IT’S NOT A PRIVATE MATTER!
Violence against women is not uncommon and can affect anyone – regardless of age, level of education, income or family background.

IT MAKES YOU ILL!
Women affected not only suffer from visible physical injuries, but also from the psychological effects and their long-term consequences.

THERE IS HELP!
No woman has to endure violence. Doctors, counseling centers, women’s shelters, the police and the justice system can help you get out of a violent situation.
Dear Readers,

Domestic violence can affect women of any age and in any section of the population. One in four women in Germany has experienced physical or sexual violence at the hands of their partner or ex-partner at least once in the course of their life. More than 40 percent of women have experienced psychological violence such as bullying or humiliation.

Most victims shy away from making use of the help which is on offer – often because they are afraid or feel ashamed, or feel that they were somehow to blame. Only one in five women seeks help. When she seeks help, the first point of contact is her own doctor.

Zeitbild MEDICAL wants to encourage all women affected by violence to confide in their doctors. Doctors are not only able to treat their physical or psychological wounds, they can also give them advice on getting further help.

As well as more than 700 specialist advice centres, help can also be obtained from women’s shelters, the police and the judicial system. In addition to this, there is a “Violence against women” helpline which takes calls 365 days a year, 24 hours a day, for any women who feel threatened by violence. The service is free and anonymous. With its qualified and multi-lingual advisors, this helpline open to all women is of special significance – in particular also for migrants and refugees.

Every woman has the right to a life without violence.

Bernd Woischnik
Zeitbild Stiftung

Violence can affect women of all ages and from all sections of the population.

In Germany...

- **25 percent** of women have experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or former partner.
- **13 percent** of women over the age of 16 have experienced criminally relevant forms of sexual violence.
- **42 percent** of women have experienced psychological violence, such as intimidation, slander, threats or psychological terrorisation.
- Violence against women is mainly committed by a partner or ex-partner in the domestic sphere.
- Women in separation or divorce situations are particularly vulnerable to violence by their (ex-)partner.
- Women with disabilities and impairments are more exposed to all forms of violence throughout their lifetime than women in the general population.

VIOLENCE HAS MANY FORMS

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

Holding, pushing, hitting, kicking, choking, strangling, injuring with weapons/objects, withholding food, sleep deprivation, etc.

SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE

Sexualized language, forcing the victim to watch pornography, forcing/coercing them into sexual acts, rape etc.

VERBAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE

Insults, humiliation, threats, calling them mad, using children as leverage etc.

SOCIAL VIOLENCE

Forbidding contact, controlling, social isolation, taking away car/bike (keys)/ticket, imprisonment etc.

ECONOMIC VIOLENCE

Allocating or withholding money in small amounts, forbidding or forcing the victim to work etc.

Source: www.gobsis.de/thema-gewalt/haeusliche-gewalt
“NO LONGER BEING ABLE TO TRUST ANYBODY ...”

* Paula, 34

My boyfriend and I had been together for a long time and were very happy about our first daughter Laura. A happy little family – we did so much and got on well. However, after the pregnancy I only very rarely wanted to have sex. This had nothing to do with my feelings for him and, in order to avoid rejecting him, I usually played along. Nevertheless: He knew of course that I wasn’t really interested and one night I didn’t want to have sex so I refused. He went berserk and pushed me onto the bed, held my wrists until it hurt and forced me to sleep with him.

At that time, I thought that perhaps it was somehow just part of it, but it happened more often that he became brutal and forced me to have sex. I was ashamed, began to drink and of course all of this didn’t go over Laura’s head either. When I went to the gynaecologist for my routine check-up, she recognised the signs. She asked me about the bruises on my arms and between my legs and I completely broke down. Finally, I was able to confide in someone. Today I know that my boyfriend had raped me. But it was only through the attention of my doctor that I was able to find the strength to leave my boyfriend. Today I am so grateful that she didn’t turn a blind eye back then and that I was able to find trust and support.

“HOW WRONG YOU CAN BE ABOUT A PERSON ...”

