

When Staying at Home Isn't Safe: New Surge of Domestic Violence and How to Stop It

For thousands of women and children across America, the stay-in-place decrees have become a stay-in-hell decree, as domestic violence is surging. Economic distress and daily confinement are sending men over a dark precipice of anger, fear, anxiety, depression and rage.

From coast to coast, cities, towns and rural areas are all experiencing the spike. In Fort Worth, for the first time in more than 40 years, officials at the largest women's shelters have stated they cannot accept new domestic violence victims because they are full. Some women's trauma hotlines report increasing almost 300% in their volume of incoming calls.

And this is not just an American problem: Countries all over are experiencing the same. Rage has gone viral. Domestic violence is now the largest pandemic on the planet. The result is catastrophic and deadly.

What's the solution? Start by implementing a global "emotional health triage for men."

Triage has multiple stages of pre-planned response. Triage is not the final solution, but it is the right direction toward helping those affected get back to a healthy place.

Even before the coronavirus, many men sensed the culture had destroyed their context, shifting definitions diminished their identity and distractions destroyed their dreams. They are, in the depth of their soul, embarrassed about who they haven't become. Failure becomes shame. Shame and disappointment breed discontent, and discontent devolves to rage. And then, a child gets hit, a woman killed—every 15 seconds a woman or child is

abused by a man.

The pandemic has made already difficult emotional issues for men larger by further stripping away the things that most men consider to be their identity: their ability to fight and win battles, to be problem-solvers and to be courageous protectors. Rather than go out and fight, men are told to stay home and do nothing. Noted author Stephen Mansfield said on the *Brave Men* podcast: "When men feel they are not needed, they lose their sense of identity. There's no battle to fight—and no victory to win."

There is hope. Men need to know, now more than ever before, what their true identity is. Men need a moral compass and a sense of destiny and purpose. Based on numerous studies and four decades of work in this field, here are six triage-inspired steps to help men come back to wholeness and centered emotional health:

1. Create a fixed starting point to begin each day. As randomness creates hopelessness, when you start your day with healthy input, your input determines your thinking—and your thinking is perfectly designed to achieve the results you are living in right now. If you don't have work, volunteer for a local food bank. Call others and see if they're OK. Listen to a positive podcast, read some Proverbs, breathe deeply and be grateful for life. Practicing thankfulness is one of the healthiest exercises.

2. Get courageous and fight for your heart. It takes courage to face needs, to tell your children you're sorry and to apologize to your loved ones. The most frequent comment of people as they are dying is regret for what they didn't say, what they didn't do and who they didn't love. Don't live with regret; be brave. The more you move that direction, the larger courage will become in your heart. Start with one courageous thing today, and then repeat that tomorrow.

3. Create a vision of whom you wish to become and write down what that looks like. Create a plan of how to achieve your vision over the next 18 months: What class do you need to take? What calls do you need to make? Who do you know who could help you? How do you need to change your lifestyle to gain that vision? Wake up each day and make one move toward that goal. Small steps lead to remarkable destinations. A man without a vision for his future will always return to his past. There is amazing freedom in moving forward.

4. Form a brotherhood. We were created for community; there are men in your life who need you. When training for warfare, men are molded into warriors who care deeply for the man next to him. In the middle of the battle, a warrior is not thinking about his flag or national anthem; he's fighting for the man next to him. Brotherhood is the foundation of emotional health; we all need each other. Reach out to someone.

5. Call the helpline in your community. Tell them you're done and you need help. Be brave enough to help yourself so those around you don't take the hit. Call your pastor or priest. That is the nexus of true manhood: taking care of business. If you were rebuilding an engine on your car and you were stumped, you would call a friend or helpline. This is so much more important and crucial to your future, so make the call.

6. Long-term emotional health has always found an authentic answer in a deep and rooted faith. Putting our faith in God and the love of Jesus takes off us the desperation of trying to solve life without a true north. You can find this hope in the Bible at 1 John 1:9, which says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." That is the hope of the world: God loves us, He will forgive us and He will heal our hearts.

And although our faith gives us hope, that hope is delivered by people. We are truly in this together. Everyone knows someone right now who needs a phone call, a Skype, a text or a

touch that says, "Hey, how are you?" Certainly, if you witness abuse, contact The National Domestic Violence Hotline. If it's you who is struggling, follow these triage steps, be courageous and reach out to someone. {eoa}

Paul Louis Cole is the president of the Christian Men's Network (CMN), a highly effective global movement of pastors and leaders dedicated to changing the hearts of men. Founded over 40 years ago, CMN has trained over 1 million men to be leaders in 134 nations to date. CMN recently launched the Brave Men podcast, as well as CMN MONDAY NIGHT MEN, a free, weekly YouTube community of men around the world with the theme "Strong Men in Tough Times."