

# Interview with someone who works with the victims of demestic violence

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An interview with Jennifer Hall, Domestic Abuse Counsellor and Life Coach

Q Being a person professionally counseling women who are victims of domestic violence, that too for the last 10 years, what do you think is the basic cause of domestic violence? A. It is basically the patriarchal structure of our society that gives birth to domestic violence, but in the modern society of professed gender equality, one may wonder why this is happening. But to my eyes, it is the result of a big gap between what a woman knows and what she really internalizes. In our society, almost all women are aware of the equal rights she have according to the law and the prevailing social ethics. But still when faced with domestic violence, she keeps a very high level of tolerance just because she is emotionally dependent on the propagator of this crime. It is always typically, the perceived emotional security inside a marriage for a woman that is preserved at the cost of being physically and mentally abused. Only when women are able to see this in a detached light, that we can even dream of ending domestic violence.

Q. 2. But don't you think that there is some inherent quality or character of a woman that creates such an emotional dependence? A. I think that it is some kind of conditioning that happens when women as a group lives for centuries under the patriarchal authority. Even when the physical circumstances stand changed, whereby giving women financial independence, It will take generations to wipe out the memories assimilated through centuries.

Q. 3. Which categories and social groups of women do you think are the most vulnerable to domestic violence? A. As far as I have seen and also as research indicates, it is the low income groups of women and women from minority races who become mostly the victims of domestic violence. Here, I have to remind you that this is not at all

a genetic phenomenon, but a purely social phenomenon. Among the low income groups, women naturally have less educational opportunities and hence they have a lower probability to get financially sound employment. This makes them dependent on the male partners. Minority women become vulnerable to domestic violence primarily because of the same reason. But they also become vulnerable when they get married to men of a perceivably influential or superior race. Like a white man marrying a Chinese woman. Q. Do you mean that there is no domestic violence among the elite social groups? Of course, not. But that happens at a subliminal level. Not as visible as in low income groups or among the socially deprived categories as minorities and Blacks. There is more emotional violence than physical violence in the high income categories. R. What is the reaction pattern that you have seen among women towards domestic violence? Do they respond immediately or does it take years of suffering to seek help? A. That is an interesting question. I have seen that it is only after prolonged suffering that women come forward to even report domestic violence. Though feminist movement has since decades and even one or two centuries been trying to teach women that personal is political, women still largely consider domestic violence as a personal issue that should not be disclosed in public. This is why they hesitate to report and seek help. And children are yet another factor that keeps them from breaking up a relationship for the reason of domestic violence. Q. Do you think divorce is the only way out of domestic violence? Is there any other solution that can work? A. The problem is that it is very difficult to convince an abusive husband to rectify his behavior. Certain amount of threat of legal action can contain a few. But the relapse

rates are usually very high. Community level interventions and monitoring can be an effective alternative. It exists even now as an informal space. But it has to be institutionalized and properly placed in its context. Especially, I have been encouraging the women in the community to act as a pressure group on the family in which there is domestic violence. Q. Do you think the post-trauma recovery in the case of domestic violence is totally possible? A. I think it will take time, but it is easier, if after divorce, the woman is able to find out a new and better relationship. The way in which domestic violence affects children is another aspect which is more complex to handle as a post trauma reduction exercise.