



west virginia
**Coalition Against
Domestic Violence**

for a safer state of family

In the thirty years of work by members of the West Virginia Coalition Against Domestic Violence, there have been multiple unique and effective initiatives to create a safer state of family. Ending domestic violence is not just about standing against hurtful behavior in relationships, but is about what to work towards. In this, we decided to spend time noting thirty ways you can work to maintain and create a healthy relationship.

- 1) UNDERSTAND BOUNDARIES: TAKE TIME TO KNOW WHAT YOUR PARTNER'S EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL SPACE IS, AND BE SURE TO ALSO UNDERSTAND YOUR OWN.**
- 2) HONOR BOUNDARIES: ONCE YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT BOUNDARIES ARE, ACCEPT YOUR PARTNER'S RIGHT TO HAVE THEM AND ENFORCE THEM – AND KNOW YOUR OWN NEEDS.**
- 3) PRACTICE LISTENING: LISTENING IS A SKILL, AND AS WITH ANY SKILL IT NEEDS TO BE PRACTICED FREQUENTLY. AVOID INTERRUPTING, NOTICE THE TIMES YOU WANT TO INTERRUPT MOST AND STOP YOURSELF FROM IT. WORK TO HEAR AND UNDERSTAND YOUR PARTNER'S SIDE OF A DISCUSSION, AND REMEMBER TO LISTEN TO BODY LANGUAGE AS MUCH AS THE WORDS THAT ARE SAID.**
- 4) ARGUE RESPECTFULLY: IF YOU HAVE A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION, WORK TO SEE THE PART OF YOUR PARTNER'S POINT OF VIEW THAT YOU CAN AGREE WITH. WORK ON DISCUSSING WAYS TO EXPAND THAT MIDDLE GROUND AND COME UP WITH WAYS TO EITHER COME TO AN AGREEMENT OR BE CONTENT WITH DISAGREEING.**
- 5) MAINTAIN YOUR SELF-CARE NEEDS: YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR OWN BODY AND MIND – DO NOT PUT THAT BURDEN ONTO YOUR PARTNER. YOUR PARTNER CAN SUPPORT YOU, BUT IF YOU HAVE HEALTH OR MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS – ADDRESS THEM AND DISCUSS HOW YOU PLAN TO MEET THOSE NEEDS WITH YOUR PARTNER.**
- 6) KNOW YOUR NON-NEGOTIABLES: EVERYONE HAS BELIEFS THEY WILL NOT DISREGARD, RULES THEY WILL NOT VIOLATE. IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW WHAT THOSE ARE SO THAT YOU CAN HAVE SERIOUS CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR PARTNER ABOUT THEM. HAVING A NON-NEGOTIABLE COME UP DURING AN ARGUMENT OR CRITICAL DECISION MAKING TIME IS NOT HELPFUL TO YOU OR YOUR PARTNER, AND MAKING A DECISION TO BE IN A RELATIONSHIP WITH SOMEONE WITH WHOM YOU HAVE ONE OR MORE NON-NEGOTIABLE ISSUES WITH COULD CAUSE SERIOUS STRESS AND HARM IN A RELATIONSHIP.**
- 7) SHOW APPRECIATION AS OFTEN AS POSSIBLE: APPRECIATION CAN BE SHOWN THROUGH YOUR WORDS, YOUR ACTIONS, YOUR GESTURES, AND YOUR ATTITUDE. FIND WAYS TO EXPRESS MORE APPRECIATION FOR YOUR PARTNER AND KEEP THAT IN THE FRONT OF YOUR HEART AND MIND.**
- 8) LEARN TO NAVIGATE HARD TIMES WITH DIGNITY: LIFE IS FILLED WITH CHALLENGES, AND ALL RELATIONSHIPS HAVE DIFFICULTIES THAT ARISE. HOW YOU AND YOUR PARTNER WORK THROUGH THESE CHALLENGES CAN DETERMINE THE SURVIVAL OR END OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP. HOWEVER, WHETHER THOSE HARD TIMES END OR MAINTAIN A RELATIONSHIP IS LESS IMPORTANT THAN HAVING THE ABILITY TO RESPECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS. UPHOLDING YOUR OWN AND YOUR PARTNER'S CHARACTER AND PERSONHOOD WILL MAKE MUCH MORE OF A DIFFERENCE IN LIFE THAN BECOMING BITTER AND RESENTFUL OF YOUR PARTNER AND THE BAD SITUATIONS YOU FACE.**
- 9) SHARE YOUR LIFE WITH YOUR PARTNER: RELATIONSHIPS ARE JOURNEYS THAT NEED TO BE SHARED IN ORDER FOR THERE TO BE A TRUE PARTNERSHIP. IT IS IMPORTANT TO CONTINUALLY SHARE YOUR LIFE, YOUR EXPERIENCES, YOUR STRUGGLES WITH YOUR PARTNER BY TALKING, DISCUSSING AND BONDING OVER THEM. MAKING SURE YOU BOTH SHARE AND LISTEN WHEN DOING THIS IS ALSO A CRITICAL PART OF BEING HEALTHY IN A RELATIONSHIP.**



