

# BREAK

the silence

**As many as 1/3 of all relationships experience partner abuse**

The L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center's

**STOP**

**Partner Abuse / Domestic Violence Program**

1625 N. Schrader Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90028

**1-323-860-5806**

[domesticviolence@laglc.org](mailto:domesticviolence@laglc.org)

[www.laglc.org](http://www.laglc.org)

Support,

Treatment,

Outreach/Education &

Prevention

of LGBT Partner Abuse/  
Domestic Violence



**A healthy home is a safe home**

**Available Services of the STOP Partner Abuse/Domestic Violence Program include:**

- Survivors' Groups
- Court-Approved Batterers' Intervention Program
- Youth Groups
- Crisis Counseling
- Short-term and On-going Individual Mental Health Services
- Partner Abuse Prevention Groups & Workshops
- Referral to LGBT Sensitive Shelters
- Referral to LGBT Specific and Sensitive Legal Services
- Advocacy with Law Enforcement & Criminal Justice personnel and agencies, service providers and others
- Specialized Assessment
- LGBT Domestic Violence Training, Education and Consultation
- Prevention services for those at risk

Gay &  
Lesbian  
Center

compiled and written by

**Susan Holt, CDVC,  
Program Manager,  
STOP Partner Abuse/Domestic Violence Program,  
L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center**

**Delena Couchman,  
Program Coordinator,  
STOP Partner Abuse/Domestic Violence Program,  
L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center**

**Made possible by funding provided by the California Department of Health Services,  
Maternal and Child Health Branch.**

# Table of Contents

About the STOP Program.....	3
Facts About Partner Abuse.....	4
Risk Factors.....	5
Myths and Realities about LGBT Partner Abuse.....	7
Frequently Asked Questions.....	10
If You Are Being Abused by Your Partner.....	17
If You Are Abusing Your Partner.....	17
If a Friend is Being Abused.....	17
If a Friend is Abusing His/Her Partner.....	18
What the LGBT Community Can Do About Domestic Violence.....	19
LGBT Cycle of Violence.....	20
LGBT Cycle of Violence (diagram).....	22
LGBT Power and Control Wheel.....	23
LGBT Equality Wheel.....	24
Personalized Safety Plan.....	25

## **About the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center's STOP Partner Abuse/Domestic Violence Program**

Among the first of its peer organizations in the U.S. to respond to domestic violence in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities, the **L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center (LAGLC)** conducted one of the first studies on same-gender domestic violence. Since that time, LAGLC's domestic violence program has grown to be one of the largest and most comprehensive domestic violence programs designed specifically for LGBT communities in the world.

LAGLC staff currently hold or have held appointments to the *City of West Hollywood's Domestic Violence Planning Council*, the *Hollywood Partnership Against Domestic Violence*, the *Domestic Violence Task Force of California Hospital Medical Center*, the *Task Force on Lesbian Battering of Sojourn Shelter*, the *L.A. County Clothesline Project*, the *Statewide California Coalition for Battered Women*, the *Los Angeles County Domestic Violence Council's Executive Board and LGBT Issues Committee*, the *Mid-Wilshire Domestic Violence Collaborative*, the *Westside Domestic Violence Network*, and the *Domestic Violence Task Force of the City of Los Angeles*. The program is a member of the *California Association of Batterers Intervention Programs*, the *Statewide California Coalition for Battered Women*, the *West Hollywood Partner Abuse Education Task Force*, the *L.A. County Domestic Council*, the *National Coalition of Anti-Violence Projects*, the *Mid-Wilshire Domestic Violence Collaborative*, and the *Westside Domestic Violence Network*.

### **The STOP Partner Abuse/Domestic Violence Program (Support, Treatment/Intervention, Outreach/Education & Prevention) offers:**

- **Survivors' Groups**
- **Court-Approved Batterers' Intervention Program**
- **Youth Groups**
- **Crisis Counseling**
- **Short-Term and On-Going Individual Counseling**
- **Partner Abuse Prevention Groups and Workshops**
- **Referral to LGBT Sensitive Shelters**
- **Referral to LGBT Specific and Sensitive Legal Services**
- **Advocacy with Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Agencies, Service Providers and Others**
- **Specialized Assessment**
- **LGBT Domestic Violence Training, Education and Consultation**
- **Prevention Services for Those at Risk**

### **Se habla español**

**To obtain more information about LGBT partner abuse/domestic violence and/or other LAGLC services, please call:**

**1-323-860-5806**

## Facts about Partner Abuse/Domestic Violence

- Partner abuse/domestic violence occurs in as many as one-in-three relationships regardless of the sexual orientation of the partners.
- The facts about LGBT partner abuse/domestic violence are often hidden by numerous myths and misconceptions. Common myths and misconceptions include the belief that women are not violent, that men are not commonly victims, that LGBT domestic violence is mutual, and that there are no significant differences between heterosexual domestic violence and same-gender domestic violence.
- While domestic violence in LGBT communities shares many similarities with heterosexual battering, it always occurs within the context of anti-LGBT bias.
- Partner abuse/domestic violence refers to a pattern of abusive, violent, and/or coercive behaviors that are used by one person in an intimate relationship to manipulate or control the thoughts, beliefs or behavior of her/his intimate partner or to punish the partner for resisting that control. It is a pattern that one person uses to gain and maintain power, dominance, and control in a relationship.

Abusive behaviors can be physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, financial and/or homophobic/biphobic/transphobic in nature and usually, though not always, occur within a repeating pattern. Generally, domestic violence is distinguished from "situational abuse/violence" which is defined as no more than two incidents of abuse or violence that occurs as a response to a crisis and do not recur once the crisis has resolved. Self-defensive and retaliatory behaviors should be differentiated from those that are initiated.

- Partner abuse/domestic violence occurs in LGBT communities with as much frequency and severity as it does in the heterosexual community. It often begins as psychological abuse (including emotional and verbal abuse) and commonly escalates into physical violence that can be life-threatening.
- Partner abuse/domestic violence is a significant problem that can be lethal and has serious physical health, mental health, and social consequences for the survivors/victims and their families, LGBT communities, and society at large. It occurs in ALL segments of a community regardless of race, class, ethnicity, culture, age, physical ability, education, politics, religion, gender identity or sexual orientation.
- People who stay with abusive partners do not enjoy abuse and violence. Leaving is *never* simple. Some are too frightened to attempt it. Others stay because they hope that the abuse will stop. And because domestic violence is thought to occur most commonly in heterosexual relationships, those in LGBT communities may not even realize that they are experiencing it or may believe that they deserved to be abused because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

**You are at risk if you, your partner or former partner:**

- has threatened to out the other against his/her wishes to cause harm.
- is obsessively jealous, has an explosive temper and/or difficulty controlling anger.
- has used abusive behavior to gain power and dominance over the other or to control the independence/autonomy of the other.
- has interrogated or attempted to restrict the outside interests, activities and/or associations of the other (including associations with family members).
- has attempted to control the other's personal habits, choice of clothing, sleeping or eating patterns, etc.
- has disrespected the other's privacy, opened the other's mail without permission, monitored the other's internet activities, etc.
- behaves more aggressively when under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol.
- has controlled the finances of the other or refused to pay a fair share of the expenses without previous agreement.
- has threatened suicide or homicide to manipulate or control the other.
- has call the other names, belittled and/or undermined the other's self-esteem.
- has refused to practice safer sex within the relationship when requested by the other.

