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Cause campaign for dating abuse in college

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Cause Campaign for Dating Abuse in College

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An Honors College Project Presented to

the Faculty of the Undergraduate

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by Isabel Elaine Kerr

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Accepted by the faculty of the School of Media Arts and Design, James Madison University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Honors College.

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PUBLIC PRESENTATION

This work is accepted for presentation, in part or in full, at the Honors Symposium on April 5, 2019.

In dedication to my parents, for fostering every pursuit of mine, for supporting me through each

high and low, and for being my biggest advocates. I owe all of my successes to them.

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Preface

After a grueling personal experience, I was searching for clarity and closure. This was not an immediate process and only began once I recognized my situation for what it was—an emotionally abusive relationship. What began as a few database searches quickly turned into a complete absorption and fascination with the current research and findings on *dating abuse.*

According to *Knowledge Network's* 2011 study, almost one-third of female college students report having experienced an abusive relationship and yet over half of all college students state that dating abuse is difficult to identify (p. 11-12). This troubling statement, and many similar findings, sparked my capstone concept. The idea was further solidified when I discovered that even though "half of college students know a college friend who has experienced dating abuse, only 8% see dating abuse as a major problem on their campus" ("College Dating and Abuse Final Study," 2011, p. 27).

Much of the ambiguity and lack of attention dating abuse receives publicly stems from misinformation. When the word "abuse" is used, some individuals think along the lines of Brandt's "I Didn't Know My Boyfriend Was Abusive Since He Never Hit Me" (2015). Murray and Kardatzke's work clarifies this muddled misconception: "physical, sexual, and psychological violence often co-occur in abuse relationships" (Murray and Kardatzke, 2007). Prevalence paired with lack of awareness led to my capstone's efforts. I hope that through my experience, education, and investment in this endeavor, others will reclaim power over their own situations and find the clarity or closure they deserve.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincerest appreciation to the people who made this project possible and encouraged me along the way:

My advisor, Dr. Holman for believing in my work, trusting my direction, and offering four years of mentorship;

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Abstract

Through a cause campaign and partnership with the James Madison University (JMU) Health Center (UHC), this project confronts the widespread social issue of intimate partner violence (IPV), or dating abuse, in college-aged relationships. Encompassing all forms and subsets of dating abuse, the campaign intends to initiate conversation, facilitate awareness, and express support within the university community. This project meets its education and intervention objectives through in-depth research on the current state of the issue, social and behavioral trends, and relevant campaign efforts. Based on this research, the campaign's creative strategy statement is created, guided by a SWOT analysis, assessment of the target audience, and consultation with the UHC. The creative strategy is demonstrated through the campaign deliverables, scheduled for implementation in October 2019, National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, in conjunction with the UHC's other awareness efforts.

Literature Review

College Dating

Kaukinen analyzes the risk and protective factors of dating abuse in college-aged individuals. As with any epidemic, many factors contribute, including "gender, violence in the family of origin, emotional states and mental health, substance use and abuse, sexual risk taking, nature of intimate relationships, and academic engagement" (2014). College is a time of transition and exposure, as young adults move into new spaces and interact with dissimilar individuals from various backgrounds. Consequentially, each of these factors may vary in relationships; any combination factors into the fostering of healthy or harmful dating relationships.

Dating abuse culture. Dating abuse is highly prevalent yet widely under-discussed, as a staggering, "1 in 3 (29%) college women say they have been in an abusive dating relationship" ("College Dating and Abuse Final Study," 2011, p. 11-12). What feeds this culture of gender inequality, power differences, emotional manipulation, coercion, rape?

Murray and Kardatzke define "*dating violence* and *dating abuse* as 'the use or threat of physical force or restraint carried out with the intent of causing pain or injury to another in a dating relationship . . . [they] also include sexual and psychological abuse as components of dating violence" (Murray and Kardatzke, 2007, p. 79). The mention of abusive components beyond physical is critical in understanding how dating abuse starts, escalates, and cohabits an abusive relationship. All components considered, "dating violence or abuse often starts with emotional and verbal abuse," and is so common that "more than four in 10 college women have experienced violence or abuse in a dating relationship" ("Dating Violence," 2017). For a more

definitive phrasing, *Women's Health* defines dating violence as "physical, sexual, emotional, or verbal abuse from a romantic or sexual partner" (2017).

