

Womenews

Women's Center of Montgomery County



Attention Friends and Supporters of the Women's Center of Montgomery County:

Seeking Board Engagement?

As someone already committed to our mission of empowering women and eliminating domestic violence in our community you may want to consider taking the next step by becoming a member of our Board of Directors.

As members of a working board, Directors are expected to attend board meetings which are currently held every month from September through June. These meetings are typically one and half to two hours and are held the third Thursday evening of the month. Additional responsibilities include participation on two Board committees or, in the alternative, chairing one committee.

Directors must be active members of the Women's Center of Montgomery County, which includes payment of the annual \$50.00 membership dues and volunteering at least 52 hours of service each year (including Board meeting, committee service hours and attendance at Board fundraising events).

If you have a high level of passion and commitment to our mission of ending domestic violence, this is your opportunity to become a leader in our organization and to make a real difference by volunteering your time, energy, experience and vision to our Board of Directors. Our Board of Directors is a diverse, dedicated and talented group of individuals who recognize that we *can* affect positive change through volunteer engagement and a shared vision for the future. By becoming a member of our Board of Directors, your involvement can directly benefit the victims of domestic violence we serve!

We meet with prospective candidates throughout the year to ensure that they receive a full orientation to the Center and our Board expectations prior to making the commitment to join. If you are interested, please contact Beth Rubin, Nominating Chair, by email at bethfrubin@msn.com.

For more information about the Women's Center of Montgomery County, please visit our website at www.wcmontco.org. Thank you!

Save the Date!
Sunday, May 19, 2019
11:00 am – 1:45 pm

Brunch Celebration!

Join the
Women's Center of Montgomery County

at
Manufacturers' Golf & Country Club - Fort Washington

Join us in "Turning the Tide" to End Domestic Violence
Please Support Our "Down the Shore" Themed Spring Brunch Gala!

**Domestic Violence Services Provided by the Women's Center
Six Month Period Fiscal Year 7/1/18 to 12/31/18**

Number of Domestic Violence Victims Served:

Number of New Victims	
Female	2,428
Male	328
Transgendered	1
Number of Significant Others	91

Counseling Hours:

Individual Counseling:	2,800 hours
Group Counseling:	277.25 hours
Total Counseling Hours	3,077.25 hours

Community Education Programs:

Number of programs to community groups	43
Number of persons reached through community groups	1,438
Number of programs to schools	15
Number of students reached in schools	1,994
Systems Training (healthcare, law enforcement):	26
Number Trained:	528

**Thank you to Our Friends at
Abington Friends School
in Commemoration of
Martin Luther King Day of Service**

Bearing Witness Through Truth, Action & Love

It is with great gratitude and admiration that we again recognize the students, staff, faculty and parents of the Abington Friends School who selected the Women's Center as the recipient of the proceeds from their clothing drive and rummage sale conducted as part of their Martin Luther King Day of Service activities. This partnership, which began nine years ago, is an inspiring opportunity to experience a genuine sense of community giving and caring.

Each year I have the honor of joining this wonderful community working with them on this event. Their commitment, energy and passion for helping others is so powerful and motivating! It reinforces for me the message of volunteerism and the greatness we can achieve when we work together selflessly to make life better for others. Our futures are truly in safe and caring hands under their leadership!

In addition to a donation of clothing, the school raised and donated \$1,435.00 to support the Women's Center of Montgomery County. Please join me in expressing our sincerest thanks and love for the Abington Friends School community!\

The used clothing sale that was held in the Lower School on Saturday and Monday as part of the "King Day of Service" raised \$1,435 for the Women's Center! Despite the extremely cold weather, volunteers spent hours sorting the donated clothes by type and size, and shoppers turned out to support the cause!

Abuse and Recovery: Katie's Story
submitted by P. McGibbon

"Narcissists don't parent – they counter-parent. They don't care about the emotional damage done to children, as long as it hurts you." PMMA International

One of the most common and effective tools that abusers use to control and punish their victims is to turn their children against them, and perpetuate the idea of them being a bad mother, with hurtful lies and criticism of parenting skills. The deliberate manipulation of children by one parent against the other is nothing other than child abuse. Constantly badmouthing or belittling the other parent, creating the impression the parent does not love the children and forcing the child to reject the parent, is much more than "alienation". It is the ultimate in bullying, creating sides, enemies and allies. Children can watch the abused parent being physically and verbally abused, beaten down and isolated. Soon they learn that the safest side is with the bully. Children lose their loving memories of childhood with the abused parent, and the loss of a child's love is the deepest cut for any victim of abuse.

