 7)
- 8)
- 9)
- 10)
- 11)
- 12)

THE COSTS OF NON-VIOLENCE

- 1) I feel vulnerable
- 2) I don't always get my way
- 3) I have to listen to criticism
- 4) It takes more effort
- 5)
- 6)
- 7)
- 8)
- 9)
- 10)
- 11)
- 12)

Being a man who has to be tough, in charge, and a big wheel *all the time* hurts. We end up taking on more responsibility than we can handle, doing dangerous things, and overextending our bodies. Our emotional and physical health suffer and our life-spans are shortened. Joseph Pleck, in *The Myth of Masculinity*, has outlined ten reasons why the male role can be hazardous to your health. These health hazards are:

1. Aggressiveness and competitiveness cause men to put themselves in dangerous situations.
2. Emotional inexpressiveness causes psychosomatic and other health problems.
3. Men take greater risks.
4. Men's jobs expose them to physical danger.
5. Men's jobs expose them to psychological stress.
6. The male role socializes men to have personality characteristics associated with high mortality (e.g. type "A" behavior and your heart).
7. Responsibilities as family breadwinners expose men to psychological stress.
8. The male role encourages certain specific behaviors that endanger health, specifically tobacco smoking and alcohol consumption.
9. The male role psychologically discourages men from taking adequate medical care of themselves.
10. The male role discourages men from seeking counseling and other psychological help.

Source: Joseph Pleck, *THE MYTH OF MASCULINITY*, Boston: M.I.T. Press, 1981, pp. 150-151. © 1981 by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Reprinted by permission.

A LITTLE HELP FROM YOUR FRIENDS

The hardest thing for most of us to do is ask for help. We fear looking weak. We think someone might try to mess with our heads. We suspect we'll end up listening to a bunch of losers.

Although we have to do it ourselves, we can't do it alone. Stopping abuse is a big job. It is like remodeling your house. It sure helps if you have a few hints from someone who has been there. Also, some encouragement and support when you make mistakes can make a big difference along the way.

Joining with other men who are working on stopping abuse can make the difference. The other men can act as a radar screen alerting us to the enemy inside. They can provide a mirror that enables us to see both our own strengths and shortcomings. Other men can also serve as a guide to where we might be heading. Therefore, we can guard against being tricked by the abuse cycle, overwhelmed by our own feelings, or uncertain about what to do next.

Most of all, other men can offer friendship during those lonely or uncertain moments. We need more than a friend who just pats us on the back and says, "How's the weather?" We need a friendship that dares to confront us when we are in denial and encourages us when we are trying hard.

LETTING GO OF YOUR WIFE

The first and most important step in stopping abuse is to interrupt that abuse cycle. Therefore, the best medicine is probably for you and your wife to separate for awhile. Her going to a women's shelter or to a friend's house is one suggestion. Your moving out is another.

Try to think of it as giving both of you a vacation—time to relax and sort things out. It is also a way to begin to let go of some of the control behind the abuse. Most important, it is the only way to assure the safety of your family while you make some changes.

The tendency is for men to rebel against a separation. "How dare she leave me!" We want to hunt her down and force her to come back. Or we may find ourselves begging her to return home, making all sorts of promises that we *mean* to keep. This only makes matters worse and delays the work ahead of us—changing. This sort of harassment, to get her back, can also be a form of abuse.

Almost ninety percent of the men who voluntarily join programs participate because their wives and children have left them. Most of those who change do so because their wives have stayed at a shelter for awhile and got some counseling support of their own. The shelter can help a woman repair some of the damage you have done. Those men who have talked their wives into returning often drop out of the program—only to re-enter the cycle of abuse with all its consequences.

The ultimate goal of "letting go of your wife" is to provide a foundation for a better man-woman relationship. What are some of the important characteristics of an equal man-woman relationship? The following guidelines by RAVEN are useful in understanding this:

Guidelines for Promoting an Equal Man-Woman Relationship

1. Be completely honest; that means not keeping secrets from your partner as well as talking straight.
2. Trust your own ability to cooperate, and your partner's. Work at negotiating agreements acceptable to you both.
3. Be conscious of competition and power plays. Be equals who compromise so that both win as much as possible.
4. Be alert to sex role stereotypes. Experiment with reversing them and work to end them entirely.
5. Be equal in sexual responsibility and in orgasmic satisfaction. Talk openly about your sexual needs and ask questions of your partner about hers.
6. Have friends, especially of your own sex, and allow your partner to do the same. Draw support from them for your ability to cooperate and nurture others.
7. Take time to be with yourself and get to know yourself better. Draw on that able "nurturing parent" inside yourself for support in the struggles you encounter.

