

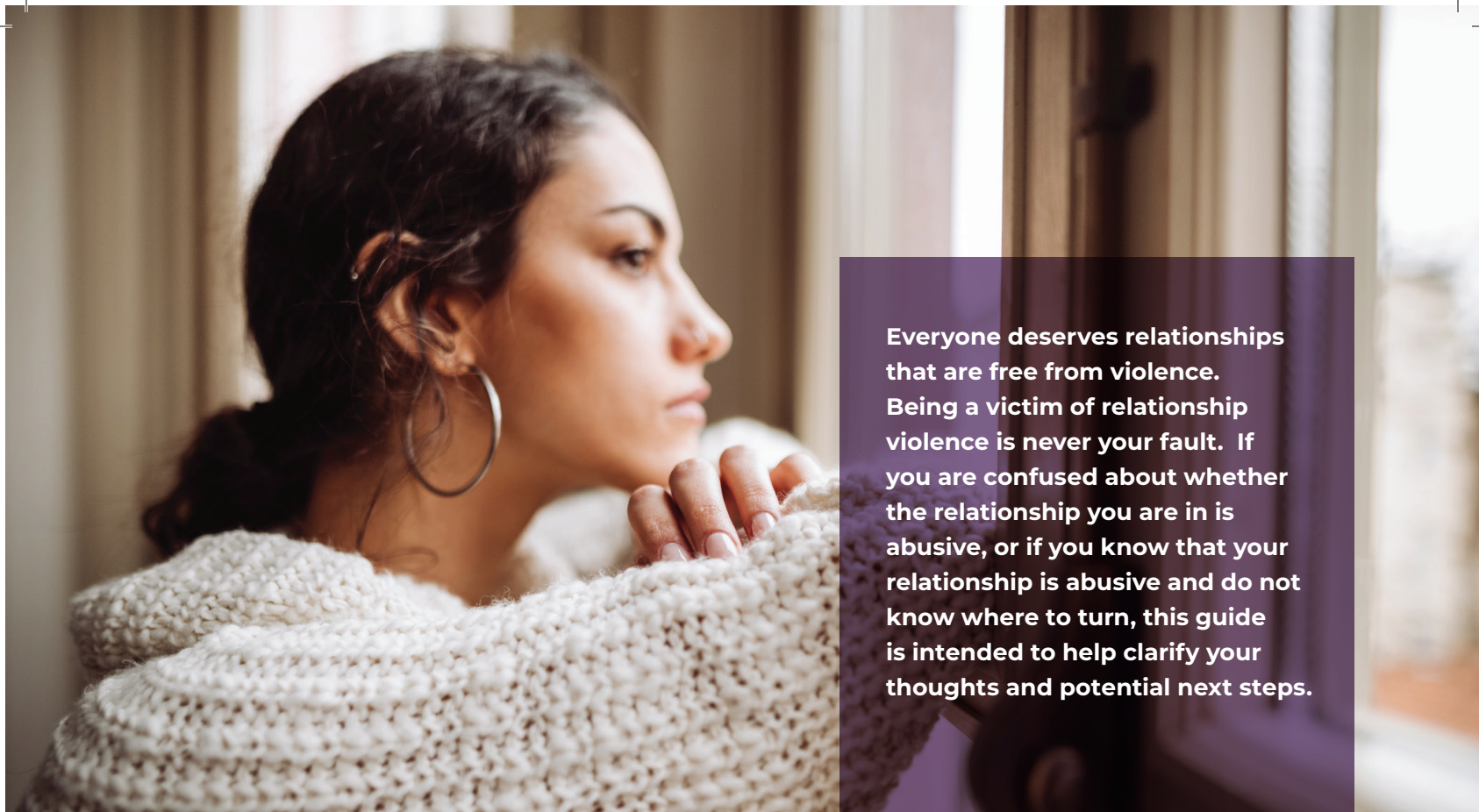
Intimate Partner Violence/Domestic Violence and Brain Injury

What Survivors Need to Know



bianj.org





Everyone deserves relationships that are free from violence. Being a victim of relationship violence is never your fault. If you are confused about whether the relationship you are in is abusive, or if you know that your relationship is abusive and do not know where to turn, this guide is intended to help clarify your thoughts and potential next steps.

