



Special Issues in LGBT Domestic Violence

While many aspects of LGBT domestic violence are similar to those experienced by heterosexual victims, it is not in all ways identical. Perpetrators often attempt highly specific forms of abuse based on identity and community dynamics, including:

- "Outing" or threatening to out a partner's sexual orientation or gender identity to family, employer, police, religious institution, community, in child custody disputes, or in other situations where this may pose a threat.
- Reinforcing fears that no one will help the victim because s/he is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, or that for this reason, the partner "deserves" the abuse.
- Alternatively, justifying abuse with the notion that a partner is not "really" lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (i.e. the victim may once have had, or may still have relationships, or express a gender identity, inconsistent with the abuser's definitions of these terms). This can be used both as a tool in verbal and emotional abuse as well as to further the isolation of a victim from community.
- Telling the survivor that abusive behavior is a normal part of LGBT relationships, or that it cannot be domestic violence because it is occurring between LGBT individuals.
- Monopolizing support resources through an abuser's manipulation of friends and family supports and generating sympathy and trust in order to cut off these resources to the survivor. This is a particular issue to LGBT people and others living in small insular communities, where there are few community specific resources, neighborhoods or social outlets.
- Portraying the violence as mutual and even consensual, especially if the partner attempts to defend against it, or as an expression of masculinity or some other "desirable" trait.
- Depicting the abuse as part of BDSM (bondage, discipline, dominance-submission, sadism-masochism) activity. Domestic violence can exist in BDSM relationships but it is not implicit, nor unique to this type of relationship. Domestic Violence is not BDSM, nor should any non-consensual violent or abusive acts that take place outside of a pre-arranged scene or in violation of pre determined safe words or boundaries be considered part of, or justified as, a normal BDSM relationship.