      Misinformation. Murray and Kardatzke emphasize a key issue in an at-risk population: "College students who experience dating violence are more likely to tell friends about their experiences than they are to report the violence to counselors and/or law enforcement officials" (2007). This presents concerns when compared to the fact that "more than half of all college students (57%) say it is difficult to identify dating abuse" ("College Dating and Abuse Final Study," 2011, p. 11-12). As a result, peers are not the most informed confidants for individuals involved in abusive relationships. Unfortunately, in college counseling centers, "violence may be overshadowed by clients' other presenting problems," potentially making centers insufficient resources for students as well (Murray and Kardatzke, 2007).

Types of Dating Abuse

      Knowledge Network's 2011 findings include an unexhaustive yet specific list of violent and abusive dating behaviors:

- Controlling Behaviors
  - Tried to prevent me from spending time with my family or friends
  - Told me how to dress
  - Bought me anything that I needed as a way to control me
  - Threatened to spread rumors if I didn't do what he/she wanted
  - Told me where to live either on or off campus
  - Prevented me from participating in sports or other extracurricular activities
  - Told me what classes to take at college

- Verbal Abuse

  - Threatened to kill himself/herself if I stopped seeing him/her

  - Threatened to hurt me if we were to break up

  - Threatened to hurt (hit, slap, choke, punch, kick) me when angry

- Physical Abuse

  - Hurt (hit, slapped, choked, punched, kicked) me when angry

  - Made me fear for my safety

- Abuse via Technology

  - Called and texted my cell phone to check up on me more than 50 times per day

  - Shared or threatened to share private or embarrassing pictures or videos of me

- Sexual Abuse

  - Pressured me into having sex (going all the way) when I didn't want to

- Forced Substance Use

  - Pressured me into drinking alcohol when I didn't want to

  - Pressured me to do drugs when I didn't want to. ("College Dating and Abuse Final Study," 2011, p. 8)

Psychological violence. Cupach and Spitzberg detail psychological terms found deep-rooted in abusive relationships, analyzing the detriments of "fatal attraction, jealousy and envy, misunderstanding, gossip, conflict, codependence, sexual coercion, stalking, relationship termination, unrequited love, and mental health problems" (Cupach and Spitzberg, 2011). Some of these signs exist in non-intimate relationships as well, presenting serious issues when present in one of the most influential types of relationships—romantic, college-aged ones. Less conspicuous than physical signs of abuse, college students in relationships that exhibit

psychological violence often overlook, justify, or normalize the harmful behavior internally

and/or privately (Murray and Kardatzke, 2007, p. 81-83).

Gaslighting. Coined in the 1930s, gaslighting describes a subset of psychological,

emotional abuse, which is characterized by behaviors of "withholding, countering,

diverting/blocking, trivializing, and forgetting/denial" ("What is Gaslighting," 2014). Individuals

who gaslight make their partners feel forgetful, blameworthy, overly sensitive, and unimportant.

Subtle and long-term, gaslighting strategies lead to feelings of defeat, isolation, doubt, and self-

blame. These covert behaviors often underlie other forms of dating abuse because it "happens

very gradually in a relationship . . . [and] may seem harmless at first" ("What is Gaslighting,"

2014). Relationships that use gaslighting as a form of control contribute to *Knowledge Network's*

conclusion that college students struggle to identify dating abuse.

Cause Campaigns

Dating abuse, deeply engrained in the cultural and psychological makeup of society,

requires national efforts and attention. In order to facilitate change, discussion must begin at the

local level and work outward, informing at-risk populations and creating support systems that are

inclusive and educational. A cause campaign at a singular college campus works toward this

tactic and reinforces *Harvard Business Review*'s statement that effective cause campaigns should

take form as "a public service engagement, not a public service announcement" (Panepinto,

2016).