* Simone, 26

In our relationship, Robert was always very courteous, he could read my every wish and we were always there for each other. Then, out of the blue, he suddenly broke up with me, without saying what was wrong. I was shocked as we were always so honest with each other. After some time, he wanted me back. But this was no longer possible for me as the trust was gone. Robert called several times a day, stood outside my front door and kept ringing the doorbell at night. At the start we were still on speaking terms but he became more and more insistent. If I went out, he would suddenly be there, even though I always sought out different venues. He was constantly writing comments on Facebook and posting pictures online. I was no longer able to keep up with blocking him on all media. I felt I was being watched all the time and had the feeling that I was no longer able to move about freely. Not only did he call family and friends, he even called my workplace – and I got in trouble with my boss. That was the turning point: I went to the police.
“I DIDN‘T UNDERSTAND THE WORLD ANYMORE …”

• Charlotte, 63

My husband had always enjoyed a few drinks extra at family celebrations or festive occasions. But after he was forced into early retirement, he started coming home drunk from the pub on the corner more and more often. I ignored it at first because I thought he would straighten himself out again. If he established a routine in his everyday life and found a task, everything would be okay. But the evenings when he drank three, four or five bottles of beer became the rule and not the exception. One evening, I had had enough and it just burst out of me: “Can‘t you do something other than drink?!” Initially, he was shocked and insulted and then he became aggressive, jumped up and shook me until I lost my balance and fell to the floor. I didn‘t understand the world anymore. What had become of the man I married 40 years ago and had loved so much? He was extremely embarrassed about it, he couldn‘t look me in the eye and shied away from confrontation. But I couldn‘t keep it bottled up inside and sought out a therapist. Now my husband and I see a couples therapist together and my husband is also attending a course for violent men and is trying to get his alcohol problem under control. Yes, I pulled the emergency brake in time; but not every woman manages to do so. I know this from my weekly meeting with women affected by violence.
What experiences of violence are refugee women contacting the helpline about?

This varies widely. It often concerns violence they experienced in their countries of origin or during their flight, as well as violence that occurs here in the reception centres and refugee shelters. This largely concerns violence within a partnership or in the family as well as sexual abuse, rape and forced marriage.

How often is the helpline called by refugee women and how do these conversations actually work?

Since late 2015, more and more refugee women have been turning to us. This is certainly also due to the fact that the helpline is the only one in Germany that provides advice around the clock for free in regard to all forms of violence in 15 languages, including Arabic, Persian, English and French.

When they call, refugee women are put in touch with an advisor, who takes time and listens. The next step is to seek solutions together. All advice is provided exclusively by women. They are all qualified specialists from the psycho-social field. It is very important to know that the conversation is confidential and anonymous. This means that nothing is queried or passed on.

Those who contact the helpline decide for themselves what and how much they want to reveal about themselves and their history.

What advice do you give refugee women?

In principle, we clarify the rights of women in Germany and help them to make use of local, confidential support. But we discuss what can best help the woman affected on a case-by-case basis with each individual caller. There are no “one-size fits all” solutions.

Where else can refugee women get support?

Refugee women, like all other women who are victims of violence, can make use of the violence protection system, including women’s shelters and local advisory services. Links with the asylum system, migration advice and, in the case of very specific risk, the police are also helpful. What is decisive here, too, is that the woman alone decides what is to happen.

How can better protection for refugee women be ensured?

By taking safety aspects into consideration when accommodating women and children, for example separate sanitary facilities, lockable bedrooms and opportunities for privacy, as well as on-site interpretation and direct contact persons. It is very important that the women are informed of their rights and the support system in Germany. We have to encourage the women concerned to take that first step away from violence and to no longer be silent, but rather to seek support.

The “Violence against women” helpline can be reached at:

08000 116 016
ZERO TOLERANCE OF VIOLENCE: YOUR RIGHTS!

Violence will not be tolerated by the state and is punishable by law. First and foremost, protection of the victim and the principle of ‘anyone who hits must go – the victim remains in the home’ is comprehensively regulated in the Protection against Violence Act (GewSchG).

Call the police if you or someone else is being threatened! They can order the perpetrator to leave the home for several days. The police must intervene as soon as they become aware of a case of domestic violence.

In the case of severe violence, they can immediately apply for protection against violence through the district court. For a limited period of time (usually several months), the perpetrator is forbidden from living in the shared home or approaching or contacting the victim.

There are also other civil protection options for the victims of violence, such as damages and compensation for pain and suffering.

Differences of opinion, dealing with conflicts and even arguing are part and parcel of a relationship. But there are lines that should never – I repeat, never! – be crossed. Physical integrity is one of these lines. There is no excuse for violence against women.