8. Don't demand or expect perfection from yourself or your partner. Human error is a necessary part of growth and change.
9. Don't make your partner into a commodity by trying to own or possess her. Learn to control your own insecurities and fears rather than other people.

Adapted from: RAVEN (Rape and Violence End Now, PO Box 24159, St. Louis, MO 63130).

WHERE TO TURN

We think the best alternative is to find a program especially designed for men who have been abusive. There are now over 150 such programs around the country and the number is growing! Most of these programs consist of a supervised self-help group of men who meet weekly to discuss their abuse and how to stop it. They are usually led by one or two experienced counselors who know how to keep the discussion on track and teach helpful skills. You might look at such a group as you would attending a school where the subject is 'changing men.'

You can look in the Yellow Pages under "Social Services" for the listing of such a group or other helpers. At the end of this booklet is a list of men's programs around the country that you can call for information, support, and names of groups in your area. Or you can call your area Women's Shelter and ask for the telephone number for a men's group or counselor they recommend.

If no men's group is available, you can go to a social service, family counseling center, or community mental health service and ask that they start a group. Show them this book and point out the guide-books for social service staff listed in Appendix C.

WHAT GOES ON IN A GROUP?

There is no "hocus-pocus" in the self-help groups. The group programs are not to punish you, not to psychoanalyze you, not to play games. They are simply men helping other men stop their abuse and become better human beings.

If you call a group, the program staff will probably tell you straight off what the group is about and how it functions. Generally, you'll be invited to come in for an orientation session in which you and one of the staff talk one-on-one about the program and how it can help you. You can size up the program then.

In some programs, you begin by attending classes for a few weeks. In these classes you learn more about abuse. Many of the points made in this book are developed further. You learn more about how abuse happens and how the law works. This is to inform you of the facts so you can make better decisions about your behavior.

You'll eventually be assigned to one of the discussion groups that meet once a week for a couple of hours. These groups of six to ten men talk over how things are going and how to improve your understanding of the problem. There may be a topic or some written exercises to teach you something new. For instance, you may learn about relaxation, better communication, dealing with stress, or how to share responsibility. Two exercises you may want to use in your program follow.

Many programs require their participants to keep a log of their abusive incidents. The purpose of the log is to help you become more aware of your abuse patterns, learn how to identify them, and stop the abuse.

Exercise 2

Abuse Log

On a separate piece of paper complete a log, like the sample outlined below, for each time you are abusive. Even if you have what you would consider a "close call"—that is, if you were almost abusive, record that too. By abuse we mean not only physically pushing, grabbing or striking your wife in any way, but also the mental abuse of yelling, name-calling, put downs, or by confining, limiting or depriving your wife in some way.

1. **ABUSIVE INCIDENT:** What was the situation? What did you get abusive about?
2. **ABUSIVE LEVEL:** What kind of abuse was involved? How severe was it? What effect did it have on your wife?

3. **PHYSICAL AND BEHAVIORAL CUES:** What sensations or actions preceded the incident? (example: Do you feel your body grow tight? Do you start with sarcastic remarks?)
4. **"I FEEL..." STATEMENTS:** What were your underlying feelings besides anger (hurt, sadness, fear, etc.)?
5. **SELF TALK:** What can you say to yourself to bring this particular abuse level down?
6. **BEHAVIORAL RESPONSE:** How did the situation actually end? (example: Did you take a time out, do some physical activity, or use drugs or alcohol to calm down? Did the police come? Did the neighbors interrupt?)
7. **PREVENTION:** How would you like to handle a situation like this in the future?

Adapted from: Daniel J. Sonkin, Ph.D. and Michael Durphy, M.D., **LEARNING TO LIVE WITHOUT VIOLENCE**, San Francisco: Volcano Press, 1982.

Many abusive men have been helped by learning and adhering to rules for *fair arguing*. RAVEN, an organization devoted to helping abusive men, had some of its members devise the following exercise.

Exercise 3

Rules for A Fair Argument (or How to Have an Argument With Your Partner and Remain Friends)

Copy these rules into a notebook and check off each time you use a specific rule. Rate how "fair" you've been on this basis. Then list when and how you might use the "fair" rules and avoid the "unfair" ones.