**Ted**

Several years ago, I met Joseph at a gay potluck dinner. He was cute and charming and I was so flattered at the attention he paid me that I ignored all of the signs of possessiveness and alcoholism that I usually would have noticed. I took him home with me that night and he just never left. Not long after that, I had my first heart attack and Joseph was really there for me. He stayed with me at the hospital and took care of me when I returned home. I didn't like supporting him financially but he was so good to me during my recovery that I felt too guilty to complain. However, it seemed at times that he wanted me to be sick so I'd become dependent on him. I eventually began to feel suffocated, and I hated his drinking, but every time I brought up either subject, he'd fly off the handle. I had two more heart attacks after that, very few friends and no family, so I put up with his drinking, verbal abuse, jealous fits and physical abuse. His behavior escalated until I was terrified of him. I was sure that the stress was making my heart condition worse but Joseph refused to leave and I was afraid to leave him because I thought he'd harm me if I did. It took the police to get him out which was really embarrassing for me.

- has controlled the other's finances or refused to pay a fair share of expenses.
  - has made annoying or threatening phone calls, left repeated unwanted messages, and/or multiple hang-up calls.
  - has coerced or forced the other to have sex or has caused the other pain or humiliation without the other's consent.
  - has slammed doors, kicked walls, and/or broken or thrown objects when angry with the other.
  - has hit, slapped, kicked, bitten, burned, restrained, pulled hair or used weapons (including household items as weapons) against the other.
  - has harmed or threatened to harm children or pets.
  - has used child or pet custody as a weapon of control
  - has driven recklessly to frighten the other.
  - has withheld medication, insisted on accompanying the other to all medical appointments, and/or destroys necessary medical supplies (wheelchairs, canes, etc.).
  - has stalked the other.
  - has abused or experienced abuse in a former relationship and remains in contact with the former partner
- and
- friends, co-workers, family members, clergy, etc. have expressed concern about the relationship and/or either partner's safety.

Note: Having witnessed or experienced family-of-origin violence, in conjunction with any of the above, is an additional risk factor.

### **Maria**

My first kiss with Alicia was my first ever with a woman. She was beautiful and it felt so right. I would have followed her anywhere. We moved in with each other within a month. Because this was my first same-gender relationship, I followed Alicia's lead. She was very closeted and expected the same from me. I wasn't allowed to hold her hand in public or even use the word *lesbian*. The fact that we worked together and that she was my supervisor complicated the situation. She asked me to work overtime without pay and I did. She told me to work a shift for her and I did. Eventually, I lost touch with my friends because she'd become angry and say that I was cheating on her. She isolated me from my family because she didn't like them. (She said that they didn't really love me because I was adopted and that they treated me differently than their biological children.) One afternoon at work, we had a huge fight that ended with her hitting me in front of our co-workers. That night I packed my things but she sweet-talked me into staying. I later found out that she was having an affair but that "she was only in it for the sex." I was heartbroken and lost but we stayed together for another six months before I gathered the courage to leave.

## Myths & Realities about LGBT Partner Abuse/Domestic Violence

MYTH	REALITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domestic violence is more/less common in heterosexual relationships than it is in lgbt communities.</li> <li>• Only heterosexual women are battered.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Studies indicate that domestic violence occurs in lgbt communities with the same amount of frequency and severity as in the heterosexual community and affects as many as one-in-three relationships. Men as well as women are battered or abuse their partners.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Violence in lgbt partnerships is "mutual combat" or a "lover's quarrel."</li> <li>• It really isn't violence when a same-gender couple fights. It's a fair fight between equals.</li> <li>• It isn't violence when gay men fight. Its just "boys being boys."</li> <li>• Lgbt persons are more likely to equally participate in the violence than are heterosexuals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner abuse/domestic violence involves one partner who is exerting power and control over another. It can include coercion, intimidation, physical and sexual violence. Labeling violence as "mutual" or as a "lover's quarrel" minimizes and denies the severity of the abuse.</li> <li>• While lgbt survivors may be more likely to fight back in self-defense due to <i>perceived</i> equality and/or lack of LGBT specific and sensitive resources, abuse in relationships is not "mutual" and "lover's quarrels" are typically not lethal.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lgbt partner abuse is primarily found in relationships when partners are in "roles".</li> <li>• The batterer is usually more masculine, stronger and larger, while the victim is usually more feminine, weaker and smaller.</li> <li>• Women do not batter/men cannot be battered.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner abuse is about one person exerting power, dominance and control over another. The abuse can be physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, psychological, and/or financial in nature and may involve the use of weapons and threats as well as homophobic/biphobic/transphobic control. Exerting power does not require the batterer to be larger or physically stronger. LGBT partner abuse is not confined to "gender roles."</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lgbt partner abuse occurs primarily among women and men who are poor, people of color, and those who frequent bars.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chronic abuse occurs in approximately one-in-three relationships regardless of sexual orientation, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, education, religious affiliation, political ideology, physical ability, etc. Domestic violence crosses all boundaries and does not discriminate. Although substance use is a co-factor to domestic violence, it does not cause abuse.</li> </ul>



MYTH	REALITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since same-gender couples are more likely to be equal in size, the damage inflicted by the lesbian or gay batterer is typically less than that inflicted by the male heterosexual batterer.</li> <li>• The acts of violence perpetrated by gay men are more severe than the acts of violence perpetrated by female batterers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both men and women are capable of committing acts of severe violence. Some female abusers have stabbed, shot, brutally beaten and/or killed their partners. Dismissing the potential severity of same-gender battering is dangerous.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Violence occurs in the lgbt communities because of the high rates of alcohol and drug use.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drinking lowers control over inhibitions which sometimes prevents people from being violent. However just as in heterosexual partner abuse, many batterers do not abuse substances and/or do not necessarily batter while using substances. Ultimately, relationship violence is about the choice one partner makes to exert control over the other. Substances do not cause violence but are a significant co-factor to it.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The law does not/will not protect lgbt victims of partner abuse.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no state statute that <u>specifically</u> includes lgbt domestic violence. While the California statute uses gender-neutral terms, it is applied inconsistently throughout the state.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Battered LGBT men and women are as likely to identify themselves as victims as are heterosexual women.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LGBT domestic violence often remains unseen and invisible, many individuals are overlooked and do not receive needed help. There is a lack of recognition and legal legitimacy for LGBT families and, because domestic violence is thought to occur most commonly in heterosexual relationships, those in LGBT communities may not even realize that they are experiencing it or may be apt to believe that they are to blame.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children are not an issue for battered lesbians and gay men.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many lgbt families have children through prior relationships, adoption, artificial insemination, etc. Unfortunately, as with all families, children often witness violence exerted by one parent over the other.</li> </ul>

