

Why are some milestones and periods of stress dangerous for families and couples who have experienced or perpetrated IPV?

- The CDC states “intimate partner violence” consists of physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse. ([source](#))
- The CDC also reports that about 1 in 4 women and nearly 1 in 10 men have experienced sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner during their lifetime and reported some form of IPV-related impact.
- Over 43 million women and 38 million men experienced psychological aggression by an intimate partner in their lifetime. ([source](#)) Individuals who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual also reported levels of IPV at rates equal or higher than those who identify as heterosexual, and are at risk during this time. [Source](#)
- Studies have shown that a direct association between economic stress and IPV. Economic hardship may increase rates of IPV and that IPV may increase financial problems for survivors, being trapped in a position of poverty and an abusive relationship.
Source: https://uknowledge.uky.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=crvaw_reports
- During times of economic stress, those in disadvantaged neighborhoods are at higher risk for experiencing IPV. When struggling financially, individuals may be more likely to stay in an unsafe relationship may be willing to sacrifice their own safety to have food on the table, or clothes for their children (source: <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/193434.pdf>)
- Among households experiencing financial strain, research has shown that natural disasters increase rates of IPV, with excess negative impacts disproportionately affecting women, ethnic and racial minorities ([source](#)).
- In a time when we are experiencing a lack of control over much of our lives, an individual who cannot manage that may take it out on their victims.
- The stress felt in our current society, through job loss or the likelihood of a recession could lead to more strain on an unhealthy relationship. There is also the danger of substance use increasing in the home due to bars and restaurants closing, with various studies often found substance use to occur in 40-60% of IPV incidents ([source](#)).

This pandemic is uncharted in terms of families spending long, undetermined periods of time at home and/or in close quarters. What effect can this have on couples and families?

- Millions of Americans are now living in stay-at-home orders meant to stem the spread of the coronavirus by restricting people’s movement. Experts are warning that calls to self-isolate to combat the spread may have consequences that are unintended, including an increase in IPV.
[Source](#) [source](#) [source](#)
- In the Hubei province in China, after quarantine, domestic violence rates have risen sharply, with one report that a local police station saw the number of domestic violence cases triple in February, when the outbreak was in an intense period ([source](#)), and a similar pattern may take place here in the U.S.
- It has also been reported that perpetrators of IPV may use the current pandemic as a means of control. Both in using the governor’s order to stay home to keep victims isolated, but also psychologically, by using misinformation and threatening their partner that they have or will get the coronavirus and even threatening to take their children away if they do get it. [Source](#) Some perpetrators are threatening to throw their partners on the street to get sick, or to get thrown out if they are sick. Perpetrators may be using COVID-19 as leverage to further isolate, coerce or increase fear in the relationship.
- A Massachusetts attorney in family law reported in an article by WGBH Springfield stated that after three day weekends there is usually an uptick in restraining orders, and after weeks or months at home, “there’s no telling the scale of what could happen”. ([Source](#))
- **Articles**
 - 6 tips from a therapist : <https://thebolditalic.com/6-relationship-tips-from-a-therapist-to-help-deal-with-covid-19-stress-4a68c0250740?gi=4eb7f2352fdc>
 - Making Marriage work during Covid 19 : <https://www.nbcmiami.com/news/local/patience-and-compromise-keeping-relationships-alive-during-covid-19/2210312/>
 - Helping kids during Covid 19: <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/helping-children-cope-with-changes-resulting-from-covid-19>

What can victims do during this tenuous period to avoid further isolation or threats of verbal/physical abuse?

- If in a position where someone is in an isolated area with an abusive partner, it is not very easy to connect to resources like CTSAFECONNECT when in close quarters. If a garage or vehicle is available, calls can be made from there.

- If able to, connect with providers via telehealth. Many providers (including Wheeler) are minimizing in person services, but are providing telephonic/video services.
- Continue to connect with support networks as much as possible and speak to someone you trust. In this technological age there are numerous options to remotely connect with friends and family (Skype, Zoom, Facebook to name a few). The more family and friends are involved and aware of what is going on in victims' lives, the more support they can provide.
- Create distance where possible. Go to another room, take a walk, watch a tv show that may distract your partner.
- Avoid difficult conversations. It may be hard to discuss problems with the relationship when confined to small space.
- Think about strategies you have used in the past to diffuse your partner's anger. Avoid their triggers if possible.
- Calm. What strategies have you used in the past to calm down? If possible, utilize this right now. [SOURCE](#)

What strategies can families employ to minimize the effects of anger and stress on their children or others in the home?

