

What Is Saheli?

Saheli is a community-based women's organization in Massachusetts serving South Asian women and their families since 1996. Saheli was founded in collaboration with the India Association of Greater Boston (IAGB) with the mission of providing services to the South Asian community both locally and across the United States. Saheli works in Nashua NH and Shrewsbury MA as well.

Volunteers provide many support services, resources and guidance in areas of family abuse, career and health planning, as well as cultural and social opportunities. Moreover, Saheli has a special emergency fund to help women in crises. Each year, Saheli holds fund raisers to support services for the South Asian community.

Email sahelihelp@gmail.com or call *Saheli* at 866-472-4354

Saheli offers resources to the entire South Asian community regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, age or gender. The group speaks many languages. Saheli is guided by an executive body of core members who are all South Asian women and an advisory board of distinguished community members of many races and ethnicities. Saheli welcomes you as a **volunteer**.

How can Saheli Help You? When you contact Saheli yourself, through a friend, Police Department, or e-mail know that: Saheli will create a safe, non-judgmental environment with a range of culturally sensitive, language specific information and support services, and listen and educate you about your options. Our goal is the help empower clients to reach a point where they can be self-sufficient, healthy and free from violence.

For example, Saheli can:

- Help you with safety planning
- Deal with immigration issues
- Advice on how and where to get copies of important documents
- Provide referrals to legal aid for custody, child support or divorce
- Arrange shelter for you and your children
- Help with restraining orders
- Help with obtaining documentation including filing incident reports
- Obtain interpretation services for court or other proceedings.

Saheli Boston provides the following additional services:

- Emergency cash assistance to victims of violence
- Support groups for women in abusive relationships
- Cell phones through the Verizon Victim's of Abuse Plan
- Computer literacy and English as a Second Language classes
- Assist in acquiring skills, employment and educational opportunities.



DOMESTIC ABUSE RESOURCES

SAHELI BOSTON



What is Saheli Boston?

Domestic abuse related injuries and deaths are on the rise in the U.S. where 1.3 million women are physically abused every year.

Research shows that domestic violence is as much a problem in the South Asian population as in any other community. Research also shows that in the US, many South Asians are in abusive relationships with their partners or in-laws, or both.

Saheli, Support and Friendship South Asian Women, is a Boston based women's organization. Saheli's mission is to ensure that all women **live safe, healthy and happy lives**. Women living through pain hurt and fear inflicted by abusive partners must know that they are not alone, Saheli can help them. There is no "shame" in empowering yourselves by reaching out for help and support. You can call Saheli on their helpline **866-472-4354** or send email to sahelihelp@gmail.com.

Saheli offers direct assistance to women who are victims of abusive relationships, and also provides referrals, networking, and friendship to stop the abuse. Advocates at Sahelis speak Hindi, Gujarati, Bengali, Punjabi, Nepalese, and other South Asian languages. Saheli will listen, and guide you to the best resources available to stop the abuse. Saheli has volunteers across the state.

If you are in a situation of immediate danger call 911. If you are not in immediate danger and need help for abuse related issues call Saheli at 866-472-4354 and a South Asian advocate will return your call.

Saheli Boston, P.O. Box 1345, Burlington, MA 01803

sahelihelp@gmail.com www.saheliboston.org

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March 2011. Gouri Banerjee, Saheli Editor.

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Additional State and National Resources for Domestic Abuse