MYTH	REALITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is generally easier for lgbt victims of domestic violence to leave an abusive partner or seek help than it is for battered heterosexual women.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is generally more difficult for lgbt survivors to seek help than it generally is for heterosexual women. There are few lgbt specific resources available and many service providers are not trained to provide culturally competent services to lgbt individuals. Lgbt individuals may fear that they will be treated with prejudice, judged, not believed or taken seriously. Additionally, seeking services for partner abuse forces lgbt people to reveal their sexual orientation which is always a major life decision that may result in the loss of family &amp; friends, employment, child custody, etc.</li> <li>Many lgbt persons have no support from their families because of the refusal of the family to accept the lgbt person's sexual orientation or gender identity.</li> <li>There are less than a handful of domestic violence shelters in the <u>nation</u> that accommodate male survivors (gay or straight), but there are <b>no</b> shelters that are <u>specifically</u> for lgbt domestic violence survivors. In addition, lesbian abusers have been inadvertently sheltered with their victims. Transgender survivors may be denied shelter anywhere.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is absolutely no difference between domestic violence in same gender relationships and domestic violence in heterosexual relationships.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many of the dynamics of partner abuse are the same in same-gender and opposite-gender relationships. Lgbt domestic violence has unique factors, however, that relate to homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, and heterosexism within society. Lgbt persons are not afforded many basic civil rights that heterosexuals receive. As a result, there are often inadequate and insensitive supports or resources. Lgbt persons may fear being "outed" after disclosing partner abuse; afraid of unfair treatment by law enforcement and service providers; concerned about the impact on child custody; etc. In addition, many lgbt persons may be struggling with their own internalized homophobia, biphobia, or transphobia which increase feelings of shame and low self-esteem.</li> <li>Many service providers are not adequately trained to address the special needs of lgbt clients. Domestic violence service providers who generally work with heterosexual survivors often have more difficulty differentiating between the LGBT batterer and the survivor.</li> </ul>

Developed in collaboration with the LGBT Issues Committee of the Los Angeles County Domestic Violence Council.

\*LGBT-Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender

## Frequently Asked Questions

***“What are the statistics on domestic violence? Are they comparable with statistics in the heterosexual community?”***

Domestic violence occurs in LGBT communities with the same amount of frequency and severity as it does in the heterosexual community. In fact, it happens consistently in as many as 1 in 3 relationships and at least once in 50% of all relationships – straight or gay.

***“How are demographics reflected in reported cases of domestic violence?”***

Domestic violence doesn't discriminate. It occurs in all segments of a community regardless of race, class, culture, ethnicity, age, physical ability, education, politics, religion, gender identity or sexual orientation. While domestic violence in the heterosexual and LGBT communities is believed to be drastically underreported, it is believed that, in the heterosexual community, approximately 95% of the cases have male perpetrators and female victims. In LGBT communities, some surveys have indicated that percentages are likely to be essentially equal regardless of gender. However, more research is needed to determine the accuracy of this information.

LGBT persons, for example, do not commonly report domestic violence because of fears about response of services providers, law enforcement, etc. and/or concern that anti-LGBT bias will increase if domestic violence is reported. When LGBT domestic violence is reported, it is often thought to be something other than domestic violence such as assault/battery, disorderly conduct, disturbing the peace, and mutual abuse/combat.

Additionally, because domestic violence has been a relatively invisible problem in LGBT communities and discussed within the larger community only within a heterosexual context, LGBT persons are sometimes not aware that they're experiencing it.

***“How often does LGBT domestic violence occur in Los Angeles?”***

More than half of the cases reported nationally during the 2000 calendar year were reported in Los Angeles – primarily to the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center. However, domestic violence does not occur more frequently in Los Angeles; rather, the higher numbers are the result of extensive outreach and education conducted by the L.A. Center after receiving funding for domestic violence prevention activities.

***“Is domestic violence an issue of priority for the LGBT community?”***

Preventing it needs to be one of our highest priorities. LGBT domestic violence is one of the largest health problems in the LGBT (and heterosexual) communities. Domestic violence can be lethal and it always has serious physical health, mental health, and social consequences for all of us and our children. Although it affects as many as 1 in 3 relationships, there are only a handful of programs in the nation that can adequately address the needs of LGBT community members who are experiencing domestic violence.

***“Is LGBT domestic violence similar to domestic violence in the heterosexual community?”***

While LGBT domestic violence shares many similarities with domestic violence in the heterosexual community, LGBT domestic violence always occurs within the context of anti-LGBT bias and societal homophobia/biphobia/transphobia. The batterer’s controlling and abusive behaviors are often dependent upon this context and may be different than those used by heterosexual batterers. Additionally, the dynamics of LGBT domestic violence are influenced by each stage of the coming out process and what stage the abuser and survivor are in.

***“Is abusive behavior ever excusable?”***

No. There is no excuse for partner abuse/domestic violence. Using abuse and violence is a choice that the abuser makes to use aggressive behavior to gain and maintain power, dominance and control in an intimate relationship. There are always alternatives. Substance use, stress, illness, abuse in childhood, etc. are often used to excuse abusive and violent behavior. The abuser, however, is solely responsible for his/her abusive and violent behaviors.

***“Is domestic violence in relationships mutual?”***

No. Domestic violence is not a “lover’s quarrel”, “fair fight”, or “mutual abuse/combat.” Survivors of partner abuse/domestic violence are not necessarily “co-dependent.” Partner abuse/domestic violence involves the use of intimidation and/or force against an intimate partner.

***“Do people who stay in abusive relationships want to be dominated and controlled?”***

No. There are many reasons why abuse survivors stay in their relationships. Leaving an abusive relationship is never simple. Some are too frightened by their partner’s threats to leave. Others stay because they hope that the abuser will change. Many do not have the support they need or access to culturally appropriate information or resources. Abuse survivors don’t necessarily want to leave the relationship...they just want the abuse to stop.

***“Is there a place for anger within a relationship?”***

It is important to distinguish domestic violence from anger. Domestic violence is not caused by anger nor is anger the same thing as abuse. Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behavior that is used to control one’s partner. Anger, on the other hand, is a universal emotion that is experienced by everyone from time to time. If it is not expressed abusively, it can lead to positive change and help us to establish priorities for ourselves and our relationships.

***“Why do LGBT individuals perpetuate violence at home when the LGBT community has often been the target of hate crimes and bias violence?”***

Hate crimes and bias violence are the result of bigotry and hate that are often fueled by institutionalized anti-LGBT bias. Domestic violence, on the other hand, is behavior that is often learned in our families-of-origin.

***“Does violence in society fuel domestic violence?”***

Domestic violence may increase after violent events occur in our community and/or society. If an individual is at risk for being abusive and s/he feels an increased loss of control in her/his life, it is possible that s/he will use abusive and controlling behaviors with those closest in an attempt to regain a feeling of control.

***“What is the key to impulse control? How do we keep ourselves and our loved ones in check?”***

It is important to understand that domestic violence is not the result of poor impulse control. Domestic violence results because the person who is being abusive makes the choice to use abusive behavior to gain and maintain power, dominance or control over an intimate partner. There are always other options. It is also important to recognize that it is not our responsibility to keep our loved ones in check. It is the responsibility of each individual to treat others with respect and tolerance rather than disrespect, abuse and violence.

***“How can I tell if someone I know is being abused?”***

Possible indicators of partner abuse/domestic violence are:

- Visible physical injury including bruises, lacerations, sprains, broken bones, burns, human bite marks, and fractures (especially of the eyes, nose, teeth, and jaw).
- Unexplained delay in seeking treatment for injuries and needed medical treatment.
- Multiple injuries in various stages of healing.
- Injuries during pregnancy, miscarriage, or premature births.
- On-the-job indicators including lost productivity, chronic absenteeism and/or lateness, requests for excessive amounts of time off, and/or on-the-job harassment by the abuser in person or over the phone or email.
- Illnesses that may be related to domestic violence include stress-related illnesses such as headaches, backaches, chronic pain, gastrointestinal disorders, sleep disorders, eating disorders, and fatigue; anxiety – related conditions such as heart palpitations, hyperventilation, “generalized anxiety” symptoms, “panic attacks” and behavior that appears to be agoraphobic in nature; depression, suicidal thoughts and/or attempts; secrecy or withdrawal from friends and activities; and substance use.
- Presenting problems related to domestic violence include “relationship problems”, “communication problems”, “family problems”, “anger management problems”, “mental health problems”, and substance abuse and addiction.

