

# The Domestic Violence Survival Workbook

Self-Assessments, Exercises & Educational Handouts



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**The Domestic Violence Survival Workbook**

Self-Assessments, Exercises & Educational Handouts

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## Using This Book *(For the professional)*

Over the past few decades the problems of family violence and domestic abuse have been brought to the forefront of our consciousness. The reality is that domestic violence occurs in families of all races, cultures, and socio-economic levels. Recognizing early warning signs is critical in the reduction of domestic violence. Part of the problem is that domestic violence encompasses many different types of abuse:

- **Physical abuse** includes slapping, hitting, punching, shoving, kicking, choking, pushing, grabbing, pulling hair, depriving of food, light and/or water, and many other ways of physically harming another person. Sometimes physical abuse involves being hit with a weapon or an object, or even left alone in dangerous places or tied up and left for periods of time.
- **Sexual abuse** is when a partner is forced to participate in sexual situations against his or her will. This can include sexual intercourse when the partner is not fully conscious, has not given consent, or is afraid to say no. This might also include sexual situations in which one partner coerces the other to engage in sexual activities that are not mutually agreed upon.
- **Psychological, emotional or verbal abuse** is when one partner threatens, humiliates, excessively blames, puts-down, intimidates or otherwise psychologically hurts the other partner. This may include situations in which a partner is made to feel inferior, stupid or lazy. This type of abuse can also take the form of one partner depriving the other of things they need or keeping them away from other people.
- **Financial abuse** occurs when a partner takes financial advantage by cashing checks without permission, taking money and personal belongings, forging a partner's signature, lying about how much money they have, or using deception, scare tactics, trickery or false pretence for financial gain.
- **Multiple forms of abuse** are when one partner abuses the other partner in more than one of the ways listed.

Professionals agree that domestic violence is very complex and can take many different forms. Abusers can include spouses, boyfriends and girlfriends, same-sex partners, roommates and friends. It may appear that the obvious and simple solution to this problem is that a domestic violence survivor should just leave the abuser and the abusive relationship. Many reasons exist to indicate why this is not always possible or desirable on the part of the abused. The good news is that skills for recognizing and effectively dealing with abusive relationships can be learned.

Over the last century many different workbooks, workshops and self-help systems have been designed to help people explore ways of overcoming abusive relationships. In the past twenty years, many research studies have focused on the value of self-reflection and journaling as a way of exploring personal characteristics, identifying ineffective behaviors, and examining thoughts and feelings that lead to these ineffective behaviors. This book is unique in that it combines two powerful psychological tools designed to enhance domestic violence coping skills: self-assessment and journaling.

## Using This Book *(For the professional, continued)*

Different cultures construct relationships and gender in different ways. For example, some cultures expect relationships to include more possessiveness and even a healthy relationship may score high on the Scales. This does not always indicate a higher incidence of abuse in this community. While the book attempts to be inter-culturally relevant and sensitive, therapists and other professionals must use discretion, sensitivity and cultural competency in their use of these materials.

The *Domestic Violence Survival Workbook* contains five separate sections that will help participants learn more about themselves as well as the impact of domestic violence in their lives and the lives of their family members. The five sections of this book are:

- **SYMPTOMS OF ABUSE SCALE** helps survivors to explore the extent to which abuse is having on their physical wellness, emotions, thought patterns and detachment from others.
- **TYPES of ABUSE SCALE** helps survivors explore and examine their relationship with parents, siblings, grandparents, children, friends and work colleagues. *It includes a comprehensive 10-page safety plan. Please stress the comments in the bottom box of each page on how to keep the Safety Plan SAFE!*
- **PARTNER BEHAVIOR SCALE** helps individuals identify if they are in a potentially abusive relationship.
- **ELDER ABUSE SCALE** helps survivors of elder abuse explore, examine and manage a variety of emotions.
- **SELF-EMPOWERMENT SCALE** helps survivors examine if they are successfully moving on from the trauma of abuse and living the life they have dreamed of living.