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- 10) **BE FLEXIBLE WITH CHORES: IF LIVING TOGETHER, RELATIONSHIPS WILL ALWAYS INVOLVE HOUSEHOLD CHORES. COUPLES TEND TO DIVIDE UP CHORES BY SCHEDULE OR BY SPECIFIC CHORE, AND FOR HEALTHY MAINTAINENCE OF A RELATIONSHIP IT CAN BE IMPORTANT TO SHIFT SCHEDULES OR CHORES AS NEEDED – AND FOR BOTH PARTNERS TO BE KNOWLEDGABLE ABOUT ALL THE CHORES. FOR VARIOUS REASONS, ONE OR BOTH OF YOU MIGHT SLACK OFF ON A CHORE, BUT THAT MAY MEAN IT IS TIME TO REASSESS THE SPECIFICS OF YOUR AGREEMENT AND MIX IT UP.**
- 11) **GIVE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT AT ALL TIMES: THE BIGGEST DESTROYER OF RELATIONSHIPS (AND A MAJOR CAUSE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE) IS BUILDING CONTEMPT TOWARD A PARTNER. THIS CAN BE AVOIDED BY MAINTAINING AN ATTITUDE WHERE YOU WORK TO ASSUME THE BEST OF YOUR PARTNER AT ALL TIMES. OF COURSE, YOUR PARTNER WILL FAIL ON OCCASION, BUT IF YOU HAVE A POSITIVE REGARD OF THE OTHER PERSON, EVEN WHEN THERE IS FAILURE IT CAN BE RESOLVED, DISCUSSED AND SHIFTED INTO A CONSTRUCTIVE OUTCOME.**
- 12) **DISCUSS YOUR VALUES AND MEANING IN LIFE: SOMETIMES COUPLES ASSUME THAT THEY HAVE SHARED VALUES AND MEANING IN LIFE, THEN FIND OUT LATER ON THAT THEIR ASSUMPTIONS ARE FALSE ON CRTICIAL AREAS THAT MAY EXPOSE NON-NEGOTIABLES. IT IS IMPORTANT TO HAVE ONGOING DISCUSSIONS ABOUT LIFE, ABOUT VALUES, ABOUT GOALS, ABOUT YOUR RELATIONSHIP.**
- 13) **BE OKAY WITH NOT BEING IN COMPLETE AGREEMENT OVER EVERYTHING: AS YOU BOTH ARE DIFFERENT PEOPLE, IT IS IMPORTANT TO REALIZE THAT YOU AND YOUR PARTNER WILL HAVE VARYING OPINIONS ON TOPICS. BEING ABLE TO APPRECIATE THOSE DIFFERENCES RATHER THAN RESENTING THEM WILL BE AN IMPORTANT STEP IN AVOIDING A BUILD UP OF CONTEMPT.**
- 14) **MAKE TIME TO BE WITH YOUR PARTNER: SCHEDULES ARE AN ONGOING LIFE ISSUE THAT NEVER HAVE PERFECT SOLUTIONS. HOWEVER, MAKING YOUR PARTNER A PRIORITY IS AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF HAVING A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP. WHETHER IT IS TEN MINUTES OF TALKING IN THE EVENING, A MORNING JOG TOGETHER OR A DINNER DATE – MAKING TIME WILL KEEP A RELATIONSHIP CONNECTION GOING.**
- 15) **LEARN AND TALK ABOUT YOUR PARTNER’S HOBBIES: THERE IS NO NEED TO BE INTERESTED AND INVOLVED IN ALL YOUR PARTNER’S HOBBIES OR FRIENDSHIPS – SINCE YOU ARE SEPARATE PEOPLE, SUCH DIFFERENCES ARE NATURAL AND ARE A PART OF THE SPICE OF THE RELATIONSHIP ITSELF. WHEN VALUING YOUR PARTNER, YOU WILL ALSO VALUE THOSE DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES AND SUPPORT YOUR PARTNER IN DOING THEM. THIS ALLOWS CONNECTION AND FREEDOM TO INTERACT TOGETHER.**
- 16) **ALLOW AND ENCOURAGE SPACE: THIS CAN RELATE TO DIFFERING HOBBIES AND ACTIVITIES, BUT CAN ALSO JUST BE ABOUT HEALTHY SELF-CARE. MAKING SURE THAT YOU AND YOUR PARTNER HAVE ALONE TIME IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF BEING INDEPENDENT AND APPRECIATIVE OF THE TIME YOU BOTH DO HAVE TOGETHER.**
- 17) **BE AWARE OF YOUR OWN IRRITATING AND ALIENATING BEHAVIOR: THIS CAN BE CHALLENGING, BUT IF YOU WORK TO LISTEN TO YOUR PARTNER’S BODY LANGUAGE AND COMPLAINTS ABOUT YOU, THERE IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO ACKNOWLEDGE SMALL THINGS THAT BUILD WEDGES BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR PARTNER AND STOP THEM BEFORE THEY GROW.**
- 18) **OWN UP TO YOUR MISTAKES AND HARMFUL BEHAVIOR: EVERYONE MAKES MISTAKES – THE ABILITY TO ADMIT TO THEM AND TALK ABOUT WAYS YOU WILL AVOID MAKING THE SAME MISTAKE IN THE FUTURE ARE EXCELLENT WAYS TO BUILD EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL INTIMACY WITH YOUR PARTNER.**
- 19) **KNOW WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT YOUR PARTNER APPRECIATES MOST – AND DO IT AS OFTEN AS POSSIBLE: NOT ALL KINDS OF SUPPORT ARE MADE EQUAL. EVERY PERSON HAS THOSE THINGS THAT GIVE THEM THE MOST COMFORT, THE MOST ASSISTANCE, THE MOST STRENGTH. GETTING TO KNOW WHAT KIND OF WAYS YOU CAN BEST BE THERE FOR YOUR PARTNER WILL MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP OVER TIME.**