- Though the governor's saying "Stay Safe, Stay Home" ultimately is to prevent coronavirus spread, these close quarters with partners coupled with the economic stress of possible job loss, children staying home, and the mental health impacts of isolation may all contribute to rising tensions in the home environment. If a family has experience with violence in the home, all these factors can make a potentially dangerous cocktail.
- If able to, take walks outside. Spend time at a nearby park. Take advantage of opportunities to run errands, while maintaining appropriate social distancing.
- Keep your cell phone close and charged in case you need to call for help.
- Create code words with your children to communicate if they or you need help, or if they just need space.

- Create a safety plan. connect with a local DV agency to create a safety plan to help protect the victim and children from harm. See tips on creating a safety plan to minimize risk here
 - <http://www.ctcadv.org/find-help/making-safety-plan/>
 - <https://www.loveisrespect.org/for-yourself/safety-planning/interactive-safety-plan/>
- This link also has indoor workouts, activities educational and fun for children, and so forth. There are a ton of resources here including online AA and NA meetings! There is also a section on managing your anxiety during the pandemic. <https://thevillage.org/news/the-new-normal-managing-anxiety-during-a-pandemic/>
- **A first step might be to start an anger journal.** A journal recording the instances of anger in your household over a period of one or several days can increase your clarity about the anger patterns: when it occurs, from whom, in response to what triggers, and to gain what ends.
 - If the anger is coming from you, learn to exit asap from any situation that triggers even the beginnings of angry responses. Calm down, and then return to re-address the situation in a friendly talking voice. Look to solve the problem instead of to criticize or blame anyone.
 - If the anger comes from someone else in the family, exit the situation also. Change the topic, or leave the room for a few minutes. Explain that you will be glad to discuss the situation once both of you can talk calmly. Be crystal clear that you only interact in cooperative voice tones.
 - Anger is a stop sign. Stop to recognize that the anger is warning you that there is a problem. Do not proceed in the conversation however until the coast is clear, that is, until talking cooperatively, in quiet voices, toward the goal of solving the problem will be possible
 - Videos, worksheets and articles about assisting with anger control : <https://prescriptionswithoutpills.com/how-to-control-anger/>

What resources are available, even in an environment where face-to-face human contact is limited?

CTSafeConnect.org or call **888-774-2900** (English) **844-831-9200** (Spanish)

CT sexual assault hotline **1-888-999-5545** English **1-888-568-8332** Spanish

The National Domestic Violence Hotline is available 24 hours a day in more than 200 languages at **1-800-799-SAFE** or text **LOVEIS** to **22522**

CTLawHelp.org, a project of the CT Network for Legal Aid. CTLawHelp.org has several self-help guides available to assist victims with legal issues such as:

Court fee waivers

Completing court forms

Family Violence Leave (leave from work due to family violence)

What to do when the other parent doesn't obey a court order for child custody

[Statewide Legal Assistance](#): If you need legal representation and have very low income, you may qualify for one of Connecticut's legal aid programs. To find out more, call:

Statewide Legal Services of Connecticut toll-free hotline: **(800) 453-3320***

*legal services hotline call-in hours are Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday from 9:00am – 3:00pm and Wednesdays from 1:00pm – 3:00pm; from Middletown and Hartford call 860-344-0380

State of Connecticut, Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA)

<https://www.ct.gov/ova/site/default.asp>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) Disaster Distress Hotline: **1-800-985-5990** or text TalkWithUs to **66746**.

○ **National Domestic violence Hotline**

▪ Our advocates are available 24/7 at **1-800-799-SAFE (7233)** in more than 200 languages. All calls are free and confidential.

▪ Our advocates offer the same support through our live chat services. [Click here for info about the chat](#) or click the "Chat Now" button to start a chat.

○ Safety planning tips for all different types of situations (Living with abusive partner; with children; with pets; pregnancy; prepping to leave; legal information; ETC)

<https://www.thehotline.org/help/path-to-safety/>

Where can an intimate partner violence victim turn for help in an emergency?

Call 911 if in immediate danger.

Connect with a certified domestic violence advocate at Safe Connect by visiting CTSafeConnect.org or texting/calling (888) 774-2900.