Cause campaigns differ from brand awareness or product/service campaigns in the

severity of their message, content, and presentation. In particular, these campaigns should "focus

on a big issue coupled with a request for a small personal action" (Panepinto, 2016). With an

important social issue, the primary challenge is moving the audience to action, so the request

from viewers should require low time and effort. Goodwill echoes this need: "PSAs should be made the same way a commercial product is made except the job is much harder because instead of trying to sell more product or increase market share, we are normally trying to affect deeply seated public attitudes and behavior" (Goodwill, n.d.).

Strategic plan. To organize the research, production, and metrics for a cause campaign, a strategic plan must be implemented and followed. Goodwill specifies that a strategic plan "address[es] the entire scope of campaign development, including research, creative strategy, production, distribution and evaluation" (Goodwill, n.d.). Within *Forbes'* suggested marketing plan are three key goals: defining the target audience, determining how to reach the target, and planning for how to maintain the target's attention and interaction (Lavinsky, 2013). Most critically, these goals require a holistic understanding of the campaign's problem, the current and desired behavior, and the target's demographic and psychographic commonalities (Goodwill, n.d.).

Effective and memorable. Cause campaigns should include a physical platform or event as well as a substantial allocation to social channels and earned media (Panepinto, 2016). Regarding the social emphasis, once people feel inclined to "own the campaign, and express their own creativity," the message sticks and spreads by itself (Panepinto, 2016). This could be applied by crafting interactive digital content, hashtags, compelling calls to action, and accessible resources for more information. Interestingly, "69% . . . are most likely to remember a PSA that presents the facts in either a surprising or straightforward way, while only 11% said they tend to remember those that make them laugh" (Panepinto, 2016). Considering the charged emotions and experiences associated with dating abuse, a surprising and clear messaging strategy is both logical and promising. Goodwill confirms that "good PSAs are empathetic, meaning they

build trust with their audience, or a sense of caring about a problem." Goodwill also states the critical need for a call to action in order to encourage participation among the target and improve retention of the message (n.d.).

Past dating abuse campaigns. Like any other topical issue, reputable campaigns exist currently to address dating abuse. The more well-known campaigns include "Red Flag," "Love Is Not Abuse," and "Break the Cycle" ("Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month," 2017). These campaigns overlap in funding, mission, and reach, building on their collective research and successes to provide large-scale audiences with accurate information and advice.

"Break the Cycle" was started in 1996 "to create a culture without abuse," focusing on a younger demographic, ages 12-24, in the prevention and intervention realms of harmful relationships ("Break the Cycle," 2014). By 2004, the teen-centered campaign spread nationally. It was the first campaign of its kind to focus on a previously overlooked age group after recognizing the gap in attention and services. Child abuse and IPV services existed, but there were none specifically for youth relationships prior to "Break the Cycle" initiatives ("Break the Cycle," 2014). The campaign facilitates constructive conversations led by and between teens though "in-person discussions, blogging, social media, and events," covering a range of platforms and means of outreach ("Break the Cycle," 2014).

"Start Talking" is a curriculum for dating violence education and prevention, part of "Break the Cycle," that was created by "Loveisrespect." The curriculum facilitates discussions in school about different types of relationships, including how healthy relationships function and what characterizes unhealthy relationships. "Start Talking" is one of many curriculums implemented in schools and communities that follows the IPARD/C (Investigation, Preparation-Planning, Action, Reflection, Demonstration/Celebration) program method ("Start Talking,"

2017). Similar to "Start Talking," Virginia utilizes The PREVENT Institute, Safe Dates, and Choose Respect.

Notably, "The Red Flag Campaign" was the first "statewide public awareness campaign to address dating violence and promote the prevention of dating violence on Virginia college campuses" (Leftwich, Perry, and Odor, 2009, p. 20). Since 2007, the campaign has been implemented on 18 Virginia college campuses, including JMU ("The Red Flag Campaign," 2017). "The Red Flag Campaign" uses a bystander intervention strategy to encourage community members surrounding individuals in abusive relationships to contribute to the solution ("The Red Flag Campaign," 2017). The campaign's creative concept pairs physical red flags with abusive relationship warning signs written across the flags. Masses of the bright flags are memorable and powerful in the campaign's physical and digital content, providing a cohesive strategy and creative execution, and the hashtag #SaySomething encourages conversation and community in college students' digital lives.