***“I’m not sure if my partner is an abuser. S/he is kind and loving most of the time.”***

While there are occasional conflicts in all relationships, everyone is entitled to be treated non-abusively and with respect all of the time. Partner abuse/domestic violence refers to a pattern of abusive behavior that is used by one person in an intimate relationship to gain and maintain power, dominance, and/or control of the other. The abuser may also use abusive behavior to punish his/her partner for resisting control.

Domestic violence frequently occurs within a cycle of abuse and violence that includes a period of increasing tension, explosion or acute abusive incident, and a period of remorse on the part of the abuser and/or feelings of closeness. Abusers are often kind and loving following the acute incident of abuse and periodically during the period when tension increases. If no intervention occurs, the cycle usually escalates over time until the period of remorse and connection is non-existent. Although abusive relationships commonly occur in a cyclical pattern, some do not.

***“How do I know if someone is abusive?”***

While future abusiveness cannot be predicted with absolute certainty, there are important indicators for potential abuse/violence which are listed below. In some cases, an abuser may display several listed behaviors that s/he will try to explain and justify as a sign of her/his love and concern but, in time, the behaviors generally become more severe and serve to control, manipulate or dominate the partner. ★If a partner displays any of the behaviors listed in #10 through #15, the risk for battering, severe violence, and lethality increases.

1. Jealousy: A sign of possessiveness and lack of trust, rather than love. Examples include questioning whereabouts; demanding to know who the partner talks to and spends time with; accusations of flirting; and time spent with friends, family, children and pets.
2. Controlling Behavior: Includes the abuser saying that the controlling behavior is due to his/her concern for the partner’s safety. Examples: not allowing the partner to make personal decisions about home, clothing, food, schedule, associations, etc.
3. Unrealistic Expectations: The abusive person expects his/her partner to meet all of his/her needs; s/he expects the partner to be the perfect lover, friend, partner, etc. S/he may say things like, “I’m no good without you”, “You’re all I need”, and “No one will ever love you like I do.”
4. Isolation: The abusive person may cut the partner off from all resources and sources of support. Examples: family and friends are not approved of or consistently criticized. The abuser may attempt to keep his/her partner from working, attending school and/or social events, etc.
5. Blames Others for Problems: The abusive person may believe that others are always doing her wrong or “out to get” him. Examples: S/he makes mistakes and then blames the partner for upsetting her/him. The abuser will commonly tell his/her partner that s/he is to blame for many things that go wrong or consistently place responsibility on others rather than taking responsibility for himself/herself, feelings and behaviors.
6. Cruelty to Children or Animals: The abuser may expect children to be able to do things beyond their age capability or expect pets to behave as if they are human. The abuser may use children as objects to obtain what s/he needs or wants or threaten custody status. Pets are often threatened and/or harmed as well.

7. "Playful" Use of Force During Sex: The abuser may be rough or insensitive to his/her partner during sex without the partner's permission. S/he may show little concern for whether the partner wants to be sexual and may sulk or use anger to manipulate her/him into compliance.
8. Verbal/Psychological Abuse: In addition to saying things that are meant to be cruel and hurtful, the abuser may degrade and curse her/his partner and minimize her/his accomplishments. Example: The abuser may tell the partner that s/he is stupid and unable to function without her/him.
9. Mood Swings: Explosiveness and moodiness are often typical of people who abuse.
10. ★ Past Battering: The abuser may reveal that s/he has behaved abusively in the past or the abuser's partner may hear from the partner's relatives, ex-partner's or friends that s/he has been abusive.
11. ★ Threats of Violence: This includes any threat of force that the abuser uses to control his/her partner. Examples: "I'll kill you," "I'll kill myself," or "I'll break your neck."
12. ★ Breaking or Striking Objects: This behavior may be used as punishment but is more commonly used by the abuser to terrorize or intimidate the partner into submission. The abuser may pound on a table with his/her fist, kick the wall, slam doors, or throw objects.
13. ★ Any Force During an Argument: The abuser may hold his/her partner down or physically restrain him/her from leaving the room. S/he may hold the partner against the wall and say, "You're going to listen to me." The abuser may rape his/her partner to obtain compliance and control and/or to punish.
14. ★ Threatening With Weapons: The abuser may threaten his/her partner with guns, knives, bottles, scissors, letter openers or other objects.
15. ★ Coming Out to Maintain Control: Risk to the victim increases if the abuser has been closeted and comes out about his/her sexual orientation in order to maintain power and control of the partner.

### ***"Can my abusive partner change?"***

Yes, but progress and change depend upon the abuser. It is up to her/him to recognize that s/he has a problem and is prepared to work on it without expecting rewards or support from the survivor for her/his efforts. Change never occurs overnight – if it occurs at all – and many abusers who receive treatment/intervention leave treatment prematurely. The abuser's remorse or apologies are part of the cycle of abuse and are not a guarantee that s/he will change. While long-term improvement is more likely for those who make a commitment to their progress, some individuals continue to be abusive and controlling after treatment.

### ***"Should I stay with my abusive partner or leave him/her?"***

Your first consideration should always be for the safety of yourself, your children and/or pets. Leaving an abusive partner is never easy and should not be attempted before you have a realistic safety plan in place. Leaving an abusive relationship without a safety plan, support, and information about options is dangerous and can put your life at risk. It is crucial that survivors and abusers seek help from a LGBT domestic violence specialist. If you need help, call the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center's STOP Partner Abuse/Domestic Violence Program at 1-323-860-5806.

***“Is my partner abusive because s/he drinks and/or uses drugs?”***

No. Drugs and alcohol do not cause people to be abusive. If your partner is abusive and also uses substances, s/he has two problems that need attention. An abuser who uses alcohol and/or drugs typically has periods of improved behavior when s/he stops using substances but s/he will commonly become abusive again if s/he has not received sufficient and appropriate help and intervention.

***“Can couple counseling (or a couples group) help?”***

Abuse is not a relationship or communication problem. It exists because the abuser makes the choice to use controlling and/or dominating behaviors. Couple counseling frequently allows the abuser to stay focused on his/her criticisms and blame of the survivor. Additionally, couple counseling may pressure the survivor to give up certain things in return for the abuser giving up his/her abusive behaviors. When domestic violence is present, even the best of counselors cannot create an environment that is safe for the survivor to express him/herself in the open and honest manner that is crucial to the success of counseling. In fact, couple counseling may cause the abuse to escalate and increase danger.

***“Is there a difference between anger management and batterers’ treatment?”***

Yes. Anger management classes and groups teach behavioral techniques such as time outs, stress reduction, and communication skills to help people manage their anger. People with anger management problems are not necessarily batterers. They have difficulty expressing their anger in an appropriate manner. Batterers use abusive behaviors to control, dominate and/or punish others. They may have anger management problems in addition to abusive behaviors.

Batterers’ treatment includes anger management techniques but the overall treatment is more extensive. The California Penal Code mandates that abusers spend at least 52 weeks in an approved batterers’ intervention group. Batterers’ treatment helps abusers identify their feelings and addresses issues of power, control and socialization. In many cases, people who act abusively have histories of childhood abuse. Once abusive and dangerous behavior has stopped, childhood abuse can be addressed and healed.