Saheli (Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali)	866-472-4354
AA Lowell	978-957-4690
AA MA http://www.aaemassd2l.org	617-426-9444
Asian Task force Against Domestic Violence	617-957-4690
Boston Youth and Family Services	781-275-7727
Boston Area Rape Crisis Center	617-399-4821
Carol Lambert (Support Group for Women)	978-369-0259
Casa Myrna Vasquez (Spanish)	800-992-2600 *
CFS Arlington (Formerly DSS)	781-641-8500
CFS Framingham (Formerly DSS)	800-792-5200 *
Child at Risk Hotline (Judge Baker Children's Center)	617-232-4882
Children's Charter	781-894-4307
Department of Transitional Assistance	617-629-1400
Disabled Persons Abuse/Neglect Hotline	800-426-9009 *
DVSN http://www.dvsn.org	888-399-6111 *
Elder Abuse Hotline	800-922-2275
Eliot Community Health Services (Metro West)	978-369-1113
Gay Men's DV Project (Boston)	800-832-1901 *
Jane Doe Safelink(all languages) http://www.janedoe.org	877-785-2020 *
Jewish Family/Children Services (Russian)	781-647-5327
MA Child Support Enforcement	800-332-2733 *
MA Dept. Transitional Assistance (Lowell)	978-446-2400
Massachusetts Alliance Portuguese Speakers	978-970-1250
Metro West Legal Services	508-620-1830
Minuteman ARC	978-287-7900
Minuteman Senior Services	888-222-6171 *
National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI)	781-982-3318
National Latino Alliance for Elimination of DV Network/ La Red (Boston)	505-224-9080
Parents Helping Parents	617-742-4911
U.S. National Domestic Violence Hotline	800-882-1250 *
	800-799-7233 *

*Toll-Free

Codman Square Health Center

637 Washington Street

Dorchester

617.825.9660

(http://www.codman.org)

Dorchester House Multi-Service Center

1353 Dorchester Avenue

Dorchester

617.288.3230

(http://www.dorchesterhouse.org)

East Boston Neighborhood Health Center

10 Gove Street

East Boston

617.569.5800

(http://www.ebnhc.org)

Geiger-Gibson Community Health Center

250 Mount Vernon Street

Dorchester

617.288.1140

Greater Roslindale Medical and Dental Center

4199 Washington Street

Roslindale

617.323.4440

(http://roslindale.org)

Harvard Street Neighborhood Health Center

632 Blue Hill Avenue

Dorchester

617.825.3400

(http://www.harvardstreet.org)

Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program

780 Massachusetts Avenue

Boston 857.654.1000

(http://www.bhchp.org)

South Cove Community Health Center

885 Washington Street

Boston, MA 02111-1444

(617) 482-7555

Massachusetts League of Community Health

40 Court Street # 10

Boston, MA

617.523.3609

Cambridge Health Alliance: Cambridge Women's Health Center

1493 Cambridge St

Cambridge, MA 02139

617-665-2800

Community Health Centers in Boston and Cambridge, MA**Manet Community Health Center**

110 West Squantum Street

North Quincy

617.376.3030

(http://www.manetchc.org)

Mattapan Community Health Center

1425 Blue Hill Avenue

Mattapan

617.296.0061

(http://www.mattapanchc.org)

Neponset Health Center

398 Neponset Avenue

Dorchester

617.282.3200

Roxbury Comprehensive Community Health Center

435 Warren Street

Roxbury

617.442.7400

South Boston Community Health Center

409 West Broadway

South Boston

617.269.7500

(http://www.sbchc.org)

South End Community Health Center

1601 Washington Street

Boston

617.425.2000

(http://www.sechc.org)

Upham's Corner Health Center

500 Columbia Road

Dorchester

617.287.8000

(http://www.uphamscornerhealthctr.com)

Whittier Street Health Center

1125 Tremont Street

Roxbury

617.427.1000

(http://www.wshc.org)

Joseph M Smith Community Health Center

287 Western Avenue

Boston, MA 02134

617.783.0500

What is Domestic Violence?

To be free from domestic violence is a human right. All human beings have rights. Human rights are rights and freedom to which all of us are entitled. Supporters of the concept claim that everyone is gifted with certain rights simply by reason of being human.

What is domestic violence?

Domestic abuse or violence is defined as any sort of violence or physical abuse directed toward a spouse (husband or wife) or intimate partner. This is violence towards those in a marriage, a dating, family, friendship or cohabitation relationship. It is most commonly applied to an intimate relationship between two adults in which one partner uses a pattern of assault and intimidating acts to assert power and control over the other partner.

How does it happen?

Domestic violence occurs when a partner is controlling another through violent and abusive acts. The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence defines domestic violence as a pattern of behavior used to establish power and control through fear and intimidation, often including the threat of violence. The controlling partner believes they are entitled to control the spouse. In some traditional South Asian homes it is considered the "duty" of the wife to keep the marriage and family intact and abuse is used to define the spouse's roles. However, you have the right to know that abuse of any kind is not okay!