FAIR BEHAVIOR

- Speaking one at a time and allowing equal time
- Looking for compromises
- Trying not to generalize
- Allowing for time-outs and breathers
- Observing rules that you set
- No forcing/No hitting or threats
- Showing personal respect
- Being honest with yourself and them
- Giving your reasons

Admitting when you are wrong
Making your understandings clear by repeating them
and writing them down

UNFAIR BEHAVIOR

Name calling
Opening old wounds/dredging up the past
Getting off on tangents
Intimidation/threats of violence
Changing the rules and not saying so
Expecting there to be a winner and a loser
Saving up gripes to dump all at once
Reading the other's mind
Denying the facts
Using sex as a leverage
Gloating over a "victory"
Appearing to ignore the other

Adapted from: "Rules for Fair Fighting." RAVEN (Rape and Violence
End Now, PO Box 24159, St. Louis, MO 63130). By permission.

SOME ALTERNATIVES

There are other places to get help besides self-help groups. Often we don't feel comfortable talking to a friend or relative; they might not know how to take it. But you can always give someone you trust a try. They may surprise you.

There are professionals who are familiar with your problems—they will not be surprised, and they know how to listen. Clergy, family counselors, or social workers are possible sources of help. Like picking a good mechanic to fix your car, however, some are better than others. Only you can decide if they are right for you.

Whomever you choose to talk with, you have to be honest with them and yourself. It is common to turn to someone for help only to end up blaming your wife for part of your violence, and getting sympathy for your problems. If you are willing and trying to change, begin by admitting your violence up front, and announce your intention to end all forms of abuse. That will get your conversation off on the right foot. You must hold to your decision to change.

PRECAUTIONS IN SELECTING A PROGRAM

Some considerations that may help guide your selection of a service are discussed below.

One readily available service is *Individual Counseling*. Many counselors will discuss your problems one-on-one. This can be a good start for gaining perspective on the abuse problem. Also, if by chance you are experiencing some long lasting depression and major changes in functioning (loss of appetite, lowered sex drive, loss of interest in your job or hobbies), it might be a good idea to seek some individual counseling.

There are many different counseling approaches and techniques. You want, however, to find one that deals with abuse and helps you stop it. You want to be sure the counseling deals with more than just your anger and how to communicate better. You could ask a counselor to consider starting a group for men like you, if none already exists.

Marriage Counseling is another alternative. It can be helpful too, but only at the right time. From our experience, effective counseling occurs apart from your wife, especially if the abuse has been recent. Marriage counseling can confuse the other problems in your marriage with the problem of abuse. It is best to start by getting a handle on the abuse, and then deal with the marriage. Marriage counselors can help improve your relationship, but only after any violence has stopped for at least a year.

Alcohol and Drug Programs are available in most communities. If you drink or use drugs and are abusive, you could probably use some drug and alcohol counseling. One of the best programs for alcohol abuse is Alcoholics Anonymous. The AA meetings are often run much like abuser programs in that you get to hear from other people like yourself and receive their support. We suggest, however, that you get this counseling *while attending* a batterer's program, *not* in place of it. Remember, stopping alcohol abuse does not necessarily lead to stopping wife abuse.

Finally, *Abuser Groups*, when available, may differ greatly in their approach. Some men's groups, particularly those at mental health centers, focus on anger control. They see the problem of abuse as primarily caused by anger. They may spend a lot of time teaching you techniques to control your anger and interrupt the abuse.

Unfortunately, staying stopped is not always easy. Like so many other things in our society, we expect to get what we want *fast*. The tendency is to learn a few gimmicks and then think we are cured. But stopping abuse is not like going to a fast food joint. It takes time and work to change ourselves. Therefore, if you do find yourself in an anger-control group, press for *more* than just anger control. Or, help start a follow-up group that keeps you changing.

Chapter 5

HOW DO I CHANGE?

"I'M WORKING ON IT"

Al called the men's counseling program initially to appease his wife and because he "needed a confidant to talk to." However, he thought a long time about what he was going to say to the counselor. Calling the program was "the most difficult thing I ever did," he says, but Al was "determined to do something about the problem this time." Nervously, Al drove around the initial meeting place twice before parking and going in.

As soon as he sat down in the program office, however, he started talking, pausing only to hold back some tears. He concluded by vowing to join the program and "do whatever is necessary—attend meetings for two years if need be."

