

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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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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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.

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.

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.

How Does Saheli Help?

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.

For Support Call the Saheli helpline 866-472-4354 and talk to an advocate

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