

# The Iceberg of Domestic Violence

One of the most dangerous and insidious truths about domestic violence is it's easy to ignore if it's not visible. Like an iceberg, there's a lot more than what is visible above the surface, and that's true for individuals, communities, and cultures. **In the depiction below, we've listed outward acts that society doesn't accept, where survivors are supported and the offenders are held accountable. Ask yourself: WHY don't we do the same with acts found below the water's surface?**

## Socially Unacceptable Domestic Violence

Intimate Partner Homicide

Intimate Partner Rape and Sexual Violence

"Severe" Forms of Physical Violence  
(e.g. beating, burning, strangulation)

## Socially Acceptable or Tolerated Domestic Violence

Experienced by victim due to...  
offender's actions

Financial abuse, emotional abuse, coercion, including reproductive

bystander's actions

Victim blaming/asking "Why don't they leave?"  
"It's a private matter and it's not my place to intervene."

Turning a blind eye and/or pretending not to notice witnessed abuses

community's actions

Making and/or not challenging jokes about domestic violence

Supporting abusers in their career/work/art (e.g. artists, athletes, politicians) without accountability for their violence



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## Other forms of Socially Acceptable or Tolerated Domestic Violence

### Experienced by victim due to... community's actions *continued*:

- ♦ Assuming good intentions on the offender's part are enough
- ♦ News articles and headlines that sensationalize and/or minimize domestic violence

### system's responses actions:

- ♦ "Marital exceptions" to rape laws
- ♦ Virtuous victim narrative / Myth of the "perfect victim"
- ♦ Arresting and/or incarcerating victims for self-defense against violence
- ♦ Holding victims solely responsible for children's exposure to the abuser's violence
- ♦ Asking victim to move or change their actions to avoid abuse
- ♦ Denying DV-based asylum requests

### cultural references:

- ♦ Romanticizing intimate partner violence and/or stalking
- ♦ Patriarchy

**If you or someone you know is in an  
unhealthy or abusive relationship...**

**Call Virginia's 24-hour Family Violence and Sexual  
Assault hotline at 1-800-838-8238**



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF  
SOCIAL SERVICES

**DFS** Division of  
Family Services

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**  
*Awareness*  
*Month*   
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For information and resources around Domestic Violence awareness and prevention in Virginia, visit [www.dss.virginia.gov/family/domestic\\_violence](http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/domestic_violence)