At the program's group meetings, Al found "It feels good to talk about my problems." He is always on time for the meetings, eager to review the stressful moments at work or at home. "It is like a release that helps me clear my head. I really notice if I miss coming." Moreover, Al found support from the other men in the program.

"The program helped me realize I'm not alone. I find the men in the group are good people. And I found out that I'm a good person, too!

I have been able to get a lot of self-esteem out of that realization. It's my behavior that stinks, not me."

As he spent more and more time at the program meetings, Al moved beyond descriptions of his incidents and talked freely of his feelings. "It's funny. You never talk about how you feel with the people you work with...they'd laugh at you if they heard the way we are talking here."

Al explained the impact of his group participation:

"I have learned to identify my emotions. I have got so many rewards out of that—just being able to express myself better. I feel I can understand people better now. It is an understanding beyond my wildest dreams. I realize this will take the rest of my life to complete."

At one point, however, Al began to feel a bit frustrated. He even shifted some of the blame for his abuse back onto women and felt very sorry for himself. He couldn't, for instance, understand the scarcity of assistance for men in situations like his:

"I mean, it burns me some. Look where I am now. I have had two houses and two marriages. It's probably cost me \$100,000. And here I am with a car that doesn't work half of the time and \$16 in my pocket. You know it's hard to let all that go by—I mean, just forget about it."

Al's commitment to the program has deepened, however. He is now more relaxed, and questions his so-called "rights." He sees himself backing off in disputes at work and with his former family members. Al has become a program "convert." As he describes himself:

"All I know is that coming to the meetings has changed me. I have begun to see myself more as an individual, instead of the way I thought I was supposed to be. I don't have to do everything for everybody. I start by making sure I have my own tent in order. I am also working to make my life better by simply trying to treat my wife like a real person—and that means showing my wife she is my equal. I haven't accomplished that yet, but I'm working on it."

GETTING STARTED

If you choose to go to a group you will, like Al, go through some "hesitations." Most men do. Al is on his way and growing. We can't expect to "get it" all at once. Remember, stopping the violence is the beginning of the process, but changing our long standing attitudes takes time. It is like learning how to ride a bike. You're a little shaky when you begin and you may even fall a few times. But with someone there to guide you at first, you eventually get enough balance to go ahead on your own. Getting on that bike for the first time, though, is downright scary.

At a men's program you'll get some tips, some practice exercises, and maybe even some homework to help steady your course. It's important to do these. At times they may not seem like much, nor to apply to you. Do them anyway. They may be helpful later on, if not now. Also, there will be good weeks and bad weeks for you. Stick with it and you'll eventually find you're changing.

BEING YOUR REAL SELF

The most important thing is to keep the real goal in mind—to be yourself, your "real self," free of abusiveness and capable of loving. When we set out to see ourselves in this way, we discover some new abilities: the ability to listen, talk decisively, act cooperatively, and resolve conflict. We begin to unlock our feelings and exercise our capacity to trust. We also become assertive, with ourselves and others, instead of aggressive. We begin to take risks.

Men who stick with it tell us that eventually there will be a disagreement, but they won't "fly off the handle." It gradually gets easier to share responsibility. As this happens, men tell us they begin to have more empathy toward their wives. They begin to see their wives more as people, and not just as objects. Gradually, men say, they become more loving partners. They become friends with their wives. They also begin to find more genuine friendships with other men—where before they often felt isolated or cut off.

It takes work, but the work is somehow a little easier if you know where you are heading. You can be sure that you are headed toward a better place than where you are now.

SELF-PITY AND SELF-CONGRATULATIONS

There are two major pitfalls that crop up along the way: self-pity and self-congratulations. If you are alert and watch out, you can avoid falling into them and slowing your progress. Self-pity comes in the form of "feeling put upon." You begin to feel like you have all sorts of problems, hurts, or disappointments. You feel like no one understands or appreciates where you are coming from. You feel backed into a corner and trapped. It seems like everyone is making it but you. Women seem to get all the credit and sympathy, while you get blamed for everything.

Don't buy it! The self-pity is another form of denial and an excuse that keeps you from changing and becoming all that you can be. Self-pity is the final weakness that says, "I only have strength to think of myself and nothing more." It cuts us off and keeps us from reaching out to others to make the connections that can help us and them.

The other pitfall, self-congratulations, is the flip side of self-pity. In self-congratulations, we think so much of ourselves that we expect others to praise us, trust us—reward us. "Why doesn't she appreciate all the changes I've made?" "Why doesn't she trust me now that I've stopped abusing her?" "She should come back to me now that I have changed."

