



IT ENDS WITH US

A VIEWER'S GUIDE

TO HELP BREAK THE PATTERN AND
PROMOTE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

NO  **MORE**

TOGETHER WE CAN END
DOMESTIC & SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Overview

Based on the book by Colleen Hoover, “It Ends With Us” powerfully highlights the pattern of domestic violence and the complexities of breaking it.

The story follows Lily Bloom (Blake Lively), who, throughout her childhood, witnessed her father abuse her mother. As an adult, she moves to Boston, reaches her lifelong dream of opening her own flower shop and falls in love with Ryle Kincaid (Justin Baldoni). Ryle appears to be perfect in many ways - a successful neurosurgeon, handsome, attentive and loving. But, in reality, he is overly possessive and coercively controlling, and ultimately becomes physically abusive. Lily wrestles with her past and her vision for her future in deciding whether to stay in or leave the unhealthy relationship.

At its core, the film offers a valuable opportunity to better understand domestic and sexual violence, learn to differentiate between healthy and unhealthy relationships, and find out how we all can make a difference in our own communities.

The NO MORE Foundation is proud to serve as the charitable partner for “It Ends With Us,” as part of our ongoing relationship with Wayfarer Studios. Together, we created this Viewers’ Guide to touch on key themes and topics addressed in the film, as part of our shared commitment to use the power of entertainment to inform, support, and inspire greater progress in preventing gender-based violence. For more comprehensive information on domestic and sexual violence, go to our Survivors’ Guide [“The Lighthouse.”](#)



A Call to Action - Promoting Healthy Relationships

“We break the pattern or the pattern breaks us.”

When Lily and Ryle first meet, there is an intense connection, but as the two fall deeply in love, Lily begins to see sides of Ryle that remind her of her parents’ unhealthy relationship. By the end of the film, Lily finds the strength to break the pattern before the pattern breaks her and her daughter.

Lily’s courage serves as an inspiration and a call to action for all of us. The good news is that **everyone** can make a difference in breaking the pattern by promoting healthy relationships.



What is a Healthy Relationship?

A healthy relationship is built on mutual respect, trust, and open communication:

- Partners in healthy relationships treat each other with kindness, understanding, and empathy, ensuring that both feel valued and supported.
- They respect each other's boundaries and individualities, and they communicate honestly and openly about feelings, needs, and concerns without fear of judgment or retaliation.
- Responsibilities are shared and decisions are made together, acknowledging and appreciating each other's contributions.
- Conflict, when it arises, is addressed constructively, with both parties willing to listen, compromise, and find solutions that are mutually satisfying.
- Emotional support and encouragement are constant, as partners celebrate each other's successes and provide comfort during challenging times.

Ultimately, a healthy relationship fosters growth, happiness, and a sense of belonging, where both individuals feel empowered and cherished.

How to Promote Healthy Relationships

- ***Learn the Characteristics of Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationships*** - Once you can better understand the characteristics of a healthy vs. unhealthy relationship, you can more easily recognize what behaviors to avoid and call out and what behaviors to perpetuate and model. See the chart below that outlines the key differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships.
- ***Start Relationships Off Right*** - When Lily and Ryle met, they had an instant connection but they didn't communicate openly and they hid critical details of their lives. Whether someone you meet online or IRL becomes your future partner, someone to enjoy some spontaneous fun with or just a friend, it's important to start with candor, respect, and safety. Get our [Healthy Dating Guide](#) to help ensure that your relationships start and stay safe and healthy.
- ***Help Educate Kids*** - Talk openly to your kids or kids in your life, even when the conversation may seem difficult. Like Lily, children have questions, are themselves sexual beings, experience peer pressure, and absorb all kinds of messages about relationships and sex from their families, peers, community, and media. They need an environment in which they can develop and practice skills and qualities they'll use throughout their lives to build healthy relationships. These skills include setting and respecting boundaries, decision making, communication, and developing high self-esteem. Use the ["Talking Healthy Relationships: A Conversation Guide for Parents & Caregivers"](#) to get started.

What Is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence is a pattern of behaviors used by one partner to maintain power and control over another partner in an intimate relationship. The abuse is not fueled by a loss of temper, mental health problems, or too much alcohol. It is systematic and purposeful manipulation by an abuser to control their victim.

