

Therapeutic Approaches to Treating Domestic Violence

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Among the various types of domestic violence treatment is physical treatment, as well as mental health therapies such as psychotherapy and cognitive behavioral therapy. An individual may opt for one-on-one counseling, family therapy or group therapy, also known as a support group. Domestic violence treatment may be for victims or offenders and also includes counseling for children who have witnessed abusive relationships.

Many domestic violence treatments begin with an abused person being treated for physical trauma. These treatments may take place in a hospital or clinic setting, or may take place in a private doctor's office. A practitioner delivering treatment will typically question a patient about who initiated physical harm and will most likely report instances of domestic violence to law enforcement authorities. An attending physician or clinician, as well as other health care staff members may also offer resources, information and referrals for more in-depth psychological treatment.

Options such as support groups, family therapy, conjoint counseling or individual counseling are each offered as domestic violence treatment for victims. Therapy is also offered for abusers in each of these formats. Many times, domestic violence treatment for abusers is court ordered.

One of the most common types of domestic violence treatments offered to abusers is cognitive behavioral therapy. This type of treatment attempts to retrain the abuser in ways of effective communication, anger management and discover ways of avoiding violent outbreaks. Cognitive behavioral therapy also may attempt to help an abuser connect with her or his emotional reasons for choosing to resolve perceived conflicts with physical, mental or emotional abuse.

Domestic violence treatment often takes place after a person has abandoned an abusive relationship. Treatment may take place, however, while a person is still involved in such a relationship. While experts highly recommend victims immediately leave an abusive relationship, some victims do not immediately do so or feel unable to do so for a variety of different personal reasons. Counseling for these individuals does not have to be delayed, however, as outreach programs, personal counselors and other treatment options are available to help victims who are still in the throes an abusive situation. In fact, it is not unusual for some victims to gather the strength needed to leave abusive relationships as the result of treatment sought while in such relationships.

In addition to domestic violence treatment for victims and abusers, therapeutic options also exist for children who have closely witnessed abusive relationships. As with adult options, many domestic violence treatment programs offer individual and group counseling for children. Adults may voluntarily enroll children in domestic violence therapy or such may be ordered by a family court judge or child advocate.

Psychotherapy, also known as talk therapy, is among the most common types of domestic violence treatment for victims. With this type of treatment, individuals explore any possible underlying reasons for selecting an abusive partner, hesitating to leave one or returning to

abusive partners after leaving. As a completely confidential treatment option, psychotherapy takes place with a trained psychologist and also helps victims work through issues of self-blame and other residual psychological effects of domestic abuse.