When an abuser parent goes out of his or her way to hurt the other, great strain is put on both the harmed parent and their children. In some cases, a parent who is repeatedly subjected to malicious acts by their ex-spouse may withdraw from their child's life in order to avoid further conflict. A malicious parent may also successfully manipulate children to the point that they will cut the harmed parent out of their lives, sometimes forever.

What can us as advocates do?

This manipulation and alienating behavior can be hard to prove, especially in court. To support clients we should ensure access to individual and group counseling, any and all resources to help them understand what they are dealing with it, and how to cope with the emotional consequences of losing their children (physically, emotionally or both).

We can assist them in obtaining the legal resources to file for custody, hire a custody evaluator, gather evidence of using children as an abusive tactic, prove contempt, modify custody where possible, and to ask for reunification therapy.

We can support our clients in remaining persistent, and not to be discouraged if the abuser parent frustrates all attempts to maintain and repair the parent/child bond.

“Katie’s “Story - Tactics for Change

When I left my marriage just around three and a half years ago my mindset was that of “one day at a time”. I may not have realized it then but it was purely a survival tactic. I look back now and I see that it was probably the mindset I had for the last 10 years of my marriage. I had been doing things for survival...becoming numb, withdrawing, etc. Sometimes life morphs into something different and we don’t even realize it.

That mindset of “one day at a time” is what has enabled me to get through it all and to continue to power through my new life. I do still have that thought process, but it’s different somehow today. It has moved beyond the idea of “where the heck am I going to sleep tomorrow?” And “how am I not going to fall apart emotionally” to one of challenging myself to be positive and self-aware EVERY day. That being said, I have fallen apart many times. When my mind gets into a low spot, I now recover quicker, I have more control on bringing myself backup. I look back at the last 3 years and I feel so blessed with those that have surrounded me with love and support.

I have three children. I love them all. My kids are now 21, 18, and 9. I have 50% custody of my nine-year-old daughter and my two older children have chosen not to have anything to do with me. I have so many wonderful memories of when they were young babies, toddlers, and elementary-age. Right around when my son turned 11 - and he started his pre-teen attitude like so many kids do - something happened. Something was wrong and I believe unconsciously I knew it. Honestly, I think back now and I knew something was not right in the beginning of the marriage - but my conscience didn’t know it yet. I have come to see that their father was manipulating them over many years. They were being taught to disregard and disrespect me. It is one thing when parents don’t agree on parenting skills but it’s another when one completely downgrades and disregards important life lessons that the other parent tries to instill - especially in the presence of the children. My children were slowly being taught by their father that I was a bad mother because I tried to “parent”; that I was an uncaring person because I worked in my home office a lot; because they didn’t like my cooking, because I didn’t coddle them; the list went on and on. Everything I did or didn’t do got dismissed or criticized. They learned by example that I was someone not worthy of showing respect to.

Meanwhile throughout my 20-year marriage I became more and more distant from my parents and brother to the point that I rejected them and I was made to believe that they were being judgmental and ugly towards me. I was made to believe that I was better off without them. Eventually, it came to be that I really didn’t have much going on in my life that my husband wasn’t involved in. This “integration” spread into my work and my hobbies. For example, I had always been a runner. I ran through high school and college and beyond. I joined a running club. He joined the running club. But the funny thing is, he doesn’t run. I realize now that he just needed to be in control of everything I did, everyone I had a relationship with. He would even tell me what I should do with my work and how I should be doing certain things. I got to the point where I didn’t have enough self-assurance to make minor work decisions without consulting him first. By then I had a home office and it was easy for him to mold me. Especially because I was losing self-confidence and believing that he was such a smart guy and I was wrong if I didn’t agree with him at first. He always convinced me of his point of view. I look back now and I realize how that was wrong in so many ways. I was being manipulated and I had no clue.

