



*Transforming Lives Through Healing and Intervention*

Dear Pastor and Community Leader,

Thank you for your interest in Abuse Recovery Ministry & Services (ARMS) and for your willingness to address such an important issue as domestic abuse.

ARMS has provided a free recovery program for victims of domestic abuse called Her Journey. Since 1997, ARMS has served over 26,000 women. Her Journey is designed to help all women, especially those in the faith community, heal from all types of domestic abuse. Most abuse is not physical. All forms of abuse are about gaining power and all bring death to individuals, couples, families and our community. Using biblical principles, we encourage beliefs and behaviors that heal and promote healthy lifestyles.

ARMS also provides men's and women's intervention groups and is considered an expert in this field by the larger domestic violence community partners.

You probably know families dealing with these issues, but you may not realize it. Domestic abuse is often hidden. Silence prevails because of shame and fear that others will not believe it. One in three women will be a victim of domestic abuse in an intimate partner relationship within her lifetime. I wish I could say that abuse is not an issue in our churches. The truth is that it is just as prevalent in the faith community as in the secular community. Abuse knows no social, economic, racial or religious bounds.

Because we know this issue is so epidemic, we hope to partner with you and your church community. We are available to assist you with training for your staff or any volunteers who would feel called to partner with us in the effort to end the cycle of abuse from a Christian perspective. Please feel free to call with any questions or to let us know how we can be of further help.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stacey Womack".

Stacey Womack  
Executive Director

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[www.armsonline.org](http://www.armsonline.org) / [www.facebook.com/abuserrecovery](http://www.facebook.com/abuserrecovery)  
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# Her Journey Program

Based on Psalm 23

## Through the Valley

1. Behind Closed Doors (The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not lack.) Understanding domestic abuse and coming out of denial.
2. Drawing the Line (He makes me lie down in (fresh, tender) green pastures.) God shows us where our limits should be. Boundaries.
3. Me Angry? H--- NO! (He leads me beside the still and restful waters.) Learning to acknowledge buried anger appropriately.
4. Starved for Affection (He refreshes and restores my life - myself.) Learning to allow God to fill our need for love.
5. Perfect People (He leads me in the paths of righteousness (uprightness and right standing with Him – not for my earning it, but) for His name sake.) Learning to accept our perfect-ness in Christ.

## Past the Shadows

1. Shadows of Death (Yes, though I walk through the (deep, sunless) valley of the shadow of death.) Dealing with depression.
2. Mind Makeover (I will fear no evil.) Gaining an understanding of who you are and your value by replacing old thought patterns with the truth.
3. Never Alone (You are with me.) Becoming best friends with God and being okay with your alone time.
4. Submission vs. Oppression (Your rod (to protect).) Being able to understand the difference between submission and oppression.
5. The Focus Factor (Your staff (to guide).) Learning to focus on you and your relationship with Christ as opposed to focusing on your abuser.

## Into His Light

1. The Choice is Yours (Your rod and staff, they comfort me.) Taking responsibility for your choices and choosing to allow God to lead and direct you.
2. The 'F' Word (You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.) Understanding the benefits of forgiveness.
3. Women of Destiny (You anoint my head with oil. My (brimming) cup runs over.) Learning to begin dreaming again.
4. True Love (Surely goodness, mercy and unfailing love shall follow me all the days of my life.) Learning what true love really is, and what it is not.
5. Into His Light (Through the length of days the house of the Lord (and His presence) shall be my dwelling place.) Learning to live out this new life daily and prevention planning.

Groups are held continuously throughout the year. Women call for location and time information. Women can begin at any point and continue coming as long as they find it helpful.

# Understanding Domestic Violence and Abuse

A widely-used definition of domestic violence is:

Domestic violence and abuse is not about one specific kind of behavior, like hitting. It is a pattern of behaviors a person uses to gain and maintain power and control over their intimate partner. Most domestic abuse isn't physical, although physical domestic violence is the number one cause of injury to women in the US, more than car accidents, mugging, and rape by a stranger combined.

