

Second Verse, Same As The First

Written by Dara Carlin | Examiner
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Sigh. I thought I did a good job... BUT my husband read my first article and shrugged "Eh, it's ok but what are you trying to say? This doesn't say anything to me; it doesn't grab me. You can do better than that."

I thought I was quite clear in clarifying and exposing what domestic violence (DV) is and isn't because it's really important to be "on the same page" definition-wise before engaging in any productive dialogue or before further elaborating on a subject that's as open to dispute as DV is. But I got a thumbs down so here's a re-write of what I was trying to say:

One of the biggest myths about domestic violence is that it means physical abuse. Nothing could be further from the truth! Without a relationship domestic violence cannot take hold. Violence in absence of a relationship is just plain old violence. The avenue that allows DV to take hold is through psychological, mental and emotional abuse; these are "the ties that bind" and it's through these binds that DV is allowed to manifest and grow.

A clear-cut case of domestic violence without physical abuse is reflected in the life (and untimely death) of model/actress, Dorothy Stratton in the movie *Star 80*. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Star_80 Dorothy died in the ultimate act of DV - homicide - but "victim of domestic violence" was a title Dorothy never formally had. If you get the chance to see the movie, you'll see all the elements of domestic violence unfolding but her husband never lays an abusive hand to her until the very end.

Like all victims of domestic violence, Dorothy didn't need to be beaten by her husband to be afraid of and be controlled by him - he gave her plenty of other good reasons that any sane person would be wise to take notice of. When you're in a relationship where someone says "Do as I say or else" doing as they say is clearly the more attractive option than the ominous threat of finding out what the "or else" is. (Even kids know that!)

Bottom line: **all cases of domestic violence involve psychological, mental and emotional abuse** BUT not all cases of domestic violence involve being hit, slapped or

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punched. You ARE a victim of domestic violence even if you've "only been hit once"; you're a victim of domestic violence if all your decisions are based upon someone else's standards with the THREAT OF HARM hanging in the balance if you don't comply.

The other myth I was attempting to debunk is the one where we think abusers should look or act a certain way so we can decide for ourselves whether he's truly abusive/capable of abuse or not instead of believing or validating the victim - even WITH evidence.

Who the accused is often plays into whether we'll believe or support the victim or not and in some instances, the truth is revealed beyond doubt in a preventable/tragic manner. Take the [2009 Alford murder case on Maui](#)

for example: Non-abusive, non-violent men don't just wake up one day and say "I think I'll kill me and my wife today" yet because Alford was a 17+ year veteran of the Maui Police Department, more time is spent trying to understand how he could possibly have carried this out because of who he was vs. trying to understand the dynamics of DV that led up to this tragedy.

(Please note that in DV homicide media reports, you'll always have comments from those who knew the murderer saying "I had no idea - he was always such a nice guy". That's because victims actively seek to cover up the abuse and abusers who have a public image to maintain have a public image to maintain - they're NOT going to let you or anyone else see who they really are; that's a side reserved exclusively for the victim.)

As for my new and improved definition of domestic violence... I'll get 'round to explaining that all later cause I actually can't elaborate on it as succinctly as I know I should. (But didn't it sound all profound and cool?) So I hope I'll pass my next litmus test here by my biggest support/critic and hope to write in a way that'll bring moments of inspiration and clarity (cause I'm really not trying to "grab" anyone). ;)

[Source Article](#)