

## Reasons for staying

This is the number one question most people want to understand. The question, however, should be "Why does the battering continue?" The question "why does she stay?" places the blame on the victim. The reality is that the majority of battered women make heroic efforts at leaving, but because of the following reasons, most are unsuccessful.

- **Fear:** The number one reason for not leaving is fear. According to the FBI, up to 40% of female homicides in any given year occur when the woman decides to leave the abusive relationship. Her fears are not unfounded! Given this fact, it is very important that the battered woman's expression of fear not be minimized. If a decision to leave has been made, a safety plan should be put in place.
- **Lack of Resources:** Since one of the major components of abuse is isolation, the battered woman most often lacks a support system. Her family ties and friendships have been destroyed leaving her psychologically and financially dependent on the abusive partner.
- **Lack of Finances/Economic Reality:** The economic reality for women (particularly those with children, is a bleak one.) This is especially true for women who have not worked outside the home. Economic dependence on the abuser is a very real reason for remaining in the relationship. Public assistance programs have been drastically reduced and those that remain provide inadequate benefits.
- **Children:** Being a single parent is a strenuous experience under the best of circumstances, and for most battered women, conditions are far from the best. The enormous responsibility of raising children alone can be overwhelming. Often, the abuser may threaten to take the children away from her if she even attempts to leave.
- **Feelings of Guilt:** The woman may believe that her partner is "sick" and/or needs her help; the idea of leaving can thus produce feelings of guilt.
- **Promises of Reform:** As is consistent with the cycle of violence, the abuser promises it will never happen again; the victim wants to believe this is true.
- **Sex-Role Conditioning:** Most women are still taught to be passive and dependent on men. In addition, women generally accept the responsibility for success or failure in their relationships; to leave is to admit failure.

- **Religious Beliefs and Values:** Religious beliefs reinforce the commitment to marriage. Many faiths hold that the husband is head of the family and it is a wife's duty to be submissive to him. This may be a powerful reason for staying in a destructive relationship.
- **Society's Acceptance /Reinforcement of Violence:** Many people turn a "deaf ear" to marital violence and believe what goes on behind closed doors is a "private matter." The observance of a burglary, vandalism, or even cruelty to animals in the neighborhood might quickly be reported; whereas, an assault on a wife or significant other may not.
- **Love for Batterer:** Most people enter a relationship for love, and that emotion does not simply disappear easily or in the face of difficulty. After a battering, the abuser often is extremely apologetic. Because her self-esteem is so low following the incident, the apologies and promises of reform are often perceived as the end of the abuse.