



Domestic Abuse and How it Can Lead to Homelessness

Abuse can come in all forms, whether verbally, physically, or mentally. It's hard to know if someone is an abuser before you've begun to trust them, because they utilize manipulation. Manipulation in terms of shifting blame, gaslighting, and even self deprecation. They also don't openly state what their intentions are. Trust is built, overtime, and only when you're in too deep do abusers show their true colors. Abusers crave dominance and power. They don't want equality in a relationship, they want subservience. They want someone that does what they're told, without fighting back. They want someone that respects them more than they respect themselves. When in a situation of domestic abuse, it's oftentimes hard to even notice, as abusers can warp your sense of right and wrong in a relationship. However, when someone does notice, leaving is extremely difficult, and let me tell you why.

Running away is probably the first option a lot of people consider, as just leaving with minimal confrontation seems to be the safest option when leaving an abusive situation. However, what happens when a singular victim suffering from domestic abuse turns into an entire family suffering at the hands of one abuser. It's much more difficult to leave when your family depends on someone, either mentally or financially, to remain stable. I've heard countless stories of people leaving situations of domestic abuse only to be further stalked and harassed later in life. It's like living life on the run, except, you've never actually done anything wrong. And restraining orders aren't always helpful either, as they may not be accepted as valid and many

abusers simply do not care about getting in the way of the law. Many abusers resent their victims for leaving and employ the mentality, “If i can’t have them, no one can,” making them even more dangerous to the victims courageous enough to leave. A lot of people argue that victims of domestic violence should just report it to the police as well, but what happens when the abuser is a part of the criminal justice system? Police partaking in domestic abuse, especially in the US is surprisingly high, as the National Center for Women and Policing stated that “Two studies have found that *at least 40 percent* of police officer families experience domestic violence, in contrast to 10 percent of families in the general population” (Friedersdorf). The correlation between the criminal justice system and domestic abuse is something that I’ll discuss further in my next article, but it’s worth noting that the criminal justice system oftentimes fails survivors of domestic abuse. Whether it be due to “police solidarity” in the force or just blatant disregard for the safety of survivors, many people are left to “fend for themselves” after leaving situations of domestic violence. But how does this translate into homelessness?

When people leave, oftentimes they’ve left situations where they held no control. They’ve depended financially on someone for so long that they don’t have any money to start their new life. This in turn leads to large numbers of domestic violence survivors in homeless shelters, not to mention those unable to gain access to those shelters. A lot of survivors of domestic abuse oftentimes go to homeless shelters for temporary safety, as it’s much more difficult for abusers to track homeless, unidentified people than someone with new home records. “On a single night in 2019, homeless services providers had more than 48,000 beds set aside for survivors of domestic violence” (End Homelessness). So what can we do to help victims of domestic abuse? Well, as I end all of my articles, it’s really more of a governmental change than an individual one. We can allot more time and money to temporary shelters, and work on serving justice to abusers regardless of their social status. There should be more of an emphasis on mental health, as leaving a relationship such as one with an abuser is quite traumatic for many people, and more programs directed towards healing should be governmentally funded.

Sources:

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