



Why Do They Stay? April 16th, 2018

The major takeaway from this event was unpacking the reasons that someone might stay in an abusive relationship. We explored some of the barriers that survivors face, and walked “in their shoes” through an interactive activity to give us a better sense of the challenges that can occur when someone tries to leave an abusive situation.

In order to frame the question: “Why Do They Stay?”, we walked through an overview of what domestic violence/intimate partner violence is:

- A pattern of abusive and coercive behaviors used to maintain power and control over a former or current intimate partner;
- That there are various tactics that an abusive partner might employ to maintain that power and control, including verbal/emotional abuse, economic abuse, isolation of their partner, using privilege against their partner, and physical/sexual violence;
- That these incidences of violence and control will get grow in intensity and frequency unless there is intervention.

This high-level exploration of the patterns and tactics of abuse helped to give context for the barriers that survivors face in leaving these unhealthy relationships. Abusive partners work to make it nearly impossible for their partners to leave. Housing concerns, financial constraints, fear for their lives or their children’s lives, shame, belief that they caused the abuse, and love of the abuser are all factors why someone may continue to stay in an unhealthy relationship, or experience challenges trying to leave.

It’s important to remember that in many cases, survivors of intimate partner violence do not always want to leave; they simply want the abuse to end. Our role as friends, colleagues, neighbors, and community members is to believe them, listen, be supportive, patient, and compassionate, and never shame, judge, or dismiss their voices.

Whether you know a survivor in your life, or you are simply wanting to help make a difference in this movement, here are some resources that may be helpful to you:

Websites:

- [New Beginnings – Ending Domestic Violence](#)
- [Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#)
- [NO MORE: Together We Can End Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault](#)

Reading Resources:

- [Why Does He Do That?, By Lundy Bancroft](#)
- [The Verbally Abusive Relationship, by Patricia Evans](#)

Remember too, that the New Beginnings’ 24-hour helpline isn’t only for survivors to call and get resources; we are here to help support friends, family members, and neighbors to learn how to better support the people they know in their lives who are experiencing domestic abuse. If you or someone you know would like to talk with an advocate about their relationship, our Helpline number is: 206.522.9472.