Domestic abuse can also be psychological, verbal, sexual, financial, property, spiritual, or animal.

One legal definition of domestic violence is:

The infliction or threat of infliction of any bodily injury or harmful physical contact or the destruction of property or threat thereof, as a method of coercion, control, revenge, or punishment upon a person with whom the actor is involved in an intimate relationship.

*Abusive and violent behavior is NOT defined by the extent of the victim's visible injury.*

## Why Women Stay

Situation factors:

- Economic dependence
- Fear of greater physical danger to themselves and/or their children if they leave
- Lack of alternative housing, nowhere to go
- Fear he will take the children
- Lack of job skills
- Social isolation: lack of support from family or friends, and church
- Lack of understanding from minister, family, friends, mental health agencies, police, doctor, etc.
- Fear of involvement in the court process
- Fear of retaliation
- Inability to recognize she is involved in a set pattern of abuse

Emotional factors:

- Believes the violence is her fault (she is often told this), feels as if she deserves this
- Feels that if she can change, it will stop his abusive behavior
- Insecurity over potential independence and lack of emotional support
- Guilt that husband is not able to survive alone
- Belief/hope that husband will change
- Ties to her home, belongings
- Her love for him

Personal belief:

- Believes that marriage is forever
- See the abuse as normal, especially if she was raised in it
- Believes abuse is only physical and this is just normal marital conflict
- She wants her children to have a father
- Religious and cultural beliefs, if she could pray harder or submit more it would end

### **Things you may experience from the abuser if separated from his victim:**

The abuser usually tries multiple tactics once his victim has left. He may be angry or seem very remorseful, promising to get help or never to do it again. He will often blame his victim or others for his problems. He is the

most likely to get help at this point, but even this may just be manipulation. Eventually, if he does not get what he wants he will return to anger.

## **Facts About Abuse**

1. Abuse is the single major cause of injury to women in the U. S.
2. All physical abuse starts with emotional abuse. 90% of the scars left from abuse isn't from physical abuse, they are emotional.
3. 1 in 4 women have suffered from abuse at some time in her life.
4. A woman is beaten every 9 seconds. Over three million women are beaten each year.
5. 10 women a day are killed by their partner. 53% of these are middle class homes.
6. In the U. S., a woman is more likely to be assaulted, raped, or killed by a male partner than any other type of assault.
7. 35% of women in hospital emergency rooms seeking treatment are there for on-going abuse.
8. 25% of women are beaten while pregnant—many times this will be the first time the woman experiences physical abuse.
9. 50% of female homicides are committed by the man who said, “Until death do us part.”
10. 50-75% of women in psychiatric wards have experienced physical or sexual abuse.
11. 95% of children who experience violence in the home will grow up to repeat the pattern (the giving or the taking). 70% of males raised in abusive homes become abusive.
12. 47% of men who beat their wives do so at least three times a year.
13. For women who have ended their abusive relationship, the abuse became more frequent or stayed the same 25% of the time. Harassment, trespassing, or stalking occurred 60% of the time.
14. About 1 out of every 5 abused women obtained restraining orders; 60% of those orders were violated.
15. A woman's risk of fatal injury is increased after she leaves her abuser. Death is the ultimate form of control.

