



TIPS FOR HAVING AN INFORMED CONVERSATION ABOUT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & HIV

ADDRESS YOUR OWN BELIEFS AND BIASES.

Each of us, whether implicitly or explicitly, has had our ideas about domestic violence and/or HIV/AIDS shaped through family structures, culture, education, media, and other mediums. We must recognize our own beliefs and biases that are not survivor-centered in order to change perceptions about these issues.

UNDERSTAND WHY THE INTERSECTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND HIV IS SO CRITICAL.

- ★ One in four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime¹. Additionally, one in four people infected with HIV are women². One study found that 40-50 percent of domestic violence survivors experience sexual assault by their intimate partner.
- ★ 55 percent of women living with HIV had experienced intimate partner violence; considerably higher than the national prevalence among women overall. Domestic Violence victims have a 4x greater risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs)³.

CHALLENGE WIDELY HELD PERCEPTIONS ABOUT HIV AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

Doesn't HIV only affect gay men? Women who have HIV probably got it by sleeping around. Isn't HIV a death sentence? Why doesn't she just leave? Isn't that a private, family issue?

- ★ There are many perceptions about Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Learn more about HIV/AIDS using our [Fact Sheet](#) for advocates.⁴
- ★ Women living with HIV experience individual, community, and institutional violence. Many of the barriers that women living with HIV face make it particularly difficult to leave an abusive partner.
- ★ One in three women will be a victim of domestic or sexual violence during a point in her lifetime. Domestic violence affects us all; victims are our family members, neighbors, coworkers, and friends.



- ★ HIV can affect anyone. While the majority of new HIV diagnoses occur in gay men, 1 in 5 individuals living with HIV are women.⁵
- ★ Research on HIV has come a long way since the 80s and 90s. Today individuals living with HIV can live long healthy lives by taking antiretroviral medications, a combination of drugs that work to suppress the production of the virus. For those living with HIV it is important to begin working with a doctor to immediately after a diagnosis to determine the correct medication regimen.
- ★ 87% women living with HIV acquired the virus while in a monogamous relationships through sexual contact with their partner.⁵

IT'S ALL ABOUT POWER & CONTROL.

- ★ HIV can be used as a tactic for power and control.
- ★ In addition to understanding the use of power and control by an abusive partner, we must also recognize when we use power and control as advocates and work to promote and honor the autonomy of survivors. Learn how power and control can appear in domestic violence shelters and services with the [Abusive Power & Control within the Domestic Violence Shelter Wheel](#).⁶
- ★ Check out this [HIV and Domestic Violence Power & Control Wheel](#) developed by AIDS Alabama and the Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence.⁷

LEARN ABOUT TESTING FOR HIV/AIDS.

- ★ There are three types of testing for HIV: antibody screening test, antibody/antigen testing, and home testing. Be mindful of the language that is used while testing for HIV. Language should be free of shame, guilt, and stigma. Be supportive of survivors and reassure them.
- ★ Learn more about National HIV Testing Day and HIV/AIDS testing locations by visiting [AIDS.gov](#).⁸
- ★ Check out NNEDV's [interview with Sojourner House](#) on how advocates can conduct trauma-informed testing with survivors.⁹

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES FOR DISCLOSING HIV/AIDS STATUS OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

Unfortunately, intimate partner sexual violence is not widely understood. For instance, North Carolina was the last state to criminalize marital rape in 1993. There are still exemptions in some states that assume a wife's consent because of the marital contract.



- ★ **Legal Consequences.** Know your federal and state laws regarding [HIV notification, disclosure, and criminalization](#);¹⁰ as well as mandatory reporting¹¹ and advocate privilege laws.¹² Survivors have the right to refuse to disclose information. If a survivor discloses their HIV status, it should not be documented for the potential of being court ordered or used against a survivor in divorce and custody hearings to discredit them. Additionally, the criminalization of persons living with HIV disproportionately impacts women. . Before documenting any information, consider the consequences it may have for the survivor.
- ★ **Threat of Abuse.** It is equally important to understand the potential implications of disclosing one's HIV status to an intimate partner. Twenty-four percent of female patients experienced physical abuse after disclosing their HIV status and 45 percent feared such a reaction.¹³

CHALLENGE HOW THE MEDIA DEPICTS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND HIV.

Check out our [Pinterest Board for movies](#) that talk about domestic violence and HIV. Discuss some of the themes and misconceptions with your family, friends, and colleagues.¹⁴

RECOGNIZE SOME OF THE RED FLAGS FOR ABUSE, AND LEARN HOW YOU CAN ASK IF SOMEONE IS EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

Sample questions to determine if someone is experiencing domestic violence:

- ★ Do you feel controlled and/or isolated by your partner?
- ★ Has your partner ever threatened you or your children? Your pets?
- ★ Has your partner ever humiliated or ridiculed you? In what ways?
- ★ Has your partner ever destroyed your property? In what context?
- ★ Does your partner limit your access to money?
- ★ Has your partner ever denied you access to medical care or prevented you from taking any medications?
- ★ Has your partner ever forced you into sexual situations against your will?

BELIEVE AND SUPPORT VICTIMS.

There is already a high stigma around reporting domestic violence and disclosing one's HIV status. Make yourself aware of the HIV and domestic violence programs in your community. Being able to explain what they can do and the support they offer may make survivors feel more comfortable accepting a referral.



Positively Safe:

THE INTERSECTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & HIV/AIDS

¹ Tjaden, Patricia & Thoennes, Nancy. National Institute of Justice and the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, "Extent, Nature and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey," (2000)

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). HIV Among Women. <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/gender/women/>

³ Machtiger, 2012; Black, 2011

⁴ http://nnedv.org/downloads/HIV/HIV_Toolkit/10_DV_Provider_Fact_Sheet_FINAL.pdf

⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/gender/women/>

⁶ <http://feminism.org/readings/pdf-rdg/wheel-sheet.pdf>

⁷ <http://nnedv.org/resources/dv-hiv-aids-toolkit/168-dv-hiv-aids-handouts/4316-hiv-power-control-wheel.html>

⁸ <https://www.aids.gov/news-and-events/awareness-days/hiv-testing-day/>

⁹ <http://nnedv.org/resources/dv-hiv-aids-toolkit/169-service-provider-resources/5214-dv-advocates-conducting-hiv-testing.html>

¹⁰ <http://nnedv.org/resources/dv-hiv-aids-toolkit/166-dv-hiv-aids-facts-sheets/5151-hiv-state-laws-overview.html>

¹¹ Family Violence State Statutes. <http://www.aaos.org/CustomTemplates/Content.aspx?id=22253&ssopc=1>

¹² http://nnedv.org/downloads/SafetyNet/OVW/CI_USAdvocateConfidentialityStateLawChart_Oct2010.pdf

¹³ Rothenberg, K H, and S J Paskey. "The Risk of Domestic Violence and Women with HIV Infection: Implications for Partner Notification, Public Policy, and the Law." *American Journal of Public Health* 85.11 (1995): 1569–1576.

¹⁴ <https://www.pinterest.com/nnedv/movies-with-dv-themes/>