Domestic violence can happen to anyone at any point in their life, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, economic status, religion, or type of relationship.

It Ends With Us shines a light on an issue that is extremely prevalent in our society. In fact:

In the U.S.,
1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men
will experience severe physical violence
by an intimate partner in their lifetime.

On average,
3 women are murdered
by their partners every day.

1 in 3 (35%) women worldwide
have experienced either physical and/or
sexual intimate partner violence or non-
partner sexual violence in their lifetime.

The Types and Pattern of Abuse

Lily experiences both physical and emotional abuse in “It Ends With Us.” Here are explanations of those and some of the other types of abuse:

Physical abuse: involves threatening or using physical violence to maintain power over an individual. Lily witnesses her father physically abusing her mother and then experiences Ryle hitting her, pushing her down the stairs, and sexually assaulting her.

Emotional abuse: includes non-physical and often more subtle behaviors that are meant to control, isolate, or frighten someone. Lily experiences emotional abuse when Ryle is extremely jealous, possessive, and repeatedly questions her love for him.

Sexual abuse: occurs when a partner controls the physical and sexual intimacy in a relationship. When Ryle tries to force Lily to have sex and she says no, this is sexual abuse. (See more below).

Financial abuse: occurs when an abusive partner extends their power to control the financial situation -- even if that person does not earn the money. Though the film doesn’t delve into this deeply, Lily seems to retain her financial freedom by having her own business. This makes it easier for her to leave.

Digital abuse: the use of technology and the Internet to bully, harass, stalk, intimidate, or control a partner.

Stalking: when someone watches, follows, or harasses you repeatedly, making you feel afraid or unsafe. It may be someone you know, like a past partner, or a stranger.

Verbal and emotional abuse can be recognized in behaviors like:

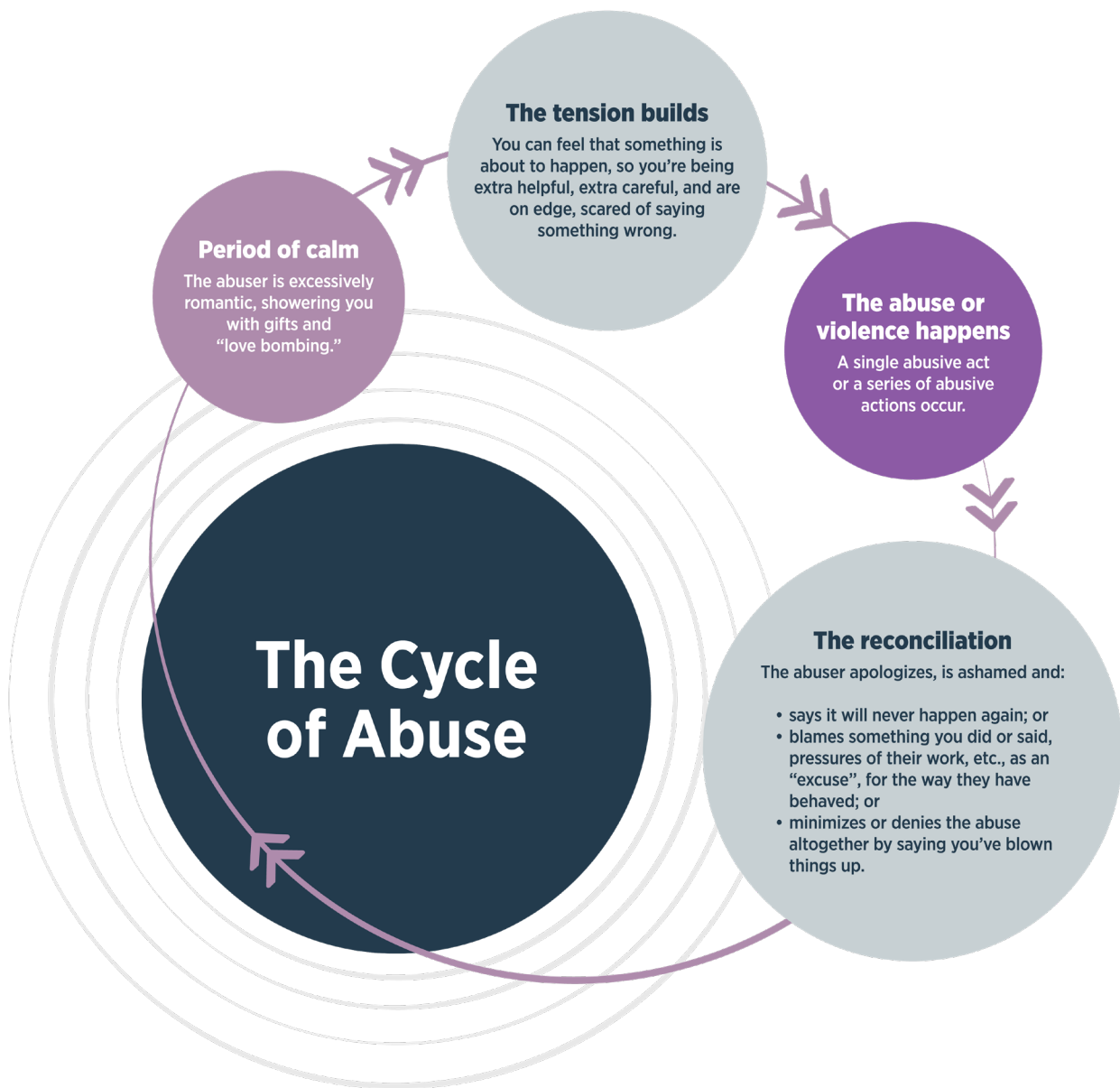
- Name calling, insults, and continual criticism.
- Using words to isolate and control.
- Harassment in person, online, or over text or phone.
- Public humiliation or embarrassment.
- Constant jealousy often surfacing as accusations of cheating.
- Blaming others for their own harmful behavior.
- Telling someone they deserve to be mistreated or do not deserve love.
- Starting destructive rumors.
- Threatening to expose secrets or personal information including photos or videos.
- Threatening with additional violence.
- Body shaming.
- Gaslighting (manipulating someone psychologically, until they question their own sanity).

