Why won't they just leave?

This is probably the most common question asked about domestic violence. **The answer is complicated.**

In many cases, the abuse starts with little things and only happens occasionally. Things might get better for a while. The person causing harm may ask for forgiveness and promise to do better. This can give the person experiencing domestic violence hope that things will work out. And sometimes they do. We don't hear much about those cases.

But sometimes things keep going wrong. Often, people who cause harm convinces another person that they are worthless. They might start to control the other person's activities or finances, including any money they earn. They may damage the other person's credit rating. Gradually, they may create a situation where the other person becomes increasingly dependent on them and difficult to leave them.

The person being harmed may feel like there's no one to turn to. The person causing harm may have isolated them from family and friends. Others might not believe them, especially if the person causing harm has convinced others that the problem lies with the person being harmed.

Sometimes, there are threats of more harm if the person tries to leave. This might include threats to track them down, take away the children, or even hurt them. If there is a pet, there may be threats to harm them.

For immigrants, their ability to stay in Canada might depend on their relationship or marriage.

The stakes in domestic violence situations are often very high. The time of greatest risk is when someone threatens to leave or actually takes steps to leave.

If you think anyone is in danger call the police: 911

If you think children may be at risk, you MUST report it to Child and Family Services: 1-800-638-0715

Frequently Asked Questions

Why would a person experiencing domestic violence be so worried about what will happen to a pet?

Many people experiencing domestic violence, or their children, are very attached to a pet. The pet has likely provided them with a lot of emotional support and comfort. People causing harm often target those pets as a way of control. The *Alberta SPCA Pet Safekeeping Program* offers temporary care for pets of people experiencing domestic violence.

Handy Resources

Alberta Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Alberta SPCA)

Pet Safekeeping – website

Centre for Public cplea Legal Education Alberta

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