

The reasons women stay in abusive relationships typically fall into three categories

Lack of resources

- Most abused women have at least one minor child.
- Many abused women are not employed outside the home.
- Many abused women don't have property that is solely theirs.
- In many cases, abusers have cut off access to cash or bank accounts.
- Most abused women fear losing joint assets and custody of their children.
- Abused women fear a lower standard of living for themselves and their children.

Responses by services and authorities

- Often, clergy and social workers are trained to "save the family" rather than to stop violence.
- Police often treat incidents of domestic violence as mere "disputes" rather than as serious crimes in which one person is physically assaulting another.
- Police may try to discourage women from pressing criminal charges.
- Attorneys are often reluctant to prosecute cases. Justices rarely assign the maximum sentence or fine possible.
- Restraining orders and peace bonds do little to prevent abusers from repeating their violent patterns of behavior. Sadly, there are too few shelters to keep women safe.

Traditional thinking

- Many women don't view divorce as a viable alternative.
- Many abused women don't accept the notion of single parenting. They believe a bad father (or in the case of a lesbian relationship, a bad partner) is better than none at all.
- Many women are conditioned to believe they are responsible for making their marriage or relationship work; that if the relationship fails, they have failed as women. Society has often taught these women that their worth is measured by their ability to get and keep a man.
- Many abused women feel isolated from their families and from society. Isolation is either the result of the abuser's possessiveness or jealousy, or it may be an attempt on the part of the victim to hide signs of abuse from the outside world. Either way, such isolation leads many victims to feel they have nowhere to turn.
- Many victims externalize or rationalize the reasons for their abuser's behavior, casting blame of circumstances such as stress, financial hardship, job stress, chemical dependency, etc.
- Between violent episodes, there are periods of calm during which the abuser is charming, nurturing, and caring. Those traits which initially attracted him/her to his/her victim resurface and the victim sees her abuser as a loving person, thereby reinforcing her decision to stay.

