



When Trauma and Loss Become Domestic Violence

We become upset when we hear or see the results of domestic violence; physical injury, emotional distress, fear and terror by those experiencing the results of extreme anger and rage by another. It is natural to side with the person injured and condemn the person inflicting the injuries. It is even more upsetting when children are involved even if they are not physically harmed. We know that there is still emotional trauma experienced by the children which has long lasting effect.

Persons involved in the domestic violent situation are often reluctant to leave the relationship and feel genuine love for the person causing the abuse. They see past the anger, rage and abuse to another side to this person and actions. While this is difficult to understand from the outside it is understandable looking from the inside. People who become involved in domestic violent relationships on both sides have experienced trauma and loss in their lives which drive the behaviors in which they engage. To reduce and eliminate domestic violent behaviors it is necessary to understand what drives those actions. We offer these insights and potentially healing activities:

Insights regarding anger and aggressive/harmful behavior:

- When anyone experiences trauma and loss in childhood or adulthood they grieve those losses.
- Without support in the grieving process people can often become “Stuck” in one of the stages of grief: ANGER
- When a person cannot move through the anger “stage” they become consumed by the anger they feel and that anger then drives their perceptions of their world and their interactions.
- Anger is a “secondary” emotion which means we all feel another emotion before we feel anger
- These “primary” emotions include: fear, insecurity, abandonment, danger, devalued, unloved.
- When persons become extremely angry and enraged to the point of causing harm to another they are reacting to an interaction or perceived interaction which causes a primary emotion.
- This primary emotion then drives the feelings of anger, rage and aggressive behavior.

Potential Healing Activities

- While keeping persons safe is an important initial action, excessive force against the person being aggressive can have unnecessary extreme reactions. Professionals trained in de-escalation should be involved immediately.
- While extreme aggressive actions, such as in domestic violence situations, is classified as a crime incarceration without mental health services will not create a long-term solution to the trauma and loss driving the anger and rage.
- Persons engaging in aggressive, anger driven behavior and those being attacked both need ongoing grief processing support by professionals trained in trauma driven grief and loss.

“I am not what happened to me, I am what I choose to become.” — Carl Jung