

3 types of domestic violence

Dr. Michael Johnson developed a Typology of Domestic Violence. It includes three major categories of violence: Intimate Terrorism, Violent Resistance, and Situational Couple Violence.

As we said, broad population surveys often show that women and men both experience and perpetrate violence in roughly equal numbers. But police stats, hospital stats and shelter stats paint a very different picture where women are overwhelmingly the victims and men the perpetrators. Dr. Johnson could find nothing wrong with the research methodology and so he thought there must be another problem. He realized that the problem is we are comparing different kinds of violence. To help clarify things, Johnson developed this typology.

Situational couple violence is the most common form of domestic violence. It happens when couples have poor conflict resolution skills and an argument escalates verbal aggression then to violence. These are the instances where women are almost equally as violent as men. It includes single, uncharacteristic outbursts of violence. The most important feature of this kind of violence is that one partner is not trying to control the other and one partner is not afraid of the other. This is not healthy behaviour and it is violence. It can end up hurting one or both of the partners. But those dynamics of control and fear are not present.

The second type is **coercive control**, sometimes also referred to as intimate terrorism. This is when the abusive partner uses violence to control and dominate the partner, primarily perpetrated by men. This is not about fighting or losing one's temper but rather it is the systematic control one person exerts over another. It continues over time and if left unaddressed, it escalates. The victims of this type of violence often live in fear every day.

The third type is **violent resistance**. This occurs when the victim of coercive control or intimate terrorism fights back. It is primarily women who use violent resistance.

Johnson's research provides a way to understand conflicting data. **It is important to remember that ALL types of domestic violence include risk and cause harm.**

All types of domestic violence pose risk to victims. We are focusing on coercive control because it has the highest risks.

This chart tells an important part of the story. At the wide base you see the most common form of domestic violence that is "situational". On the left you can see the "gender proportions" arrow that indicates men & women engage in this form of violence relatively equally... As the level of aggression increases, you can see that men are more likely to use violence. The "risk" arrow to the right tells you that as the aggression increases, so too does the risk.

Violence exists on a continuum. At the top of triangle is “coercive control”. Remember that coercive control is not about responding to a situation – the purpose of this form of violence is to dominate; create fear and psychological dependence. It should also be noted that even at the base of triangle where the violence is ‘equally’ perpetrated by men and women, women experience the most serious injuries and are more likely to be hospitalized.