Recognizing abusive behavior and relationships

Domestic violence, domestic abuse, or relationship abuse is a pattern of abusive behavior in which one person gains and maintains power and control over another person in the relationship. Domestic violence can include physical, emotional, psychological, financial, and/or sexual abuse as well as stalking. Some signs of abuse include calling someone names, extreme jealousy and suspicion, keeping one away from family and friends, throwing things around the house or at another person.

Anyone can be subjected to this abuse regardless of their age, gender, race, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, educational level, or socioeconomic status. The severity and frequency can vary. Domestic violence can occur in heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer relationships and among those who are married or unmarried. Additionally, it can occur between a parent and child, siblings, or even roommates, not just romantic or dating partners.

When violence occurs within a household, it is often referred to as domestic violence, but when violence occurs among romantic partners that may or may not be living together, this is referred to as intimate partner violence. They both refer to abusive behavior, but domestic violence is the phrase more commonly used.

Abuse can occur between current and former spouses and dating partners. If your spouse or partner controls your every move, forces you to behave in certain ways, intimidates you with weapons, and/or shows extreme jealousy when you are not with them, you may be in an abusive relationship. Please consider contacting the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 or your county domestic violence agency if you need support.

Defining brain injury

The brain controls everything we say, do, think, and feel. It keeps us alive through breathing, circulation, digestion, hormones, and the immune system. Through the brain, we experience emotion and express ourselves. Every brain is unique and sensitive to its environment. If the brain is injured, it can impact the way a person thinks, acts, and feels and it can change everything about a person in a matter of seconds, depending on the type and severity of injury (mild, moderate, or severe).

A brain injury is an injury to the brain that occurs after birth and is not congenital, degenerative or hereditary. The injury results in a change of the brain's neuronal activity. There are two types of brain injury: traumatic brain injury (TBI) and acquired brain injury (ABI).

Traumatic brain injury (TBI)

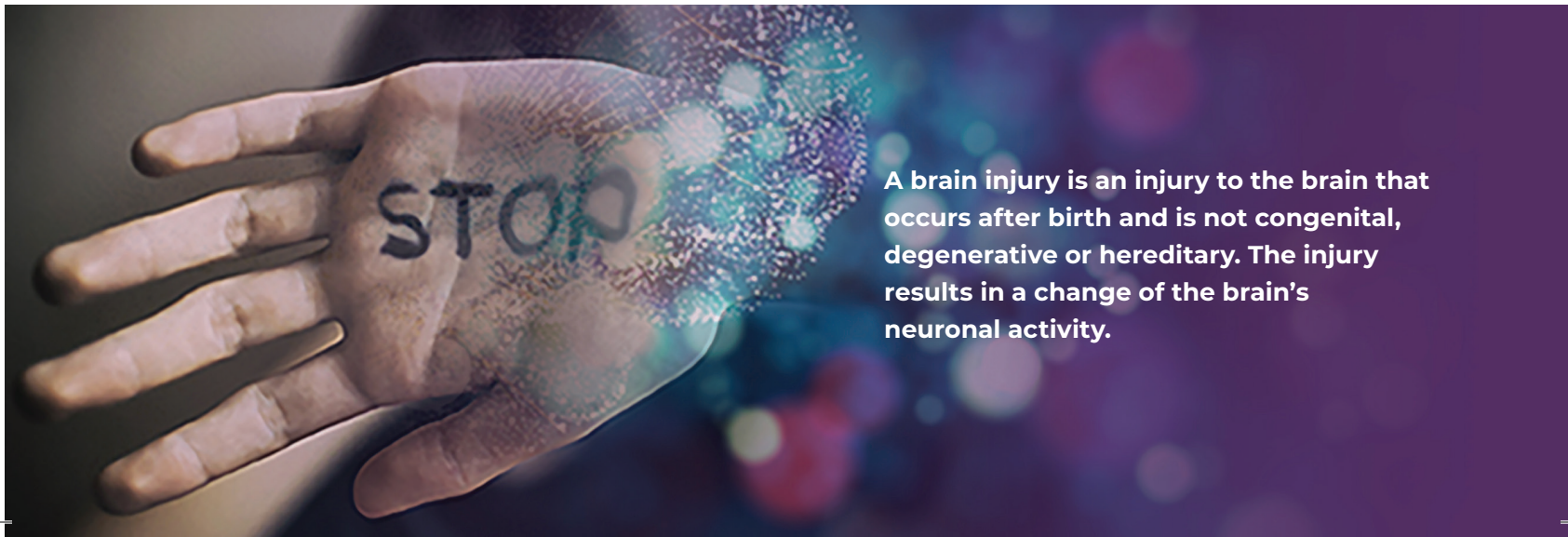
A TBI is caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head that disrupts the normal function of the brain. Traumatic injuries can be defined as closed (non-penetrating) or open (penetrating). The severity of a TBI may range from mild (i.e., a brief change in mental status or consciousness), moderate (i.e., unconscious for up to 24 hours and contusions (bruises) on the brain) to severe (i.e., an extended period of unconsciousness or amnesia after the injury).