Learn more about the forms of abuse from the National Domestic Violence Hotline [here](#).

Pattern of Abuse

Ryle’s abusive behavior starts with something very common, “love bombing.” “Love bombing” is the excessive showering of attention, gifts, and love early on intended to draw someone in, foster dependence, and then use that influence to isolate them from friends/family, chip away at their self-esteem, and control them.

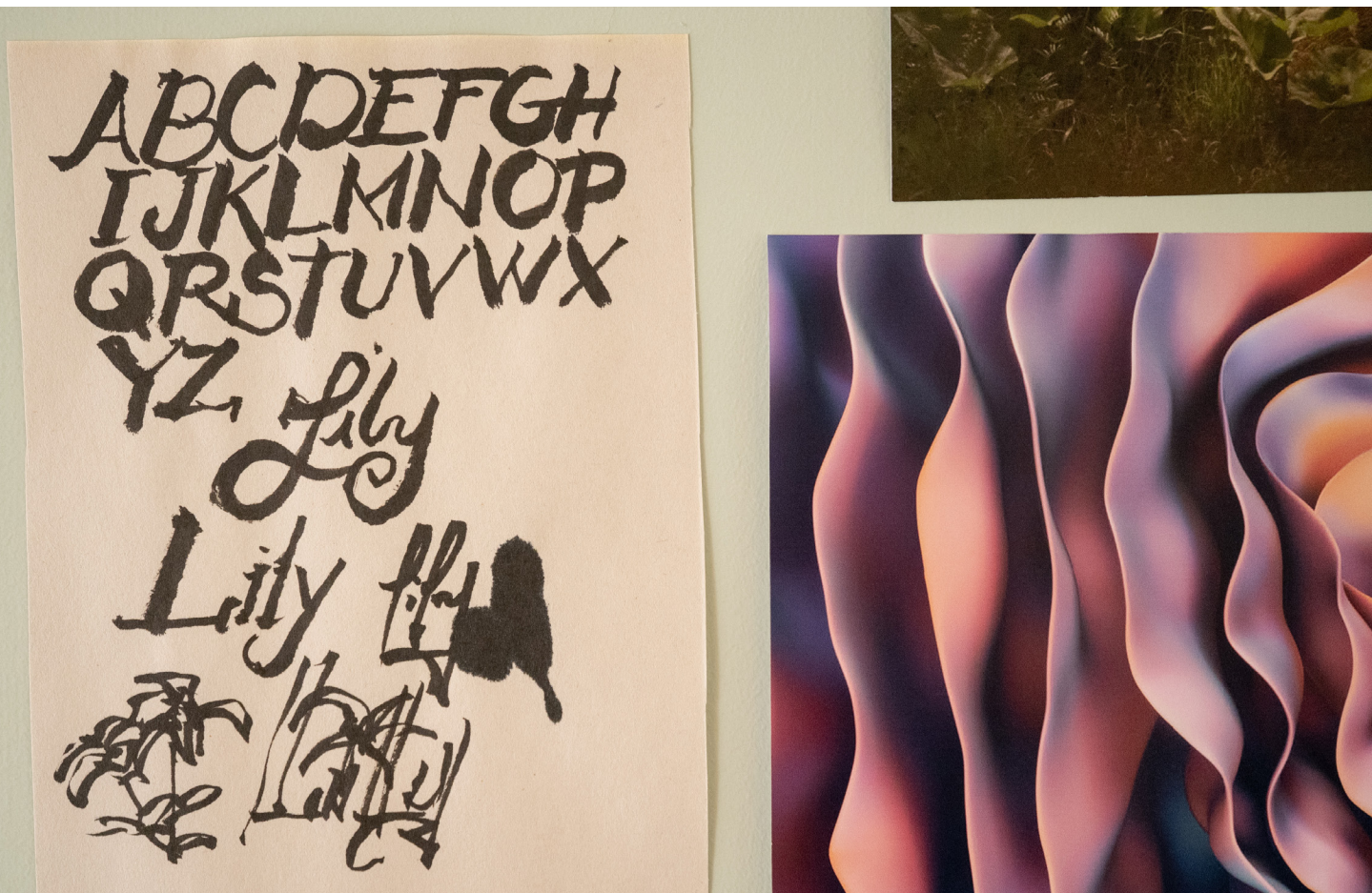
Genuine love develops over time and should not be rushed. While healthy relationships involve expressing admiration and excitement through gifts and affectionate messages, if the intensity and pace of what you’re experiencing makes you uncomfortable, it should be a warning sign.



Child Survivors of Domestic Violence

Witnessing domestic violence as children can profoundly affect individuals when forming their own relationships. For example, Lily struggles with trust and worries about replicating her parents' abusive patterns. This fear can make it challenging to build and maintain healthy relationships, as seen in her initial relationship struggles. Such trauma can lead to low self-esteem and difficulties in trusting others, impacting how individuals perceive their worth and the kind of love they deserve. This is something Lily manages to overcome at the end.

Additionally, adults who witnessed domestic violence as children may inadvertently adopt harmful behaviors from their past. In the book, Atlas also experiences challenges due to his traumatic childhood. Both characters struggle with effective communication and conflict resolution, often mirroring the dysfunctional patterns they witnessed. This can result in heightened sensitivity to conflict and a pervasive fear of abandonment. Overcoming these challenges requires significant emotional work, to unlearn harmful patterns and build healthy, respectful relationships.



Understanding Sexual Assault

Sexual assault is forced or coerced sexual contact without consent – which means without the presence of a clear yes, not the absence of a no. 1 in 3 women and 1 in 6 men have experienced sexual violence in their lives. 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men were sexually abused before the age of 18.

“It Ends With Us” highlights instances where the consent boundary is crossed, starting with Ryle’s persistent advances towards Lily. Despite her initial resistance, Ryle’s relentless pursuit and emotional manipulation pressure Lily into situations where her consent may be coerced rather than freely given.

Later in the film, Ryle pushes Lily on the couch and sexually assaults her. It does not matter that they are married. It also does not matter if he didn’t complete the sexual act. It is sexual abuse if one party does not consent.

In a healthy sexual encounter, both parties are comfortable communicating their needs without fear. It’s not okay if your partner initiates sex and becomes angry, frustrated, or insistent when you decline. Sexual activity that occurs because of fear, guilt, or pressure is coercion - and coercion is a form of sexual assault.

Remember that consent needs to be ongoing. This means even if you’re in the throes of a heavy make-out session or foreplay, you both need to consent before you take things to the next level.



Rape Myths

Myth

If you've been drinking, it's your fault you got raped.