These sections serve as avenues for individual self-reflection, as well as for group experiences revolving around identified topics of importance. Each assessment includes directions for easy administration, scoring and interpretation. Each section includes exploratory activities, reflective journaling activities and educational handouts to help participants discover their habitual, ineffective methods of managing domestic violence and exploring new ways to bring about healing.

The art of self-reflection goes back many centuries and is rooted in many of the world's greatest spiritual and philosophical traditions. Socrates, the ancient Greek philosopher, was known to walk the streets engaging the people he met in philosophical reflection and dialogue. He felt that this type of activity was so important in life that he went so far as to proclaim, "The unexamined life is not worth living!" The unexamined life is one in which the same routine is continually repeated without ever thinking about its meaning to one's life and how this life really could be lived. However, a structured reflection and examination of beliefs, assumptions, characteristics, and patterns can provide a better understanding, which can lead to a more satisfying life. A greater level of self-understanding about important life skills is often necessary to make positive, self-directed changes in the negative patterns that keep repeating throughout life. The assessments and exercises in this book can help promote this self-understanding. Through involvement in the in-depth activities, the participant claims ownership in the development of positive patterns.

Journaling is an extremely powerful tool for enhancing self-discovery, learning, transcending traditional problems, breaking ineffective life habits, and helping to heal from psychological traumas of the past. From a physical point of view, writing reduces stress and lowers muscle tension, blood pressure and heart rate levels. Psychologically, writing reduces sadness, depression and general anxiety, and leads to a greater level of life satisfaction and optimism. Behaviorally, writing leads to enhanced social skills, emotional intelligence and creativity. It also leads to improved writing skills which leads to more self-confidence in the workplace.

By combining reflective assessment and journaling, your participants will be exposed to a powerful method of combining verbalizing and writing to reflect and solve problems, becoming more aware of domestic violence in their lives.

**Preparation for using the assessments and activities in this book is important. The authors suggest that prior to administering any of the assessments in this book, you complete them yourself. This will familiarize you with the format of the assessments, the scoring directions, the interpretation guides and the journaling activities. Although the assessments are designed to be self-administered, scored and interpreted, it helps for facilitators to be prepared to answer questions about the assessments for participants.**

**With your background and experience, as well as familiarity with the scales, you should be able to clarify for participants any confusing words or phrases.**

## **The Assessments, Journaling Activities and Educational Handouts**

The Assessments, Journaling Activities, and Educational Handouts in *The Domestic Violence Survival Workbook* are reproducible and ready to be photocopied for participants' use. Assessments contained in this book focus on self-reported data and are similar to ones used by psychologists, counselors, therapists and career consultants. Accuracy and usefulness of the information provided is dependent on the truthful information that each participant provides through self-examination. By being honest, participants help themselves to learn about unproductive and ineffective patterns, and to uncover information that might be keeping them from being as happy and/or as successful as they might be.

An assessment instrument can provide participants with valuable information about themselves; however, it cannot measure or identify everything about them. The purposes of the assessments are not to pigeon-hole certain characteristics, but rather to allow participants to explore all of their characteristics. This book contains self-assessments, not tests. Tests measure knowledge or whether something is right or wrong. For the assessments in this book, there are no right or wrong answers. These assessments ask for personal opinions or attitudes about a topic of importance in the participant's career and life.

When administering assessments in this workbook, remember that the items are generically written so that they will be applicable to a wide variety of people but will not account for every possible variable for every person. The assessments are not specifically tailored to one person. Use them to help participants identify negative themes in their lives and find ways to break the hold that these patterns and their effects have.

Advise the participants taking the assessments that they should not spend too much time trying to analyze the content of the questions; their initial response will most likely be true. Regardless of individual scores, encourage participants to talk about their findings and their feelings pertaining to what they have discovered about themselves. Talking about abusive patterns and relationships can enhance the life of participants. These domestic violence exercises can be used by group facilitators working with either potential victims of domestic violence or past or present survivors of domestic violence.