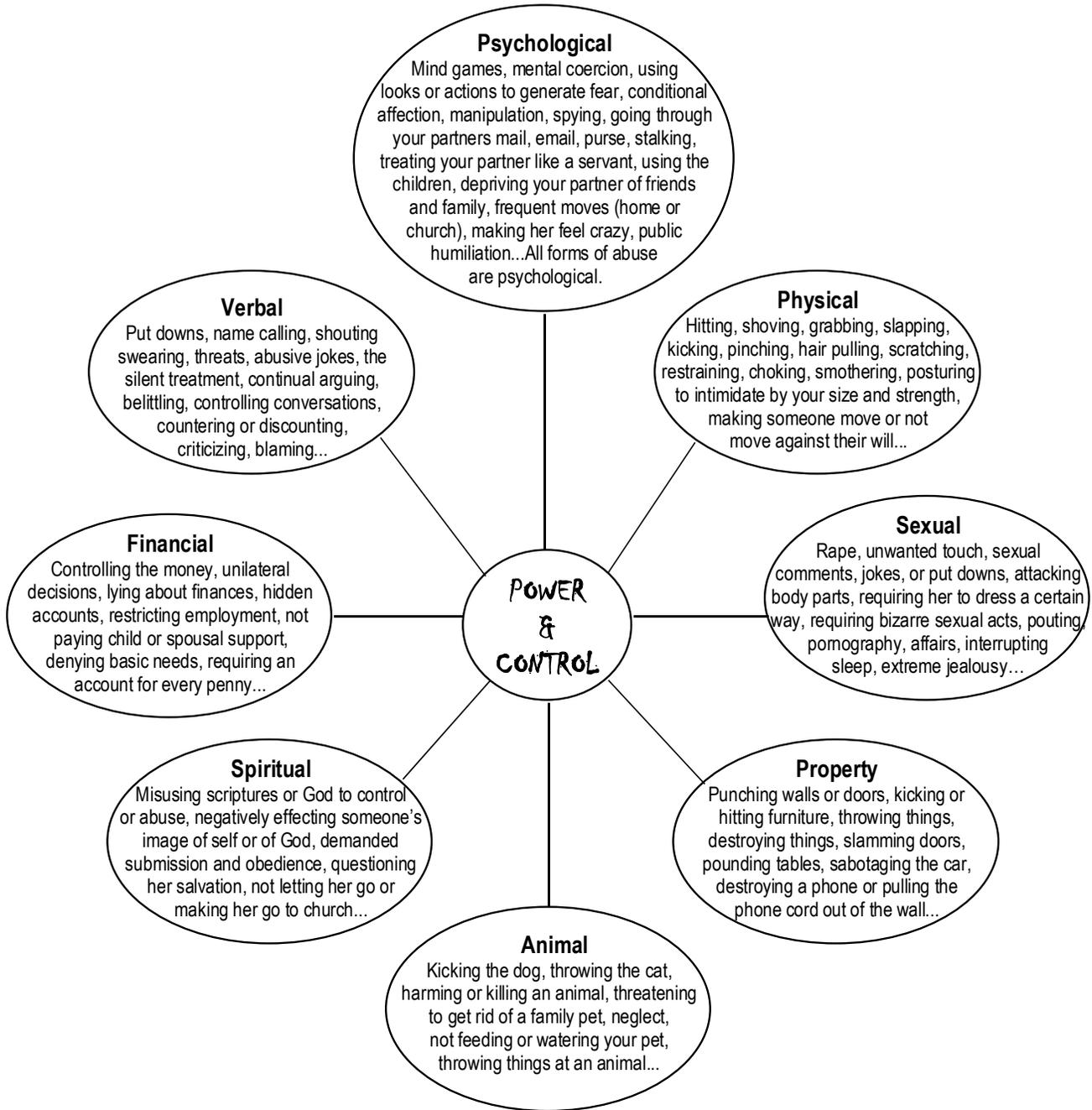
## More Facts About Abuse

If your partner is displaying a combination of these behaviors, you may have a potential batterer on your hands.