While we should congratulate ourselves for working on stopping the abuse, we must realize that we always have farther to go. You have to keep pulling those weeds to make room for the flowers. The rewards are in the benefits of reducing abuse and expanding our capacity for friendship.

We can't expect our wives to suddenly congratulate us, given what has happened to them. They have no doubt heard promises in the past that the abuse would stop; but the cycle repeated itself before. They have to be cautious for their own sake and the children's.

After all, why should they thank you for stopping the abuse that never should have happened in the first place? It is like having someone step on your foot in a subway car. You generally don't say "thank you" when they remove their foot from yours. They shouldn't have stepped on you in the first place!

SAFETY FIRST

Meanwhile, there are some practical steps you can take—steps that will help you stop yourself from being violent. Remember though, they are not an end in themselves. Don't use them like a crutch. They are merely a safety precaution—something like putting handcuffs on for the moment.

The most common safety precaution—one you can start using right now—is taking *time out*. The idea of *time out* is for you to leave the house and cool off before you become abusive. It is a deal that you must work out with your wife. Use it to help you both, never as a way to manipulate or get back at her. Here are the procedures for taking a *time out*. You should review them with your wife.

1. Identify a "cue" that trouble is coming (usually a physical sign expressed by a tightening chest, clenching of your hands; or in a feeling that you must control her).
2. Give a T-sign with your hands to show you need to take a TIME OUT as soon as you feel that cue.
3. Let your wife know that you need a time out to get control of your behavior. Let her know how much time you need to calm down.
4. Depart without slamming the door or making any further comments.
5. Walk briskly (it's better not to drive) while thinking about the *Self-Talk* statements below. Call a friend. Don't drink.

6. Return at the end of your stated time limit and admit at least one error you made before leaving. (If an argument develops, take another *time out*, or agree on a later time to discuss the matter.)

Some programs, instead, require men to develop a "responsibility plan." In this approach, the men establish, with their wives, several alternatives to the violence—what the husband and wife can do if the man is abusive. We think it's a good idea to move toward such a negotiated plan, one that goes beyond *time out*. Meanwhile, it is important that you establish a means to interrupt the abuse before it starts. *Take time out...and be safe.*

USING POSITIVE SELF-TALK

We are our own worst enemy. Over and over again we say defeating things to ourselves: "I can never change," "It isn't worth it," "I don't need any help," "I can't change until she does." Our mind keeps rehearsing past events and building mountains out of molehills. We store up burdensome resentment and keep convincing ourselves how we have been wronged. If you think about it, the process is almost like self-hypnosis. The best way to avoid hypnosis is to refuse it.

Many programs recommend talking to ourselves positively, to check the negative thoughts. It's a matter of having faith that we can and will be better than what we think. We all have abilities that lie largely untapped. Assert some of those to yourself—once a day when you get up—and especially when taking a *time out*. Here is a list of "can's" you might say to yourself:

1. I can change.
2. I can learn new ways of thinking and acting.
3. I can show my feelings in non-abusive ways.
4. I can ask for help when I need it.
5. I can ask for what I want but know that I cannot always get it.

6. I can tell people when I cannot fulfill their expectations of me.
7. I can reject stereotypes of how I am "supposed" to be.
8. I can take responsibility for my actions.
9. I can show my strength by choosing *not* to abuse someone.

These "can's" may appear to be way beyond your reach. If so, you may want to think beyond your own limits and will. Some people choose to contact that 'strength' through a group of caring people; some through nature. Some self-help programs, like Alcoholics Anonymous, encourage their members to open themselves up to spiritual power. Whatever religion or name you might try to put on it, there is a power beyond our individual efforts that harmonizes and improves life. It's that power that gives us the potential, courage and strength to change.

THE CHOICE IS YOURS

We have said that you can change—and that you need and deserve some help to do this. There is no excuse to just sit there. Get off your butt and do something for yourself—and your family. You have a right to change and be free of the consequences of abuse.

Like most other rights in the world today, you have to fight for this one. The fight is ultimately with yourself—and with all the excuses, fears and doubts that would make you deny the problem or give up. We believe you have the courage and strength to take on this fight. Countless other men have. It is one fight that you cannot afford to lose.

Your willingness to read this far is evidence that you are on your way. But you can't afford to lose what you've learned here. Copy some of the reminders from the next page and keep them in your wallet or posted in your room.

