

Possible warning signs that an employee may be a victim of abuse

The effects of domestic violence can show up in many different ways. Being aware of these effects will not only help you better understand the experience of those affected by abuse, but it will also help you better identify someone who is being abused.

Visible signs of physical injury include:

- bruises, black eyes, cuts, burns, human bite marks and broken bones;
- injuries during pregnancy, miscarriage or premature births; and
- many injuries in different stages of healing.

Someone who is being abused might try to hide visible injuries from others. One sign of this might be someone who suddenly starts wearing winter clothes such as long-sleeve shirts, turtlenecks or scarves (to hide strangulation marks) in the summer, when they never did before. They might also wear sunglasses indoors or unusually heavy make-up.

Illnesses that may be related to abuse include:

- stress-related illnesses like headaches, backaches, constant pain, gastrointestinal disorders, trouble sleeping, hearing loss, eating disorders, and being tired all the time;
- anxiety-related conditions like heart palpitations, difficulty breathing and panic attacks;
- depression, thinking about or attempting suicide, and alcohol or other drug problems;
- sleeping or eating disorders; and
- vague, non-specific medical complaints.

In the **workplace**, the effects of domestic violence can be seen as:

- not being able to concentrate or focus at work;
- missing work or getting to work late or very early;
- asking for a lot of time off;
- on-the-job harassment by the abuser, either in person or over the phone;
- poor employment history or losing jobs;
- calls from financial institutions to verify employment;
- decreased productivity;
- tension around receiving repeated personal phone calls;
- difficulty in making decisions alone;

“Creating standards others are drawn to”

- avoiding windows or the main entrance of the office;
- repeated discussion of marital or relationship problems;
- flowers or gifts sent to the employee at their workplace for no apparent reason;
- signs of fear, anxiety or depression;
- fatigue or intense startle reactions;
- getting nervous, quiet or 'jumpy' when their partner collects them from work or arrives at work;
- isolating themselves, being quieter than usual and keeping away from others;
- minimising and denying that they are being abused;
- suddenly not being able to attend work events or go away on business events; and
- needing to 'check in' with their partner a lot, or constantly getting calls, emails, or text messages from their partner.

Reference sources:

- www.opdv.ny.gov
- www.makeitourbusiness.ca