You have the right to be free of abuse.

Call Saheli at 866-4Saheli (866-472-4354)

Saheli Boston, P.O. Box 1345, Burlington, MA 01803

Email: sahelihelp@gmail.com Go to www.saheliboston.org

Are You in an Abusive Relationship?

Do you

- Spend time watching your partner before speaking?
- Doubt your judgment or think you are crazy?
- Fear your partner or fear that nobody will believe you?
- Feel depressed, suicidal, anxious, trapped and powerless?
- Have headaches, neck aches, fast heartbeat, choking sensations?
- Constantly make excuses for your partner's behavior and believe that you can help him change if only you changed something about yourself?

Does your husband, or a family member, or a partner

- Make you feel like you are unable to make decisions?
- Put down your goals and accomplishments?
- Deny access to family bank accounts, cars, credit cards and control all the money including what you earn?
- Control your activities, preventing you from meeting friends, socializing?
- Threaten you with deportation?
- Insult and humiliate you in private or public?
- Encourage other family members to mistreat and use you?
- Become jealous and accuse you of having affairs?
- Abuse and humiliate the children and blame you?
- Pressure you sexually for things you aren't ready for?
- Treat you roughly – grab, push, pinch, shove or hit you?
- Threaten you with dangerous weapons?

If any of these conditions are happening in your relationship, talk to someone. Without some help, the abuse will continue. Or call the Saheli helpline **866-472-4354** and talk to an advocate.

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How You, Family, and Friends Can Help

The first step in creating change in your life or someone else's, is to understand that victims are paralyzed with fear and unable to make any decisions because of lack of knowledge of legal systems. Absence of community support and resources, not knowing where to go, lack of language or job skills, fear of the law often trap people in very abusive situations.

Do not wait if you are being abused, seek support, and friendship today

If you suspect that someone you know is being hurt do not be afraid to help. Here are some steps you can take:

Do:

- *Approach the person in an understanding, kind and non-blaming way*
- *Acknowledge that her situation is scary and that she does not deserve to be hit, threatened, abused financially or otherwise*
- *Listen to her and support her in any way you can*
- *Let her know that abuse is not her fault*
- *Provide her with information on anti-domestic violence organizations*
- *Offer to be a contact person in an emergency*
- *Offer to accompany her to the hospital or police, if needed*
- *Respect her right to decide her own future and choose her own path*
- *Help her to help herself by asking "How can I help"?*
- *Help her make a Safety Plan but never encourage anyone to follow a safety plan that they believe can put them at risk – they are the ones who know their own situation best.*

Don't:

- *Wait for her/him to come to you*
- *Judge or blame or give advise without knowing the facts*
- *Never pressure her/him to follow your advise or put conditions on your support.*

Above all, remember that just as domestic violence does not begin and end with one person, so too, ending violence requires the effort of many people. Do your part - and ask others to join you!

Call Saheli at 866-4SAHELI (866-472-4354) to find out more

Restraining Orders

If you do not feel safe in your relationship, you may apply for a **209A Abuse Prevention Order** at a District Court (or through the local police if the Court is closed). A restraining order will help to protect you from a “family or household member” who has abused you. You can only get a restraining order if the abuser is:

- *A person to whom you are or were married*
- *A person you haven't been married to but are or were related to by blood or marriage (for example, cousin, brother-in-law, brother)*
- *A person with whom you have had a child, regardless of whether you have ever been married or lived together*
- *A person you are not related to but currently are or formerly were members of the same household*
- *A person you are or were in a dating or engagement relationship.*

Restraining Order 209A may be customized to include (but is not limited to)

- *An order not to commit further abuse*
- *A “no contact” stay-away order (from home, work, and/or school)*
- *A vacate order to leave a shared residence*
- *An order directing your attacker to pay you for losses suffered as a result of the abuse, including medical and moving expenses, cost for restoring utilities and replacing lock, and other out-of-pocket losses for injuries and property damages sustained.*
- In 2010 an additional **Harassment Prevention Order (G.L. c258E)** was passed. This order enables:
- *Victims of criminal harassment, stalking, and sexual assault, regardless of their relationship to the defendant, to protect themselves from harassment by the doer*
- *This new law is different from 209A - the victim and abuser do not have to be in a relationship*
- *Victim has to prove that defendant has harassed them*
- *There must be proof of at least 3 acts of willful and malicious conduct that intimidate the victim, make them fearful, and damage their property.*

DISOBEYING EITHER OF THESE ORDERS IS A CRIMINAL OFFENSE!

