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Educational Page



No Visible Bruises: Traumatic Brain Injury Caused by Domestic Violence

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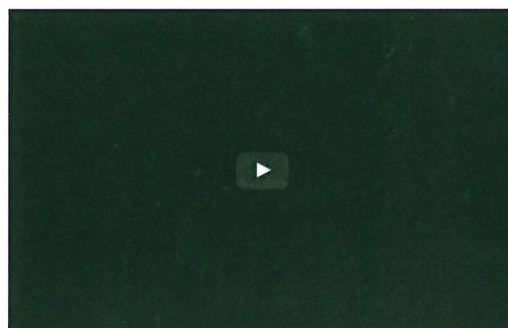


When you think of domestic violence, the image of blackened eyes and broken bones is what comes to mind. Domestic violence can result in broken bones, black eyes, bruises and other horrible marks left from an abuser but sometimes there is no mark left. Sometimes abusers find ways to hide the violence, to hide the abuse from friends and family. This aspect of violence is relatively scary because most people believe that abuse is always easy to see, and that it is easily picked out in public. However, victims who have abusers that want the abuse to remain private will find alternative ways, sometimes abusing their victim where clothing covers the area or by repetitively hitting their victim in the back of the head.

Facts about Traumatic Brain Injury:

- Strangulation or blows to the head, which are common causes of TBI, may occur in 50-90% of domestic violence assaults against women.
- Individuals who have disabilities, such as those that can result after a TBI, are 4-10 times more likely to suffer abuse or violence.
- The more times an individual has sustained injury to the head, the more severe and frequent their symptoms and injuries will be.

THE SCARS YOU
CAN'T SEE ARE THE
HARDEST TO HEAL



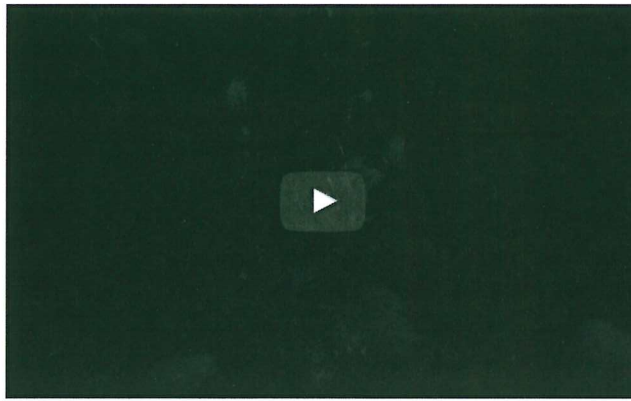
Traumatic brain injury happens to football players, victims of car accidents and domestic violence victims. People who have been abused in ways that would injure their head and brain are more likely to suffer from traumatic brain injury. The damage is not always apparent because there may not be any form of a bruise or any outward damage, where on the inside the brain is suffering. Victims that go to the doctor because of an "accident" that had occurred in the home have a hard time explaining what really happened especially if their offender is in the room with them. Traumatic brain injury occurs when an external force causes brain dysfunction.

Common Forms of Physical Abuse that can cause TBI:

- Hitting in the head with a blunt object such as, a hand or arm
 - Smashing of the head into a wall or hard object
 - Pushing down the stairs
 - Shooting or stabbing in the head
 - Violent shaking of the body
 - Strangulation or choking
 - Drowning

If someone calls our hotline or comes in to talk who has disclosed domestic violence, here at The Women's Center, we utilize the HELPPS tool which screens victims for TBI. The HELPPS tool was adapted from the International Center for the Disabled in 1992. This tool uses the acronym HELPPS, H=hit, E=emergency room, L=lose consciousness, P=problems, P=pregnant, and S=symptoms. These questions assess the victims condition and if they may have a traumatic brain injury.

In the video below, Allison discusses how her abuser through her down a flight of stairs and when she went to the hospital, her husband played his role of the perfect significant other. This made it incredibly difficult for her to talk about what happened and the worst part was that; no-one had asked her, it was assumed that she had suffered from an accident in the home.



According to The Centers for Disease Control, roughly 11% of TBI deaths, hospitalizations and emergency room visits are related to assaults this equates to around 156,000 visits every year. With that being said, domestic violence is rarely an isolated incident and if a victim does have a brain injury, the symptoms from the injury can make the violence more severe. Some of these symptoms consist of the following, difficulty completing activities, difficulty caring for children, difficulty caring for spouse, and behavioral changes which include violence or aggressive tendencies. Individuals that suffer from traumatic brain injury may become more dependent on their significant others who may be their abuser. Because of this, victims may be more reluctant to leave their abuser because they will feel as though they are too dependent on them to leave. Traumatic brain injury does occur with victims of domestic violence and it's very important to know that signs and symptoms.



If you have or you know someone who has experienced a traumatic brain injury because of on-going or past domestic abuse, please let them know of the following options:

- Go to a safe place, such as a friend or neighbor's house
 - Call the police
 - Call The Women's Center for information and support
- Go to the hospital. If you do not feel comfortable driving yourself because of your injury, call 911 or a friend or family member for help

Resources:

- <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-unseen-victims-of-traumatic-brain-injury-from-domestic-violence> (<http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-unseen-victims-of-traumatic-brain-injury-from-domestic-violence>)
- <http://www.biausa.org/tbims-abstracts/domestic-violence-related-mild-traumatic-brain-injuries-in-women> (<http://www.biausa.org/tbims-abstracts/domestic-violence-related-mild-traumatic-brain-injuries-in-women>)
- <http://www.foxnews.com/health/2016/08/23/fists-not-football-brain-injuries-seen-in-domestic-assaults.html>