A survivor of abuse can sustain a closed head injury when their partner hits them on the head with an object, smashes their head against a wall, pushes them downstairs or violently shakes them. In comparison, a survivor can sustain an open head injury from an external object (i.e., bullet, knife, glass).

Acquired brain injury (ABI)

ABI is an injury to the brain that is not hereditary, congenital, degenerative, or induced by birth trauma. This type of injury is one that has occurred after birth. Common ABI's include stroke, tumor, aneurysm, infections of the brain (i.e., meningitis, encephalitis), drug overdose, and toxic exposure (i.e., lead, carbon monoxide).

A survivor of abuse can sustain an ABI when their partner suffocates, strangles, or chokes them. From these forms of assault, a person a person may lose consciousness or die depending on the length of time without oxygen.



A brain injury is an injury to the brain that occurs after birth and is not congenital, degenerative or hereditary. The injury results in a change of the brain's neuronal activity.

Possible effects of brain injury

If you have experienced any form of assault mentioned above, you may have a brain injury. Some possible effects of brain injury are written below, but please note that some of the consequences mentioned can also be a result of emotional issues related to abuse. Please contact a healthcare provider if you have or are experiencing any of the following consequences:

Cognitive

- Loss of consciousness
- Disorientation or alteration in consciousness
- Memory problems
- Reduced attention and concentration
- Slowed processing speed
- Reduced reaction time
- Feeling foggy
- Repeating questions or answering more slowly than usual

Emotional

- Depression or sadness
- Anxiety or nervousness
- Personality change
- Mood swings/emotional ability
- Irritability
- Showing less interest in previously enjoyed activities

Physical

- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fatigue or drowsiness
- Dizziness
- Problems with balance
- Visual disturbance
- Sensory symptoms (ringing in ears, loss of taste or smell)
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Raspy or hoarse voice
- Markings on the neck
- Abrasions around mouth and nose
- Petechiae (appears as rash or broken blood vessels on the face)



