

LIFETIME CONTEXTS OF DOMESTIC/DATING VIOLENCE IN THE d/DEAF COMMUNITY

EARLY LIFE

- Language deprivation – poor access to language development/communication opportunities (ASL, hearing aids, etc.)
- Forcing one form of communication despite child's preference or ability
- No/little effort to communicate with the child; Dinner Table Syndrome
- Parental neglect/abandonment
- Preference for hearing siblings
- Parental, sibling, peer bullying
- Violence justified as discipline
- Treating the child as a burden
- Infantilization: not allowed to make own choices
- Parents/doctors treating deafness as something to be fixed
- Taught only a home sign language; no ability to communicate outside the home

Cultural shame:

Deafness may be seen as a result of wrongdoing by ancestors or in a past life. Many families hide deaf children to "save face"

TEEN YEARS & ADULTHOOD

- Trying to fit in can lead to drinking, substance abuse, unsafe sex, tolerating red flags
- Difficulty establishing boundaries because control was normalized in childhood
- Birth control/sexual health resources gated behind communication barriers
- Difficulty interacting with peers and building networks
- Bullying; cyber-bullying; othering from parents, siblings, peers
- Othering; making fun of accents
- Chronic loneliness, isolation, depression, anxiety
- Low expectations from teachers, employers; assumptions that the d/Deaf person has lower ability or intelligence; disparate salary
- Passed over for leadership and promotion opportunities
- "Crab theory"; other harmful intra-community dynamics and biases

Cultural disconnect:

Some d/Deaf people feel that deafness has to be their only identity, and feel disconnected from cultural/other communities

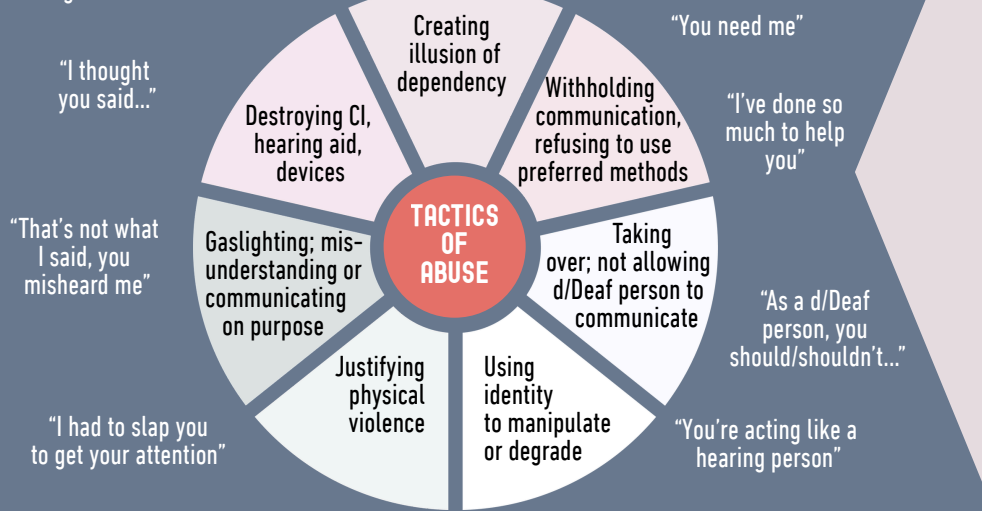
Cultural exclusion:

In cultures that value oral storytelling, deafness can create disconnection when there's no effort to be inclusive

When deafness is treated as a defect or invisibilized by family and community, d/Deaf people can develop internalized shame, become distrustful of authority or help, and lack healthy support systems.

EXPERIENCE WITH VIOLENCE

d/Deaf people may be targeted for violence because of the assumption that they are less able to detect stalking and less able to seek help for abuse. For some, added layers of bias, such as AAPI-hate, or the stereotype that Asian women are submissive, make them even more likely to be targeted.



Layered complexities

Deafness is a spectrum and the community is diverse. Some may have been born deaf or with hearing loss or acquired it later in life, including as a result of abuse. Some grew up in the Deaf culture or community, while some did not. Some use English and/or ASL, and some use other sign languages.

Some people who are d/Deaf may live with another disability such as blindness, limited mobility, or a cognitive disability. d/Deaf people are not just defined by their deafness, but have intersecting identities. They may have ESL, be immigrants, be LGBTQ+, etc. Like deafness, any of these identities are likely to impact how they experience violence.

Abuse can exist in relationships where both partners are d/Deaf or only one is. Responders should not make assumptions about who the harm-doer is.

SEEKING HELP

- Lack of support from family, friends, community
- Lack of qualified interpretation or long wait times, especially for non-English sign languages
- Technology issues or quality that limits interpretation/communication
- Hotlines with no accessibility features
- Assumptions about preferred communication method/language; assumption that all d/Deaf people use ASL
- Implicit bias, audism from service providers, healthcare, police
- Assumptions that deafness equals lack of intelligence, ability, or capacity to make decisions and live independently
- Allowing the abuser or a family member to interpret
- Fear of knowing the interpreter
- Re-traumatization from healthcare providers who may touch the survivor without communicating properly or asking consent

Audism and bias:
Some may believe that d/Deaf people don't date or are less desirable partners. Families can minimize abuse, saying "they should take what they can get"

LONG-TERM HEALING

- Continued low self-esteem, anxiety
- Difficulty finding support groups/community of other d/Deaf survivors
- Lack of workplace accommodations and harmful assumptions limit ability to become financially independent
- Pressure to hide trauma because they don't want to add to stereotypes that d/Deaf people cannot live normal lives or fear seeming like even more of a burden



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