



# You are not alone

## How to Recognize Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence in the Workplace

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Anyone can experience domestic/intimate partner violence, regardless of age, race, religion, sexual orientation, economic status or educational background. The abuser may be a current or former spouse or intimate partner, relative or friend. Some people may not realize that what they are experiencing is domestic/intimate partner violence. Co-workers witnessing or hearing of such behaviour may also not understand this. This is in part due to the fact that the majority of violent workplace incidents are committed by someone the person knows.

Do you think one of your colleagues may be in an abusive relationship? Here are some workplace-specific warning signs and symptoms.

### The abused partner may:

- Try to cover obvious injuries (e.g. long sleeves or turtlenecks on a hot day, sunglasses indoors) and attribute them to "falls," "being clumsy" or "accidents"
- Be sad, lonely, withdrawn and afraid
- Have trouble concentrating
- Have unplanned absences
- Minimize, deny or apologize for the perpetrator's behaviour
- Be sensitive about home life or hints of trouble at home
- Receive an unusual number of phone calls and have strong reactions to those calls
- Be reluctant to discuss or respond to phone messages
- Arrive to work late or very early or request to leave early
- Have repeated conversations about marital or relationship problems
- Have bruises, chronic headaches, abdominal pains, muscle aches, fatigues, sleeping or eating disorders
- Make last-minute excuses/cancellations
- Use substances to cope
- Be absent from work more often than usual
- Have decreased productivity, inconsistent work quality or difficulty concentrating on tasks
- Be nervous talking when the perpetrator is present
- Have difficulty making decisions alone

- Avoid windows and/or the main entrance of the office
- Receive flowers or gifts for no apparent reason
- Have vague, non-specific medical complaints
- Express suicidal or homicidal thoughts
- Have flashbacks
- Be emotionally distressed, depressed or have suicidal thoughts
- Have uncharacteristic signs of anxiety and fear
- Be fearful of job loss

Perpetrator may attempt to prevent their partner from getting to work or seeking work by:

- Interfering with transportation (e.g. hiding car keys or transportation money)
- Hiding or stealing the partner's identification cards
- Threatening deportation in a situation where their partner was sponsored
- Failing to show up to care for children
- Using physical restraint

Perpetrator may interfere with the abused person while at work by:

- Repeatedly phoning or emailing
- Stalking and/or watching
- Showing up at the workplace and pestering co-workers with questions about the partner
- Lying to co-workers about the partner's whereabouts
- Destroying the partner's or workplace's property
- Threatening partner and/or co-workers
- Displaying jealous and controlling behaviour
- Verbally abusing the partner and/or co-workers
- Making disruptive personal visits to the workplace
- Physically harming the partner and/or co-workers

The most common tactics are:

- Repeated harassing phone calls
- In-person harassment at the workplace

Co-workers may:

- Receive insensitive or insulting messages intended for the abused partner
- Be threatened, abused or physically harmed

Someone who is abusive at home may be "invisible" as an abuser at work. While not all abusers reveal overtly violent behaviour, some visible warning signs that may indicate an abusive temperament include:

- Bullying others at work
- Denying that there is a problem
- Having "defensive injuries" (e.g. scratch marks)
- Being absent or late related to their actions toward the abused person or for court-mandated/jail time
- Calling the partner repeatedly during work
- Blaming others for problems, especially the partner
- Being familiar with the legal and social service systems and using them to their advantage so it appears they are the injured party

### Sources:

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5. Refuge and Respect. Domestic violence resource manual for employers, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. 2010.