

Understanding the ‘realities’ can help create change.

Violence in lesbian relationships is an issue that is rarely talked about or acknowledged. It is only recently that women are beginning to name and discuss their abusive experiences.

One reason shared by most “battered women” is that abuse in our society generally has been hidden. The assumption is often made that women interact in a caring and supportive manner and therefore cannot be abusers. As a result, abuse is thought to only occur in straight relationships and always by men towards women.

Other issues relate to stereotypes and prejudices about lesbians, there is often fear among lesbians that open discussion about abuse will generate even broader negative images regarding the community. Research has demonstrated that violence in lesbian relationships is a significant problem that can no longer be overlooked. Let us help.

If you are being abused you need to know:

- You are not to blame for the violence!
- You do not deserve to be abused
- You have a right to live without fear
- You cannot control the abuser's behavior
- Abuse always gets worse over time

What can you do?

Tell someone what is happening to you
Call for counseling and support
Make a safety plan in case you have to leave quickly, things like:

- Set aside extra set of keys, I.D., glasses, bank cards, cash, address book, medication, and important papers. Keep this outside your home.
- Find a safe place to go, which will not be easily guessed by the abuser.

Resources in Saskatoon

Shelters:

Adelle House	668-2761
Interval House	224-0185 (24 hr)
YWCA of Saskatoon	224-0944 (24 hr)

Crisis:

Mobile Crisis Line	933-6200 (24 hr)
Saskatoon Police	9-1-1 (24 hr)

Information & Support:

Avenue Community Centre	665-1224
Sexual Assault Line	244-2224 (24 hr)
Victims Services	975-8400

For more information, please contact us.
Our mailing address is:

The Avenue Community Centre
for Gender and Sexual Diversity
Saskatoon

Office:	#201 - 320 21st Street West Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7M 4E6
Phone:	306.665.1224 (in Saskatoon) 306.665.1280 (Saskatoon Fax) 800.358.1833 (outside Saskatoon)
Website:	www.avenuecommunitycentre.ca
Email:	info@avenuecommunitycentre.ca

© The Avenue Community Centre 2009

Pamphlet
adapted from:



301 - 501 18th Avenue South West Calgary, Alberta T2S 0C7
(403) 234-PEER (7337)



**You deserve a bonus at work.
You deserve praise and encouragement.
You deserve that sweater in the window.
You deserve to live your dreams...
You deserve to not be afraid.
You deserve to be treated with respect.**



**Let us give same-sex partner
abuse the attention it deserves.**



Myths about lesbian abuse...

Myth 1: *Domestic violence doesn't occur in lesbian relationships. Women don't batter other women.* Lesbians do batter other lesbians. This myth comes from a belief that women do not learn to use power and control over other women in the same way that men do.

Myth 2: *Battered lesbians are as likely to identify themselves as victims as straight women do.* Denial by lesbians may be even greater than denial by straight victims. This may occur for a number of reasons: A) the myth that women aren't violent, B) the lack of acceptance of lesbian relationships, C) the victim who fights back is considered equally to blame and D) the lack of visible resources for abused lesbians.

Myth 3: *Lesbian violence is primarily found in relationships where lesbians are in definably different roles (e.g., "femme" & "butch").* Many lesbians have been involved in the feminist movement which seeks to free all people from sex role stereotyping. Frequently, lesbian relationships do not have "roles" and battering occurs in these relationships as well.

Myth 4: *Since women are likely to be more equal in size, the damage inflicted by the lesbian batterer is less than that inflicted by a male batterer.* Even in straight relationships, the size of the batterer relative to the victim doesn't determine the amount of damage sustained. Intense anger or rage can enable a smaller person to really hurt a larger one.

Myth 5: *Lesbians are more likely to equally participate in the violence than are heterosexuals.* Although it may be true that lesbian victims are more likely to attempt to defend themselves against their abuser, this does not mean that there is mutual battering going on, or that they "asked for it".

Myth 6: *The abused lesbian is not as dependent financially upon the abuser as a straight victim, Or, the lesbian victim is more dependent.* As in

"straight" relationships, the abused lesbian may be "supported" by her batterer or she may be "supporting" the batterer. Many lesbians are economically self-sufficient.

Myth 7: *Children are not an issue for battered lesbian, bisexual or trans women.* Many lesbians are mothers. Questions of child custody may arise for a battered lesbian if she admits she is a lesbian and that she is in a violent relationship. The impact on children is the same as any spousal violence situation.

Myth 8: *Battered lesbians have needs that are different from other women.* Battered lesbians need the same services as other battered women because the impact of battering is the same.

Myth 9: *The acts of violence by men are more violent than the acts of violence by women.* Battered lesbians who seek services report violence or threats of violence which are just as severe and life threatening as other battered women. Never discount or minimize women's fear of violence within their relationships.

Shatter The Myths

Types of Abuse:

Coercion, threats & intimidation

Threatening to destroy possessions, stalking or slandering you.

Threatening to "out" you to family, friends or work place.

Threatening to mutilate themselves or commit suicide if you leave or do not do what they want.

Threatening to hurt you, your family, friends, former lovers or pets.

Economic abuse

Forcing you to work, keeping you from going to work/school, refusing to work themselves.

Controlling money, spending all income (yours/theirs) on drinking, drugs, clothes restaurants, fines, bail, etc.

Ruining your credit rating, selling your property.

Isolation

Controlling what you do, who you see and talk to, and where you go.

Cutting you off from family, friends and community support.

Stopping you from leaving the house or taking the car.

Mental abuse

Controlling your sense of reality, name calling, never allowing you to have a say.

You have to adjust your life to their moods.

Forcing you to change your lifestyle, eating habits, friends, looks, clothing, beliefs etc. in order to stop fights.

Blaming you for their behavior.

Constantly accusing you of cheating.

Physical Abuse

Biting, slapping, kicking, choking, grabbing, punching, shoving, tripping, scratching.

Twisting arms, pulling hair, using weapons, withholding food, throwing objects.

Sexual abuse

Forcing sex on demand, forcing unwanted sex acts, using pornography or past history as a way to force sex acts.

Threatening to leave, having other lovers.

Withholding sex.

Spiritual abuse

Ridiculing, criticizing, putting down, or forbidding your language, beliefs, culture, racial identity, spiritual mentors, practices or items.

Destroying or otherwise defiling spiritual objects, tools, medications or other items.