



## Commentary: Dangers of abuse reinforced

By Ray Appel and Dr. Dean Gruner • For The Post-Crescent • May 19, 2010

The recent sentencing of four years in prison for Ryan Michalkiewicz on charges of attempted homicide and reckless endangerment of his estranged wife and children in the Town of Menasha has already prompted expression of opposing perspectives.

Those close to him or the victims will undoubtedly have their views influenced by emotional ties. But let's dissect the situation using research and statistics pertaining to male violence against women.

It's important to understand the most dangerous time for a woman is when she's leaving a relationship. According to a 2003 study published in the American Journal of Public Health, women who leave their batterers are at a 75 percent greater risk of being killed by their batterer than those who stay.

This case corroborates those statistics and demonstrates the atmosphere of fear and intimidation that too many women in our society endure. The American Medical Association identifies domestic violence as the No. 1 health issue for women in our country, with nearly one in three women in the United States physically abused by a partner at some point in her life.

A perpetrator's behavior typically becomes more violent and more frequent over time. To say that a man who abuses his wife then demonstrates remorse is indicative of someone who will not reoffend is contrary to statistics and is, at best, a misinformed presumption. For the victims' sake, we pray that this case is an exception to the overwhelming statistics.

Next, let's examine the perpetrator's "eruption of rage." Emotion does out-react reason, but to claim his acts are not premeditated is erroneous. Premeditation is not synonymous with conspiracy. The time it took for this man's acts is beyond that of an emotional outburst.

Abuse in domestic violence situations escalates and

an estimated 75 percent of domestic violence goes unreported. Many perpetrators of domestic violence do not have a criminal record (or even a police record) because their abuse builds in secret, sometimes over many years. When a victim says she is afraid that the perpetrator may return to "finish the job," it is rarely because of an isolated incident.

Finally, we are sure there are some who may say the victim holds some culpability. Let's make two things very clear:

First, violence is never an appropriate response to any nonviolent behavior. Beliefs to the contrary are indicative of a lingering culture of male dominance and female submissiveness.

Second, male violence against women is rooted in power and control. Our society tends to give men more power and generally condones men's violence against women through silence of well-meaning men.

Light sentences for violent acts compounds this detrimental culture by sending a message of tolerance and indifference. We have traditionally viewed domestic violence and sexual assault as a women's issue. It is not; it is society's issue.

The only way to stop male-perpetrated violence against women is to be a part of the solution.

Men (and we mean all well-meaning men), it's time we stand behind that statement. We need to be the ones who change our collective behavior, behavior

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that excuses or ignores men who abuse women.

Join us as we pledge to not commit, condone, or stay silent about men's violence against women.

Stand up, speak out and join Fox Valley Voices of Men. If not for the sake of victims, do so for the women in your life.

To see how to be a part of the solution, see [www.voicesofmen.com](http://www.voicesofmen.com).

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