

## Domestic Violence Awareness Month

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Educate your congregation, friends, family by sharing this resource.

### About General Board of Church and Society



The General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) is the social justice agency of The United Methodist Church. GBCS has headquarters on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., and at the Church Center for the United Nations in New York City.

The message of salvation brought by Jesus Christ binds us together as a people and sends us forth to bring healing in the midst of strife, justice in the midst of brokenness, and love in the midst of hate.

Our purpose is to relate the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the church and society to bring human life, resources and world relationships into conformity with the will of God.

### Educate. Empower. Engage.

Part of the Christian faith is to live out social holiness. For more information on Domestic Violence or other social justice concerns, visit [www.umc-gbcs.org](http://www.umc-gbcs.org) or contact:

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### Sources & Credits

- \* Images courtesy of Virginia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church
- \* Power Wheel courtesy of Domestic Abuse Intervention Project [www.duluth-model.org](http://www.duluth-model.org)

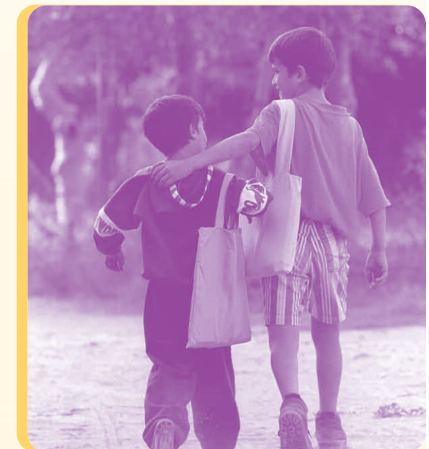
# Domestic Violence

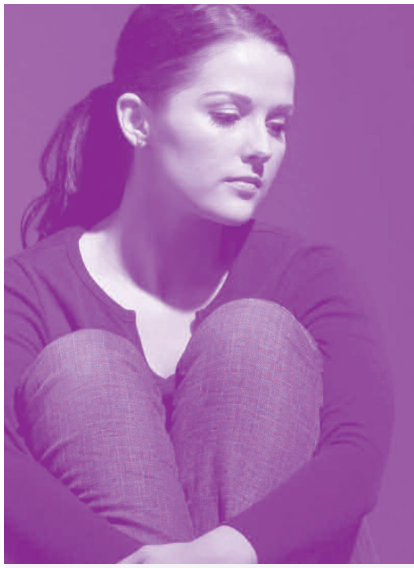
## Adolescent Bullying



*Do to others as you would  
have them do to you.*

*Luke 6:31*





**I used to have a best friend** named Katie. We shared everything, even our passwords. One day I got online and noticed a bunch of e-mails from someone whose name I didn't recognize. The subject was "you look hot." It was from a guy at school who is two grades above me. He said he wanted to do stuff to me that I am even embarrassed to say to myself.

These girls at school, "the beautiful people" as I call them, convinced Katie to give them my password. She thought it would make them like her. I think she was scared, too. They do mean things to everyone.

Anyway, they got into my e-mail and sent messages that looked like they were from me to all the senior guys. One was a picture of me with no clothes on, which I guess they got from an adult website and "Photoshopped" my class picture headshot on it. Then they wrote things like "I will do anything to make your fantasies come true," and signed my name. Because it came from my account every one thought I really sent it.

Now I can't go anywhere in school without guys looking at me funny, and people whispering and pointing at me when they think I can't see. I don't have any friends. I don't even talk to Katie any more. I thought it was safe to share my password with my best friend. Now I know you can't.

I feel so alone. I wish I could move somewhere else and start over. I wish I could disappear.

Joanna (not her real name)

## Survival of the Meanest

Adolescent bullying is generally understood as a blatant, continuing assertion of power by the strong against the weak, carried out in words or deeds usually by a group of students against an individual.

Bullying has been treated until recently as a harmless "rite of passage" and "toughening up" exercise for boys. In the 1970s, the world began to recognize the serious, harmful nature of bullying. School shootings in the United States and increasing concern about teenage violence have intensified concern further in recent years.

Yet, as evidence emerges about bullying, such as that experienced by Joanna, the scope and damage of girls bullying girls remains mostly far beyond public scrutiny.

Although rates of bullying vary widely from country to country, it is widespread. When young people, aged 11, 13 and 15 across 25 countries in Europe and North America were asked about their experiences with bullying and victimization within the preceding two months, the results showed that up to:

- 73% reported bullying another child, and
- 36% were victims of bullying behaviors.



