

Why don't victims just leave?

- They do. Every day we hear from survivors of abuse who were able to find the support and resources they needed to be safe and self-sufficient.
- Every day we also hear from people who are unable to leave because they:
 - Fear the abuser will be more violent if they leave.
 - *In at least 55% of homicides by abusers, the victim had left or was trying to leave.*
Source: Washington State Domestic Violence Fatality Review, 2012
 - Don't have anywhere to go. Communities don't have enough affordable housing. Shelters and transitional housing units are limited.
 - *On just one day, domestic violence programs in Washington could not meet 398 requests for housing.*
Source: The National Census of Domestic Violence Services, Washington Summary, 2012
 - Cannot afford to take care of themselves and their children without the abuser's income.
 - Worry about child custody, and the safety of their children when they're alone with the abusive parent.
 - Are emotionally drained, financially challenged, and isolated from family and friends. Surviving abuse takes an incredible toll on people.
 - Tried to leave in the past and the abuser found them.
- We also hear from people who don't want to leave, but want the abuse to stop.
- Research consistently shows that people in an abusive relationship make repeated efforts to be safe and self-sufficient, but there are many barriers, both external (limited resources, support) and internal (emotionally connected to partner, desire for children to be with both parents) that make this very difficult.
 - One study of more than 6,000 women found that they had made an average of 6 help-seeking efforts before entering the shelter.
Source: *Battered women as survivors: An alternative to treating learned helplessness*, Gondolf & Fisher, 1988
 - Another found that women left their abusive partners an average of 5 times before leaving permanently.
Source: *Woman abuse: Facts replacing myths*, Okun, 1986
 - A third study found that it took an average of 8 years for women who had left an abusive partner to leave permanently.
Source: "Profile and strategies of women who have ended abuse," Horton & Johnson, 1993
- This is the wrong question to be asking, as it implies that victims are responsible for ending violence. In fact, we should be asking what we can do to stop abusers from being violent and controlling.