Fact

No one is ever to blame for being raped or sexually assaulted – it doesn't matter what the circumstances were. Raping someone is always a crime, and 100% of the blame, shame, and responsibility for that crime lies with the perpetrator or perpetrators.

Myth

If you didn't scream, try to run away, or fight back, then it wasn't rape.

Fact

Many victim-survivors are frozen to the spot from fear or shock and unable to move or speak. Keeping still and quiet is an automatic response designed to keep us safe.

Myth

If you didn't say "no," it wasn't rape

Fact

The absence of a "no" does not mean "yes."

Myth

It's not rape if it's your partner or spouse.

Fact

If you didn't consent, it's rape. It doesn't matter if it's a partner or spouse that you've been with for years; it's still rape.

Myth

Most perpetrators are strangers to the victim.

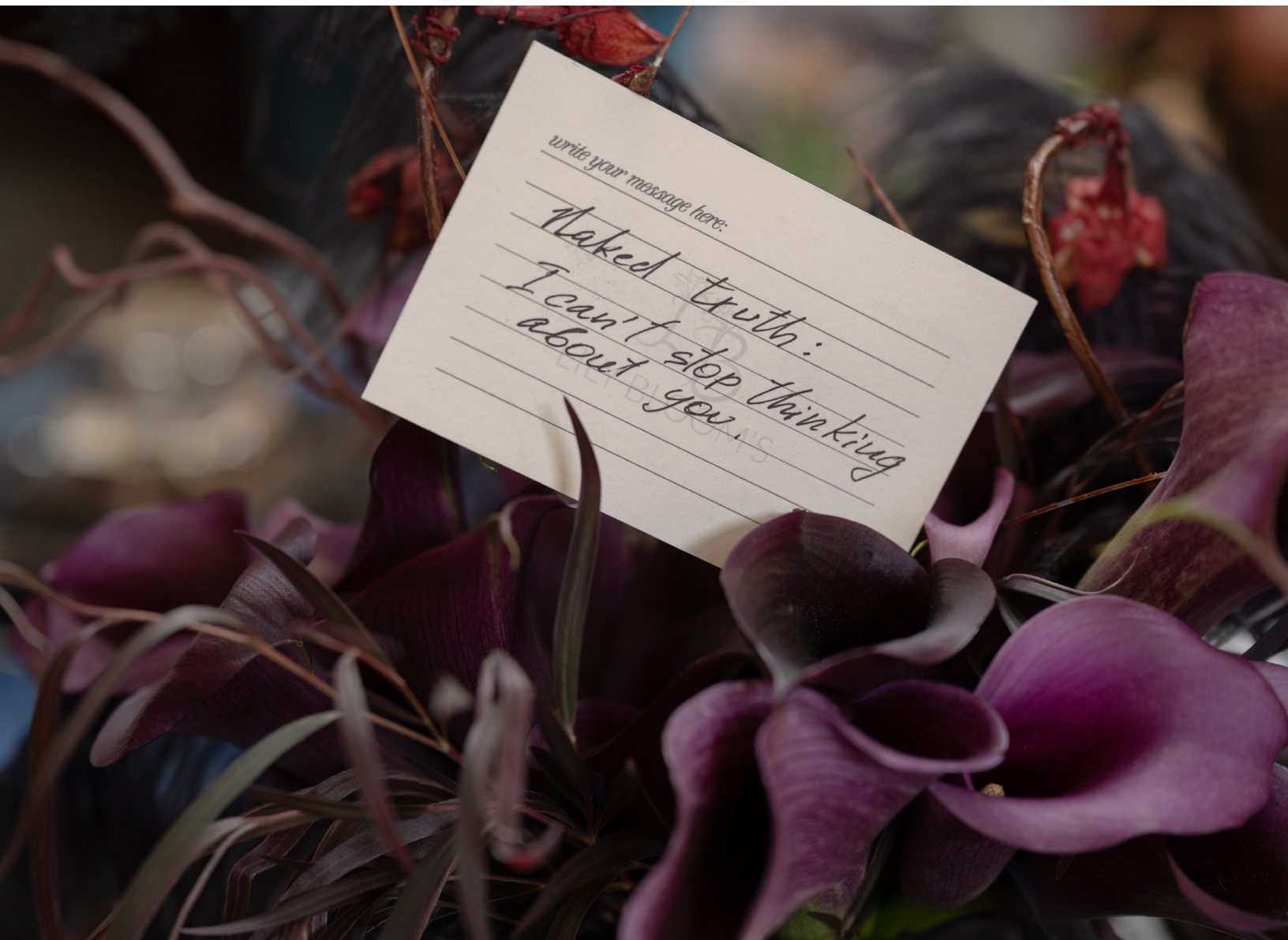
Fact

In fact, 80-90% of sexual assaults are committed by someone known to the victim. In their lifetimes, 56.1% of women and 57.3% of men were raped by an acquaintance, and 39.3% of women and 12.5% of men were raped by an intimate partner. (CDC)

Recognizing a Healthy vs. an Unhealthy Relationship

“It Ends With Us” shows the often cyclical nature of domestic violence. Child survivors like Lily are at greater risk for repeating the pattern as adults by entering into abusive relationships or becoming abusers themselves.

Lily remembers seeing her father’s abuse towards her mother, which may affect her perception of healthy vs. unhealthy relationships.



No relationship is perfect, but healthy relationships make both people feel respected, supported, and safe. Here are some of the defining characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships:

Healthy Relationship	Unhealthy Relationship
Respect: Each person values who the other person is, understands the other person's boundaries and values their beliefs and opinions.	Disrespect: One partner makes fun of the other's opinions and interests, or purposely destroys something that is important to them.
Trust: Partners trust each other and are comfortable doing things separately and respecting each other's privacy online.	Jealousy: Everyone can experience jealousy. It becomes unhealthy when one partner tries to control the other because of it, as Ryle does to Lily with his intense jealousy of her connection to Atlas.
Honesty: Partners are truthful with each other and able to talk openly about what they both want without fearing the response or judgment.	Betrayal: When one partner is deceitful, hides important things from the other or threatens to make their private matters public to control them.
Individuality: Neither partner compromises who they are, and each has their own identity, with space and freedom in the relationship.	Control: When one partner makes all the decisions and tells the other what to do, what to wear, and who to spend time with. They may also be 'in charge' of all the finances and may try to isolate their partner from their friends and family.
