



Domestic Assault and Recovery from Addiction

What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive behavior involving physical, psychological, or sexual abuse of one or more family or household member by another. It involves the use of violence, threats, coercion or intimidation for the purpose of maintaining one person's power and control over another. (Definition from: Help Now of Osceola)

What's the relationship between addiction and domestic assault?

Domestic violence and addiction often overlap. Most men who are arrested for domestic violence have alcohol or drug problems and some research has found that as many as 60% of men in addiction treatment have at least one incident of interpersonal violence in the past year.¹

Why is this a treatment issue?

We believe it's a recovery issue. Any person who doesn't take full responsibility for their history of abuse is at increased risk for relapse. For this reason, Dawn Farm asks every client about domestic violence and tries to educate all of our clients about domestic violence. Clients with a history of battering are referred to a batter intervention program and survivors are offered a referral to a program for survivors. These referrals are not mandatory. Dawn Farm has no power to coerce any client to accept a referral and will continue to serve any client who refuses to accept a referral.

But I was drunk!

A lot of people in treatment say something resembling, "I only abused her one time and I was drunk and in a black out. If I'm powerless over alcohol, how can I be responsible for this? My sentence to batterer intervention program is unnecessary. I'm an alcoholic not a batterer, and if I get sober and into recovery it will never happen again."

- Addiction and domestic violence do not cause each other. They may make each other worse, but one does not cause the other. Both problems need to be treated independently.
- Recovery requires that we take responsibility for all of our actions during our use whether we were in a blackout or not. This means learning from the consequences of our actions and accepting the consequences for those actions.
- Many alcoholics do things in blackouts and have problems while using that we wish to dismiss when we get clean and sober. (For example: child abuse or neglect, promiscuity, overspending or other compulsive behaviors.) We believe it is wrong to simply write these things off with the statement "I was using then and I'm clean now." Experience has taught us that these problems often follow people into recovery and to ignore them would mean risking repeating these behaviors and relapse. In some cases professional help is needed, in cases where these behaviors harmed another person, getting professional help from an expert in that area is the prudent and responsible course of action.

¹ Klostermann, K. (2006). Substance abuse and intimate partner violence: Treatment considerations. Substance Abuse Treatment, Prevention, and Policy. 1: 24.



- Violence is rarely an isolated incident. Overwhelmingly it is preceded with other abusive behaviors. Therefore, any instance of violence is cause for serious concern and intervention. In addition, alcoholics and addicts (in general) are prone to thinking their case is different or unique, this thinking should not be trusted in most areas of life and should **never** be trusted in instances of violence.

Given all of the information above, any addict or alcoholic who is truly engaged in a program of recovery and educated about these facts should willingly seek and accept additional services to ensure that they stop their abuse. Refusal to accept responsibility and accountability for harm done to another person is a clear sign of relapse. The recovery of any addict or alcoholic who refuses or resists intervention for abusive behavior is shaky at best.