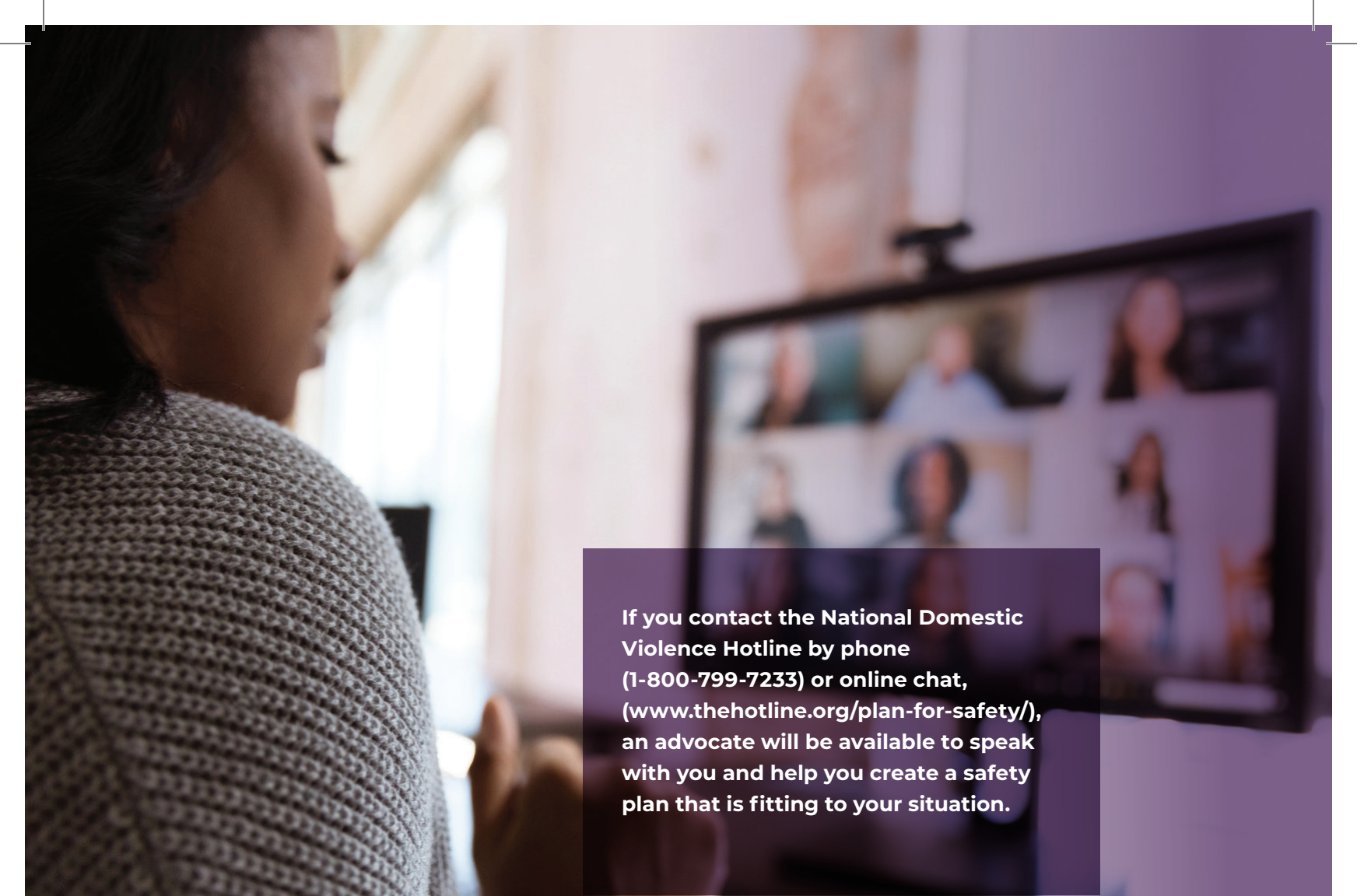
Challenges

Survivors of abuse may not seek medical help, because there is a misconception that a hit on the head is not problematic unless consciousness is lost. Survivors are often alone after they are injured and may not seek medical care for injuries due to safety, isolation, or economic reasons. Survivors may also be fearful and feel ashamed. Abuse is never the fault of the targeted person.