REMINDERS

Abuse comes in cycles.

Abuse is a crime.

Abuse is control.

Abuse is not worth it.

Abuse is terrorism in the home.

Abuse makes it worse.

**"A little help from your friends"
can make a difference.**

Anger is an excuse.

Be your real self.

Blame is part of the problem.

Booze means more bruises.

Control your behavior—not hers.

Denial is part of the problem.

Face the facts.

Let go of your wife.

Let it pass.

Safety first.

Self-pity is a pitfall.

She did not make you do it.

Stop! Stay stopped.

Take a time out.

The choice is yours.

The threat to hit is hitting.

Use positive self-talk.

You are not alone.

You can be right, or you can be happy.

You can change.

You deserve help.

Your pain is self-centered.

Appendix A

A WOMAN'S STORY

It is often hard for men to understand abuse from the woman's point of view. Women definitely see it differently than we do. But gaining empathy for our wife or lover is an important part of changing. The story that follows may give you a better idea of what your abused wife or lover is thinking.

I don't know when or how it all started. There had been flare-ups now and then. My husband and I would argue over the baby or not having sex, but usually I'd just give in and things would blow over. All couples have fights like this, or so I thought. The disagreements seemed part my fault anyhow. But it's true we didn't talk seriously much beyond that.

Then, one day early-on in our marriage, my husband hauled off and hit me over nothing. It was just after dinner and he started making something of my not cleaning up the house. I don't even remember saying anything back to him. I might have started to ask a question.

He slapped me backhanded across the face and then shoved me against the wall. That's what really hurt. And those eyes! He looked like he could have killed me if I moved an inch the wrong way. I didn't dare say anything more about it. I just let the whole matter lie, hoping it would pass.

Later that night, my husband acted like it never happened and was all sweet and nice. It wasn't long, though, and he was putting me down for little things. I would occasionally talk back. That's what a person is supposed to do to a lie. But it wasn't worth it. My husband would get that look and I was frightened that he'd start hitting me again. Then he did. I think it was next after an argument over the baby. And then he hit me again...and again.

It got to the point that I didn't know what to expect. Sometimes he would be real apologetic and make up to me, and then we'd have a few good and tender moments. Then other times he would blame it

all on me and threaten to hit me again if I acted up. I felt like I was in a cage or something. One false move and I'd get punished.

Now I know that my husband had some bad experiences growing up and sometimes has tough days at work. At first, I thought that I must have been adding to his problems. I thought some of the abuse might be my fault for not being a better or more supportive wife. But when I heard about other abused women, I began to think maybe it was not just me. After all, my husband would go off sometimes for no reason, no matter what I did or did not do.

The abuse seemed to get worse instead of better, like I had hoped. My husband kicked me one time, in the back, and I could hardly walk for a week. I shoved him back in desperation, and he went crazy screaming and punching and throwing things until I ran out of the house. I stayed overnight that time with a relative but came back because I was worried about the kids. He was getting on them more and more and hit one with a baseball bat one day.

Why didn't I leave for good? I always thought my husband would change. I thought too that we were married, and I'd be the failure if I didn't make a good home. As it turns out he was impossible to please.

The funny thing is that my husband thinks *I* abused *him*. As I said, I occasionally asked him questions or tried to challenge his put downs, and he'd turn it all around like I was attacking him. And sure there were times I would scream or yell at him...I mean, I was scared for my life, or simply tired of being run into the ground. It got to me. I was feeling constant tension and depression, and I would snap sometimes.

Also, I admit there were moments when I knew I was going to get hit. I could see him in that rigid mood. It would fill the whole house. So I would press at him a little to get it over with. Words were the only defense I had—he's so much bigger and stronger than I am. You have to do some things just to survive or help the kids survive. I don't mean that I'd think all this out; that's just the way it happened on occasion.

I didn't know what to do for the longest time. I couldn't talk to my husband about the abuse or he'd threaten me or get angry. I had lost so much self-esteem anyway that I didn't care some of the time. Then finally, one day I saw the terror in the kids' faces during a blow-up and knew I had to do something for them, if not me.

A friend of mine told me about a marriage counselor. I set up a counseling session to help me, and with the counselor's insistence brought my husband. He went once and then canceled the other appointments. I almost called the police a couple of times, and even threatened to do so once, but felt that would just cause more problems.

Finally, I went to a women's shelter with the kids after one particularly bad incident. My husband called the shelter saying it wouldn't happen again. The kids wanted to go home after a day or so, too. I returned, but it was a mistake.