A particular score on any assessment does not guarantee a participant's level of safety or danger in a relationship. Use discretion when using any of the information or feedback provided in this workbook. The use of these assessments should not be substituted for consultation and/or safety planning with a domestic violence professional. Should the participants experience any emotional, mental, or physical problems, they need to consult a qualified mental health care professional.

***Thanks to the following professionals whose input in this book  
has been so valuable!***

Carol Butler, MS Ed, RN, C, Nancy Day, OT Reg (Ont), Eileen Regen, M.Ed., CJE

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Without their thought-provoking questions and professional insights,  
this book would not have been possible.



## Layout of the Book

*The Domestic Violence Survival Workbook* is designed to be used either independently or as part of an integrated curriculum. You may administer one of the assessments and the journaling exercises to an individual or a group with whom you are working, or you may administer a number of the assessments over one or more days.

**This book includes five sections, each of which contains:**

- **Assessment Instruments** – Self-assessment inventories with scoring directions and interpretation materials. Group facilitators can choose one or more of the activities relevant to their participants.
- **Activity Handouts** – Practical questions and activities that prompt self-reflection and promote self-understanding. These questions and activities foster introspection and promote pro-social behaviors.
- **Reflective Questions for Journaling** – Self-exploration activities and journaling exercises specific to each assessment to enhance self-discovery, learning and healing.
- **Educational Handouts** – Handouts designed to enhance instruction can be used individually or in groups to enhance awareness of abuse and abusive relationships. They can be distributed, converted into masters for overheads or transparencies, or written down on a board and discussed.

**Who should use this program?**

This book has been designed as a practical tool for helping professionals, such as therapists, counselors, psychologists, teachers, group leaders, etc. Depending on the role of the professional using *The Domestic Violence Survival Workbook* and the specific group's needs, these sections can be used individually, combined, or as part of an integrated curriculum for a more comprehensive approach.

**Why use self-assessments?**

Self-assessments are important in teaching various domestic violence survival skills.

Participants will:

- Become aware of the primary motivators that guide their behavior.
- Explore and learn to identify situations that are potentially harmful.
- Explore the effects of unconscious childhood messages.
- Gain insight that will guide behavioral change.
- Focus their thinking on behavioral goals for change.
- Uncover resources they possess that can help them to cope with problems and difficulties.
- Explore their personal characteristics without judgment.
- Develop full awareness of their strengths and weaknesses.

**Because the assessments are presented in a straightforward and easy-to-use format, individuals can self-administer, score, and interpret each assessment at their own pace.**

## Introduction for the Participant

Domestic violence is the number one cause of injury to women and men in the United States. Domestic violence is a crime that cuts across all racial, cultural, age and socio-economic lines. Violence at home between partners can take many forms including physical, sexual, financial, verbal and emotional abuse. Most men and women who abuse their partners tended to witness violence in their own family as they were growing up or were abused as children.

People who have been abused often believe they somehow cause the abuse, or that they can control the abuse by pleasing his or her partner or not causing him or her to get angry. If you are one of those people, you probably are still exhibiting a variety of symptoms that disrupt your life, your relationship with others, your work, and your family interactions. Some of the thoughts, feelings and behaviors of abuse survivors include:

- Low self-esteem
- Controlling behaviors
- Lack of trust
- Anxiety
- Guilt about being responsible for the abuse
- Fear of abandonment

The good news is that if you are possibly about to be abused by someone, being abused now, or have been abused in the past, this book can help you! Many abusers are not even aware of the patterns and triggers for their abusive actions. On the other hand, many people being abused find themselves caught up in a cycle of abuse that follows a common pattern in their relationships.

This book relies on assessments and journaling activities to help you reflect on yourself and your relationships. This method is both educational and therapeutic. *The Domestic Violence Survival Workbook* is designed to help you learn about the types of abuse, how to take better care of yourself, and how to identify abusive personality characteristics.