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- 20) **UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NEGOTIATION AND COMPROMISE – AND DO BOTH WHEN YOUR PLANS ARE DIFFERENT FROM YOUR PARTNER’S: NEGOTIATION IS WHERE YOU GO WITH YOUR PREFERENCE ONE TIME, THEN SHIFT TO YOUR PARTNER’S PREFERENCE ANOTHER TIME. COMPROMISE IS WHERE YOU AND YOUR PARTNER COME TO A MIDDLE GROUND IN ORDER TO AGREE. BOTH TECHNIQUES WORK BETTER AT DIFFERENT TIMES, AND KNOWING HOW TO REACH RESPECTFUL RESOLUTION TO DISAGREEMENTS WILL OFTEN INVOLVE USE OF BOTH.**
- 21) **BE INCLUSIVE OF YOUR PARTNER: MAKING SURE YOU INCLUDE YOUR PARTNER IN YOUR LIFE HAS BEEN TALKED ABOUT IN PRIOR ITEMS, BUT HAVING AN OVERALL ATTITUDE OF WANTING YOUR PARTNER TO BE A PART OF YOUR LIFE, YOUR ADVENTURES, YOUR ACTIVITIES AND A PART OF YOU SPECIFICALLY IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF MAINTAINING CONNECTION.**
- 22) **ALWAYS WORK TOWARD BEING OPEN AND TRANSPARENT: HONESTY IS NOT ALWAYS THE BEST POLICY IN A RELATIONSHIP – IT CAN END UP BECOMING A WAY TO EMOTIONALLY AND PSYCHOLOGICALLY CAUSE PAIN IN A PARTNER. KNOWING HOW TO BE TRANSPARENT ABOUT YOUR MOTIVES, YOUR CHOICES, YOUR PROCESS AND BEING OPEN TO FEEDBACK AND DISCUSSION IS MUCH MORE OF AN IMPORTANT PART OF A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP. EVERYONE HAS TIMES THEY DO NOT TELL THE FULL TRUTH, BUT IF YOU CAN STILL MAINTAIN OPENNESS AND TRANSPARENCY, THERE IS MORE OF AN OPPORTUNITY TO BE TRUSTWORTHY AND HONORABLE ON A CONSISTENT BASIS.**
- 23) **LET TIME RUN ITS COURSE: SOMETIMES IT CAN BE TEMPTING TO TRY AND RUSH A DECISION AND MAKE SOMETHING HAPPEN AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. THIS MIGHT RESOLVE ONE ISSUE, BUT IF YOUR PARTNER FEELS PRESSURED AND RUSHED INTO SOMETHING IT MIGHT LEAD TO A RESULT THAT IS NOT SATISFYING AND COULD BE A SOURCE OF REGRET AS TIME GOES ON. KEEPING AN OPEN PERSPECTIVE ON TIME THAT IS FLUID AND UNDERSTANDING CAN BE MUCH MORE ADVANTAGEOUS TO A RELATIONSHIP, EVEN WHEN THE PRESSURE TO BE TIMELY IS STRESSFUL.**
- 24) **REMEMBER THE VALUE YOU HAVE FOR YOUR PARTNER: AT TIMES IN EVEN THE BEST RELATIONSHIPS IT CAN BE HARD TO REMEMBER YOUR PARTNER’S VALUE WHEN YOU ARE FRUSTRATED, SICK OR IN A BAD MOOD. THE KEY TO AVOIDING MAKING HURTFUL DECISIONS CAN BE TO KEEP YOUR PARTNER’S VALUE TO YOU STRONG IN YOUR MIND, WHY IT IS THAT YOUR RELATIONSHIP IS IMPORTANT, WHY YOUR PARTNER IS IMPORTANT.**
- 25) **ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR PARTNER’S HUMANITY: ALL HUMAN BEINGS HAVE A VARIETY OF WONDERFUL, NOT SO WONDERFUL AND BIOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS THAT CAN BE EASY TO FOCUS ON IN NEGATIVE OR OVERLY POSITIVE WAYS. KEEPING A BALANCE IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP BY KNOWING THAT YOU AND YOUR PARTNER ARE BOTH HUMAN BEINGS WITH THOSE WONDERFUL AND LESS THAN IDEAL TRAITS AND THAT IMPERFECTION IS AS MUCH A PART OF WHY YOU CHOSE YOUR PARTNER AS THOSE THINGS YOU LIKE THE MOST.**
- 26) **CONNECT WITH SUPPORT BEYOND YOUR PARTNER: ALL COUPLES GET SUPPORT FROM EACH OTHER, BUT IF THE ONLY SOURCE OF SUPPORT IS ONE OTHER PERSON, THERE IS POTENTIAL FOR DISAPPOINTMENT AND FRUSTRATION WHEN YOUR PARTNER CANNOT OR DOES NOT KNOW HOW TO SUPPORT YOU IN CERTAIN SITUATIONS. IT IS GOOD TO HAVE AN OUTSIDE NETWORK OF FRIENDS, FAMILY AND OTHERS WHO CAN PROVIDE SUPPORT AS A PART OF PERSONAL SELF CARE, BUT ALSO AS A WAY TO KEEP FROM PUTTING THE BURDEN OF SUPPORT SOLELY ON YOUR PARTNER’S SHOULDERS.**
- 27) **HANDLE TOUGH DECISIONS TOGETHER: NOT ALL DECISIONS IN A RELATIONSHIP NEED TO BE MADE TOGETHER, BUT A PART OF KNOWING AND HONORING YOUR PARTNER’S BOUNDARIES IS KNOWING WHEN DECISIONS NEED SHARED INPUT. THESE CAN BE DURING TOUGH SITUATIONS, BUT CAN ALSO BE IN MUNDANE EVENTS WHERE YOUR PARTNER WANTS TO BE INVOLVED.**
- 28) **BE ASSERTIVE: BEING AGGRESSIVE OR PASSIVE IN A RELATIONSHIP CAN LEAD TO A BUILD UP OF FEAR AND CONTEMPT IN VARIOUS WAYS. IT IS POSSIBLE, AND IN FACT HEALTHIEST, TO BE ASSERTIVE FOR YOUR PERSONAL NEEDS AS WELL AS ASSERTIVE IN MEETING THE NEEDS OF YOUR PARTNER.**



