

# Battering in gay and lesbian couples

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Battering refers to the physical, sexual or emotional domestic violence exercised by one partner to intimidate and control the other in the relationship: the usual image of a battered person is a heterosexual female trying to cover her black eye using sun screen shades. However, times have changed and today battering in gay and lesbian relationship is as much a serious issue as it is in heterosexual relationships.

According to statistics on domestic violence, battering is present in both heterosexual and lesbian and gay couples and 30% of gay and lesbian couples struggle with domestic violence problems (GLBTQ, 2010).

Battering happens in any kind of a relationship, devoid of sexual orientation. In essence, there are fewer cases of domestic violence that are normally reported by the same sex couples as compared to the heterosexual couples. This does not however mean that they do not have these problems, the reason behind it has been found to be the fact that most of the battered people in same sex relationships refuse to report their cases because they fear that in case they report, people will find out their sexual behavior or discover that their relationship is abusive (Aardvarc, 2008).

In addition, the police are sometimes not in position to distinguish between the victim and the batterer in gay and lesbian complaints because in most cases, it is the batterer who calls the police, which is method of gaining more power over the other (Belge, 2010). Following the growth of gay and lesbian activism in 1980s, the GLBTQ community began to seek remedy for domestic violence and spouse battering.

Many organizations that counsel battered women hardly accept to take in battered gay men. Furthermore, most people presume that the same sex relationships are built from equality (Aardvarc, 2008). Therefore, women who are battered by their female spouses find it hard to accept that another woman is actually being violent on them. In the same way, when gay men is battered, friends, family and the law enforcement bodies treat these lightly by assuming that the 'boys have to be boys'.

Gay men find difficulty coming out as a victim of spouse battering because they feel ashamed that the society will find them being truly 'less of a man' (GLBTQ, 2010). Additionally, those who try to report spouse battering in their relationships run into various barriers. Police officers, judges and prosecutors to whom GLBT victims can turn to for help might have trouble in offering the same degree of services as compared to heterosexual victims.

Not only could personal prejudice towards gays and lesbians come into play, but these professionals could have insufficient training and experience for handling GLBT victims due to non-existent laws to put into effect on behalf of these victims (Aardvarc, 2008). Evidence shows that the level of battering in lesbian couples is very high as compared to the same among gays (56% v. 25%) (Dutton, 2004). This further indicates that as a matter of fact, lesbian and gay couples put together constitute the highest numbers of battering while at the same time, comprise of the least reported cases.

Some sociologists argue that the high increase of battering among lesbian and gay couples is influenced by lack of defined roles and responsibilities between the two partners, and hence, it becomes impractical for one man to submit to another or a woman to be ruled over by a fellow woman. The result

is conflict of interest and tag of war for power within the setup and eventually, the physically stronger partners end up battering their partners to win their control (Dutton, 2004).

Finally, recent research among guys and lesbians has found out that a good number of them are actually bisexuals—some gay men are people who have wives and families, without the knowledge of the other partner (Aardarc, 2010). Due to divided commitment and duties, most of them are unable to keep up their gay or lesbian partners demands and ends up having domestic problems such as battering (Belge, 2010). Therefore, presuming that there are no or fewer cases of domestic violence in the form of battering among the gay and lesbian couples is wrong and misleading to the society.

References Aardvarc (2008). Domestic violence in gay and lesbian relationships. Retrieved from <http://www.aardvarc.org/dv/gay.shtml> Belge, K. (2010). Fact, fiction and stats of lesbian and gay battering. Retrieved from [http://lesbianlife.about.com/od/lesbianhealth/a/DVfactsMyths\\_2.htm](http://lesbianlife.about.com/od/lesbianhealth/a/DVfactsMyths_2.htm) Dutton, D. (2004). Battered men-the hidden side of domestic violence. Retrieved from <http://www.batteredmen.com/duttfull.htm> GLBTQ, (2010). Domestic violence in GLBTQ. Retrieved from [http://www.glbtq.com/social-sciences/domestic\\_violence.html](http://www.glbtq.com/social-sciences/domestic_violence.html)