Conclusion

In light of the national conversation prompted by the Me Too movement, a cause campaign addressing dating abuse arises on the cusp of emerging voices and previously suppressed experiences, serving as a major strength (Zacharek, Dockterman, and Edwards, 2017). Inhibiting the kairos of the topic, weaknesses complicate goals of awareness and action. In order to combat the underreporting of sexual violence, the ambiguity of definitions and terminology must be addressed, as "there is no unified data collection system . . . many definitions of sexual violence differ" (Leftwich et al., 2009, p. 25). Opportunities exist in building upon nationally recognized initiatives like "The Red Flag Campaign," but threats lie in the overlap in campaign efforts. When executed with specificity in target audience and objective,

the efforts can minimize redundancy and work in parallel. Additionally, proliferation of multimedia content and tailored messages are key executional components to accomplish a memorable, actionable campaign that fits in with existing content and resources.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

– "Me Too" national conversation (Zacharek et al., 2017)

– Combined assistance and/or authority of the University Health Center, School of Media Arts & Design, and Honors College

– Large, relevant, and accessible audience within the campus community

Weaknesses

– Information provided by JMU requires the students to seek it out on websites—not widely accessible or well-known ("Services for Students," 2018)

– Limitations in time and resources for an individual student capstone

– Current legislation and news that keeps individuals from coming forward

Opportunities

– As half of college students are involved in long-term relationships, dating students will be receptive to the messaging (Kuperberg and Padgett, 2016).

– Exposure to over 20,000 college students, who are either directly or indirectly affected by dating violence ("Facts and Figures," 2018)

– Ability to work in conjunction with JMU's existing "Red Flag Campaign" efforts

Threats

– Potential triggering of target audience—suggested preemptive steps, e.g., detailing help resources on all deliverables and informing all relevant campus staff of the campaign prior to campaign launch (Potter, 2012)

– Lack of action as a result of the campaign due to social norms or complicated emotional involvement of affected individuals

Creative Strategy Statement

Target Audience

- Gender: Predominately female; LGBTQ inclusive

    - Heterosexual women experience some of the highest rates of dating abuse, almost three times the national average ("Dating Abuse Statistics," 2017). The LGBTQ community experiences the same rates as heterosexual individuals (Carpenter, 2017).

    - Creative intends to step away from binaries and reflect diversity in orientation, sexuality, and relationships, as the entire gender spectrum experiences dating abuse ("Addressing Sexual and Relationship Violence," n.d.).

- Age: 17-22

- Education: Undergraduate college students

    - 57% of college students who experienced an abusive relationship state it occurred during college ("College Dating Violence and Abuse Poll," 2014).

- Relationship status: Intimately dating, whether that be long-term or short-term

    - While over half of college-aged men and women are in intimate, dating relationships, long-term relationships are the most desired and hookups are the least desired relationships for all students (Stevens and Morris, 2007; Kuperberg and Padgett, 2016).

- Geodemographic: Harrisonburg, Virginia; 75% originally from the state of Virginia

- Career: Part-time, on-campus employment, or unemployed

- US VALS Segments ("Strategic Business Insights," 2018)

    - VALS Innovators: "Always taking in information; are confident enough to experiment; are future oriented; are more receptive to new ideas and technologies"

    - VALS Strivers: "Have revolving employment; high temporary unemployment; are fun loving; are intimate; are the center of low-status street culture; desire to better their lives but have difficulty in realizing their desire"

- Technology use

    - The target owns and routinely uses personal laptops, smart phones, and/or wearable technology.

    - 94% of the target use YouTube, 80% use Facebook, 78% use Snapchat, 71% use Instagram, and 45% use Twitter (Smith and Anderson, 2018).

- Habits

    - 25% of those in relationships have been with their partners for one to three years, while 29% have for less than a year (Stevens and Morris, 2007).

    - 43% or more of target have experienced "violent and abusive dating behaviors" ("Dating Abuse Statistics," 2017).

- Limitations

    - Due to university regulations, the sharing and publishing of information/statistics specific to the JMU student population was not granted for this project.

    - JMU statistics fall within average range of national statistics on dating abuse (Hieber, 2018).