Brain injury can make it harder for a survivor of abuse to:

- Assess danger and defend themselves against assaults.
- Make and remember safety plans.
- Go to school or hold a job (possibly increasing financial dependency on the abuser).
- Leave an abusive partner and live on their own.
- Access services.
- Retain custody of their children.
- Adapt to living in a shelter. (They may become stressed, anxious, confused, or disruptive. In a shelter setting, they may have trouble understanding or remembering shelter rules.)





If you contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline by phone (1-800-799-7233) or online chat, (www.thehotline.org/plan-for-safety/), an advocate will be available to speak with you and help you create a safety plan that is fitting to your situation.

Developing a safety plan?

A safety plan is a personalized, practical plan that includes ways to remain safe while in a relationship, planning to leave, or after you leave. Safety planning involves how to cope with emotions, tell friends and family about the abuse, take legal action and more.

A good safety plan will have all the vital information you need and be tailored to your unique situation, as well as walk you through different scenarios. If you contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline by phone (1-800-799-7233) or online chat, (www.thehotline.org/plan-for-safety/), an advocate will be available to speak with you and help you create a safety plan that fits your situation. You can also contact your county domestic violence agency to discuss your situation and come up with a plan.

Although some of the items that you outline in your safety plan may seem obvious, it is important to remember that in moments of crisis, your brain does not function the same way as when you are calm. When adrenaline is pumping through your veins, it can be hard to think clearly or make logical decisions about your safety. Therefore, having a safety plan laid out in advance can help to protect yourself in those stressful moments.

Resources

If you are seeking additional information and support, please review the list of resources below. In case of emergency, please contact your local police department by dialing 911.

Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey (BIANJ)

Community Resource Specialists at BIANJ provide support, resources, and information on brain injury, as well as BIANJ programs. Everything discussed is confidential. The Helpline is not intended to replace professional and/or medical advice.

Helpline: 1-800-669-4323

Email: info@bianj.org

Website: www.bianj.org



National Domestic Violence Hotline

The National Domestic Violence Hotline provides essential tools and support to help survivors of domestic violence so they can live their lives free of abuse. You can obtain support by phone or through online chat through their website.

Hotline: 1-800-799-7233

Website: www.thehotline.org



New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NJCASA)

The New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NJCASA) connects individuals affected by sexual violence with professionals that provide assistance and referrals. Calls are routed to the closest rape crisis care center.

Hotline: 1-800-601-7200

Website: www.njcasa.org



New Jersey Domestic Violence Hotline

Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The New Jersey Domestic Violence Hotline provides confidential access to domestic violence information and services, including crisis intervention, referral, and advocacy. Bilingual and accessible to the deaf and hearing impaired. They can also refer survivors to their local domestic violence programs and agencies.

Hotline: 1-800-572-7233

Website: www.njcedv.org



Support Services

Helpline: 1-800-669-4323

BIANJ offers support, information about brain injury and connection to resources. The helpline operates Monday through Friday from 9am to 5pm. The helpline can be accessed by phone, live chat on bianj.org, and email at info@bianj.org.

BIANJ CARES

BIANJ CARES offers Connections, Assistance, Resources, Education and Support to individuals of all ages and families impacted by brain injury. This free statewide program provides one-on-one support by caring staff to assess current needs and help reach personal goals.

Support Groups

Support groups allow people with brain injury and their family members to meet others who are in similar situations, gain emotional support, friendship, as well as information and resources relevant to brain injury. Support groups meet throughout the state.

Educational Trainings

BIANJ offers workshops and trainings throughout the state to increase awareness about brain injury. These include:

- Presentations for people impacted by brain injury
- Professional and family conferences
- Webinars and online courses

Prevention

Prevention programs are designed for all ages to educate and increase awareness about preventing brain injury, such as:

- Transportation safety
- Seniors and falls
- Concussion
- Additional workshops as requested

Advocacy

BIANJ empowers individuals to get involved and advocate for legislative policy to support people impacted by brain injury.

For questions and a full listing of our programs and services, contact us at 1-800-669-4323, info@bianj.org, or by live chat at bianj.org.

Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey (BIANJ)

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