Until recently, adolescent bullying has been researched primarily in industrialized countries, such as Sweden, Japan, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States. Studies have proliferated there. Awareness of the problem is beginning to surface in the Philippines, Thailand and other countries of East Asia and the Pacific region.

*"Now I can't go anywhere in school without guys looking at me funny, and people whispering and pointing at me when they think I can't see."*



# Domestic Violence

## Adolescent Bullying

### The Power Wheel™

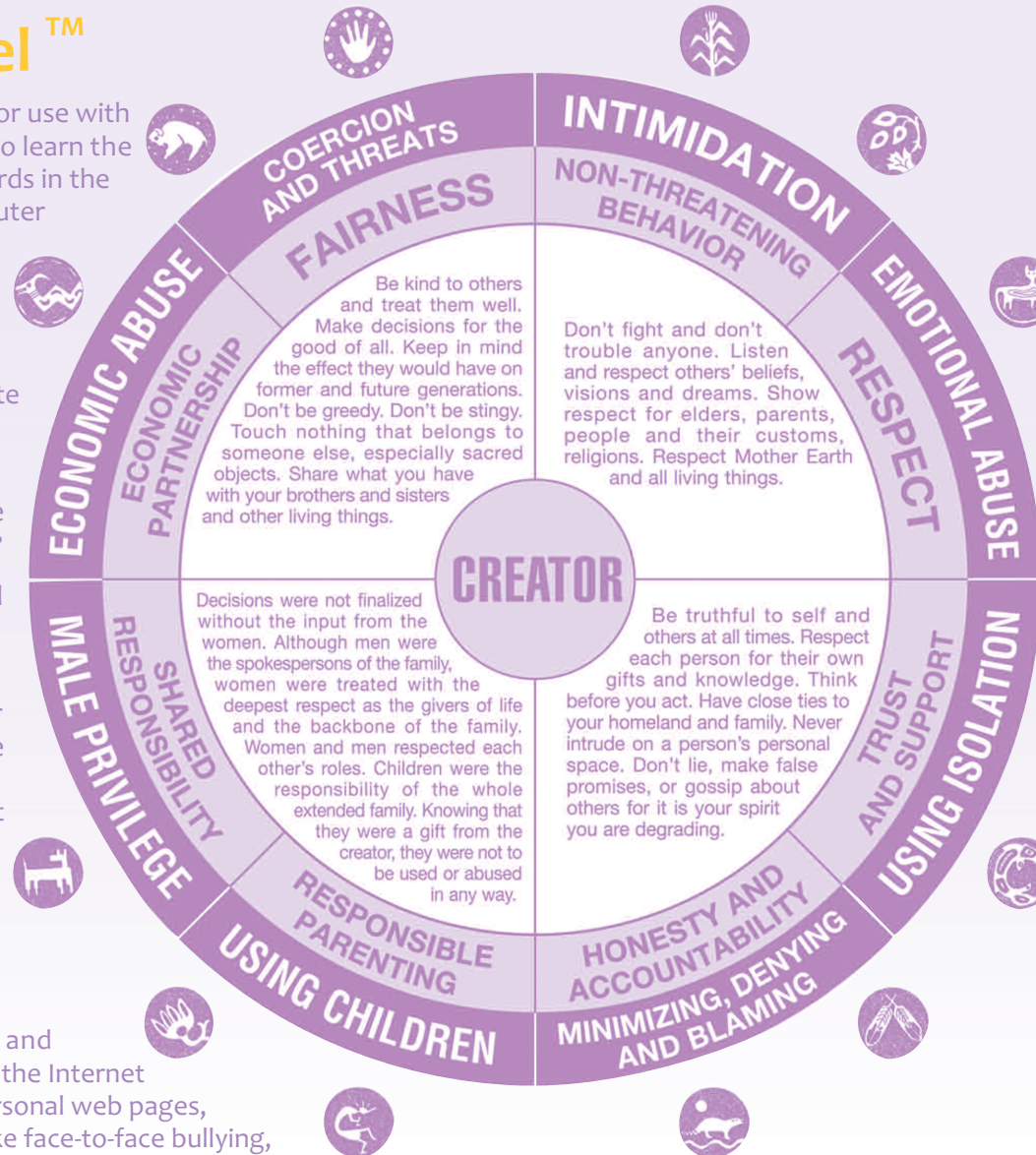
The power wheel is a teaching tool for use with individuals or small groups wanting to learn the dynamics related to abuse. The words in the inner (positive behaviors) ring and outer (unhealthy behaviors) ring can be focal points for discussions on such questions as:

- What societal/cultural messages about men and women contribute to unhealthy behaviors related to abuse?
- How can the church be a positive force in the prevention of abuse?
- How has the church perpetuated or been silent about domestic violence?

