



***My name is Steven Hicks. I'm on the older side of things, in my forties very much old enough to be a grandfather, and in my short life I've had several lifetimes of experiences both good and bad.***

“Many times it is assumed that domestic violence is “women’s issue” but in my mind it is a human right issue. Statistically domestic violence affects mostly women but it has a huge impact on men's lives as well, be it as victim or abuser. There are number of cases where men suffer from domestic violence but don't report the abuse. Also, when men become “the abuser” it creates a dramatic negative effect on their lives too. Whether you are a perpetrator or a victim, domestic violence affects both and brings negative outcome for both.

It is important that men need to be actively involved in preventing domestic violence. Most of the time men are the abusers but they become victims too. While they abuse, or harm others, invariably they harm themselves as well, thus the real long lasting change must come from the male side. There are certainly many things women can do to protect and help themselves, but men have the responsibility to stop hurting women. Much easier to say than to act but we must do it. For a woman, I think it's important to focus on your safety and human dignity. Staying in an abusive relationship can make things worse. The situation can deteriorate until someone gets very seriously injured or dead. It is important to look for resources that can bring safety and stability. No matter what, even if you don't think you can, no matter the status you think you may lose, even if there is love for the abuser, you must think about your safety and dignity first. Nothing will change until then.

Men, especially younger men must understand that violence is not an acceptable way to process one's emotions. It is very important for younger men especially children to have good male role models. Men should know that they are allowed to seek help, especially when the problem is spousal / partner violence.

Indeed, it is more important to solve a problem than just to ignore it until the problem is hard to deal with. Men are supposed to change any behavior if that is hurting someone. We must understand that emotional abuse can cause pain too. Emotional abuse just like physical violence can be as complex, damaging and extraordinarily difficult. It takes many years and many attempts to break the cycle of abuse or to unlearn the abusive behavior.

Believe in yourself, no matter how many mistakes are made keep moving forward to change the situation for good. You'll get there if you don't give up.