

Cultural Issues Related to Domestic Violence

Cultural Attitudes and Barriers

Issues or Influences	Counseling Tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic violence occurs in all cultures and races, including all American ethnic minorities. • Definition of domestic violence differs between cultures. • Several issues complicate efforts to end domestic violence: language barriers, fear of police involvement, confusion about legal and social services, fear of deportation. • Women don't want to ask for help: it attracts attention and makes trouble in the family. • Hispanic concept of "Familismo," which refers to family networks, can make Hispanic women reluctant to seek outside help. The victim fears being an outcast if the family doesn't believe her. • An Asian woman may fear of "losing face" and bringing shame to her family. • Puerto Rican culture believes in "cultural fatalism": bad things happen no matter what efforts are taken to prevent them. • Some African-Americans fear police brutality. Many women hesitate to report a male abuser because they are afraid police may use excessive force on their partner. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect cultural values, but emphasize that her safety is important. Assure her that a strong family can help her in a crisis. • Point out that no one deserves to be hurt, no matter what the man says. • Tell her that laws protect both women and men from assault. • Inform her of domestic violence help: national hotline, women's shelters, local support groups. • Stress the confidentiality of any discussion.

Religion

Issues or Influences	Counseling Tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biblical interpretations that tell the women she must obey her husband or partner. • Attitude that preserving the family is more important than her own safety. • Belief that abuse is part of God's will. • Buddhist beliefs: women must persevere in difficult times; her fate can't be changed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay attention to religious questions or comments. Many women find comfort in biblical scriptures. In the African-American community a victim's first place of refuge is often the church. • Affirm that her questions are valid and ask the victim how important these issues are to her. • Refer the victim to a pastor or rabbi experienced in domestic violence issues. • If you are comfortable discussing religious issues, explain that Biblical quotes are often misused to justify abuse.

Gender

Issues or Influences	Counseling Tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender roles determine a woman's view of domestic violence. Some cultures do not label a man's physical attacks on his wife as "domestic violence." • Gender roles define power and control. Latin American men prize "machismo," or male status. • Some societies view the woman as the man's "property." What he does in private is his business. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assure the victim that her safety is more important than submitting to abuse condoned by cultural tradition. • Encourage her to develop skills so that she can support herself if she needs to.