Equality: Both partners put equal effort into the relationship and make decisions together as opposed to one person calling all the shots.	Manipulation: One partner influences the other without them realizing it. This can include ignoring them until they get their own way, making their partner feel guilty or responsible for their actions, making them feel like everything is their fault and threatening to hurt themselves or others if they don't do as they say or stay with them. They may also use gifts and apologies to influence their decisions or to 'apologize' for their behavior.
Encouragement: One partner supports the other to do things that they want to do and backs their decisions.	Belittling: One partner makes the other feel bad about themselves - calling them names, making rude remarks about their friends and family or what they look like, and making fun of them - even if it's played off as 'just a joke.'
Self-confidence: When partners have confidence in themselves, they are calm and comfortable enough to allow others to express their opinions without forcing their own opinions on them.	Intimidation: When a partner tries to control aspects of the other's life by making them feel fearful or timid. This may include threatened or actual violence.
Non-Violent relationship: No physical violence used by either partner and feeling a sense of care and concern from both partners, each knowing the other will be there to support them.	Physical violence: When one partner intentionally uses physical force against the other, as a means of controlling them. This includes shaking, slapping, pushing, biting, punching, scratching, trying to choke or strangle, hitting with household objects, using weapons and physical restraint (e.g. pinning them against a wall).

Leaving Abusive Relationships

Lily’s journey depicts the struggles many face in prioritizing their safety and well-being over their love for the abuser. Despite Ryle’s abusive behavior, Lily grapples with the deep emotional connection they share and her hope that he can change. Ryle’s initial charm and moments of genuine affection make it difficult for Lily to reconcile his violent outbursts with the person she fell in love with.

The decision to end an abusive relationship is profoundly personal, and the path from making that decision to leave can vary greatly. For some, it might be a sudden choice, seizing an opportunity as it presents itself, possibly resulting in leaving with only what can be carried. Others may meticulously plan their escape. In either scenario, support is readily available. Either way, it’s best to speak with experienced professionals who can guide you on the right path for you.

Go to our Survivors’ Guide [“The Lighthouse”](#) to learn more about creating a safety plan and finding housing assistance, legal support, and emotional help.