It is very important for the person that is being abusive to get the appropriate kind of treatment. Inappropriate treatment can lead to an escalation of abuse and violence. Anger management and batterers’ treatment are not the same although many people see them as interchangeable.

***“My partner is attending a batterers’ group. Can s/he benefit from individual counseling as well?”***

Group sessions are the treatment of choice for people who abuse their partners. Individual counseling may be contraindicated (not productive) until the abuser has made progress in a group specifically designed for abusers. After the abuser has made consistent progress in group, s/he may be referred to individual counseling to work on other problems that need attention. If the abuser is using substances, s/he may be referred to substance abuse treatment in addition to treatment for partner abuse/domestic violence.



***“How do I know if my abusive partner is changing?”***

You can best judge change in your partner’s behavior. If your gut feelings tell you that s/he has not changed, trust your feelings regardless of other signs. The following are some guidelines:

- § Has s/he stopped saying and doing things that frighten or intimidate you?
- § Can you express anger appropriately toward her/him without being punished for it?
- § Does it feel safe to bring up topics that you know will upset her/him?
- § Can s/he listen to your opinion and respect it even if s/he disagrees?
- § Can s/he argue without being abusive or domineering?
- § Does s/he respect your wishes about sex and physical contact?
- § Can you spend time with family and friends without being afraid that s/he’ll retaliate?

***“I called several domestic violence programs and most of them offered drop-in survivors' groups. The L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center’s Partner Abuse/Domestic Violence Program does not offer a drop-in group and I was told that it was necessary for me to make an appointment for an intake before joining a survivors' group. Why don’t you offer drop-in groups?”***

We do not offer drop-in groups for survivors of partner abuse/domestic violence for the protection of our clients. An intake is essential for all clients seeking services so that survivors can be assured that they will be placed in the group that will be most helpful to them and that abusers are not placed in survivors’ groups.

***“If my relationship is abusive, is it necessary that I see a domestic violence specialist?”***

It is very important that you see a counselor who has received extensive training and education in domestic violence. Do not assume that all mental health professionals have received sufficient training. Some counselors have received training in LGBT issues but not domestic violence. Others have not received training in either subject. Counselors/therapists who do not understand the dynamics of partner abuse/domestic violence can potentially and inadvertently, through their interventions, increase your risk. It is your right to ask a counselor/therapist about their education, training and credentials. Be cautious of counselors/therapists who see domestic violence as a relationship problem, a communication problem, or a family systems issue as well as counselors/therapists who believe that survivors are in relationships with people who abuse because they are attempting to work out unconscious conflicts or are attracted to abusers.

***“Is there a difference between LGBT specific services and those that are LGBT sensitive?”***

Yes. Domestic violence services that are LGBT specific have been designed specifically and/or primarily for LGBT communities. Providers of these services specialize in working with LGBT individuals and families.

Domestic violence services that are LGBT sensitive have been designed primarily for the heterosexual community although they welcome members of the LGBT community. Providers of these services usually receive varying amounts of training in LGBT issues.

The services offered by the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center’s STOP Partner Abuse/Domestic Violence Program are LGBT specific.

## **If You Are Being Abused by Your Partner:**

- If you have been physically assaulted, seek medical attention or call 911.
- Talk to a LGBT domestic violence specialist immediately.
- Remind yourself that you are not responsible for your partner's abusive/violent behavior and that you have the right to a safe and healthy relationship.
- Remember that leaving an abusive partner without a safety plan, support and information about options is dangerous and can be life-threatening.
- Establish contacts with friends and family so you have a place to go in an emergency.
- Remember that couple counseling is usually not effective and can be dangerous.

## **If You Are Abusing Your Partner:**

- Take responsibility and be accountable for your actions.
- See a LGBT domestic violence specialist immediately. Join a group for people who abuse their partners.
- Remember that apologies are only a temporary response and are not enough to stop the cycle of abuse.
- Recognize that physical and sexual assault are crimes. Assault is against the law and you can be charged and/or sentenced to time in jail.

## **If a Friend Is Being Abused:**

- Educate yourself about domestic violence. Learn about the dynamics of partner abuse and available resources so that you don't inadvertently increase his/her risk.
- Don't insist that s/he leave her/his abusive partner. Leaving an abusive relationship without a realistic safety plan is dangerous and can be life-threatening.
- Do not recommend couple counseling.
- Reinforce that while many couples often have dysfunctional communication patterns, abusive behavior is never acceptable, that using abusive behavior is a choice that the abuser makes; and that it is the abuser's responsibility to change.
- Validate his/her feelings as well as their complexity
- Acknowledge the reality of the losses that s/he faces.

- Remind him/her that excessive jealousy, possessiveness, controlling and dominating behaviors and rage are not indicators of love.
- Challenge her/his denial about the seriousness of abuse as well as any misconceptions that s/he has about domestic violence (domestic violence is not a significant problem in the LGBT community; men are not commonly victims; women are never batterers; the abuse that women perpetrate is less severe than the abuse that is perpetrated by male batterers, etc.).
- Remember that your role is to be a friend rather than an expert or counselor.
- Encourage him/her to seek help and support from a LGBT domestic violence specialist or program.
- Take care of yourself. Don't do anything that puts yourself at risk. Don't intervene physically or threaten the abuser. If you witness your friend being assaulted, call 911 for help. If the abuser threatens you, secure a protective order and report any violations of the order. Seek support and assistance from a domestic violence specialist.

### **If a Friend is Abusing His/Her Partner:**

- Let him/her know that violence and abuse is unacceptable and is often a crime. Abusers often believe that apologies will solve the problem. They do not.
- Tell him/her that abusive behavior is learned and can be unlearned.
- Be supportive and encourage her/him to seek immediate help. S/he must take responsibility for her/his behavior (s).
- Assist her/him in finding a batterers' intervention group or other community resources for abusers such as the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center's STOP Partner Abuse/Domestic Violence Program. S/he needs to understand the consequences of her/his violent behavior and s/he must stop abusing others. S/he may link issues such as drinking or drugs, a history of child abuse, or other stressors to his/her abusiveness. These are not excuses or causes of her/his violence but are issues that will need attention.
- Do not recommend couple counseling. It is potentially dangerous.
- Remain in contact with her/him and provide continued support for obtaining the help s/he needs and for stopping her/his abusive behaviors. The community may isolate the abuser and s/he may withdraw without seeking the help that s/he needs.
- Take care of yourself. Do not put yourself at risk. If you witness your friend assaulting his/her partner, do not attempt to physically intervene or threaten the abuser. Call 911 for help. Seek support and assistance from a domestic violence specialist.

## What the LGBT Community Can Do About Domestic Violence:

- Break the silence. Be part of the solution.
- Support safety for LGBT victims and hold LGBT abusers accountable for their actions.
- Support LGBT persons who are working to end all forms of violence and anti-LGBT bias.
- Recognize and speak out against all forms of bias and violence. They are interconnected.
- Support LGBT specific and sensitive domestic violence programs.
- Volunteer for LGBT specific and sensitive domestic violence programs.
- Encourage community mobilization.
- Attend classes, watch films, and read books about LGBT domestic violence. Educate yourself and others about domestic violence and the societal context that affects it .
- Identify and challenge the myths and misconceptions about LGBT domestic violence that you may have adopted.
- Urge legislators to address LGBT domestic violence and fund LGBT specific programs.

