



BEHIND *Closed Doors*

*Dealing with Domestic Abuse and
Finding Help in Cy-Fair*

Written by Marlena Solomon

*Approximately 1.3 million women and 835,000 men who
are physically assaulted by an intimate partner*

- National Institute of Justice

No one wants their relationship to end that way, but it happens all the time. Seemingly good relationships go bad and take a violent turn. In an instant, circumstances change and you've become a victim of domestic violence. Who can you talk to? Where can you go? There are many reasons why domestic violence victims don't seek help or sometimes wait until it's too late, but with more education on the subject, maybe victims will be more willing to speak up about their situation.

In the Public Eye

No doubt you've heard about the alleged domestic violence incident that took place between celebrity singers Rihanna and Chris Brown the morning of the Grammy Awards back in February. Images of a battered Rihanna surfaced on the Internet and Brown, whose career at the time was one of the hottest on the charts, was finding his music with less airplay. As unfortunate and disturbing the incident was it brought the issue of domestic violence to the forefront of both public and family discussion.

The Numbers Don't Lie

According to the National Institute of Justice, The U.S. statistics of domestic violence are staggering. There are approximately 1.3 million women and 835,000 men who are physically assaulted by an intimate partner. But even with the widespread nature of the problem, families are hesitant to talk about the issue because parents wrongly believe domestic violence won't affect their children. Instead, parents should use the topic to speak to their children about appropriate behavior and healthy relationships, especially those who are approaching or who are dating age.

Program Director of the Northwest Assistance Ministries Family Violence Center Donna Amtsberg says, "Family violence is a learned behavior, and parents and mentors have a responsibility to teach young people about appropriate ways to handle anger, frustration, and disappointment."

Crumbling Under the Strain

The prospect of losing your job and home can cause strain in

any relationship, but with the recent economic down turn across the country, Intimate Partner Violence due to financial strain is even more prevalent. Research has shown in one study, a strong relationship between couples worried about financial strain and the likelihood of intimate partner violence. That correlation has in turn resulted in cases of repeat victimization of women and women remaining in abusive relationships. "The choice to stay or leave violent relationships may be based on the decision that a partner's

economic contribution to the relationship outweighs the risk of violence. It also may compel women to live with men's violent behavior rather than seek help or take other steps to leave the violent relationship," says the National Institute of Justice.

Where to Find Help

If you are a victim of domestic violence, NAM's Family Violence and Counseling Center located at 15555 Kuykendahl Rd. in Houston, is a resource battered women and children can turn to in a time of desperation and need. Some of the services the FVC offers are a 24-hour hotline, telephone crisis counseling, emergency shelter, food and clothing, medical assistance and personal counseling.

According to NAM's FVC, domestic violence does not discriminate and affects all ethnicities, gender and ages, circumventing social, economic and education lines, and it is the number one reason for homelessness among women.

Don't let the unexpected take you by surprise. Take the time to talk, especially to your teenage children about where to turn if they find themselves as the victim, or if they know a friend who is a victim of domestic violence. Write the

number of the help line down, tuck it into your wallet and know that help is available for you. **CFM**

MARLENA SOLOMON would like to thank Danielle Wicks for sharing her personal account as a victim of domestic violence that inspired this article.

If you or someone you know is a victim of domestic violence, contact Northwest Assistance Ministries at 281-885-4673 or 1-888-750-4673.

Family Violence Center Support

The Northwest Assistance Ministries Family Violence Center continues to offer programming to meet the needs of their clients including Play Therapy and Art Therapy services for children and adolescents.

The FVC has also created an alliance with the Houston SPCA to ensure the safety of the household pets through the PetSafe Project. With a referral from a battered women's program or shelter, the SPCA will keep the family pets free of charge while the family seeks safe refuge.

The Family Violence Center offers free youth violence prevention and awareness programs to middle and high school students. Programs are available for students in the Cy-Fair school district, church youth groups and teen social groups. Those programs include:

- Dating with Respect
- Bullying and Me
- Conflict Resolution
- Anger Management
- Sexual Harassment and the Link Between Domestic Violence and Child Abuse