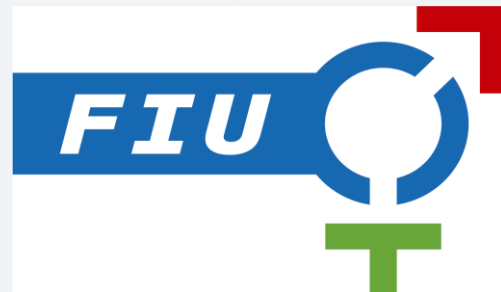


Dealing with domestic violence - in the workplace



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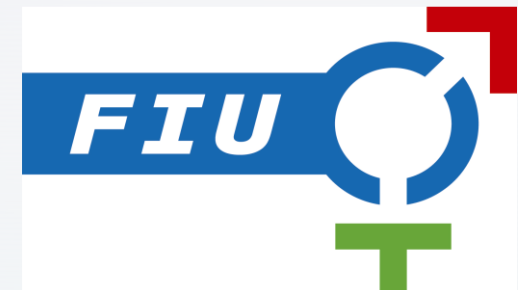
The aim of today's course

Knowledge about:

- Why focus on domestic violence in the workplace?
- What is domestic violence – myths and facts
- Consequences: Domestic violence and the workplace

How to:

- Spot a victim/survivor of domestic violence
- Have the difficult conversation
- Deal with and prevent domestic violence in the workplace

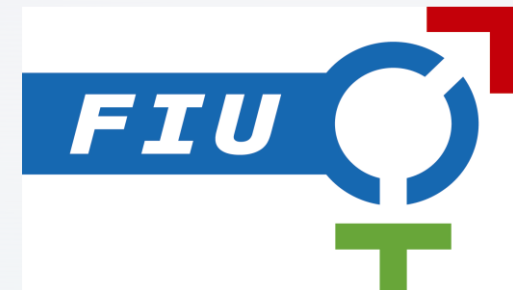


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Why focus on domestic abuse in the workplace?

- There is no clear boundary between private life and work life – victims/survivors of domestic violence inevitably take the violence (or the consequences) with them to their work
- The workplace can play a big role in helping victims/survivors –both getting out of an abusive relationship *and* keeping their job
- Ethically *and* economically, it only makes sense for companies to make domestic violence work an integrated part of the company
- Security: Domestic violence can also enter the workplace quite literally. Abusive partners sometimes seek out their partner at work and subject her to violence. Therefore, focusing on domestic violence at work also has to do with taking employees' security at work seriously.



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The consequences

One study

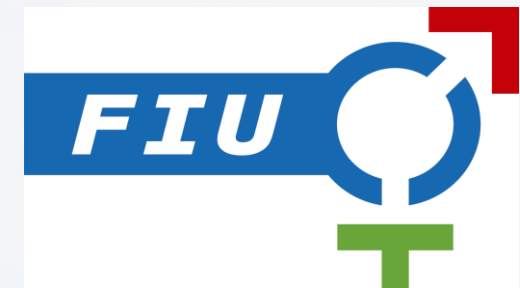
- twice as much absenteeism
- twice as many were unable to work, had switched jobs or were on part-time because of health problems
- four times as many had conflicts with their colleagues

("The work life of abused women" by the Danish National Board of Social Services, 2006)

Another study

- 71 % experienced fatigue at work
- 35 % had difficulties making deadlines
- 64 % had concentration problems
- 30 % had extra sick leave
- 55 % worried about what their colleagues think
- 35 % had difficulties participating in social activities with colleagues

("The work life of abused women" by the Danish National Board of Social Services, 2009)



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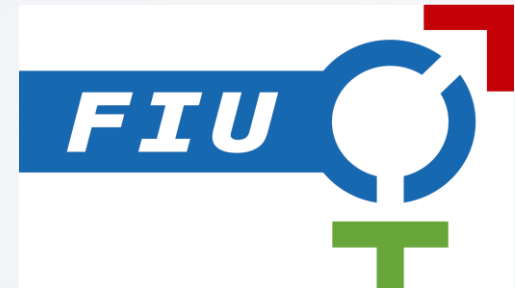
Myths & prejudice

Myth 1: It does not occur in ordinary families and it does not affect any of our colleagues

Myth 2: The abuse could never happen to me – it only happens to other people or a certain kind of person.

Myth 3: She can just leave the him!

Myth 4: She must have done something to provoke him



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The facts

Fact 1: Domestic violence occurs in all social classes, age groups...

Fact 2: A complex mechanism keeps a person in a violent relationship:

- > violence develops over time
- > control and psychological abuse gradually intensifies until the person's self-esteem and sense of reality are affected
- > self-blame, no longer knows what counts as acceptable behavior
- > abuser switches between affection and violence
- > financial and practical reasons (especially with children)

Fact 3: Victims/survivors do everything they can to prevent the violence.

