



## Using Drugs and Alcohol to Cope with Abuse

Substance abuse can increase a survivor's risk in a number of ways

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By domesticshelters.org

It's not uncommon for some survivors of domestic abuse to use alcohol, illicit drugs or prescription medications like painkillers and sedatives. In one of the more dramatic findings, a study observed that 42 percent of domestic violence survivors were using drugs or alcohol at the time they were assaulted.

Sometimes, substances are being forced upon a survivor by an abuser as a mechanism of control or a tool to create guilt, shame, powerlessness, depression, and sexual or relationship dysfunction. More commonly, says Susan Bernstein, licensed social worker and MA-based therapist who specializes in trauma, "[some] survivors use drugs or alcohol to dull or numb or block any sort of emotional upheaval that the abuse causes. It becomes their coping mechanism."

She adds, "Unfortunately, using drugs or alcohol can impair your ability to clearly assess what is going on in your relationship. When you stop drinking or using drugs, you may recognize that you are covered in bruises or experiencing psychological abuse."

Indeed, substance abuse can increase a survivor's risk in a number of ways, such as:

- Preventing a survivor from accurately assessing the level of danger posed by the abuser. Or, a survivor may feel a sense of increased power and erroneously believe in their ability to defend themselves against physical assaults, or their power to change the batterer.
- Impairing judgment and thought processes so that a survivor may have difficulty safety planning adequately, or it may become more difficult to leave an abusive partner.
- Increasing reluctance to contact police in violent situations for fear of their own arrest or referral to the Department of Children and Family Services.
- Making healing that much more difficult as a survivor works to resolve two issues - domestic violence and substance abuse - that can require a multi-disciplinary approach to recovery, and sometimes different service providers. According to DomesticShelters.org data, 31% of domestic violence programs offer substance abuse counseling.

### Abused and Substance Abusing, Now What?

So your partner is abusing you. You're doing your best to manage and substance abuse happens to be part of your life. Quitting can be especially hard, or may not even be a realistic option. Sobriety may threaten your relationship: you may feel more anxious because you don't know where to go, how to get help or where to get money. Or you may just find that the substances reduce threats or your anxiety.

"The hardest thing is to help these survivors release themselves of the shame," Bernstein says. Many survivors feel shame from the domestic violence, and using drugs or alcohol can add a layer of shame. "They don't want to be seen as addicts," Bernstein says.

Importantly, she points out that domestic violence survivors are never to blame for their alcohol or drug use. But understanding how drugs and alcohol affect your relationship can be key to staying safe.

*Cont'd on page 2*

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“People will say, ‘Oh, I did this to myself.’ I tell them, ‘No, you didn’t. But now that you have insight, you can keep your outlook clearer, keep yourself safer and keep danger lower by unveiling what’s happening,” Bernstein says.

For example, with the insight that can come with sobriety, domestic violence survivors who once used alcohol or drugs may be able to more clearly understand the level of abuse they are facing. They may be better able to develop and follow a plan for keeping themselves safe. They can gain the confidence to call the police without fear that they might be arrested or referred to child protection agencies.

### Where Can You Get Help?

**Shelters.** “When dealing with domestic violence, social workers or advocates in most agencies will first let the person start talking, without judgment and in a safe space,” Bernstein says. Once you realize you’re safe and not being judged, you can start to address the substance abuse.

**Support groups.** Bernstein points out that many women find support in Alcoholics Anonymous, since women who are struggling with sobriety are also often coming from violent or traumatic relationships.

**Therapy.** For some people therapy is the key, since it provides a safe, confidential place to talk. You can call your insurance company and ask for a referral to someone who specializes in substance abuse counseling. The National Association of Social Workers also offers a list of resources.

Whatever route you take, it’s important to get help. “You feel the pain and you feel the withdrawal from drugs and alcohol more if you don’t have that support,” Bernstein says.

### OUR MISSION:

The purpose of Hyde County Hotline, Inc. is to work to eliminate domestic abuse and sexual victimization and provide safe shelter in Hyde County, North Carolina through the collaborative efforts of a compassionate community.

We promote dignity, respect and safety at home resulting in safer communities.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOMICIDES IN NC

from January 1 – February 29, 2016

**7 Murders**

[www.nccadv.org](http://www.nccadv.org)

Thank you to the Family Violence Prevention Services Program, US DHHS, and NC Council for Women for financial support.