### Adam

I am a 34 year-old Korean-American man. I was with Tim for 8 months before I got arrested. We met at a party, spent the night together, and didn't spend another night apart until I went to jail. Tim didn't have many friends so I introduced him to mine. When we went out together, he'd always drink too much and disappear into the bathroom to do bumps of crystal. When I'd dance with my friends or talk to them, he'd get jealous and accuse me of having sex with them. He said they were a bad influence on me and that he didn't want me to hang out with them anymore. He'd call me a "whore" and whisper in my ear that I would "pay" when we got home. Once we'd had sex, everything would usually be okay. One night, Tim and I ran into an old friend of mine at a party. Kevin and I hadn't seen each other in years so we spent a long time talking. Tim eventually walked off. Later that evening, Tim and I went to a West Hollywood club. When we arrived, I went to the restroom and Tim followed me. He grabbed my arm, twisted it behind my back, and shoved my face into the mirror. He called me a "slut" and accused me of coming on to Kevin. I started to cry and assured him that Kevin and I were just friends. He screamed that I was a liar and demanded that I admit that I wanted Kevin sexually. I denied it and he got even angrier. When I told him that he was hurting me, he twisted my arm even harder then began choking me. I couldn't breathe so I bit his arm. His arm began to bleed so he backhanded me across the face and ran out of the restroom. When I came out of the restroom, the police were there. They asked me how it happened and I told them the whole story. Since Tim is smaller than I am, I guess they believed his side of the story. I spent five days in jail, was convicted of spousal abuse with three years of probation, and have to attend batterers' counseling for a year.

## The LGBT Cycle of Violence

Many domestic violence experts believe that relationship violence generally occurs within a cycle that, without intervention, increases in frequency and severity. The repeating cycle of violence includes three distinct phases:

1. The Tension Building Phase
2. The Explosion or Acute Battering Incident
3. The Calm, Loving Respite or "Honeymoon" Phase

These phases vary in time and intensity between couples and within the same couple. The length of time that a couple remains in a phase or the length of a cycle varies. While LGBT persons experience the cycle of violence similarly to heterosexual persons, the LGBT cycle of violence is exacerbated by internalized and institutionalized anti-LGBT bias and heterosexism. These represent additional challenges to safety and help-seeking.

### Phase One: The Tension-Building Phase

Phase One is characterized by a gradual increase in tension and abusive behaviors such as criticism, name-calling, psychological humiliation, and other "lesser" incidents of abuse and violence. During this phase, the abuser becomes increasingly prone to react negatively to frustration. Both abuser and survivor often minimize and rationalize the abusive incidents. The abuser may use control tactics that lower the survivor's self-esteem and increase internalized homophobia, biphobia, or transphobia (anti-LGBT bias) thereby making it increasingly difficult for the survivor to seek help or recognize the cycle. The abused partner may feel as if s/he is "walking on eggshells" and behave in ways that s/he hopes will prevent further abuse. Some survivors show no anger and display passive, nurturing, and/or submissive behavior that has become known as "learned helplessness" and described as part of "battered woman's syndrome." The abuser's increasingly aggressive behavior is often reinforced by society's laissez-faire attitude about abuse and violence as well as the prevalence of anti-LGBT bias and prejudice. Survivors who have been abused over a period of time know that the "lesser" abusive incidents will increase in frequency and severity. Many, in an effort to cope, reason that they deserve the abuse and "try harder" in the hope that they will have an effect on the abuser's behavior. Other survivors may attempt to fight back in anger and self-defense. Others will do something that they believe might "provoke" the partner's violence in an attempt to move more quickly into the "honeymoon" phase. When the abuser explodes, the survivor often assumes guilt and blames him/herself for loss of control of the situation. However, there is a point toward the end of this phase that the process ceases to respond to any controls and the abuse culminates in a battering incident.

### Phase Two: The Explosion or Acute Battering Incident

Phase Two involves a major act of abuse and violence by the abuser against the survivor resulting from the abuser's choice to discharge the tensions that built up in Phase One. This seemingly out-of-control behavior and major destructiveness distinguish the "lesser" incidents in Phase One. This phase is shorter than Phase One and Phase Three and generally lasts from one to forty-eight hours. The trigger for the abuser is in his/her internal state or an event outside the relationship. Survivors often believe that they did something to "provoke" the abuser's violence and abusers may not fully understand their rage and behavior. During this phase, the survivor may attempt to fight back in self-defense in an effort to protect him/herself, perceived equality in terms of size and strength, and/or lack of LGBT specific and sensitive resources. Many survivors report that fighting back in Phase Two often results in more serious violence by the abuser. It is unclear why the batterer stops abusing during this stage, if s/he does stop. Sometimes the abuser kills his/her victim.

If the police are involved, it is usually during Phase Two. California law mandates that an arrest be made if there is evidence of physical abuse to either of the partners. If neither is arrested, violence may increase when the police leave. Sometimes, both persons will be arrested or the victim will be arrested instead of the batterer.

The survivor's initial reaction to acute battering is often shock, disbelief, self-blame and minimization that is similar to the reaction of the abuser when confronted with his/her behavior.