Ask the court for an order of protection, which will mandate the person who abused you to stop. The order can also remove the abuser from the home for safety reasons.

Talk to a Family Violence Victim Advocate (FVVA) for information about the law, the court, and other options you may have. FVVA's are staff members of local domestic violence programs who work at the state's criminal courts and are available to help you. Talk to a Family Violence Victim Advocate (FVVA) for information about the law, the court, and other options you may have. FVVA's are staff members of local domestic violence programs who work at the state's criminal courts and are available to help you.

the CARES ACT that has just been signed into law ensures emergency funds for survivors and programs that support them. The funding will allow domestic violence programs to quickly house and support vulnerable survivors. The CARES Act also provides \$4 billion for Emergency Solutions Grants and other housing resources, some of which will be available to help survivors, as well as allocates \$2 million for the National Domestic Violence Hotline, a crucial lifeline during the COVID-19 crisis. [source](#)

- phone and digital communication
- when an argument breaks out, it's important to identify the safest place in the house, away from objects that may be weaponized, like the kitchen and bathroom. Prepare for a situation where an abuser might hide essential supplies, like soap.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/23/opinion/covid-domestic-violence.html>

What can folks in our programs do to better manage their anger, stress, and other feelings during this fragile time?

Take the following steps to cope with a disaster:

[SOURCE](#) for info below:

Take care of your body– Try to eat healthy well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, and get plenty of sleep. Avoid alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Learn more about wellness strategies for mental health.

Connect with others– Share your concerns and how you are feeling with a friend or family member. Maintain healthy relationships and build a strong support system.

Take breaks– Make time to unwind and remind yourself that strong feelings will fade. Try taking in deep breaths. Try to do activities you usually enjoy.

Stay informed– When you feel that you are missing information, you may become more stressed or nervous. Watch, listen to, or read the news for updates from officials. Be aware that there may be rumors during a crisis, especially on social media. Always check your sources and turn to reliable sources of information like your local government authorities.

Avoid too much exposure to news– Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories. It can be upsetting to hear about the crisis and see images repeatedly. Try to do enjoyable activities and return to normal life as much as possible and check for updates between breaks.

Seek help when needed– If distress impacts activities of your daily life for several days or weeks, talk to a clergy member, counselor, or doctor, or contact the SAMHSA helpline at 1-800-985-5990.

1. Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
2. Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch, meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, and avoid alcohol and drugs icon.
3. Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
4. Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.
5. Call your healthcare provider if stress gets in the way of your daily activities for several days in a row.

For parents

- Children and teens react, in part, on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with the COVID-19 calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children. Parents can be more reassuring to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared.

Not all children and teens respond to stress in the same way. Some common changes to watch for include

- Excessive crying or irritation in younger children
- Returning to behaviors they have outgrown (for example, toileting accidents or bedwetting)
- Excessive worry or sadness
- Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits
- Irritability and “acting out” behaviors in teens
- Poor school performance or avoiding school
- Difficulty with attention and concentration
- Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past
- Unexplained headaches or body pain
- Use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

There are many things you can do to support your child

- Take time to talk with your child or teen about the COVID-19 outbreak. Answer questions and share facts about COVID-19 in a way that your child or teen can understand.
- Reassure your child or teen that they are safe. Let them know it is ok if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
- Limit your family's exposure to news coverage of the event, including social media. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
- Try to keep up with regular routines. If schools are closed, create a schedule for learning activities and relaxing or fun activities.
- Be a role model. Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members.

What resources within Wheeler are available immediately to the people we serve?

**Wheeler Navigation Center: 860.793.3500 (local)
888.793.3500 (toll-free)**

Mobile Crisis

If you, a youth in your care, or a loved one are in crisis and would like to speak with someone from a local crisis team, call 2-1-1, and press "1" to be connected to the team serving your town/city.

Community Support for Families, for families referred by Dept of Children and Families: Community Support for Families is a voluntary, family-driven program designed to assist families in strengthening natural and community support systems to maintain safe and healthy home environments. Available in Hartford/Manchester and New Britain/Meriden areas.

Wheeler offender programs, must be referred through CSSD:

Explore in Bristol, Meriden, New Britain, Middletown, and Hartford

The Explore program provides domestic violence offenders with the information and skills they need to change the behaviors and improve their current and future relationships.

Family Violence Education Program

Our Family Violence Education Program provides specialized intervention and education to individuals arrested for the first time for family violence offenses