Call Saheli at 866-472-4354 or an advocate at a anti-domestic violence agency for help. Agencies in Boston and Cambridge are shown in the back of this book.

What are the Different Types of Domestic Abuse?

Domestic Abuse does not just affect people of a certain race, age, gender or social class. It can affect all people. Generally, research shows that when one form of domestic abuse exists, it is coupled with other forms as well.

Types of abuse: Domestic abuse involves physical, psychological, emotional, economic, and sexual abuse, as well as attempts to manipulate the victim through the use of children. The abuser may also seek to isolate the victim from other people who may provide assistance.

Abusers use **domination, punishment** or **control** of one's partner. For example, they may use:

Physical Abuse - biting/scratching - slapping/punching - kicking/stomping - throwing objects at another - locking another in a closet or utilizing other confinement - deprivation of heat or food - shoving another down steps or into objects - assaults with weapons such as knives/guns/household objects.

Psychological Abuse - threatening to hurt partner - threatening to commit suicide, take children away - harm the victim's family-harming family pets and animals-and reporting you to the authorities.

Emotional abuse - Putting you down (for example, commenting about your looks and weaknesses, name calling) making you think you are crazy - making you feel bad about yourself - playing mind games- treating you as if you are a servant - making all the big decisions.

Isolation - limiting spouse's involvement with outsiders - embarrassing or humiliating spouse in front of others - expecting spouse to report every move and activity - restricting use of the car, activities and accomplishments - withholding approval or affection - making another feel as if they are crazy in public or through private humiliation - unreasonable jealousy and suspicion.

Economic Abuse - preventing partner from getting a job – taking away partner's salary – making partner ask for money or giving partner a tiny little allowance so that partner is always short of money.

Sexual Abuse - sex on demand - sexual withholding - physical assaults during sexual intercourse - spousal rapes or **non-consensual** sex - sexually degrading language - denying reproductive freedom.

Using children - making you feel guilty about the health and wellbeing of the children, accusing you of being a bad parent, using visitation as a way to harass you, threatening to take the children away, using abusive behaviors in front of the children.

Healthy Versus Abusive Relationships

Sometimes it can be hard to tell if you are in an unhealthy relationship. All couples fight occasionally and we receive many mixed messages from family and friends. South Asian traditions place a lot of emphasis on women to do their "duty" towards husbands and in-laws. How do you know what is part of a normal relationship and what is abuse?

In Healthy Relationships there is partnership, communication, economic equality, respect, physical safety, and support and trust. The Equality wheel on the next page shows that above all healthy relationships are non-violent. In a good relationship--

- You feel safe and comfortable with each other
- Communication is open – you listen to each other, decide issues together
- You express feelings without fear of partner's reactions
- Rules/boundaries are defined yet there is flexibility to change as needed
- Both partners have relationships and hobbies outside the marriage
- You do not try to change or control the partner
- You can say "no" without fear and guilt
- Each partner is responsible for their own actions, and
- Each partner can enjoy being alone and privacy is respected.

In Abusive Relationships one partner dominates the other, exerts economic control, is jealous and physically abuses the other by - hitting, slapping, and choking, twisting arms, uses fear and intimidation. **The Power and Control** wheel shows that in abusive relationships one individual wants to CONTROL the other:

- You are pressured into doing things you do not want to do
- You are constantly criticized or humiliated
- Partner checks up on you constantly when you go somewhere without them
- You are subjected to jealous fits
- Partner gives you orders – treats you like a servant
- Partner makes all decisions
- You are scared all the time
- Is moody, and
- Provokes fights

What Happens When You Call the Police?

If you are in a situation of immediate danger and your partner is "attempting to cause or is causing physical harm", or you are "in fear of imminent physical harm" **call 911**. The following is a response to questions that victims whose immigration status is insecure may have,

Can I call the police if I am being abused and do not know my immigration status? Call 911 in case of an emergency. Domestic violence is a crime regardless of your legal status. You have the legal right to keep your immigration status private. You do not have to tell the police or a shelter about your immigration status.

