

Women Are Safe, Inc.

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Calling It Anger Adds To the Danger

It is a common misconception that abusive partners have an anger management problem. As an advocate I hear many people say of abusers, “he has a problem with anger.” Many victims state that, “he just got mad” or, “he lost control of his temper”. However, domestic violence isn’t about anger. It’s about power and control. To illustrate this point, here is an example of an anger problem: I have a bad day at work and throw my stapler at the wall. That is an anger problem because I have grabbed the first thing within my reach and used it to release my aggression. Now, an example of domestic violence: I have a bad day at work. I put my stapler in my briefcase. I go home and throw the stapler at my partner and blame her for my bad day. That is a domestic violence problem because I have used my bad day as an excuse to abuse my partner and exercise control my over her.

When a person is convicted of domestic violence, the courts can mandate that he attend classes. State certified domestic violence intervention classes are 26 weeks and address all domestic violence issues with intimate partners. In contrast, Anger Management is 8 hours and addresses only anger issues. When an abuser assaults his intimate partner and is incorrectly mandated to anger management classes, the victim is put in more danger and the assault is minimized. Sadly this is often the case. However as advocates, we also have to remind victims that domestic violence classes are not the cure-all to the complicated issues involved in abusive relationships. It is only the beginning of the help they need.

The legal system has the responsibility to mandate the correct classes for the crime committed. By continuing to treat domestic violence as an anger problem, the power and control issues are never addressed and the violence continues. Protecting the victim is priority! Failing to hold domestic violence offenders accountable for their actions is a failure to our society.

Women Are Safe, Inc. has support groups for victims of domestic violence. To find out more about support groups please call our office 729-9885. We also have a 24hr crisis helpline at 729-5730 or 1-800-470-1117. If you or someone you know is in a domestic violence situation, there is help available. Please call.