### **Phase Three: The Calm, Loving Respite or "Honeymoon" Phase**

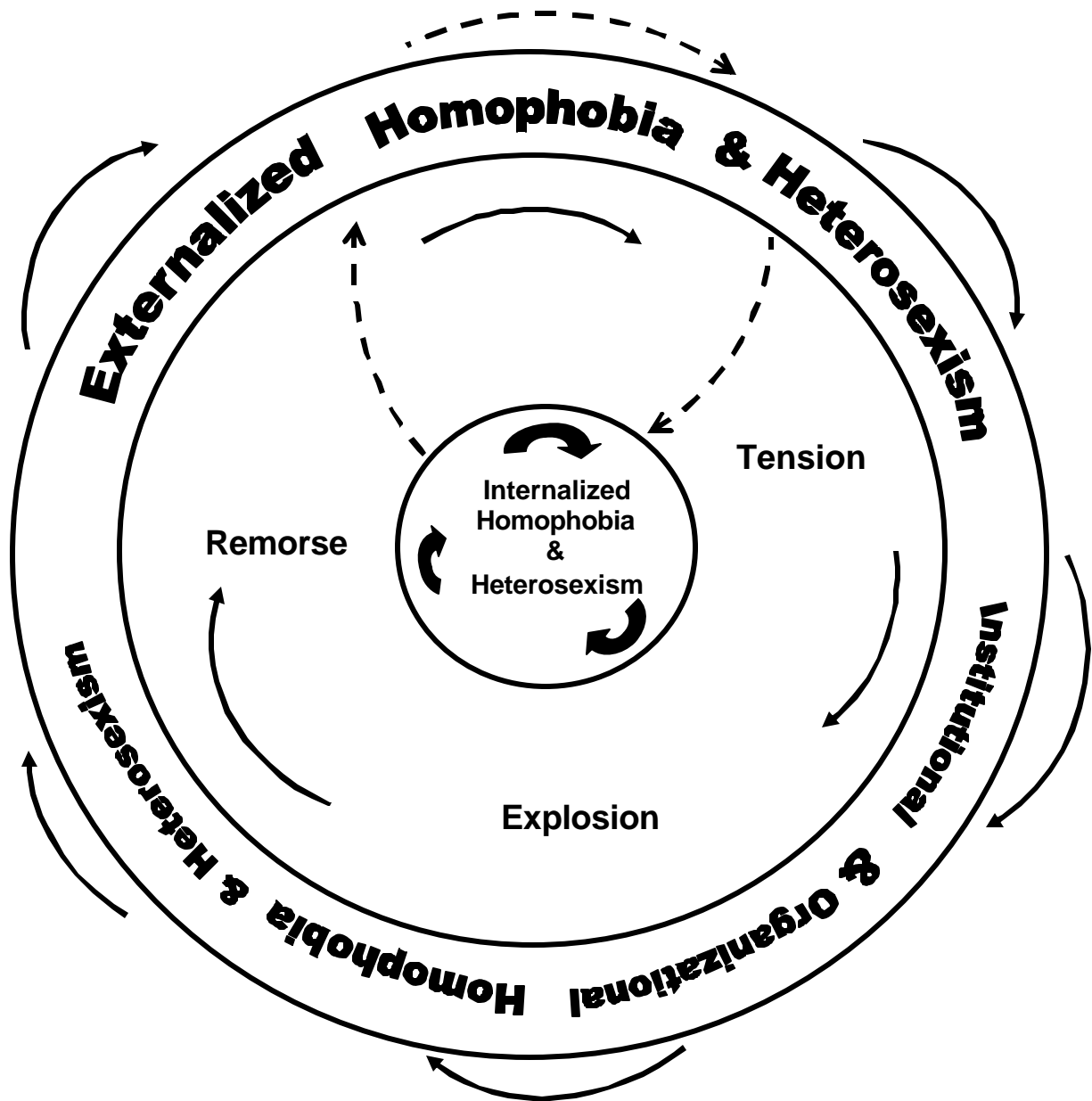
During the third phase, the abuser frequently feels remorseful about his/her behavior and acts apologetic and loving. This phase often begins with gifts, declarations of love, and lovemaking. The abuser is often fearful that the survivor will leave the relationship and may claim that s/he will be destroyed if the relationship ends. S/he may make promises that s/he won't be abusive and violent in the future and convince others that s/he will give up any outside pressure that s/he believes is the cause of her/his loss of control (using substances, emotional affairs with others, job pressures, stress, etc.) S/he may seek help for her/his "anger management problems" or suggest couple counseling. It is rare, however, for abusers to accept help unless the survivor leaves, or threatens to leave, the relationship and s/he believes that seeing a counselor may help get the partner back, or if the criminal justice system mandates that the abuser get help.

Phase Three is generally the most difficult time for the survivor to end the relationship. S/he wants to believe that the "honeymoon stage" will last and that the partner will not be abusive and violent again.

Phase Three is generally longer than Phase Two but shorter than Phase One. Eventually, the "lesser" abusive behaviors, incidents, and tension begin again and the cycle repeats itself.

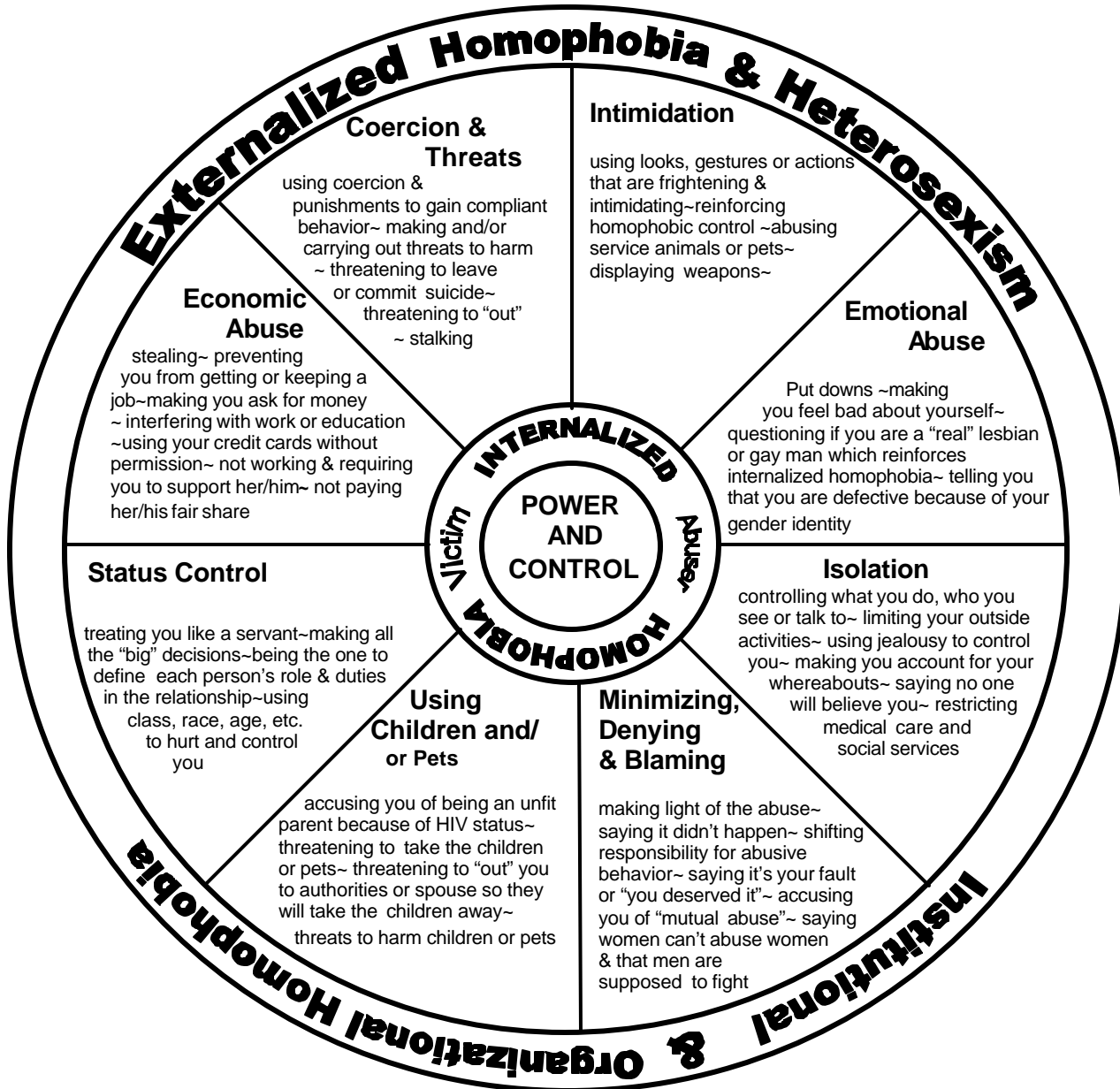
Adapted from the work of Lenore Walker (Battered Women, 1979)

# LGBT Cycle of Violence



While LGBT persons experience the cycle of violence similarly to heterosexual persons, the LGBT Cycle of Violence is exacerbated by internalized and institutionalized homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and heterosexism. These present additional challenges to safety and help seeking.

## LGBT Power and Control Wheel



Anti-LGBT bias: Conscious or unconscious feelings and/or beliefs that inhibit a person's capacity for impartial judgment. An unfair act or policy which results in a prejudicial mindset against LGBT people. Anti-LGBT bias includes homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

Heterosexism: The belief that heterosexuality is superior to homosexuality.

