

SEASONS GREETINGS: Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault peak during the holiday season.

Remember the Wal-Mart employee in New York who was trampled to death by angry holiday shoppers bursting through sliding glass doors to get discounted merchandise the day after Thanksgiving? Another incident in California where two men shot and killed each other in the aisles of Toys “R” Us, seemingly to settle an argument their girlfriends were having.

Stories like these capture our attention and make headlines around the world. These may be isolated incidents, but the holidays are a violent and tense time of the year for many in this country, but not in headline-grabbing stories like the Wal-Mart and Toys “R” Us incidents we read about.

During holidays, such as Thanksgiving and Christmas, the police, medical professionals, crisis lines and shelters see a rise in Domestic Violence and Sexual Assaults. Most Domestic Violence and Sexual Assaults do not make the news, except when they turn deadly, and even then, maybe they will make the local evening news. These assaults are equally tragic.

One of the reasons Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault occurs more frequently during the holiday season is the consumption of more alcohol and drugs. Abusers are usually surrounded by drugs and alcohol at parties, family events, work outings, or other special events. These special events can turn out to be a nightmare for victims. Alcohol especially is a well known trigger or factor that contributes to domestic violence in many households. The usage is in no way an excuse to why someone would abuse another individual, but it can be a contributing factor.

Money issues such as late bills, not enough money for extras or too much spending in a household can be a trigger for domestic violence especially when spending money on gifts. Especially when buying gifts for children. Tension builds from guilt and frustration, and for those in violent situations, it triggers more physical and mental anger. These violent behaviors do not deserve an excuse, but these can be triggers that can make certain time periods worse than others.

It can be difficult to acknowledge that you or someone you know is involved in an abusive relationship. Domestic Violence does not look the same in all relationships, however, there are some warning signs that may indicate you are in an unhealthy relationship. Take a few minutes to answer these questions:

- ❖ Does your partner insult you in public or in front of your children
- ❖ Does your partner treat you like you are stupid or call you names
- ❖ Does your partner try to control what you do
- ❖ Does your partner act jealous of your friends or family
- ❖ Does your partner blame you for his/her violence
- ❖ Has your partner ever threatened to hurt you or himself/herself if the relationship ends

If you answer yes for one or more questions, it is important for you to get help. If you are in need of help, or if you would like more information about the services available through the DOVE Program, please contact 218-935-5554 or 1-800-763-8629.

If you are in immediate danger or need someone to talk to, call the 24 hour crisis line 1-877-830-3683.