When I finally talked about divorce, and called a lawyer for advice, my husband agreed to get some help. He went to a special men's program for about a month or so. Then he told me he was O.K. and stopped going. It did seem that things had settled down a bit. But then he started saying I was testing him. He claimed that I didn't love him or trust him enough. After all, he insisted, he had changed. It was all my fault now.

I have been living at a relative's for a few months, since finally leaving for real. My husband still wants me to come back, but I am just too scared and confused about it all at this point. Sure I still feel some love for him, and I want the kids to know their father. But I have some bitterness over all that has happened between us, too. And I need some time to sort that out. I need some time for my wounds to heal. Not so much wounds on the outside, but those on the inside.

Appendix B

SELF-HELP BOOKS FOR MEN

There is a self-help book for just about everything today. Not surprisingly there are several that concern abuse problems. Some men have found books, like those mentioned below, gave them useful ideas and encouragement. You may want to look into one or two that sound interesting to you. Just remember that a book by itself won't end abuse. You need some other people to work with you on the problem.

Bach, George, and Peter Wyden. *The Intimate Enemy: How to Fight Fair in Love and Marriage*. New York: Avon, 1981.

Benson, Herbert, and Miriam Klipper. *Relaxation Response*. New York: Avon, 1976.

Brende, Joel Osler, and Erwin Parsons. *Vietnam Veterans: The Road to Recovery*. New York: Signet, 1986.

Druck, Ken. *The Secrets Men Keep: Breaking the Silence Barrier*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985.

Farrell, Warren. *Why Men Are the Way They Are*. New York: Houghton, Mifflin, 1986.

Gaylin, William. *Feelings: Our Vital Signs*. New York: Ballantine, 1980.

Goldberg, Herb. *The New Male-Female Relationship*. New York: Signet, 1983.

Julty, Sam. *Men's Bodies, Men's Selves*. New York: Delta, 1983.

Lieberman, Mendel, and Marion Hardie. *Resolving Family and Other Conflicts: Everybody Wins*. Santa Cruz, CA: Unity Press, 1982.

Pietsch, William. *Human Be-ing: How to Have a Creative Relationship Instead of a Power Struggle*. New York: Signet, 1986.

Rosen, Gerald. *The Relaxation Book: An Illustrated Self-Help Program*. New York: Prentice Hall, 1977.

Ryan, Regina Sara, and John Travis. *Wellness Workbook: A Guide to Attaining High Level Wellness*. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 1980.

Selye, Hans. *Stress Without Distress*. New York: Signet, 1975.

Walters, Richard. *Anger—Yours, Mine, and What To Do About It*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981.

Zibergeld, Bernard. *Male Sexuality: A Guide to Sexual Fulfillment*. Boston: Little Brown, 1978.

Appendix C

GUIDEBOOKS FOR PROGRAMS

Several guidebooks and manuals are available for abuser programs. They vary, however, in their objectives, approaches, and format. There is also some controversy over when to use couples counseling, if at all, and over how much emphasis to give to anger control and skill-building as opposed to furthering a deeper change process. You may want to mention these guidebooks to social service workers in your community. These books can help them start a program designed for you, if there isn't one already in your community.

Gondolf, Edward. *Men Who Batter: An Integrated Approach to Stopping Wife Abuse*. Holmes Beach, FL: Learning Publications, 1985.

This book discusses the rationale and procedures for supervised self-help groups and emphasizes the need to re-socialize men who batter. It includes many group exercises and an extensive list of resources.

Hart, Barbara. *Safety For Women: Monitoring Batterers' Programs*. Harrisburgh, PA: P.C.A.D.V., 1987.

This book outlines a plan for evaluating programs for batterers and offers a compelling analysis of why abuse happens.

Sonkin, Daniel, Del Martin, and Lenore Walker. *The Male Batterer: A Treatment Approach*. New York: Springer, 1986.

This book offers an overview of domestic violence and anger control treatment primarily for individual therapists. It also includes a discussion of the legal and ethical issues involved in counseling abusers.

Appendix D

PROGRAMS FOR MEN WHO ARE ABUSIVE

As mentioned in the text, nearly 150 programs now exist for men who are abusive. Here is a list of some of these programs in different parts of the country. You may want to call one of these programs to talk to their staff about your situation. They can probably tell you the name of the program nearest you and how to get more help. You may want to call or write for the *Ending Men's Violence National Referral Directory* available from RAVEN, P.O. Box 24159, St. Louis, MO 63130, Phone (314) 725-6137.