1. **A push for quick involvement:** Comes on very strong, claiming, "I've never felt loved like this by anyone." An abuser pressures the woman for an exclusive commitment almost immediately.
2. **Jealousy:** Excessively possessive; calls or texts constantly or visits unexpectedly; prevents the victim from going to work because "you might meet someone," checks the mileage on your car. Frequently accusing the other of having an affair, when there is no proof.
3. **Controlling:** Interrogates the victim intensely about whom they'd been talking to and where they were; controls all the money.
4. **Unrealistic expectations:** Expects the victim to be the perfect woman and meet his every need.
5. **Isolation:** Tries to cut the victim off from family and friends; accuses people who are your supporters of "causing trouble."
6. **Blames others for problems or mistakes:** It's always someone else's fault if anything goes wrong and the victim pays the price verbally, emotionally, and in any way he deems necessary.
7. **Makes everyone else responsible for his feelings:** The abuser says, "You make me angry" instead of, "I am angry", or "You're hurting me by not doing what I tell you." Less obvious is the claim: "You make me happy."
8. **Hypersensitivity:** Is easily insulted, claiming that his feelings are hurt when he is really mad. He'll rant about the injustice of things that are just a part of life.
9. **Cruelty to animals and to children:** Harms or kills animals. Also may expect children to do things that are far beyond their ability (spanks a 2 year old for wetting a diaper or may tease them until they cry.)
10. **"Playful" use of force during sex:** Enjoys throwing his victim down or holding her against her will during sex; says he finds the idea of rape exciting.
11. **Verbal abuse:** Constantly criticizes his victim or says blatantly cruel, hurtful things; degrades, curses, calls her ugly names. This may also involve sleep deprivation, waking you up with relentless verbal abuse.
12. **Rigid sex roles:** Expects her to serve, obey and may require she remain at home.
13. **Sudden mood swings:** Switches from sweetly loving to explosively violent in a matter of minutes, or even more confusing, within seconds.
14. **Past battering:** Admits to hitting women in the past, but says that they made him do it, or the situation brought it on.
15. **Threats of violence:** Makes statements like, "I'll break your neck", or, "I'll kill you," then dismisses them with "Everybody talks that way", or, "I didn't really mean it."

# TYPES OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

Abuse Recovery Ministry & Services  
PO Box 663, Hillsboro, OR 97123 \* 503-846-9284



**Abuse is still abuse if all you do is change it's form.**  
**Domestic abuse is a system of behaviors that gains you power and control over those closest to you.**

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## How Prepared is Your Church to Serve Victims of Abuse?

### Have sermons condemned abuse in the home?

- Has the pastor ever preached a full message on abuse or family violence?
- When families are discussed, does the pastor mention that many families do not fit standard cultural and church ideals for family life?

### Is abuse discussed in premarital counseling programs?

- Is printed information on abuse (such as brochures) given to all couples who undergo premarital counseling prior to their wedding?
- Are couples asked whether there has ever been an incidence of violence in their relationship?
- Are couples admonished to live violence-free lives and offered suggestions for dealing with anger and disappointment?

### Is dating violence discussed in youth groups?

- Has the youth pastor been informed about the prevalence and severity of dating violence even among church teens?
- Has information on dating violence been provided in a place where a teen can see it in privacy?
- Has the issue been raised from time to time in youth meetings, together with suggestions on how to respond to violence and how to help friends who have been abused?

### Are safety mechanisms in place?

- Have abuse victims been counseled to ensure that they have made some advance preparations in case they need to leave their home quickly?
- Who can be called on short notice if there is an emergency facing a family in your congregation?
- Are there people in the congregation who are aware of the important safety issues for women and children in your area?
- Are there any members who are trained to provide emergency services?
- Does the church have a support group for victims of violence?

### Have you asked the shelter about its needs?

- Has a contact been made between the women's organizations in your church and the nearest shelter for battered women?
- Has the pastor ever called the shelter to inquire how the church might assist in its work (e.g., painting a room, moving a woman and her children, childcare, food treats at Christmas, spiritual counseling)?

### Do you know the transition worker by name?

- Does the pastor know the location of the nearest community shelter for battered women?
- Has the church established some contact with at least one worker at the shelter?
- If there are no community-based housing resources, has the congregation itself made some provision for emergency shelter?

### Is information available in safe locations?

- Where is the safest location in your building to place information that abuse victims can look at in privacy (such as the washrooms)?
- What information can be offered to women in immediate crisis or those in relationships that are sometimes abusive?
- Is a contact name and phone number provided on the literature?