**Many people who were abused go on to abuse others.**

**If you have concerns about this issue, please call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233.**



# **The Domestic Violence Survival Workbook**

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

---

### **SECTION I – Symptoms of Abuse**

#### **Symptoms of Abuse Scale**

Directions . . . . .	15
Symptoms of Abuse Scale . . . . .	16
Scoring Directions . . . . .	18
Profile Interpretation . . . . .	18 – 22

#### **Activity Handouts**

Staying in the Present . . . . .	23
Exercise . . . . .	23
Affirmations . . . . .	24
Listen to Music . . . . .	24
Visualization . . . . .	25
Thought Stopping . . . . .	25
Breathing . . . . .	26
Progressive Relaxation . . . . .	27
Meditation . . . . .	27
Nutrition . . . . .	28
Engage in Simple Pleasures . . . . .	28

#### **Journaling Activities**

Learn? . . . . .	29
Work On? . . . . .	30
Stress Management Plan? . . . . .	31

#### **Educational Handouts**

Some Long-Term Effects of Abuse . . . . .	32
Fears in Leaving an Abusive Situation . . . . .	33

### **SECTION II – Types of Abuse**

#### **Types of Abuse Scale**

Directions . . . . .	37
Types of Abuse Scale . . . . .	38 – 39
Scoring Directions . . . . .	40
Profile Interpretation . . . . .	41 – 42

## TABLE OF CONTENTS *(continued)*

---

### **Activity Handouts**

Safety Plan #1 – Things to Do to Be Safe . . . . .	43
Safety Plan #2 – Supportive Neighbors and Friends . . . . .	44
Safety Plan #3 – Leaving Your Home Safely . . . . .	45
Safety Plan #4 – What Would You Take? . . . . .	46
Safety Plan #5 – Children . . . . .	47
Safety Plan #6 – Supportive People . . . . .	48
Safety Plan #7 – Your Safety . . . . .	49
Safety Plan #8 – Other Ways to Protect Yourself (and Children) . . . . .	50
Safety Plan #9 – My Plan . . . . .	51
Safety Plan #10 – Safety of My Children . . . . .	52

### **Journaling Activity**

Severe Abuse . . . . .	53
------------------------	----

### **Educational Handouts**

Cycle of Abuse . . . . .	54
Some Examples of Abuse . . . . .	55

## **SECTION III – Partner Behavior**

### **Partner Behavior Scale**

Directions . . . . .	59
Partner Behavior Scale . . . . .	60 – 61
Scoring Directions . . . . .	62
Profile Interpretation . . . . .	62
Profile Interpretation Scale I – Jealousy . . . . .	63
Profile Interpretation Scale II – Control . . . . .	64
Profile Interpretation Scale III – Lifestyle . . . . .	65
Profile Interpretation Scale IV – Abusive Behavior . . . . .	66

### **Activity Handouts**

Self-Advocacy . . . . .	67
Negatives . . . . .	68
Helplessness . . . . .	69
Developing Positive Connections with Other People . . . . .	70
Healthy Relationships Worksheet . . . . .	71

## TABLE OF CONTENTS *(continued)*

---

Unhealthy Relationships Worksheet . . . . .	72
Changing Unhealthy Relationships . . . . .	73
<b>Journaling Activities</b>	
Trusting Relationships . . . . .	74
An Ideal Relationship . . . . .	75
Ideal Qualities . . . . .	76
<b>Educational Handouts</b>	
Healthy Relationships . . . . .	77
Indicators of an Unhealthy Relationship . . . . .	78

### **SECTION IV – Elder Abuse**

#### **Elder Abuse Scale**

Directions . . . . .	81
Elder Abuse Scale . . . . .	82 – 83
Scoring Directions . . . . .	84
Profile Interpretation . . . . .	84
Scale Descriptions . . . . .	85

