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Male victims of domestic violence are not unusual

In the year 2006, 19 June was adopted as the Day of Equality between Women and Men. On that day nonprofit organizations annually commemorate the importance of the equal treatment of both sexes. The Persefona organization aids victims of domestic and sexual violence and many imagine women in the role of victims of these violations. That stereotype was the topic of today's press conference.

The myth that domestic violence just applies to the female population is so entrenched in society that most people are not aware how easily men can become victims of it too. Precisely because they are men, they are frequently forgotten as domestic violence victims and encounter barriers in the process of seeking adequate aid. "This is a double stigmatization by which a man who is a victim of domestic violence must face gender stereotypes related to the role of men in society, which include values such as dominance, independence, playing the role of protector and strength. On the other hand, they must cope with everything the issue of domestic violence presents them with," explained Persefona director Jitka Čechová.

From the known cases of male domestic violence victims it can be seen that men do not define themselves as victims and that they do not perceive violent tendencies on the part of their partner to be a crime. A basic barrier is that men do not believe they should seek professional help because they must solve the problem themselves. Moreover, they fear that if they report such a situation before it has ended it might be turned against them and they could even end up being prosecuted as a perpetrator of domestic violence.

These facts are confirmed by the testimony of a male client of Persefona who became the victim of domestic violence and decided to seek aid. "Even when it was happening I could not admit it was happening. You blame yourself and you think it's your own fault, that's why it would never have occurred to me to go somewhere to address it," the client said. He did not get a perspective on the entire situation until after his sister contacted Persefona with a request for advice on his behalf. Thanks to his family, he found the courage to begin addressing his situation with professionals. "The advantage is that you find someone who believes you," the client said.

Comprehensive aid to victims of domestic and sexual violence and their loved ones
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The Persefona organization is sought out annually by approximately 350 clients who are victims of domestic violence, rape and sexual abuse, by their loved ones, and by persons who commit violence in relationships. Of those clients, only between 3 and 7 % are male victims of domestic violence.

“We are of the opinion that this is just a fraction of all cases and we consider it important to increase sensitivity to this issue,” Čechová said, adding that “the aim is for men to seek aid and for the public to better understand all aspects of domestic violence.”

The Persefona organization was created in 2007 when the League of Human Rights organization separated from its anti-domestic violence program, which had provided aid to victims of domestic violence since 1999. The mission and purpose of Persefona is to increase understanding of all aspects of the issue of domestic and sexual violence and to seek optimal ways to address it. Its services are provided by professional staffers – lawyers, psychologists and social workers. Consultations are realized by e-mail, in person, and by telephone. More information is at www.persefona.cz

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