From *No Place for Abuse*, pages 72-74, Kroeger & Nason-Clark

## Guidelines for Clergy

Remember the Goals:

- 1. SAFETY for the woman and children**
- 2. ACCOUNTABILITY for the abuser**
- 3. RESTORATION of individuals; and IF POSSIBLE, relationships**

### DOs and DON'Ts with an Abused Woman

DO believe her. Her description of the domestic abuse is only the tip of the iceberg.

DO reassure her that the abuse is not her fault, she doesn't deserve this treatment, it is not God's will for her.

DO give her referral information; like ARMS 503-846-9284 or National Hotline. 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

DO support and respect her choices. Even if you do not understand.

DO encourage her to think about a safety plan: set aside some money; copies of important papers for her and children; a change of clothes hidden or in care of a friend if she decides to go to a shelter. Plan how to exit the house the next time the abuser is violent. Plan what to do about the children if they are at school; if they are asleep, etc. (This is both practical and helps her stay in touch with the reality of the abuser's violence. Safety planning is a process that is ongoing.)

DO protect her confidentiality.

DO help her with any religious concerns. Send her to ARMS for help with this, too.

DO assure her of God's love for her, and of your commitment to help her through this difficult time. Pray with her.

DO help her see her partner's violence has broken the marriage covenant and that God does not want her to remain in a situation where her life and the lives of her children are in danger.

DO support her and help her to mourn the loss of the relationship if he is unwilling to make changes and the relationship comes to an end.

DO NOT give information about her or her whereabouts to the abuser or to others who might pass information on to the abuser. Do not discuss with the church council or elders who might inadvertently pass information on to the abuser.

DO NOT minimize the danger to her. You can be a reality check. "From what you have told me, I am very much concerned for your safety . . ."

DO NOT tell her what to do. Give information and support.

DO NOT react with disbelief, disgust, or anger at what she tells you. Let her know that you are concerned, that what the abuser has done to her is wrong, and she did not deserve to be treated abusively.

DO NOT blame her for his violence. Encourage her to understand she cannot control his choices.

DO NOT recommend couples counseling or approach her husband and ask for "his side of the story." These actions will endanger her.

DO NOT recommend mediation or communications workshops. Power and control are the problem.

DO NOT send her home with a prayer and directive to submit to her husband, bring him to church, or be a better Christian wife.

DO NOT encourage her to believe forgiveness is the answer for the problem.

DO NOT encourage her dependence on you or become emotionally involved with her.

DO NOT do nothing.

### **DOs and DON'Ts with an Abusive Partner**

DO approach him and express your concern and support for him to be accountable and to deal with his abusive behavior (once she is in a safe place).

DO meet with him, but do not allow him to focus on his wife being the problem.

DO address any religious rationalizations he may offer or questions he may have.

DO name the abusive behavior as his problem, *not hers*. Tell him that only he can stop it.

DO refer to a program which specifically addresses domestic abuse.

DO assess him for suicide or threats of homicide.

DO warn the victim if he makes specific threats towards her.

DO find ways to collaborate with community agencies and law enforcement to hold him accountable.

DO NOT approach him or let him know that you know about his abusive behavior. This cannot be done until she is in a safe place and you have her permission

DO NOT allow him to use religious excuses for his behavior or accept his blaming her for his behavior.

DO NOT encourage couples counseling with him and his partner if you are aware that there is domestic abuse.

DO NOT go to him to confirm the victim's story.

DO NOT give him any information about his partner or her whereabouts.

DO NOT be taken in by his minimization, denial or lying about his abusive behavior.

DO NOT be taken in by his "conversion" experience. If it is genuine, it will be a tremendous resource as he proceeds with accountability. If it is phony, it is only another way to manipulate you to maintain control and avoid accountability.

DO NOT advocate for the abuser to avoid the legal consequences of his violence.

DO NOT provide a character witness for him with purpose in any legal proceedings.

DO NOT confuse his remorse with true repentance.

DO NOT send him home with a prayer. Instead, work with others in the community to hold him accountable.