Current Mindset of the Target

- College students may seek long-term, intimate relationships because of social norms, age expectations, or lack of companionship. Regardless of motivations for dating, over half of college students cannot identify dating abuse yet almost half experience said behavior in their relationships (Stevens and Morris, 2007; "Dating Abuse Statistics," 2017).

- The target is situated in a political climate, locally and nationally, that perpetuates the underreporting of sexual assault due to legislative restrictions and decisions (Haynes and Weyrich, 2018; Kimble and Chettiar, 2018).

Current Mindset of the Target on Preexisting Campaigns

- National organizations and prevention programs, such as "The Red Flag Campaign" and "Loveisrespect," have substantial brand awareness among the target ("The Red Flag Campaign," 2017; "About loveisrespect," 2017). "The Red Flag Campaign" has a presence on 59 campuses in Virginia alone ("The Red Flag Campaign," 2017).

- Intervention and prevention programs do not negatively impact empathy and action among the target in reducing dating violence (Potter, 2010).

Desired Mindset of the Target

- By educating dating individuals about identifying and eliminating unhealthy relationships, the campaign encourages the target to initiate honest dialogue and accept advice from campus resources. In turn, this will continue the current conversation of education and intervention at a feasible level at JMU. The campaign intends to show support and understanding of JMU student life in a realistic, productive manner. This allows the university to encourage and adopt positive social norms (Potter, 2010).

Message Objective

– Give brand social meaning through slice of life so students can more easily identify like-situations in their personal lives

– Persuade the audience through an informational/educational approach, promoting university resources and making students more receptive to advice

– Promote campaign recall through repetition of ads to increase student receptivity to university support

Creative Strategy

– JMU is a space for students to create positive memories, goals, and relationships; intimate relationships should foster further happiness and success within this community, not dejection or negative preoccupations.

Supporting Evidence

– When Student Ambassadors describe JMU as "the happiest place on Earth," they mean that all students are entitled to positive experiences and a supportive home at JMU. Abusive relationships detract from student's growth and goals, encroaching on this positive space.

    – Campus specific campaigns more strongly resonate with the target ("Addressing Sexual and Relationship Violence," n.d.).

– Drawing inspiration from the students' post campaign receptivity, "The Red Flag Campaign really hit close to home for me . . . It brought back some memories about past relationship experiences, and made me think about what I need to be happy" ("The Red Flag Campaign," 2017).

Creative Concept

– Focusing on students' favorite JMU spaces and the memories associated with them, the campaign draws attention to the inconspicuous harm abusive relationships can cause in students' lives. The campaign's tagline and title, "Dukes Deserve Better" is paired with the slogan, "Don't let an abusive relationship ruin your favorite spot."

Tone

– Positive

– Reflective
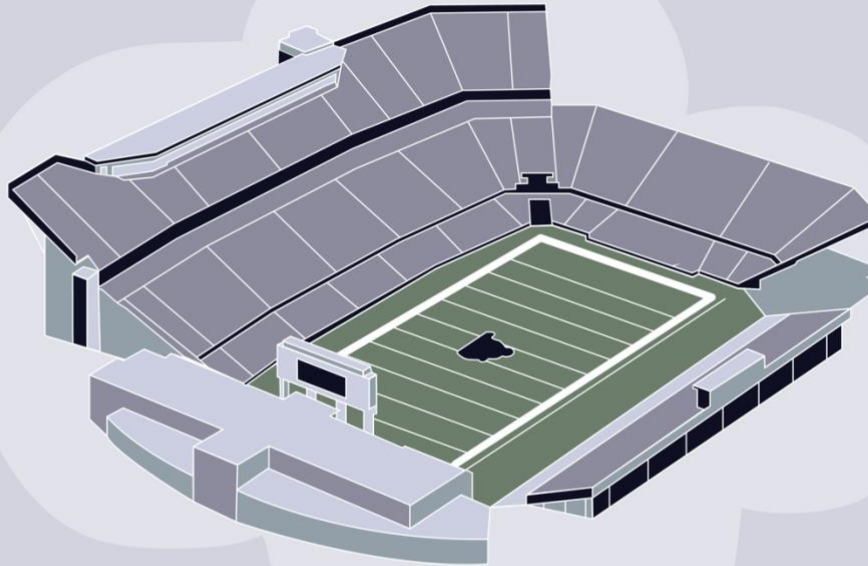
– Declarative

– Thought-provoking

– Empathetic

– Collective

Figure 1: Poster 1 for dorms, campus bathrooms, academic buildings.

