

Family Violence

Rescuers must learn to care for themselves

By JACIE B. PALMER
Herald Special

"Rescuer" is a good term to describe some women who continue to live with or exist within a violent relationship. A rescuer wants to see those around her reach their potential and she believes that with her superior help, care and concern an abusive male will change his behavior. Women by their very nature are nurturing and giving and this is further reinforced by stereotypical societal values.

A rescuer may see herself as lovingly caring for her husband and family. They are her first priority and she takes upon herself responsibility for their well-being. When they are sad, disappointed or angry she takes the blame - somehow believing she has done or said something to bring out these emotions. Women have been conditioned to be responsible, pleasers, givers, adapters who are submissive to those around them. The rescuer will need to have a very serious crisis to realize that she is responsible for no-one's happiness but her own.

The rescuer may be taking such good care of everyone else that she has forgotten her own needs. She may be economically deprived by her abusive husband while the rest of the family is cared for at a much higher standard of living. In an abusive relationship it becomes easy for a male to blame his spouse for his disappointments and unhap-

piness. He constantly reinforces the idea that she is somehow to blame for the abuse, that she is not trying hard enough to understand or to meet his needs.

A rescuer wants to take the misery away. She wants to uplift those around her. She is a prime candidate to listen to and to believe his "pity" party which consists of complaining about every little incident which disrupts his day. Each sad tale reaches into the depth of her heart and places instinctively a hunger to nurture, to care for and to rescue this individual. She may recognize he's been abused in the past and see clearly his lack of self-esteem that's masked in a gruff exterior. She has forgotten herself! She thinks only of him and his needs. His life appears so sad and full of uncaring individuals. He is unloved and has not fulfilled his business and personal dreams.

What she doesn't realize is that this man doesn't want to or need to change. He has been living like this successfully for most of his life. Living off rescuers works! He saves money by using his victims, experiences love and caring at its best and never has to let down his wall of ice and continues to take. He never has to deal with his lack of trust and his inability to deal with commitments. When the going gets tough he just moves on and drifts into another relationship and leans on yet another woman.

For rescuers the psychological

abuse is deadly - even without the physical violence. The abuser starts subtly until he sees the reception and then becomes stronger using comments such as "It's your fault," "If only you'd ...", "You didn't think of ...", "Why didn't you know ...?" That gets to the rescuer every time! He has her totally hooked on him!

Rescuers feed on the giving. They just love to see those around them happy and cared for and they love to take the credit for the positive environment that's been created. Rescuers need to recognize that they must gain their happiness in life from their own lives and not by feeding off those around them. Rescuers often feel a little unappreciated because others don't recognize their selfless contribution. Their behavior, while positive, is deviant from the norm. Everyone should be helpful to those around them but not at the expense of personal fulfillment.

Rescuers are wrong. Instead of helping their abusers they are hurting them by further sublimating the problem. An abuser needs to recognize his nature. Rescuers need to realize they are not responsible for others' unhappiness and angry natures.

Feel free to contact Jacie by directing letters to her attention at the Herald. All correspondence will remain confidential. Should you wish to speak to Jacie, call the Distress Centre at 877-2111 and your call will be returned. If

you are a woman or child in crisis or an abusive male wanting help,

call the Distress Centre or dial 911.

United Way

Distress Centre on call

By LORRAINE WILLSON
Herald Special

Faced with a stressful situation? One that perhaps you, alone, can't resolve? Where can you turn for help?

The answer may be a phone call away to the North Distress Centre.

The Centre, one of 19 member agencies of the Halton Hills United Way, was created in 1973 when a group of concerned citizens recognized the need for an anonymous crisis intervention telephone service. During its 18-year history, countless lonely, distressed, abused and troubled individuals have received confidential and non-judgmental help when they most need it.

Whether it's emotional support in a time of stress, suicide prevention, or simply an information service on the agencies and other available services in this area, the Distress Centre is there - 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Centre also operates as an after-hours contact number for other services such as the Cancer Society and drug abuse.

As Judith Rasanen, director of the Centre explains, "We have 50 trained volunteers whose role is not to offer advice or counselling

but to lend a sympathetic and caring ear. And when needed, they can also provide referral information on other agencies or services."

The Centre's daily phone calls, ranging from as few as five to more than 20 a day, are a reliable barometer that measures the mental health and stability of the Halton Hills community. A worrisome increase in both the total number of calls and the increasingly desperate nature can be attributed to the economic hardships many residents are facing.

"We find that more than half the number of the phone calls are related to family problems. Moreover, a large number centre around employment concerns. With many residents out of work, financial difficulties are at the heart of many of today's crises," notes Rasanen.

The Distress Centre receives about 50 to 60 percent of its financial support from the United Way of Halton Hills. You can make the difference this year. Please give generously to the United Way and help someone in need.

Lorraine Willson is a Georgetown-based freelance writer and public relations consultant.



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