Will Immigration Services be called if I call the police? The police will not contact Immigration Services if you are calling to report domestic violence. You, as victim, may have been told by your spouse that the police will not enforce laws on your behalf if you are an illegal resident – be assured that they will. You may have been told that legal protections like restraining order are no available to you – be assured that they are.

What will happen if I call 911? The police will come to the place from where the call was made. Most police departments respond quickly to calls of domestic violence. The first thing they do is make sure no further injury/abuse occurs. They will gather facts by talking to anyone who was a part of the incident or witnessed it. They will also look for 'physical evidence' such as bruises, torn clothing, broken dishes/furniture blood, etc. They will decide if a crime has been committed and if an arrest needs to be made.

Be Aware of Your Rights as follows:

If you are in need of medical treatment, you have the right to request that the police officer drive you to the nearest hospital or otherwise assist you in getting medical treatment.

If you think that you need police protection in order to stay physically safe, you have the right to request the officer remain with you at the scene until you and your children can leave or until you feel safe.

You can ask the officer to assist you in finding and taking you to a safe place a shelter, or the home of a friend/family member or somewhere you feel safe.

You can and should request a copy of the police incident report and keep it with other documents in a safe place.

You can appear at the Superior, Probate and family, District or Municipal court where you live to file a complaint and request a restraining order.

Immigration Law and Domestic Abuse

If you are being abused by your U.S. Citizen or Lawful Permanent Resident ("green card" holding) spouse or parent, or child (over 21),

Or your child is being abused by his or her U.S. Citizen or Lawful Permanent Resident ("green card" holding) parent,

And you are undocumented or without legal immigration status, there are laws to help escape violence and get legal immigration status.

If you can document your abuse you can get legal status without help from your battering spouse or parent with the help of an attorney. Below is a list of things you should not do in order to obtain legal status.

What Not to do if you are undocumented (do not have immigration status)

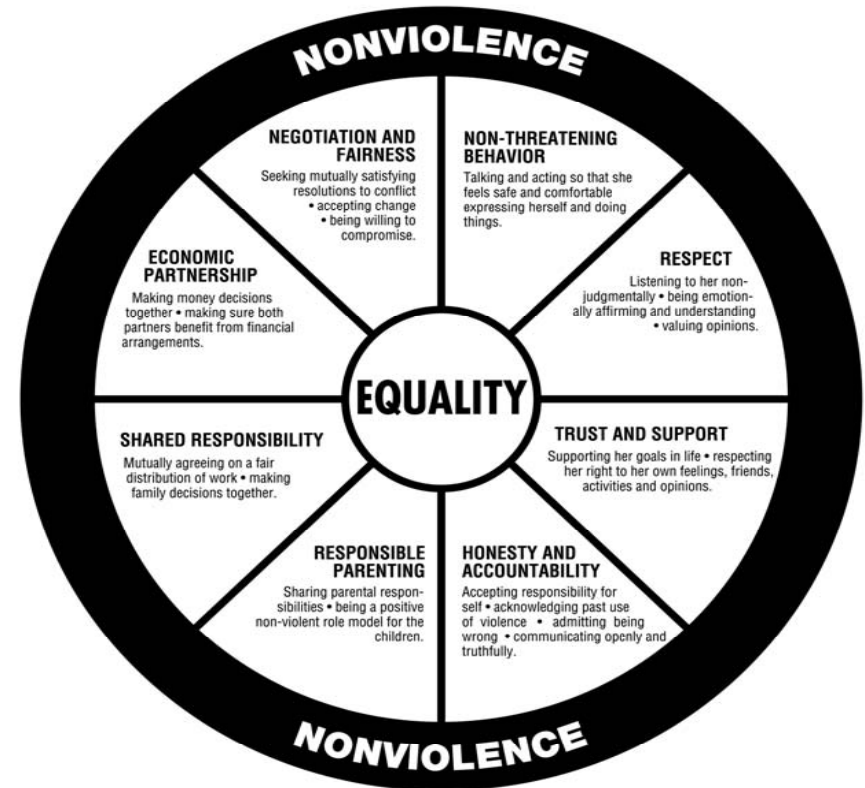
- Do not discuss immigrant status with anyone except an attorney or advocate who is helping you at a shelter/domestic violence agency
- You should not go to Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS - formerly the INS) alone, even to ask for information. If you receive a notice to go to CIS for an interview or a hearing, speak to a Saheli advocate or attorney immediately.
- You should not, under any circumstances, file any papers at the CIS without first discussing your case with an advocate or attorney.
- You should not sign any divorce related papers until you have spoken to an immigration attorney. If you or your spouse has already started divorce proceedings, call your attorney immediately.