#### **Activity Handouts**

Self-Esteem Exercises . . . . .	86
Daily Feelings Log . . . . .	87
Anxiety Exercises . . . . .	88 – 89
Guilt-Related Exercises . . . . .	90
Forgiving Yourself . . . . .	91
Depression Exercises . . . . .	92
Converting Negativity into Positive Outcomes . . . . .	93
Putting It All Together . . . . .	94
How Has Abuse Affected Me? . . . . .	95

#### **Journaling Activities**

Who Supports Me? . . . . .	96
My Safety Plan . . . . .	97

#### **Educational Handouts**

Types of Elder Abuse . . . . .	98
Barriers . . . . .	99

## TABLE OF CONTENTS *(continued)*

---

### **SECTION V – Self-Empowerment**

#### **Self-Empowerment Scale**

Directions .....	103
Self-Empowerment Scale .....	104 – 105
Scoring Directions .....	106
Profile Interpretation .....	107
Scale Descriptions .....	108

#### **Activity Handouts**

Increasing Your Self-Esteem .....	109
Pride .....	110
My Positive Self .....	111 – 112
Stop Feeling Guilty .....	113
Your Wants and Needs .....	114
Non-Assertive Situations .....	115
Emotional Dependence .....	116

#### **Journaling Activities**

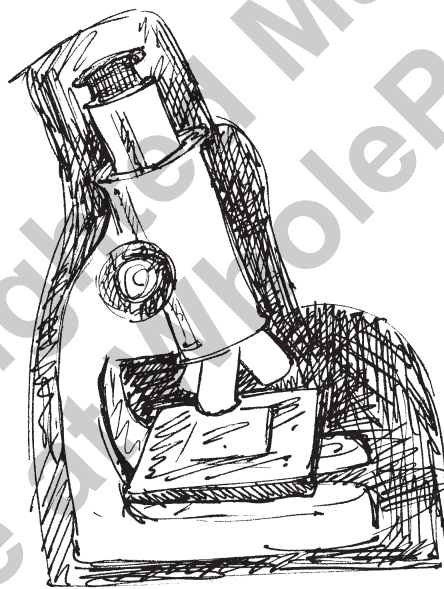
I Do Well .....	117
The Guilt .....	118
Assertiveness .....	119

#### **Educational Handouts**

Stress .....	120
Common Guilt Issues .....	121

SECTION I:

# Symptoms of Abuse Scale



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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# Symptoms of Abuse Scale Directions

Domestic violence is a pattern of behavior in an intimate relationship that is used to obtain and maintain power and control over an intimate partner. Stress is often the result of this abuse. The Symptoms of Abuse Scale is designed to help you explore different types of symptoms that you may be experiencing that are related to stress.

This booklet contains statements that are divided into four categories. Read each of the statements and decide how descriptive the statement is of you. In each of the choices listed, circle the number of your response on the line to the right of each statement.

In the following example, the circled 1 indicates that the statement is not at all descriptive of the person completing the inventory:

	A Lot Like Me	Somewhat Like Me	A Little Like Me	Not Like Me
I. I find that . . .				
I feel detached from other people around me	4	3	2	1

This is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time thinking about your answers. Your initial response will be the most true for you. Be sure to respond to every statement.

(Turn to the next page and begin)

## Symptoms of Abuse Scale

	A Lot Like Me	Somewhat Like Me	A Little Like Me	Not Like Me
<b>I. I find that . . .</b>				
I feel detached from other people around me	4	3	2	1
I have lost interest in important social activities	4	3	2	1
I have lost interest in my job	4	3	2	1
I have lost interest in hobbies and sports	4	3	2	1
I avoid activities or places that remind me of the abuse	4	3	2	1
I avoid people or conversations that remind me of the abuse	4	3	2	1
I have difficulty being around my friends	4	3	2	1
I try to avoid feelings that remind me of the abuse	4	3	2	1
DETACHED TOTAL =	_____			