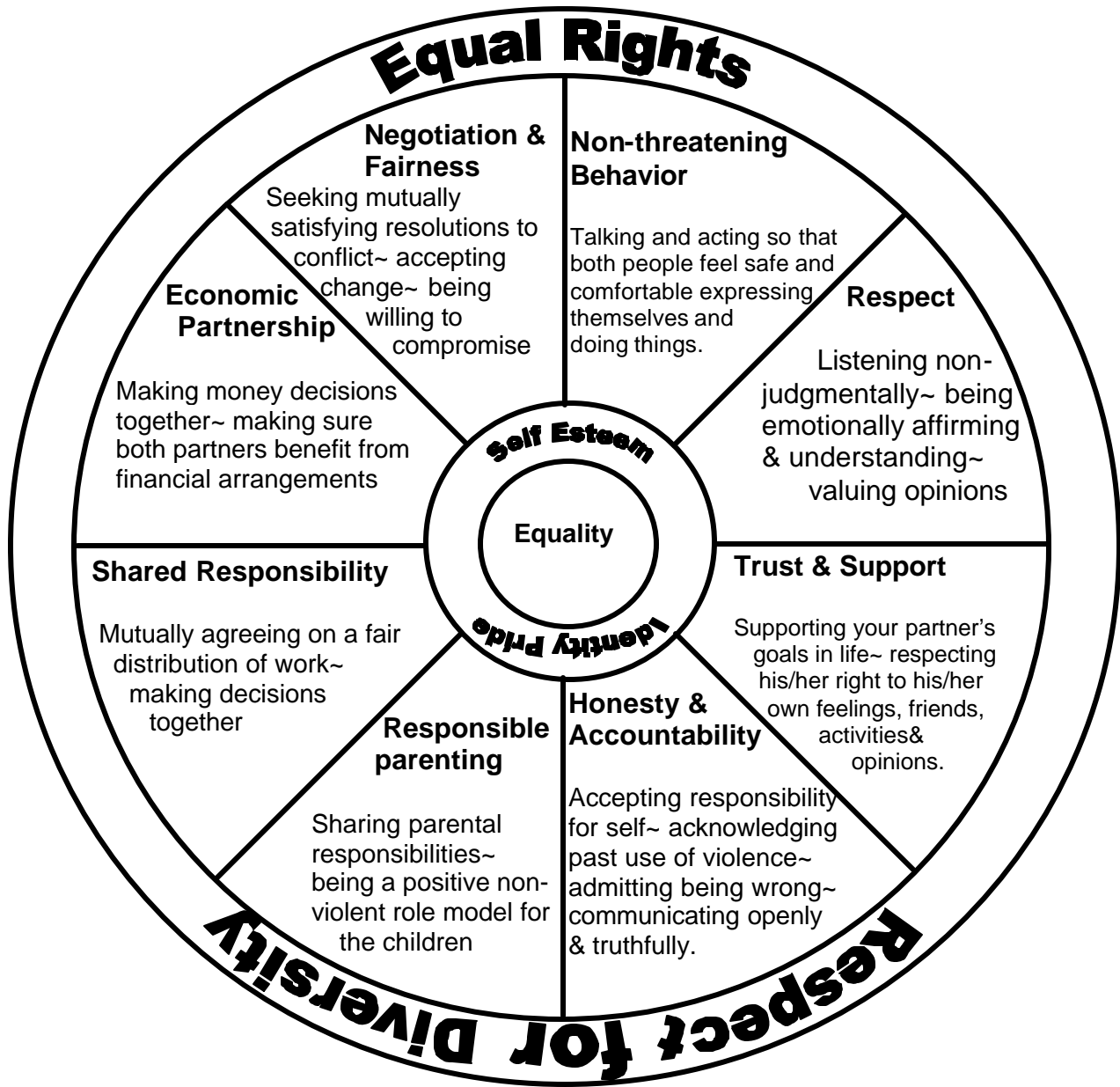
Homophobia: The irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against homosexuality or homosexuals, bisexuals (biphobia) and transgender persons (transphobia). Recent research indicates that homophobia is not an actual phobia because it is caused by disgust rather than fear or anxiety. The findings suggest that social conditions and attitudes, rather than psychological factors, create homophobia.

External Homophobia and/or Institutionalized Homophobia: Heterosexism and anti-LGBT bias that are entrenched within society's institutions (schools, government, religion, etc.)

Internal Homophobia and/or Internalized Homophobia: Internalization of myths and stereotypes about LGBT people.



# LGBT Equality Wheel



# Personalized Safety Plan

*Keep in a safe place at all times.*

The following steps represent my plan for increasing my safety and preparing in advance for the possibility of further abuse/violence. Although I do not have control over my partner's behaviors, I do have a choice about *how* to respond to her/him and how to access safety for myself, my children and/or pets.

## Safety while in the relationship:

1. I will contact the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center's STOP Partner Abuse/Domestic Violence Program at 1-323-860-5806 and talk to a LGBT domestic violence specialist as soon as possible.
2. I will have important phone numbers available at all times.
3. I can rehearse a realistic escape route from my home, workplace or anywhere my partner might try to hurt me.
4. If I leave my home, three safe places I can go are: \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.
5. I can keep change for phone calls with me at all times and leave extra money, car keys, clothes, and copies of important papers with \_\_\_\_\_.
6. To build my independence I can: open my own bank account(s), take my name off accounts that my partner is misusing, develop contacts my partner doesn't know, talk regularly with a support person, and review this safety plan often and make necessary revisions to it.

## Safety when my partner and I have separated:

1. I can change locks, install heavier doors, a peephole, a home security system, an outside lighting system, etc.
2. I can install a car alarm.
3. I can change my residence.
4. I can change my job location.
5. I can alter my daily routine.
6. I can relocate my children to different schools.
7. I will inform \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ that my partner no longer lives with me and ask them to alert the police or me if s/he is seen near my home, my children or my pets.
8. I can tell \_\_\_\_\_ at work about my situation and ask \_\_\_\_\_ to screen my calls.
9. I can request that my desk/office be relocated.
10. I can avoid stores, banks, clubs, bars, meetings, and events that I frequented/attended when my partner and I were together and/or that my partner frequents/attends.
11. I can obtain a restraining order and keep it on or near me at all times as well as leave copies with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
12. If I feel down and ready to return to a potentially abusive situation, I can call \_\_\_\_\_ for support. I can strengthen my relationships with other people so I'll be less tempted to return to my abusive partner.

13. I can cancel any joint accounts or utilities and tell representatives of these businesses that I want to use a secret access code in future dealings with them (to guard against my partner misrepresenting me).
14. I will always remember to be careful, watchful and cautious of any person or car that might be following me.
15. I can call 911 if I feel that I am in immediate danger.

**What I need to take if I leave**

- |                                 |                                                      |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| _____address book               | _____checkbook/bank books                            |
| _____custody/paternity papers   | _____driver's license, car title, registration       |
| _____insurance papers           | _____house and car keys                              |
| _____jewelry                    | _____medical records                                 |
| _____medications                | _____money/coins for phone calls                     |
| _____children                   | _____pets (if able)                                  |
| _____restraining order & copies | _____social security card                            |
| _____birth certificates         | _____photos of any injuries<br>received from partner |

**Important phone numbers:**

- |           |           |
|-----------|-----------|
| ( ) _____ | ( ) _____ |
| ( ) _____ | ( ) _____ |
| ( ) _____ | ( ) _____ |

**For *immediate* help in a crisis, call 911.**

**STOP Partner Abuse/Domestic Violence Program**

**We Can Help.**

**1-323-860-5806**