“Creator” refers to God, or a “higher power,” which calls each of us to live our lives with respect for ourselves and others. Physical abuse can result from these unhealthy behaviors sometimes leading to the death of a victim.

### Virtual Attack, Real Harm

Bullying has recently spread rapidly and exponentially from the schoolyard to the Internet through e-mails, online chats, and personal web pages, such as Facebook and MySpace. Unlike face-to-face bullying,



### Bullycide

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” Unfortunately, there is little truth in this familiar children’s saying. Verbal cruelty hurts as much as beating or kicking. In particular, sexual taunts, rumors, innuendos, posting of compromising pictures, labeling boys as “fags” and girls as lesbians or sluts directly assault an adolescent’s developing self and sexuality.

Because wounds are invisible, they are often ignored or dismissed by adults, including teachers, parents, doctors and the victim’s peers. But they often wind up causing harm that may last for years or a lifetime.

**As bullying damages an adolescent’s self esteem, grades may begin to drop. S/He may isolate himself or herself and refuse to go to school. Depression, substance abuse and threats of suicide are not uncommon results of bullying. Many teenage suicides have been linked to bullying, and the term “bullycide” has entered the language.**

as Joanna’s story attests, doctored images and made-up messages can travel worldwide instantly, providing 24-7 exposure of the victim. They can turn millions of other young people into “innocent” bystanders and witnesses without culpability.

Bullying not only hurts the victim, it harms the bullies, those who witness bullying and fail to intervene, and all of society. Bullying and its consequences are known to follow children and adolescents into adulthood with future date rape, sexual harassment and other forms of violence or criminal behavior.

Adolescence is a vulnerable stage of development. Forming social networks, peer pressure and “fitting in” become new, sometimes absolute authorities for behavior. Independence is a worthy goal, but not at the expense of other human beings’ well-being and self-esteem. These are especially vulnerable in adolescents.

Families, schools and churches are responsible for setting limits, speaking up and working together to stop bullying. They must intentionally change any climate that nurtures bullying into one that nurtures respect, compassion and humanity.

## What the Church Says

The United Methodist Church affirms the sacredness of all persons and their right to safety, nurture and care. It names domestic violence and

sexual abuse as sins and pledges to work for their eradication. The church commits itself to listen to the stories of battered spouses, rape victims, abused children, adult survivors of child sexual abuse, and all others who are violated and victimized.

The church further commits itself to provide leadership in responding with justice and compassion to the presence of domestic violence and sexual abuse among its membership and within the community at large.

*2008 Book of Resolutions, “Violence Against Women and Children”*

### The United Methodist Social Principles

We recognize that family violence and abuse in all its forms — verbal, psychological, physical, sexual — is detrimental to the covenant of the human community. We encourage the church to provide a safe environment, counsel and support for the victim. While we deplore the action of the abuser, we affirm that person to be in need of God's redeeming love.

¶ 161.H (2008 Book of Discipline)

## Ways You Can Take Action

### The Church is a Voice for Action

The church must speak out against abuse and help survivors. When it does, the church is a clear voice for action.

Steps to take can include:

- Ensure your congregation is welcoming to teens and offers a safe place for teens to gather.
- Post and widely distribute materials including contacts for hotlines and other local and national resources.
- Incorporate the topic of adolescent bullying into sermons, making clear the church’s position. Emphasize the scope and harm not only to individuals and families, but society. Use language of responsibility and healing rather than blame and punishment. Encourage family members, neighbors and friends who suspect or know of abuse to come forward.
- Provide education and training for clergy and laity on abuse prevention, detection and intervention.
- Provide counseling for survivors, their families and people at risk.
- In the United States, advocate for the ratification of the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.
- Develop and implement clear policies to deal with sexual abuse by pastors and others who provide church leadership.
- Create and nurture peer groups for adolescents to raise awareness of the stresses in their own families and issues that are risk factors for abuse. Raise awareness about internet bullying and peer pressure.
- Organize forums, inviting outside speakers, including survivors, abusers and representatives of local and national organizations to facilitate discussions and encourage congregants to come forth about their own risk status.
- Encourage congregant volunteers to organize and run support groups and forums.