	A Lot Like Me	Somewhat Like Me	A Little Like Me	Not Like Me
<b>II. I find that . . .</b>				
I have frequent headaches	4	3	2	1
I am jumpy if startled by sudden noises	4	3	2	1
I have recurring panic attacks	4	3	2	1
I often have an upset stomach	4	3	2	1
I am experiencing a decrease or increase of appetite	4	3	2	1
I am tired a lot of the time	4	3	2	1
I frequently have a dry mouth or throat	4	3	2	1
I often feel anxious	4	3	2	1

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS TOTAL = \_\_\_\_\_

*(Continued on the next page)*

# SECTION I: SYMPTOMS OF ABUSE SCALE



(Symptoms of Abuse Scale, continued)

	<b>A Lot Like Me</b>	<b>Somewhat Like Me</b>	<b>A Little Like Me</b>	<b>Not Like Me</b>
<b>III. I find that . . .</b>				
I think about the abuse a lot of the time	4	3	2	1
I get mental pictures of the abuse without being reminded of it	4	3	2	1
I am unable to remember parts of the abuse	4	3	2	1
I am unable to remember my life during the abuse	4	3	2	1
I have sudden flashbacks of the abuse	4	3	2	1
I have difficulty falling asleep	4	3	2	1
I relive the abuse in my mind	4	3	2	1
I have a hard time concentrating	4	3	2	1

COGNITIVE TOTAL = \_\_\_\_\_

	<b>A Lot Like Me</b>	<b>Somewhat Like Me</b>	<b>A Little Like Me</b>	<b>Not Like Me</b>
<b>IV. I find that . . .</b>				
I feel numb emotionally	4	3	2	1
I feel guilty about the abuse	4	3	2	1
I have bad dreams and nightmares	4	3	2	1
I get emotionally upset when I think about the abuse	4	3	2	1
I don't know who to trust	4	3	2	1
I am on guard most of the time	4	3	2	1
I am irritable a lot of the time	4	3	2	1
I have feelings of hopelessness	4	3	2	1

EMOTIONS TOTAL = \_\_\_\_\_

(Go to the Scoring Directions on the next page)

## SECTION I: SYMPTOMS OF ABUSE SCALE

### Symptoms of Abuse Scale Scoring Directions

The Symptoms of Abuse Scale is designed to measure the severity and the nature of the symptoms of the abuse you are currently experiencing. For each of the four sections on the previous pages, count the scores you circled for each of the eight items. Put that total on the line marked "Total" at the end of each section.

Then, transfer your totals to the spaces below:

I. DETACHED TOTAL = \_\_\_\_\_  
II. PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS TOTAL = \_\_\_\_\_  
III. COGNITIVE TOTAL = \_\_\_\_\_  
IV. EMOTIONS TOTAL = \_\_\_\_\_

### Profile Interpretation

TOTAL SCALES SCORES	RESULT	INDICATIONS
Scores from 25 to 32	High	You have many of the symptoms of extreme stress. You need to do much more to eliminate some of the stress in your life.
Scores from 16 to 24	Moderate	You have some of the symptoms of extreme stress. You need to do more to eliminate some of the stress in your life.
Scores from 8 to 15	Low	You may not have any or you may have a few of the symptoms of extreme stress. You may not need to do anything if you have a very low score, or it may help you to do a little to eliminate some stress in your life.

For scales which you scored in the **Moderate** or **High** range, find the descriptions on the pages that follow. Read the description and complete the exercises that are included. No matter how you scored, low, moderate or high, you will benefit from these exercises.



## Symptoms of Abuse Scale Profile Interpretation *(Continued)*

### I. DETACHED

People who are experiencing extreme stress are often detached and have lost interest in life. You possibly have lost interest in activities that are important to you like your job, school, hobbies, sports, house-of-worship or spiritual activities and/or social activities. You may feel cut off and disconnected from people and have trouble being around friends and family.

Who are some of the people from whom you feel disconnected?

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List some of the things you have normally done that you no longer feel like doing.

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What activities do you especially miss being involved in?

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*(Continued on the next page)*