



*Giving voice to the unspeakable...  
responding to domestic abuse in Jewish homes.*

## **Myths & Misconceptions of Domestic Abuse in the Orthodox Community**

**To publicly speak about domestic abuse is a Chillul Hashem, an intolerable disgrace to our community.** *To remain silent perpetuates the myth that domestic abuse does not exist in the Jewish community. This causes unnecessary and unjustified pain and suffering to many women and their children. Therefore to not speak about Domestic Abuse is a total community failure and the real Chillul Hashem.*

**Domestic abuse occurs in only the less observant Jewish community.** *Abuse happens equally throughout the Jewish community regardless of religious belief or practice.*

**If abuse isn't physical, it is not considered domestic violence.** *Physical violence is the easiest to detect, but abuse has various forms which are often misunderstood and unreported. 70% of abuse is not physical; it is emotional, verbal, psychological, financial and sexual.*

**A person who is Shomer Torah and Mitzvos, certainly a Ben Torah, would not abuse his wife unless he had a mental illness.** *Abuse is often a learned behavior and physical abuse is a choice. It is a systematic pattern of unfairly using power and control for the sole purpose of manipulating a spouse in an intimate relationship.*

**He is under so much pressure. It is her fault. If only she would take responsibility and just do things better. That would alleviate the problem.** *Abuse is not caused by a woman's behavior or outside stressors. Abusers must take responsibility for their actions. There is no justification for domestic abuse.*

**"I would never stay in an abusive relationship." She must be crazy.** *Jewish women feel responsible to preserve Shalom Bayit, and avoid disrupting the family. They fear loss of privacy and confidentiality in a tight-knit community; that their children will be stigmatized and that this might compromise shidduchim. They fear losing their children, having limited finances, not receiving a GET and never being safe.*

**Abusers are abusive in all their relationships and are easy to detect.** *Generally abusers appear likeable in public. Abusers can live a life of Torah and Mitzvahs, yet contradict themselves by abusing their wives.*

**Abuse often stops on its own. Abusers can change.** *Change can occur only if the abuser accepts responsibility for his behavior and gets treatment with a domestic abuse specialist. Historically, an abuser does not change because he has given his word to his Rabbi or that he has done Teshuva.*



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**Couples counseling is effective with couples experiencing domestic abuse.** *Couples counseling can increase the risk of violence because it is based on equality, and domestic abuse is about one person having power over another. If the abuse is not physical, it is often to understand what is really happening in the relationship. It is safer to work individually with each partner.*

**Generally abusers love their children and would not hurt them.** *Abusers often turn children against their mother and use them as pawns in their marital relationship. Approximately 90% of children are silent witnesses of the abuse directed at their mother.*

**The Shidduch process will protect the bride from potential abuse.** *It is difficult to know the full truth about a potential shiddach's home life. It is often hidden, unknown, or not talked about for fear of Loshon Hora and ruining a possible match*

**Jewish men are good husbands, good providers, don't do drugs, don't cheat on their wives and don't abuse their wives or children.** *Because we all tend to believe this image, Jewish women blame themselves for the abuse and experience a deep sense of failure.*

**Women can be just as abusive as men.** *It is reported that 5% of partner abuse victims are men. Of that number 3% were hurt due to women protecting themselves and their children.*

**Every marriage experiences some form of abuse.** *Abuse is not about an occasional disparaging remark or flare of temper in the heat of an argument. It is a consistent pattern of power and control and very different from general family arguments.*

**There is nowhere culturally sensitive that Jewish Women experiencing Domestic Abuse can receive the support they need.** *SHALVA understands the unique religious and cultural issues many Jewish families may have in conjunction with addressing the universal needs all abuse survivors face.*

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