### How you can help...

\*\*Donate to our Thrift Stores – call us for pick-up of large items 252-925-2502 (all donations are tax deductible)

\*\*Ask us about presentations \*\*Ask how we can help you

\*\* Tell others about us

\*\*Monetary donations are accepted: PO Box 335, Engelhard, NC 27824



We're on the Web!  
Visit us at:  
[www.hydecounthotline.org](http://www.hydecounthotline.org)

## Hyde County Hotline, Inc.

Crisis Intervention, Advocacy and Prevention  
Domestic Abuse and Sexual Victimization

24 Hour Crisis Line 252-925-2500

**Date:** April 16, 2016

**Location:** Hwy 94 and N.  
Lake Rd, Fairfield, NC

**Registration:** 8:00 am 4/16/16  
or by mail (register by 3/15/16 to  
ensure tshirt in your size)

\$25 – Ages 15 and up

\$15 – Ages 10-14

\$8 – Ages 9 and under

**Race:** 9:00 am

*Registration forms available  
online at*

*[www.hydecountyhotline.org](http://www.hydecountyhotline.org),  
Hyde Supply Thrift Store or by  
calling 252-925-2502*

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Race Across the Lake 5K/10K

### YOUR SUPPORT WILL:

Provide assistance to victims of  
domestic abuse and sexual  
victimization in Hyde County, NC.

## SPONSOR TODAY!

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1 free entry

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### Silver Level

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2 free entries

Recognition on Facebook  
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website

### Gold Level

(\$200 +)

2 free entries

Recognition on Facebook  
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website  
Signage provided by  
sponsor displayed during  
the event

For more information on sponsorship, please contact Cynthia Gibbs at 252-925-2502.

**THRIFT  
SHOP**

## Hyde Supply



Open Thursday – Saturday 10:00 – 4:00

Hyde Supply Thrift Store offers gently used, quality clothing, housewares, furniture, books, accessories and many other items to the public at low prices.

Abuse victims and their children often leave with literally only the clothes on their backs. The thrift stores are able to help an abused family quickly regain one of the basic needs of life that we so often take for granted and begin to restore some of the dignity stripped away by abuse.

Volunteers are vital to the organization's overall functioning and success.

Hyde County Hotline is a private, non-profit organization in Hyde County dedicated to promoting dignity, respect and safety at home resulting in safer communities.

Time, Money, and Merchandise are all needed and greatly appreciated. Thank you for your support!

All proceeds from the Hyde Supply Thrift Store go to support the Hyde County Hotline mission. All donations are tax-deductible and tax donation forms will be mailed to you from Hyde County Hotline upon request.

The question is NOT

"Why didn't the victim leave?"

The better question is

"Why does the abuser  
choose to abuse?"

@NNEDV



## Domestic Violence Counts: Census 2015 Report

For the tenth consecutive year, on September 16, 2015, NNEDV conducted a one-day unduplicated count of adults and children seeking domestic violence service in the United States. This annual census documents the number of individuals who sought services in a single 24-hour period, as well as the types of services requested, the number of service requests that went unmet due to a lack of resources, and the issues and barriers that domestic violence programs face as they strive to provide services to victims of domestic violence. This report is instrumental in raising awareness about domestic violence and the incredible work that local domestic violence programs do every day.

The full *2015 National Domestic Violence Counts Report* is available below, along with a one-page national summary (in both English and Spanish) and individual state and territory summaries.

<http://nnedv.org/projects/census/4655-domestic-violence-counts-census-2015-report.html>



Please join us for our upcoming webinars from the National Health Resource Center on Domestic Violence.

Webinar Title: Domestic Violence, Mental Health, and Substance Use Coercion

Date: March 7th, 2016, 5-6:30pm EST, 4-5:30pm CST, 3-4:30pm MST, 2-3:30 pm PST

Speakers: Dr. Carole Warshaw (National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma, and Mental Health)

There is now a large body of research demonstrating that abuse and violence are associated with a wide range of health and mental health conditions. Some are the direct sequelae of physical and sexual violence; others are related to the traumatic/ psychophysiological effects of ongoing abuse. Read more here.

To register, please visit:

<https://futureswithoutviolence.adobeconnect.com/e8hlfne2s1g/event/registration.html>

For questions, please contact: Anisa Ali at [aali@futureswithoutviolence.org](mailto:aali@futureswithoutviolence.org)