## **Twelve Reasons Why Couple's Counseling is Not Recommended For Domestic Violence Situations**

- 1. Focusing on the relationship assumes that each person contributes to the abusive behavior**, when in truth the perpetrator is solely responsible for his abusive behavior.
- 2. Focusing on issues other than the abusive behavior allows the abusive behavior to continue.**
- 3. Danger to the victim may increase due to the counselor's involvement in the relationship.** Because the batterer's goal is to maintain control of the relationship, any interference on the counselor's part may lead to an increase in his controlling behavior. The therapist may unwittingly elicit information or initiate interventions that escalate abuse.
- 4. A couples counselor who is focused on the relationship may be hesitant to strongly confront just one of the individuals**, concerned this will be viewed as favoritism. Such failure to directly confront the abuse contributes to minimization and denial.
- 5. Blaming the victim.** When abusive behavior is identified, the victim may be asked, "What was your part in this?" Alternatively, the batterer may use comments and observations of the couple's counselor to justify his abusive behavior (e.g., "Remember, he said how your refusal to answer my questions only makes things worse!") many victims already tend to blame themselves; the counselor may unwittingly encourage this.
- 6. Out of fear of further abuse, the victim may not be honest about the abuse or other issues in the couple's session**, giving the false impression that things are better than they really are.
- 7. On the other hand, the victim may have a false sense of security and safety in the couple's session.** This may lead her to disclose information she normally wouldn't at home, believing that the therapist will keep her safe. Once they have left the safety of the counseling room, he may then retaliate.
- 8. In couples counseling, if the therapist focuses extensively on the abuse, the batterer may feel shamed, scapegoat, and to blame for every problem in the relationship.** In a batterer intervention group, while he is held accountable for his abuse, he is not blamed for every problem in the relationship. Couples counseling may discourage the level of disclosure that is possible in a group.
- 9. Before other issues in the relationship can be effectively addressed, the abusive behavior must end.** Abusive behavior tends to distract attention away from other issues, like a smoke screen. This is akin to couples counseling where one or both parties are active alcoholics; until they are sober, such interventions have little effectiveness. Similarly, until the abuse has stopped, other interventions have limited effectiveness.
- 10. It colludes with the batterer's denial.** It allows him to continue to blame her and/or the relationship for his abusive behavior. He can then take advantage of the couple's sessions to further his agenda of control and power over.
- 11. There is usually no assessment for violence in couples counseling.** If an assessment is done with both people present, the potential for honest disclosure will be undermined.
- 12. Couples counseling can keep a victim in the abusive relationship longer than she would otherwise stay in the false hope that the counseling may make things better.** Some forms of couples counseling require couples to make a time commitment (e.g. 3-6 months) of not separating while in the counseling, which may prolong an abusive relationship.

by Chris Huffine, Psy. D. July/98

## Pastor's Reading Resource List

*We Too: How the Church Can Respond Redemptively to the Sexual Abuse Crisis*, by Mary DeMuth, Harvest House, 2019

*No Place for Abuse: Biblical & Practical Resources to Counteract Domestic Violence*, Catherine Clark Kroeger & Nancy Nason-Clark, InterVarsity Press, 2001

*Abuse and Religion: When Praying Isn't Enough*, Anne L. Horton & Judith A. Williams, Lexington Books 1992

*Domestic Violence, What Every Pastor Needs to Know*, Reverend Al Miles, Fortress Press, 2000

*A Cry for Justice: How the Evil of Domestic Abuse Hides in Your Church*, Jeff Crippen & Anna Wood, 2012

*Am I Sleeping with the Enemy?: Males and Females in the Image of God* Ron Clark, Cascade Books, 2010

*Why Does He Do That?* Lundy Bancroft, Berkley Publishing Group, 2002

*The Verbally Abusive Relationship*, Patricia Evans, Adams Media Corporation, 1992, 1996

*The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind and Body in the Healing of Trauma* by Bessel Van Der Kolk, MD, Penguin Books, 2015