To sum up:

1. Understanding the nature of domestic violence is necessary
2. **The issue: Focusing on the victim/survivor, and not the abuser!**
3. Myths lead to: Double victimization + no help



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How does domestic violence often play out?

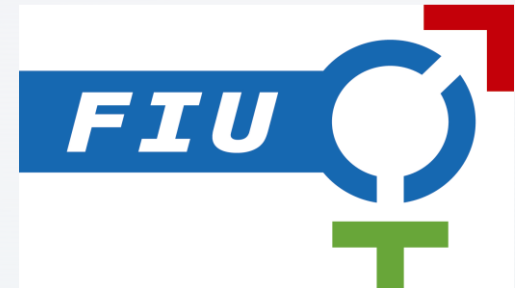
Types of domestic violence:

- Psychological, physical, sexual, material and economic abuse
- The abuser often uses different types of violence which overlap and intensify each other.

The cycle of abuse:

1. **Green stage**: The relationship starts out peacefully.
2. **Yellow stage**: **Gradually** more jealousy, threatening, blaming and isolation, resulting in low self-esteem and difficulties in distinguishing between love and violence/acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. This can last for years.
3. **Red stage**: One small incident causes an explosion of anger: sexual, physical, or extreme verbal abuse occur. This part of the cycle has the shortest duration.
4. **Green stage**: Back to peace and affection (flowers, gift, excuses for violence, apologies).

Keyword: **Denial**



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How to spot a victim/survivor

Signs that your colleague may be abused:

- Mood, appearance, body weight or work performance change
- Many sick days, forgets/cancels appointments at the last minute and gives unreliable excuses.
- Injuries which she/he cannot explain/the explanations are not credible
- You overhear/see your colleague's partner acting demeaning
- The partner keeps an eye on your colleague at work
- Your colleague is afraid of upsetting her/his partner.
- Your colleague often apologizes for her partner's behavior.
- Your colleague is not allowed to/does not participate in social events at work



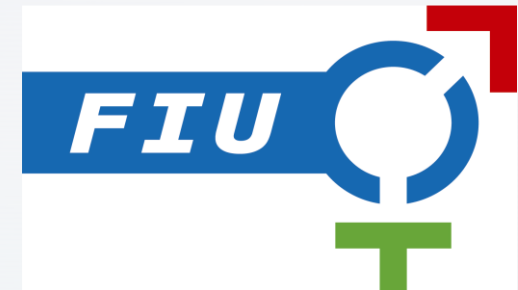
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Case exercise

After work and right outside your workplace you witness a colleague who is having an argument with her partner. You see the partner shove her quite hard a couple of times. The colleague is not someone you know well and there are other colleagues who witness the same incident, but they do nothing.

What do you do? Why?



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The difficult conversation: Do's and don'ts

What to expect:

- Minimizing/excusing abuse.
- Shame, guilt, denial.

Do:

- Be **specific** about why you are worried + that you can be trusted
- Show sympathy. Make it clear how you/the workplace can help.
- Refer to resources inside and outside the workplace.
- Underline: it is not their fault + others are in the same situation.
- Tell her/him that you would like to talk again whenever there is a need.
- Listen!

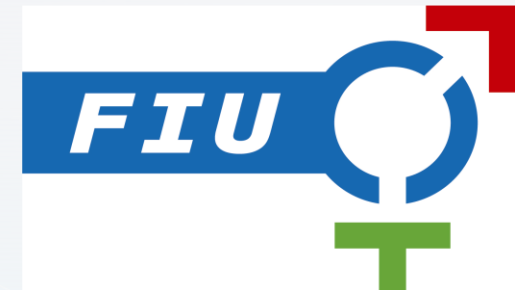
Prepare for the conversation:

- Undisturbed room, resources, examples.

Don't:

- Speak negatively about your colleague's partner
- Put pressure on your colleague to act or leave the relationship
- Be judgmental/talk down to her/him
- Tell your colleague what YOU think she/he should do
- Promise more than you can keep
- Decide when you will talk again.

Remember:
Your job is not to solve your colleague's problems, but to help him/her express the problem, to build her/his self-esteem, and refer to professional help!



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What can you as a workplace/co-worker do?

- Help the abused person put her situation into words and to her/him further along a process which moves towards the person finding the way away from the violence.
- Raise awareness and reduce the taboos, myths, prejudice
- Spread information about how to get help if you are a victim/survivor

Guidelines about: identifying, preventing, and dealing with domestic violence

1. A declaration about the aim to deal with domestic violence
2. A definition
3. Who to contact (an **educated** employee)
4. How the workplace can help

Prevention: Empowerment and boundaries



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