As my marriage continued and my children got older I started to realize something. I slowly (and believe me, it took years and years for the light bulb to come on) started to realize what was going on and how they were actually being turned against me by their father, my own husband who supposedly loved me. I don’t think I saw it until I started seeing results of it in my now almost adult children. The emotional ugliness started seeping out of my son. By this time he was bigger and taller than me and he had an immense amount of anger. A lot of it was verbally directed to me. My older daughter was staying somewhat neutral at this point and we got along okay. My youngest was still a toddler. On May 20, 2015 I told my husband that I was leaving. I told them it would be a month or so since I had to get living arrangements. Of course, that just added to my worst-mother-ever image. The anger in my son grew. My older daughter was obviously upset but still neutral. Then I had a business trip in June for 5 days and when I returned home she was completely turned against me and had the same attitude as my husband and son. I finally was able to leave the house in the beginning of July.

I will never forget the day I packed things in the car to take with me. I took my clothes, my office items and the items that belonged to the Association that I work for. I took very little otherwise. As I carried things out of the house to the car I was crying hysterically. My two older children stood in the living room, mocking me and accusing me of stealing. I left behind many things with sentimental value; things that had been given to me by my grandparents. I occasionally think about those “things” and remind myself that they are just “things”. I’m doing fine without them. I don’t need those things to remember my grandparents.

Early on after the separation, I came to the realization of something that helps me on a daily basis. I can place everything in my life into two categories. One category includes things that I can do something about. The second category includes things that I cannot do anything about- those things that I have no control over. Things like the loss of a relationship with my two older children. I cannot let those things in the second category get at me. If I did, it would destroy me. To be honest with you I don’t allow myself to think about my older children much. That doesn’t make me cold, it is survival. Sometimes I have bad days and it sneaks up on me but I’m getting better at redirecting myself by remembering the positives in my life. I can’t do anything about who they are now and how they chose to eliminate me from their life. I can only hope and pray that maybe someday that’ll change but I have accepted (or at I least try to) that they may never change. I have recently come to the realization that their memory of their childhood it’s not the same as my memory of their childhood.

Their memories will be forever tainted. Their thought processes have been altered by their father’s manipulation. They are not the same people they once were. However awful that sounds it also helps me look at it as a completely different life back then...one that is over and one that can never be returned to. I can’t go back to their elementary school years. I cannot change who they have become and I cannot change their decisions that they make in the future. What I CAN do is stay strong and understand that my past has made me who I am today. I am not, nor was I ever, the mean uncaring-no-good mother that my children were made to believe that I was. I have shed the skin that made me believe that as well.

I had to fight in court for the 50% custody that I now have of my nine-year-old. She is my focus in life today. Not only do I stay positive for my own sanity but I need to be emotionally strong for her. It is my responsibility as a mother to help her see the positive in life as well. One fun little thing that my fourth grade daughter and I like to do during our bedtime routine is say something that we are thankful for that begins with each letter of the alphabet. It always helps me and it gives her awareness to keep in mind the things we should be thankful for - because they are plentiful if you are looking for them.

I have a rebuilt a stronger than ever relationship with my parents now. I can’t even explain the strength that they have given me over the last three years. I pushed them away for close to twenty. In 2015 when I told my mom that I was planning on leaving my marriage, I fully expected her to say something like...”this is a hole you got yourself into and it’s not our problem”. I was completely blown away by the open arms that they gave me. I have guilt about the way I treated them. But I also know that I can’t change the past. What I CAN do is be there for them as a healthy and loving daughter and show them the same love that they have had for me for my entire life. I find life to be absolutely amazing when you can reflect back on things. It is important that reflection be looked upon as something to be utilized in a positive manner, in other words, to learn something from it, not to allow it to bring you down.

I would say that my biggest eye opener and healing turning point was when I began going to the women’s center for the weekly support group. For the first year or so I was faithful with my attendance - I relied on it - I needed it. It’s a beautiful thing, but at the same time it’s a horrible thing to have a group of women in the same room that have gone through similar hell. The room gets filled with compassion, understanding, disbelief, anger, and heartache. I find that through it all is some sort of security in the understanding that others have gone through the same. Everybody in that room had a different story but everybody in that room had immense amount of similarity in their experience. We have all been emotionally beaten down by our experiences but somehow we are able to build each other up.

