

## **WHY DON'T THEY LEAVE?** **BARRIERS TO ESCAPING A VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP**

The National Council Against Domestic Violence (2022) conducted a review of research and identified reasons why victims do not leave their abusive relationship. Some of the reasons include:

1. Fear that the abuser's actions will become more violent if the victim tries to leave;
2. Fear that the offender will take the children and/or harm them;
3. Fear of losing custody of the children;
4. Lack of means to support self and children; many survivors have few financial resources – their abusers may destroy the survivors' credit history, maintain control of household income and/or cause the survivors' job termination by harassing them at work;
5. Lack of places to go; shelters have limited spaces and have restrictions that can be problematic; hotels are costly; wearing out welcome with family and friends;
6. Fear of being homeless;
7. Isolation – abuser may physically lock survivor in room, take away cell phone;
8. No belief that law enforcement will take them seriously; no belief that police would do or could do anything to help;
9. Knowledge of the difficulties of single parenting;
10. Lack of knowledge/access to safety and support;
11. Unsupportive friends and family; pressure from them to stay together limited support network;
12. Religious or cultural beliefs and practices (that may keep the victim trapped in the relationship);
13. Shame – many survivors feel ashamed that someone is hurting them; they may believe that the abuse is their fault or that they deserve such treatment; guilt over the failure of the relationship; low self-esteem;
14. Love of the relationship, belief that abuse will end; abuser is someone with whom they fell in love; attachment to the partner; belief that they are the only ones who can help the abuser;
15. The abuser is a respected community leader.

[*Why Do Victims Stay?*, National Council Against Domestic Violence's webpage. 2022;*Why Do Victims Stay?*, Pathways to Safety's webpage; *Why Do Abuse Victims Stay with Their Abusers?*, Good Therapy's webpage; Morgan, R.E. and Oudekirk, B.A., *Criminal Victimization, National Crime Victimization Survey* (Bureau of Justice Statistics) 2018.]

Recommended article: *Fifty Obstacles to Leaving, a.k.a., Why Abuse Victims Stay*, [The Colorado Lawyer](#), October 1999/Vol.28, No.10.

Recommended article: *Why Victims of Domestic Abuse Don't Leave – Four Experts Explain*, [The Conversation](#). February 2022.