



Domestic Abuse and Homelessness: From One Level of Suffering to Another

Imagine, if you will, what it might be like to live every day in a domestically violent relationship. The fear that walks with those footsteps climbing up to the door. The trembling that rushes over you when you hear him fiddling with his keys. When the door opens, inside the silhouette of his body blocking the moonlight, you see all of the times he's hurt you.

Be it in marriage or dating, living with someone that could pose a threat of physical abuse against you is a terrifying thing. Unfortunately, this experience is all too common. [Project Sanctuary offers statistics](#) on the frequency and commonality of domestic violence, saying that "intimate partner violence," as they denote it, accounts for 15% of all violent crime. Such a consistent everyday experience of violence and fear can undoubtedly wear down one's mental health. The question of whether or not the next time you see him will be through a swollen eye is one that you never want to answer. Sometimes, avoiding such abuse and tyranny from someone once trusted extends to great lengths, the expected result being homelessness.

Those that experience homelessness as a result of domestic abuse should not be considered as having escaped from their plight and therefore in no need of help. Homelessness and domestic abuse are both terribly challenging things for different reasons; one should not be the result of the other. But, sadly, homelessness often seems to be the better and safer alternative than living

in an abusive relationship. To turn away from such trauma directly into another form of trauma and hardship is no escape; it is from one level of suffering to another.

There are things that can be done to help the homeless who have fled domestic abuse. The National Alliance to End Homelessness [writes](#) that rental assistance is one tangible way to help the man or woman fleeing domestic abuse find safety and consistent housing. They go on to note that their immediate needs are not the only ones that must be met. As with homeless veterans and others, those who have experienced domestic abuse carry with them an immense weight of trauma, both physical and mental. This of course can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder among other things. Therefore, providing funding for therapy or medication needed to overcome such trauma can prove a most helpful way of serving the heavy laden man or woman.

Becoming aware of the relationship of domestic abuse and homelessness is the first step. The second is clearly addressing the immediate needs of the one fleeing such violence by providing financial or physical support. Lastly, one should not neglect the mental health aspect of those running from domestic abuse and toward homelessness. The coalition of two harsh experiences will prove damaging to the psyche, and thus must be helped by those willing and able to serve the ones that need it most.

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