



SAYING NO TO THE THREAT OF OR ACTUAL PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

Never accept either. If you find yourself being tolerant of such behaviour then you need to seek urgent counselling. There is never any justification for either situation.

Some cultures or social circles tolerate verbal and physical abuse, particularly where the male is given undue authority over the female. This toleration is ultimately destructive to that very society and to all those who are in that society. The essential importance of your own safety and wellbeing is above all social and religious conventions or the dominating demands of any individual.

In ongoing domestic violence situations, both people in the relationship often try to convince themselves that once the heat dies down and the abuser apologizes, everything will be fine from then on. This is rarely, if ever, the case. Often the one being abused minimizes the seriousness of the abusive behaviour and looks for excuses for it, even to the extent of blaming themselves. "I shouldn't have upset him or her" or "I must try harder to be a good person", for example. This type of confusion is very self-destructive and also destructive to any children witnessing this dynamic. The dynamic within the abuser is often a counter reflection of the abused. There is a strong belief that other people cause them to be upset and that they must punish the others for not obeying their will. Again, this is a very destructive type of confusion that must be healed for everybody's sake. Both the abused and the abuser are stuck in unconscious mindsets that believe violence is a normal way to deal with relationship issues.

It may come as a surprise to some that violent behaviour, physical and verbal, is just as prevalent with females as it is with males. Male physical violence can have far greater power and intent and can therefore be much more visible and can have far more dangerous consequences. On

the other hand, women are often more skilled at verbal abuse and emotional manipulation, also with devastating effect.

The threat of violence or actual violence should never be tolerated. This is a boundary that must be set. This message has to get through to the abused as well as the abuser and both often need long-term rehabilitation if an ongoing destructive cycle of abuse and short-lived reconciliation has set in.

The abuser needs to participate in some sort of rehabilitation program for an extended period of time. This is for the abuser's sake as well as for everyone else's sake. It is destructive to everyone to allow such confusion to continue. Also, such a depth of confusion is not going to be overcome in a few counselling sessions or a weekend workshop.

I am not necessarily saying here that the relationship must end for good. It may need to be put on hold, however, ensuring that enough space is created, physical and emotional, to secure the safety of the abused and any children involved.

Sadly though, due to pride and denial, it is often very hard for the abuser to face the full reality of his/her behaviour. Increasing public education around male violence is helping the situation. These confused men need help just as much as anyone else. Where women's violence is concerned, there is unfortunately still a lot of denial within the public arena around this issue.