

Why won't she just leave?

Are you OK?

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

In many cases, the abuse starts with little things and only happens occasionally. Things might get better for a while. He may ask for forgiveness and promise to do better. This gives her hope that things will work out. And sometimes they do. We don't hear much about those cases.

But sometimes things keep going wrong. He may be jealous and think she is flirting. He might call her names or put her down. He blames her for what's happening. Often, the abuser convinces his victim that she is worthless, lucky to have him look out for her. He might start to control her activities. He may control their money, including any she makes. He may ruin her credit rating. Gradually, he makes her increasingly dependent on him, making it increasingly difficult for her to imagine living on her own. How would she manage? No place to live? No money? No transportation? What about the kids?

She may have no one to turn to. He may have isolated her from her family and friends. They might not believe her. He may have convinced them that she's the problem not him. Or he may have turned them against her. He may threaten to track her down and hurt her if she leaves. He might threaten to take away the kids or even hurt them. If they have a pet, he may threaten to harm it.

If she is an immigrant, her ability to stay in Canada may be tied to her marriage. If it breaks up, then what?

The stakes for her are often very high. The time of greatest risk of harm to a victim of domestic abuse is when she threatens to leave or actually does 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 is she so worried about what will happen to her pets?

Many victims of 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. Abusers often target those pets as a way of controlling their victims. The Alberta SPCA Pet Safekeeping Program offers temporary care for the pets of domestic violence victims who need to escape their abusive situations and have no other place for their pets.

Handy resources

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

Pet Safekeeping - website
<https://bit.ly/2r5ljp6>