Every now and then I have a set-back but they are becoming far and few in between, they are no longer debilitating. Sometimes they jump out of nowhere and I have to remind myself that I am not bulletproof and that I am human. I had a set-back a few months ago when my boyfriend’s two sons (who are about the same age as my older two) were

angrily arguing. I was on the verge of a panic attack and had to leave right away and cried the whole drive home. I realized that in the past, that type of arguing was usually directed at me or blamed on me. Being self-aware helps in these situations. Instead of wallowing, I try to understand the psychology of it. I didn't let it follow me into the next day and I feel proud of how I recovered from that sneak attack from my psyche. It just made me realize that my previous life will haunt me only as much as I let it. I just need to focus on squashing the haunting.

I have come to understand a little about the term "profile". It's not a word that really meant anything to me before, but oddly enough gives me some clarification. Before I met the women at the support group I thought things just did not make sense. It didn't make sense (and still doesn't) that someone could be so horrible towards another. My ex-husband is a narcissist. He fits pretty snugly into the profile. To me, this makes him nothing special, pretty rotten in fact. The fact that there exists a profile for that personality type makes him unimpressive and not unique. In fact, I view it as an unsavory category that I can place him in. I quickly learned within the first few weeks of attending the group that there are others out there who have dealt with a narcissist like my ex-husband. It amazes me how similar those that fit into the profile can be. People that fit into this profile have a way of thinking and acting that I will never understand. This is good, because it means I am a better person - I have compassion. I see compassion in my daughter and I encourage it.

I went to counseling. I found that verbalizing things helped immensely and it kept me more aware of what was going on in my heart and in my head each day, each minute. I rely on that habit now. I no longer go to counseling and I only occasionally go to support group, but I have learned to pay special attention to my mood and positive thinking. This has become my new survival tactic and maybe it always will be. It helps me to be positive and happy not only in my heart, but outwardly. I think that is a goal I want to keep challenging myself to reach. I went through major emotional changes after I left. Sort of like a roller coaster. I started out believing that I was a horrible person and a horrible mother. I had very little confidence in myself and frankly didn't like myself much. Slowly I began to be the person I was 20 years ago - but better and stronger. With the push and guidance of my parents, I started my own company. I never had the confidence to do it before.

There's a special couple that go to my church. They used to be my youth group leaders way back when. I look up to them and I care for them deeply. The other week Mr. S. came up to me and said "I look forward to seeing you each week, your smile, and you're positive outlook". That blew me away. I was so appreciative that he said that and amazed that he feels it. Today, I look back and I know that I have been blessed. Yeah, I've dealt with a lot of ugliness and still deal with it through my X's influence on my youngest, but I have learned that I can change ME and God gave me the ability to guide MY thoughts. I know I am a work in progress but maybe my tactic is working.

EXTRA, EXTRA; READ ALL ABOUT IT:

One Woman's Powerful Stand Against Domestic Violence
Connecting the Global Epidemic of Human Trafficking to the Domestic Violence Epidemic
The Secret History of Women in the Senate

Do you find the titles of these articles intriguing? Do you want to read more? Do you share a commitment to be informed and empowered? If so, we encourage you to follow the **Women's Center of Montgomery County on Facebook** where, each day we update our links to articles that we believe educate us about our mission and the world in which we carry it out.

Our Facebook page includes articles that span the mission from empowering women and achieving gender equality to understanding the dynamics and impact of violence against women.

In becoming a member of the **Women's Center of Montgomery County** you have demonstrated your commitment to these issues. We hope that by following us on **Facebook** that we reward that commitment with the information and awareness that we all need if we are to affect meaningful and positive social change!

**Visit the Women's Center of Montgomery County
on Facebook!**

Valentines Day!

Celebrate an Evening of
Connection & Affection
With Your Sisters.

Fire, Refreshments &
Shopping at Cottage #3

Wednesday February 13th

5:00 – 9:00

Drop In to throw a wish into the fire,
Enjoy a glass of wine and peruse the latest
Designs from the Amy Ragsdale Design Collection.