Northeast:

Baltimore, MD: *Batterers Program, House of Ruth* (301) 889-7884

Barre, VT: *DELTA* (802) 476-5022

Boston, MA: *EMERGE* (617) 267-7690

Cranston, RI: *Brother to Brother* (401) 467-3710

New City, NY: *Volunteer Counseling Service* (914) 634-5729

Pittsburgh, PA: *Second Step* (412) 371-1545

Philadelphia, PA: *Project RAP* (215) 875-3334

Midwest:

Chicago, IL: *Men in Crisis* (219) 422-8082

Cleveland, OH: *RAISE* (216) 229-2422

Columbus, OH: *The Domestic Violence Program* (614) 444-0800

Duluth, MN: *Domestic Abuse Intervention Project* (218) 722-2781

Fort Wayne, IN: *Men for Nonviolence* (219) 422-8082

Kansas City, MO: *Alternatives for Men (A-MEN)* (816) 753-5118

Minneapolis, MN: *Domestic Abuse Project (DAP)* (612) 0874-7063

Omaha, NE: *Men and Domestic Violence* (402) 554-0520

St. Louis, MO: *RAVEN* (314) 725-6137

South:

Asheville, NC: *MOVE* (704) 252-8102

Dallas, TX: *The Family Place* (214) 234-4347

Fredericksburg, VA: *Fresh Start* (703) 898-0299

Gainesville, GA: *Crossroads* (404) 536-5860

Jacksonville, FL: *First Step* (904) 354-3122

Lenoir, SC: *Abuser Treatment Program* (704) 758-0888

Tulsa, OK: *Men's Program* (918) 584-0096

West:

Anchorage, AK: *The Male Awareness Program* (907) 272-0100

Casper, WY: *Self-Help Center* (307) 235-2814

Denver, CO: *AMEND* (303) 322-7887

Hilo, HI: *Alternatives to Violence* (808) 969-7798

Juneau, AK: *M.E.N., Inc.* (907) 586-3585

Medford, OR: *Siskiyou Men's Alternatives to Violence*
(503) 772-5414

Monterey, CA: *Men's Alternatives to Violence* (408) 372-7568

Olympia, WA: *Hoy & Nickle Associates* (206) 357-8293

San Bernardino, CA: *Batterer's Anonymous* (714) 884-6809

Salt Lake City, UT: *Spouse Abuse Treatment Program*
(801) 355-2846

Seattle, WA: *Family Violence Prevention Program* (206) 326-4045

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

What gives *us* the right to speak out? Well, we have been speaking with groups of men like yourself over the last ten years, helping them stop abusing women. These men have shown us a lot. Some of them give up easy. Others become discouraged but bounce back. Some stick to it with gusto and become group leaders, helping other men help themselves. It is these men who enable us to speak to you.

So who are we anyway? Ed Gondolf is a researcher at Western Psychiatric Institute, University of Pittsburgh, and a social worker who has worked with groups for men who are abusive. He has been a group leader, program director, and researcher with men who abuse their wives. His experience has prepared him to train other people to develop programs for men. He has written a book called *Men Who Batter* for program staff and other social workers.

Dave Russell is himself a recovering abuser. His tantrums and drinking bouts finally led to a divorce and separation from his wife and kids. Through a lot of hard work and help from others, Dave began the process of recovery ten years ago and eventually remarried. For the last seven years, Dave has been the director of the Second Step Program for men in Pittsburgh, which he also helped start.

If you would like more information, you can contact us in care of: Second Step, 747 South Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15221.

MAN to MAN

Speaks Frankly to Men in Abusive Relationships

By two of America's foremost experts in domestic violence, this book helps the reader improve old relationships and develop new, positive ones. *Man to Man* is a concise resource for men trying to change and counselors working with domestic violence issues. *Man to Man* covers:

- Facing the Facts
- But I'm Not Abusive
- It's Not My Fault!
- What Can I Do About Abuse?
- How Do I Change?

... a look at what is involved in making the commitment to end abusive behavior ... The book addresses denial and minimization, victim blaming, alcohol and anger as excuses for battering, and power and control ... Advice is offered on how to seek help for the problem, with an emphasis on self-help groups. Suggested readings and a partial listing of special programs for abusers are provided.

National Woman's Abuse Prevention Project

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