Unfortunately, women often tend to blame themselves. “But I provoked him, he had had a hard day, I have to make more effort, I shouldn’t answer back etc.” Enduring violence and then still finding excuses for him is not the right way. Women should not rely on this being a one-off slip. His – sometimes even tearful – apologies will not help you.

Once this line has been crossed, it will happen again. The inhibition threshold decreases. Don’t be a victim. You are not to blame.

Definitely get help from outside, because one thing I have unfortunately learned too often in my role as a patron of the “Strong networks against violence: No violence against women and girls!” campaign by the German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB) is that: The physical wounds heal at some point, but the psychological wounds never disappear. They define and often destroy a whole life. Those who experience violence should not have to bear it alone.

These crimes – and this is what they are – are usually committed within your own four walls; where you should feel safe. And if this violence is committed by a person that you love and trust, it is twice as traumatic. Trust and affection are destroyed.

Do not hesitate to open up. There is help! As a patron of the DOSB campaign, I fully endorse this under the motto: “Zero tolerance of violence against women and girls: You are. We are. Together we are strong!”

Regina Halmich
Boxing world champion and patron of the DOSB campaign
“Strong networks against violence: No violence against women and girls!”

Protect your child!

Children who experience one of their parents being abused, hit or threatened by their (ex-)partner often show psychological as well as physical signs of this afterwards too, such as insomnia or concentration disorders. The development and health of your child can be permanently affected in the long term due to the experience of violence. The impact varies depending on whether the children witness acts of violence or are themselves mistreated, how long it has been since they experienced this violence and what measures were taken to resolve the acute situation. The age and gender of the child and their relationship with the adult also play a role. Children exposed to violence are at a higher risk of later experiencing violence at the hand of a partner. Through support and help your child can overcome the experience.

MEN WHO COMMIT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ARE PATHETIC.

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Who can I turn to?

No woman has to deal with violence alone! There is help! Your doctor is willing to listen and can treat physical and psychological complaints properly. Advisory services, women’s shelters, the police and the justice system provide you with protection and qualified advice and support to resolve the violent situation.

What can I do?

If you are threatened, call the police emergency number (110)! Women’s shelters and advisory services also have emergency hotlines. State your name and your address and emphasise that you need help immediately.

What else can I do?

- Ask someone you trust to come to you or call you.
- Confide in a doctor.
- Allow your injuries to be documented in a way that will stand up in court as evidence of the frequency and severity of the injuries.
- Look for a lockable room immediately.
- Leave your mobile phone in a specific room so you can get help in case of emergency.
- Leave a suitcase with important documents and perhaps some essential clothing with a person you trust.

Source: www.frauenberatungsstelle.de/pdf/NUR_MUT.pdf

USEFUL LINKS

www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/themen/gleichstellung/frauen-vor-gewalt-schuetzen
Website of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth with further information on violence against women as well as external links.

www.zanzu.de
The website of the Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA) provides information on sexual and reproductive health in 13 languages, in pictures and words.

www.frauen-gegen-gewalt.de
Website of the Federal Association of Women’s Advisory Services and women’s emergency hotlines. Here, women who are affected by violence can find uncomplicated help close to home.

www.gewaltschutz.info
Information for people affected about protection against violence and their rights. Each site can be read in parallel in seven different languages.

www.frauenhauskoordinierung.de
Information portal for women’s shelters with a shelter and advisory services search function.

www.gesine-intervention.de
Further important information and materials on this topic. Information for women affected by violence.

www.aktiongegengewalt.dosb.de
Website of the “Strong networks against violence!” campaign by the German Olympic Sports Confederation with information about nationwide campaign days and offers for self-defence courses, among other things.

HILFETELEFON
GEWALT GEGEN FRAUEN
08000 116 016

CONTACTABLE 365 DAYS A YEAR, 24 HOURS A DAY:

The “Violence against women” helpline is the first nationwide advisory service for women who are affected by violence. Those affected, as well as relatives, peoples close to the victim and professionals can contact the helpline anonymously at 08000 116 016 or via the online advisory service for free advice. Qualified advisors are available to take your call in confidence and provide local support at your request.

If necessary, interpreters in 15 languages can be brought into the conversation.
With its multilingual counselling and information service, the helpline is also of particular importance to refugee women.

www.hilfetelefon.de

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