Women's Center of Montgomery County
will receive 10% of all sales from this event.

RSVP - amy@amyragdale.com or 215-542-7570

Stalking Awareness Month: What You Need to Know

Submitted by Kerri H., WCMC Volunteer Coordinator

January 2019 is the 15th annual Stalking Awareness Month. The awareness campaign began by the sister of a victim that was killed by her stalker – with the hope that their tragedy could raise awareness to prevent future acts of violence. To further that goal, here’s an article that I hope will be helpful to you or someone you care about.

What is stalking? Stalking is a pattern of obsessive behavior by an individual (ex-intimate partner or stranger) that causes fear in the targeted individual. This is an informal definition. The statutory definition in the Pennsylvania criminal code defines stalking as “a course of conduct . . . toward another person . . . which demonstrates either an intent to place such other person in reasonable fear of bodily injury or to cause substantial emotional distress.” 19 Pa. C.S. Sec. 2709.1

With stalking there are 2 important elements to satisfy.

1. Obsessive Behavior (informal definition) or course of conduct (statutory definition) by the perpetrator. Simply, an unwanted behavior, act, or communication that happens more than once.
2. Fear (informal definition) or reasonable fear of bodily injury or substantial emotional distress (statutory definition). For example, bringing a friend a surprise cup of coffee is a nice gesture. It is scary when it is brought to you at a location that you thought was confidential and the person bringing it is an ex-abusive partner. The behavior itself seems innocent but when viewed in context it’s terrifying. *“Sometimes I would unlock my car and find a rose on my seat - no note, just the flower. I knew he somehow got into my car and left it there; it was all he needed to do to terrorize me.”* Emily Spence-Diehl, Stalking: A Handbook for Victims (“ES”)

Are you being stalked? Have you changed your routines to avoid your ex-partner (individual)? Do the attentions of someone make you feel uncomfortable or unsafe? As advocates, these are some of the questions we would ask but you know your situation best - you are living it. We are always happy to talk about your concerns so feel free to call us.

Understanding a stalker: Sometimes it helps to understand why someone is motivated to stalk another person. We are asked questions like these: Why are they doing this - are they still in love with me? Why don’t they get a new partner? They have a new partner! We didn’t even know each other that long - why are they obsessed with me? Do they enjoy scaring me?

We can spend our lives trying to figure out what is wrong with someone but ultimately we can only understand our own motivations for doing things. But, there do seem to be some characteristics and societal factors that drive someone to engage in this behavior. Bottom line, it has less to do with you and more to do with the dysfunction of the stalker.

1. Faulty beliefs and behaviors. This explains many things wrong with how others feel entitled to treat people poorly. This is an unfortunately familiar concept in intimate partner violence. Examples would include: not taking responsibility for own actions, sense of entitlement, unable to cope with rejection - take “no” for answer, etc. Sexism and gender socialization are significant factors.

2. Culturally, persistence is taught even in the face of rejection. It is not uncommon in movies to watch a pursuer continue to pursue their “love” interest despite the party saying no or being treated poorly by the pursuer. According to Gavin De Becker who wrote the excellent book “The Gift of Fear” - culture teaches that persistence pays. De Becker, The Gift of Fear and other Survival Signals That Protect Us From Violence. (“GD”)

“Most people who refuse to let go are highly predictable. It is perhaps too glib to say they continue until they stop, but that is basically what happens in the vast majority of cases - unless they are engaged. To accurately predict the little behaviors along the way, one must understand the languages of entitlement, attachment, and rejection. Above all, one must see the situation in the context of this culture, which teaches the myth that persistence pays.”
3. Stalkers are typically above average intelligence. This helps them to “know how far they can go without breaking the law.” Linden Gross, Surviving a Stalker, Stay Safe. Get Help. Reclaim Your Life (“LG”)
4. Stalkers sometimes lack a core identity. This explains why they latch on to someone else to validate their own. LG
5. Manipulate and lie. Stalkers manipulate the target primarily with guilt to establish contact. (“I have something really important to talk to you about but it’s too hard over the phone. This will be the last time we talk, I promise.”) They also manipulate and lie to outsiders to get information about the target.
6. Ms. Spence-Diehl explains many other traits in her excellent handbook. (eg., obsessive about other things in their life - not just the target, fantasy belief in the relationship, lack empathy, etc.)
7. While the majority of stalkers are men, both men and women are victims. Approximately 1 in 6 women and 1 in 19 men have experienced stalking victimization in their life. Female victims reported that 83% of perpetrators were male and male victims reported that 44% of perpetrators were male. CDC, National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, 2010 Summary Report.