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- 29) UNDERSTAND RESPECT: AS A CONCEPT, RESPECT CAN OFTEN BE MISUNDERSTOOD. WHEN PEOPLE BELIEVE THEY NEED TO EARN RESPECT, OR DESERVE RESPECT, THEY ARE COMMONLY BELIEVING THAT RESPECT IS ABOUT FEAR OR OBEDIENCE. WHEN YOU CONSIDER RESPECT TO BE THE ABILITY AND DESIRE TO LISTEN AND CARE ABOUT ANOTHER PERSON'S THOUGHTS, OPINIONS AND EMOTIONS, IT OPENS UP A FOCUS ON VALUING – WHICH IS AN EXCELLENT PRACTICE TO MAINTAIN AND GROW A RELATIONSHIP.**
- 30) BALANCE INTIMACY: PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL INTIMACY ARE EQUALLY IMPORTANT IN A RELATIONSHIP. WORKING TO BALANCE INTIMACY IS AN IMPORTANT ONGOING ACTIVITY, AND KNOWING HOW TO BUILD EACH AS YOUR RELATIONSHIP EVOLVES IS WHAT HELPS THE TWO OF YOU TO BE A PART OF A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP THAT CAN TAKE YOU THROUGH LIFE.**

For more information on how you can get involved in supporting respectful and healthy relationships in your community, contact the West Virginia Coalition Against Domestic Violence at 304-965-3552, access our website at <http://www.wvcadv.org> or email us at website@wvcadv.org
