



Risk and Protective Factors Tip Sheet

Risk Factors: Traits or characteristics that increase your chances of susceptibility of a negative health-related condition (violence). Risk factors do not necessarily cause the negative health-related condition, and not everyone who has a risk factor will develop the condition. Risk factors may occur in the individual or be in place in their environment, such as their family, school, community or society. Risk factors are used to help focus prevention efforts. The following are some known risk factors that increase the likelihood of **perpetrating** Intimate Partner Violence. Risk Factors for victimization can be viewed at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/ipvfacts.htm>

Risk Factors for Perpetration of Intimate Partner Violence

Individual Factors

- Low self-esteem
- Low income
- Low academic achievement
- Involvement in aggressive or delinquent behavior as a youth
- Heavy alcohol and drug use
- Depression
- Anger and hostility
- Personality disorders
- Prior history of being physically abusive
- Having few friends and being isolated from other people
- Unemployment
- Economic stress
- Emotional dependence and insecurity
- Belief in strict gender roles (e.g., male dominance and aggression in relationships)
- Desire for power and control in relationships
- Being a victim of physical or psychological abuse (consistently one of the strongest predictors of perpetration)

Relationship Factors

- Marital conflict—fights, tension, and other struggles
- Marital instability—divorces and separations
- Dominance and control of the relationship by the male
- Economic stress
- Unhealthy family relationships and interactions

Community Factors

- Poverty and associated factors (e.g., overcrowding)
- Low social capital—lack of institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a community’s social interactions
- Weak community sanctions against IPV (e.g., unwillingness of neighbors to intervene in situations where they witness violence)

Societal Factors

- Traditional gender norms (e.g., women should stay at home and not enter workforce, should be submissive)

Sources:

Intimate Partner Violence Fact Sheet at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/ipvfacts.htm>

Black DA, Schumacher JA, Smith AM, Heyman RE. Partner, child abuse risk factor literature review: National Network on Family Resiliency, National Network for Health; 1999. [cited 2005 September 15]. Available from: URL: www.nnh.org/risk.

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Kantor GK, Jasinski JL. Dynamics and risk factors in partner violence. In: Jasinski JL, Williams LM, editors. Partner violence: a comprehensive review of 20 years of research. Thousand Oaks (CA): Sage; 1998. p. 1-43.

Tjaden P, Thoennes N. Extent, nature, and consequences of intimate partner violence: findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey. Washington (DC): Department of Justice (US); 2000a. Publication No. NCJ 181867. [cited 2005 September 15]. Available from: URL: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/pubs-sum/181867.htm.

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(Black et al. 1999; Heise and Garcia-Moreno 2002; Kantor and Jasinski 1998; Stith et al. 2004; Tjaden and Thoennes 2000a)

Protective Factors: Traits or characteristics that may either reduce the risk of a health threat (violence) or provide individuals with alternative responses. They may occur in the individual or be in place in their environment, such as their family, school, community or society. When considering youth development, protective factors are similar to assets, which are positive factors that promote healthy development and are correlated with nonviolence. Although less is known about protective factors, generally they are the absence or suppression of risk factors. Protective factors are used to focus health promotion efforts. Below is a partial list of protective factors and assets associated with decreased violence:

Protective Factors Implicated for Non-violence

Individual Protective Factors

- Even, resilient temperament
- Capacity for empathy and respect for others
- Ability to evoke positive responses in others
- Tendency to accept and takes personal responsibility
- Anger management and conflict resolution skills
- Media literacy

Family Protective Factors

- Healthy parent-child bonding
- Families that set clear standards for behavior
- Family life that provides high levels of love and support
- Family standards of non-violence

Community Protective Factors

- Schools that teach healthy beliefs
- Community sponsored social, cultural and religious activities
- Connectedness with friends and adults in communities
- Neighbors that participate in monitoring young people's behavior
- Strong sanctions against domestic violence
- Access to community support and services

Societal Protective Factors

- Ethical and responsible media portrayal of violence against women
- Intolerance for all forms of oppression
- Awareness of intimate partner and teen dating violence as a public health, criminal justice and human rights issue

Sources:

Schewe, Paul. Best Practices in Teen Dating Violence Prevention Efforts

Teen Dating Violence: Are You Aware? at <http://ohioline.osu.edu/flm01/pdf/FS07.pdf>

Intimate Partner Violence Fact Sheet at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/ipvfacts.htm>

Blum RW, Ireland M. Reducing risk, increasing protective factors: findings from the Caribbean Youth Health Survey. *Journal of Adolescent Health* 2004;35(6):493–500.

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