What do I do? Speak with an advocate. You can reason through many of these options with them.

1. Don’t Let Them Down Easy. If you are ending a relationship, be direct and clear in expressing that you do not want a relationship. Offer no explanations and do not speak again about the breakup. Being nice is easily misconstrued by the obsessive individual. According to Mr. De Becker, there is only one appropriate reaction if someone hears an express ending to a relationship “I hear you, I understand, and while I am disappointed, I will certainly respect your decision.” Any other response (for example, if the partner aggressively debates or doubts the rejection) is a great sign that you are correct to end the relationship. It shows that they are not listening to you if they refuse to believe what you say. Gather strength from that, try to release yourself from any guilt you feel from hurting someone and move on. Hold on tight to your boundaries - this is the ultimate in self-care.
2. No contact. Cut off all contact with your stalker as safely as you can. Unfortunately, any contact after an explicit rejection can be viewed by the stalker as an invitation to re-engage. It may provide them with insight into what it takes for you to respond. Even if you continue to tell or text that person that you don’t want to have contact with them - you are still in contact with them. You cannot control your stalker but you can control how you react to their behavior.
3. Appear to do nothing. “There is an almost irresistible urge to do something dramatic in response to threats and harassment, but often, appearing to do nothing is the best plan. Of course, that isn’t really doing nothing; it is a reasoned management plan and a communication to the pursuer every bit as clear as direct contact. The approach is a real test of patience and character for victims, but it is often the fastest way to end harassment.” GD

4. Build a legal case. The stalker may be engaging in criminal behavior (trespassing, harassment, stalking). Document the stalking behaviors. When the stalker follows or contacts you, write down the time, date and place. (Contact an advocate for a stalking log.) Keep emails, phone messages, letters, and screenshots of texts. Photograph anything of yours the stalker damages. Ask witnesses to write down what they saw. You may also be eligible for a Protection from Abuse order (PFA) if there was physical violence and you are related or were in a relationship with them.

Safety: It is not your fault you are being terrorized. The stalker is responsible for their actions. You can take steps to keep yourself safer and strategies that may reduce their obsession. Most importantly, tap into your intuition and judgment and develop your own individual plan for your safety. I think it can help to discuss this with an advocate. We can offer strategies for staying safe in the home (alarm systems, motion lights), in your car (keep doors locked) at work (vary your schedule, secured parking), online (disengage in social media) and have resources that may be helpful.

Self-care: *“You need to be aware all of the time - and that’s where the trauma comes in. Your body just can’t be alert all of the time.”* Stalking Survivor, ES

It is difficult to feel good when you are in a constant state of stress. Fortunately, there is a lot of information about maintaining your wellness during difficult times. Choose the wellness tools that work best for you - meditation apps, exercise (if you are afraid to jog/walk outside maybe some at-home workout options), healthy eating, self-care, etc. Finding ways to regain your sense of power is also healing - for some that mean taking a self-defense class, engaging in self-advocacy in the criminal justice system, and participating in a support group. It may also be helpful to try to plan for your heightened levels of stress - for example, if your stalker calls you constantly - turn off the volume on your phone.

The following article is shared from domesticshelters.org

Why You Should Celebrate Yourself This Valentine’s Day Who says February 14th festivities require a mate?

Valentine’s Day, shmalentine’s day. After leaving an abuser, that’s probably what you’re thinking—or something a little less G-rated—about February 14. The near-hourly deliveries of roses to coworkers and the onslaught of professions of love on Facebook might be a trigger or leave you feeling lonely, but the day doesn’t have to be a downer. In fact, it’s the perfect day to celebrate how much you love the most important person in your life: You.