The Role of the “Bystander”- Friends, Colleagues or Family Members

In “It Ends With Us,” it is clear that bystanders—those friends, colleagues or family members who witness or become aware of abusive situations – can make a big difference. Alyssa, Atlas, and Lily’s mother all have a great impact on Lily’s journey.

Alyssa: The Supportive Friend

Alyssa becomes aware of the violent acts that her brother Ryle has been committing against her friend Lily. Toward the end of the story, she says to Lily: “As his sister, I wish more than anything that you could find a way to forgive him. But as your best friend, I have to tell you that if you take him back, I will never speak to you again.”

By offering emotional support during difficult times and listening to Lily’s concerns and fears without judgment, Alyssa demonstrates how to be a supportive bystander. Alyssa’s unwavering support and safe haven as a trusted confidante empowers Lily to make the difficult decision to leave Ryle.

Atlas: The Champion

Atlas, Lily’s first love, embodies the role of champion and protector. When he realizes that Lily is in an abusive relationship, he offers her a safe ear to talk to and a safe place to stay. He listens without judgment and provides the consistent support she needs to help her rebuild her self-esteem and trust in others.

Lily’s Mother: Victim Turned Advocate

Initially, Lily’s mother remains silent about the abuse by her husband, struggling to break free from her own trauma. However, her experiences eventually lead her to support her daughter’s decision to leave because she knows that Lily’s safety is more important than anything. That encouragement may have helped to validate Lily’s feelings and give her the confidence to break the cycle for good.



Ways to Support Survivors

If you suspect someone is being abused, it's essential to approach the situation with empathy and caution. Here are some steps you can take:

1

Listen Without Judgment: Create a safe space for the victim to share their experiences without fear of judgment or disbelief.

2

Validate Their Feelings: Let the victim know that their feelings and experiences are valid and that it's not their fault.

3

Encourage Professional Help: Suggest seeking professional help from experts in domestic violence or therapists who can offer specialized support.

- Offer to let victims use your phone or computer to look up local resources or contact someone that can help them and any children involved so that their abuser is less likely to see their searches.

4

Offer Support: Provide resources such as contact information for local shelters, hotlines, or counseling services.



Ways to Make a Difference in Stopping and Preventing Violence

While the the responsibility for domestic violence or sexual assault lies with the perpetrators of these crimes, we all play a role in preventing violence and looking out for each other's safety.

Here are some ways that you can take action to stop or prevent violence:

1

Learn to recognize the signs or behaviors that may signal domestic or sexual violence (see unhealthy relationship characteristics above). Follow your instincts. If a situation feels wrong to you, it probably is. One way to decide is to ask yourself, "If I don't act, could the situation get worse?" IF YES, then you should evaluate the best way to safely intervene.

- Remember, you don't have to intervene alone. Seek support from other friends, your workplace, the National Domestic Violence Hotline or other resources. Call 911 in an emergency.

2

Leading up to every incident of abuse or sexual assault are all kinds of behaviors, words, and actions that normalize and condone violence in our society. Even actions like a sexist joke or victim-blaming remark contribute to a culture in which domestic violence and sexual assault are tolerated and not treated with the gravity and urgency that these crimes deserve. Call out those jokes and remarks and encourage greater respect.

3

Teach your kids or kids in your life about healthy relationships. Use our [guide](#) to help start the conversation.

4

Have conversations with your friends, colleagues, and family members. The more that we can remove the shame and stigma from this issue, the more we can increase awareness and actions to help stop it.

The Role of Men in Preventing Domestic and Sexual Violence

Historically, women have been at the forefront of addressing gender-based violence. While it is important to center the voices of women, we also know that domestic and sexual violence are most often committed by men. It is essential that men are active in the solution.

Learn more about healthy masculinity and the steps men can take to help stop and prevent violence against women from our partner, [A Call to Men](#).

Resources for Help

NO MORE Global Directory - a platform with a easy links to support services in 200 countries/territories around the world.

BrightSky - a safe, easy to use app and website that provides practical support and information on how to respond to domestic violence.

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233).

RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network): 1-800-656-HOPE (4673).

Loveisrespect: A resource for young people on healthy relationships (www.loveisrespect.org).

911 - in an emergency, call the police for help.





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