

## Do You Know the Faces of Domestic Violence?



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The face of domestic violence is growing all too familiar... Or is it? Over the last one to two decades, the mental health community and the media have done an excellent job of getting the face of the battered woman and the sexually abused child in front of the general public. Though the plight of these victims is no easier than it was 20 years ago, public awareness has grown significantly. We have gained greater resources to identify victims and have more ways to offer relief, but the guilt, the confused love, the feelings of being trapped, the absence of self-reliant resiliency is the same. So the toll on battered women and the struggle to stop child abuse and neglect continue. But what about the other faces in the crowd?

What about the six-foot-two construction worker with third-degree burns on his back caused by a hot frying pan thrown at him when he was late for dinner? What about the suburban mother embarrassed to discuss the marks on the back of her neck? Would anyone believe that her 15-

year-old son forced her face into the spilled pop on the floor? Would anyone believe that she is afraid to have her own son over on his scheduled visits? Would anyone believe that her ex-husband just laughs at her and says that she probably deserved it? What about the young gay man, who creatively dons a scarf to cover up the marks around his throat placed there by his partner in a drunken rage?

While we ponder those, what about the more subtle types of domestic abuse that leave no physical marks, but leave psychological wounds that can scar their victims for years? What about the adolescent girl who is constantly humiliated by her father's sexual innuendos in front of her peers? Or the creative young male who is publicly ostracized by his mother because he does not play sports like his older brother? What about the middle-aged man who is constantly berated by his wife for losing his job or the thirty-something young mother who is called horrible names because she has lost her high school cheerleader's figure?

The emotional and mental trauma caused by this spectrum of domestic violence, whether accompanied by physical marks or not, can be as debilitating as the injuries we see in the media campaigns about battered women. Or as corrosive as high-functioning depression. Though trauma can have common outcomes, such as decreased self-esteem, debilitating self-doubt, depression, self-injury, or even suicide, each individual is different with distinctive needs. The place to start is in helping each of them realize they are not alone, they are not crazy, they can win back their sense of self and the dignity inherent within them, and they can have a healthy resolution of the love they have for the one who hurts them.

If any of these stories sound like you or someone you know, please reach out, because there are many organizations like Headway who care. No matter what the situation may be, whether there are physical marks or not, and even if you aren't sure if it is abuse or not, we at Headway are here for you and eager to help you heal. Call us at (612) 861-1675 or email [info@headway.org](mailto:info@headway.org) and we'll be happy to start the conversation with you.

*Hal has been with Headway since 2007 and has been practicing in the field of Clinical Psychology for 20 years. As the Director of Client Services, his role is to align the internal strategic plan with the needs of the community using the future fiscal viability of the organization as the compass. In addition to this role, Hal is also an instructor for the Forensic Mental Health Program at Concordia University, practices in the forensic assessment of juveniles, and regularly presents around the state at professional conferences, mainly on topics related to Child and Adolescent Psychology.*

*In his spare time, Hal likes to be physically active and manage his menagerie of dogs.*