Sound cheesy? Hear us out. We’re not suggesting you go as far as marrying yourself like one Australian woman did in 2018. All we’re saying is to dedicate some time to praising you for being you. It can have profound effects on your outlook and life. But don’t just limit it to one day a year. You should celebrate yourself a bit each day.

Make it your Valentine’s Day resolution (we’re pretty sure that’s a thing) for these reasons:

1. It does wonders for self-esteem. We, especially women, are conditioned to tell ourselves we’re not pretty enough, not smart enough, not skinny enough. Not good enough. No wonder so many of us have self-esteem issues! Turn the tables by celebrating what you like—nay, love—about yourself, and after

a while, you'll change the tone of your inner voice and boost your self-confidence.

2. It can help you reach your goals. Giving yourself dailyatta girls will help you recognize and celebrate your strengths. And once you're in touch with those, you can put them to good use to reach your personal, professional and relationship goals.
3. Others will respect you more. If you want others to respect you and treat you well, you need to lead the charge by respecting yourself. Building confidence will empower you to establish and enforce boundaries as well as set a standard for how others should treat you.

How to Do It

Celebrating yourself doesn't have to involve throwing a party of one every day (although it can!). Here are some ideas for how to honor No. 1:

- **Five Things.** After your alarm goes off but before getting out of bed, tell yourself five things you like about you, from your attention to detail to the way you always remember to call your friends on their birthdays.
- **Treat Yo'Self.** (That's a Parks and Rec reference, if you weren't familiar.) Buy yourself flowers and chocolates. You deserve it. Or do something you enjoy—even if it's as minor as choosing the radio station in the car on the way to your kid's school. Of course, taking an hour to get a pedicure would be nice, too.
- **Act Like a Kid.** When was the last time you painted a picture? Swung on a swing at the park? Went Go-Kart racing? You don't need to be so grown up all the time.
- **Take a Nap.** Sleep can do wonders for your outlook on life. Don't set an alarm.
- **Say Thank You.** Gratitude has been proven to increase optimism and contentment. Be grateful every day.
- **List Your Accomplishments.** Either of the day, month or heck, your life. Praise yourself for being the brave, amazing, and/or downright productive things you've done. Keep this list with you and look at it the next time you feel like you need an ego boost.



**PLEASE
STOP
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

24 hr Domestic Violence Hotline is 1-800-773-2424



SOROPTIMIST
Best for Women

**Pottstown
& Phoenixville
Clubs**

Know the signs: ISOLATION

Submitted by Robin J. Community Education Specialist

Maggie is missing in action. There is always some reason for not showing up - she's under the weather, the car broke down, she's just too swamped. If you are fortunate enough to even reach her, you've heard it all. Maybe Maggie is one of those people who simply do not have enough time in a day. Maybe she is suffering from partner-inflicted isolation.

Isolation is a type of control that can happen within an unhealthy relationship. It is an attempt for one partner to shut off the other from family and friends - and perhaps beyond. At first, isolation may be difficult to spot. In the starry-eyed honeymoon period for new couples, isolation can be perceived as affection. "My partner only wants to be with me" might pass off as security or flattery. Patterns generally develop slowly and overtime lead to a barrier between a victim and their outside world.

Here are some warning signs of isolation. The abusive partner might:

- monitor calls, texts and social media.
- be possessive and clingy in social situations.
- rush you out of gatherings.
- sabotage social events to get alone time.
- criticize friends and family.
- try to make you feel guilty when you want to spend time with people away from him.
- wage war against your people; inventing drama or conflict in order to make you feel they are the only one you can trust.

Isolation can make the victim feel as if what goes on in your home is normal and that what you believed about the world is an illusion. It is central if your abuser is going to be successful in their attempts to control you. This is not love.

If you feel you are being isolated from your social circles and activities, trust your instincts. If you can connect with your intuition, the abuser might not see the warning until you've developed a safety plan. Additionally, take opportunities to share your struggle with trusted family and friends. Chances are good that they are already aware of the unhealthy situation.

Finally, you are never alone. The Women's Center of Montgomery County has resources to help restore your well-being. Our 24/7 confidential Hotline is a good place to begin. Call: 1-800-773-2424.

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