What Can You Do Personally? Get help from a program for abused women or legal services advocate or consult with a Saheli advocate. They can help you figure out your options. **See the list at the back of this book for referrals.**

You should find all documents that will support your case. For example, Marriage Certificate, evidence that you and the batterer lived together as a married couple, birth certificates, bills, leases, family photos, tax returns, — Proof of abuse such as restraining or civil protection orders, police reports, medical records, letter, from a battered women's program, photos of injuries/bruises—Evidence of "good moral character" such as proof that you have no criminal record, or a letter from your religious institution—You must provide a written affidavit describing the history of your relationship with the abuser.

The Equality Wheel

The equality wheel shows the important characteristics of a healthy relationship. A healthy relationship is not violent. Through respect for and trust in each other, the partners develop an EQUAL relationship.



Domestic Abuse Victim's Bill of Rights

If you have been subjected, by your husband, partner or family member, to any of the abusive actions listed on earlier pages, know that there is nothing wrong with you and you are not alone. You do not have to suffer in silence.

Violence does not end without help, it becomes worse and occurs more often. Continuing to live in an abusive situation is not good for you or your children. Your immigration status does not depend on staying with your husband.

You should also be aware of your rights:

- You have the right **NOT** to be abused
- You have the right to be angry about past abuse/beatings
- You have a right to choose to change the situation
- You have a right to freedom from fear and abuse
- You have a right to leave the battering environment
- You have a right express your thoughts and be treated like a adult
- You have a right to share feelings with others and not be isolated.

What services are available to you?

- You have the right to request and expect assistance from the police and social agencies, such as Saheli
- You can ask Saheli to find you appropriate resources to improve your condition
- Know that abuse is a crime regardless of immigration status
- Know that there are special immigration and work visas available to women who are being abused
- Know the authorities WILL enforce laws on behalf of all residents
- Know that legal protections like restraining orders are available to all victims regardless of their immigrant status.

Creating a Safety Plan for Yourself

Whether you stay or leave an abusive relationship is your decision, you are your own best friend. However, you should begin to empower yourself by bringing about a change in your relationship without endangering yourself or your children. One of the first steps is to put together a Safety Plan as follows:

- Create "safe places" in the house where you can go in case of physical danger
- Keep a cell phone with 911 pre-programmed
- Empower yourself by talking to close friends/family about what is happening
- Join a Support Group such as the Saheli support group
- Contact an anti-domestic violence agency from a safe place and talk to an advocate
- Keep a detailed record of abusive events that have occurred, and keep dates when abuse occurred in a safe place
- Get to know the local police station and hospitals in the area
- Plan and practice an escape route out of the home
- Prepare children to respond if batterer comes to school or to childcare facilities
- Keep a bag packed and hidden in a safe place at home (or locked in a car trunk with only one key, or with a relative or friend), in case of the need to flee.

The bag should include:

- *Work permit and/or green card, school and medical records*
- *Copies of passports, social security and identification cards*
- *Marriage certificate and court documents*
- *Driver's license, welfare identification and birth certificates*
- *Copies of proof of your lease or mortgage payments*
- *Bank checkbooks and credit cards*
- *Copies of ownership documents for car or house*
- *One month's living expenses*
- *Cell phone and money for phone calls*
- *Clothing, diapers or other items for the children – medication and prescriptions*
- *Family photographs, telephone and address books*
- *Copies of insurance papers—life, disability, home*
- *Car and copies of house keys*
- *Important personal items such as wedding jewelry, religious books and statues.*