Figure 2: Poster 2 for dorms, campus bathrooms, academic buildings.

Figure 3: Poster 3 for dorms, campus bathrooms, academic buildings.

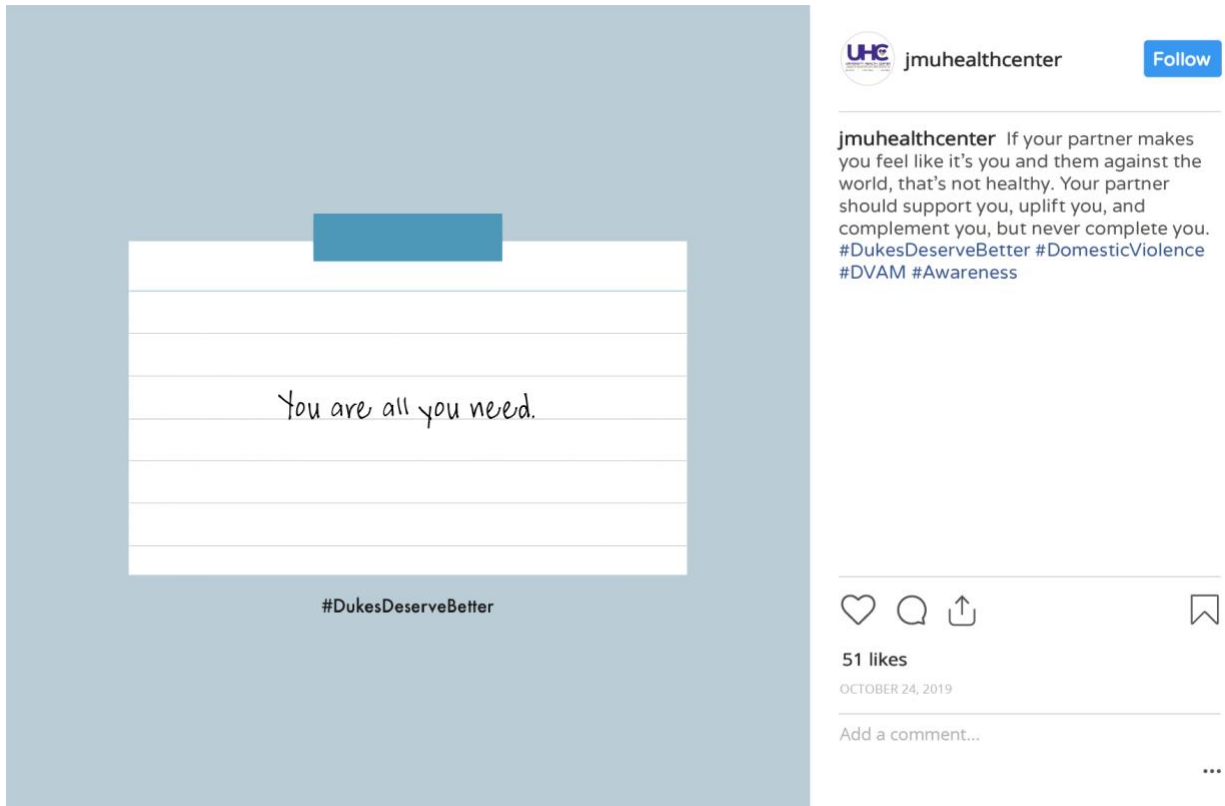*Figure 4*: Bus banner for Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation's 40 routes.

Figure 5: Social media post 1 for the UHC's Instagram, Facebook, and/or Twitter.

Figure 6: Social media post 2 for the UHC's Instagram, Facebook, and/or Twitter.

Figure 7: Social media post 3 for the UHC's Instagram, Facebook, and/or Twitter.
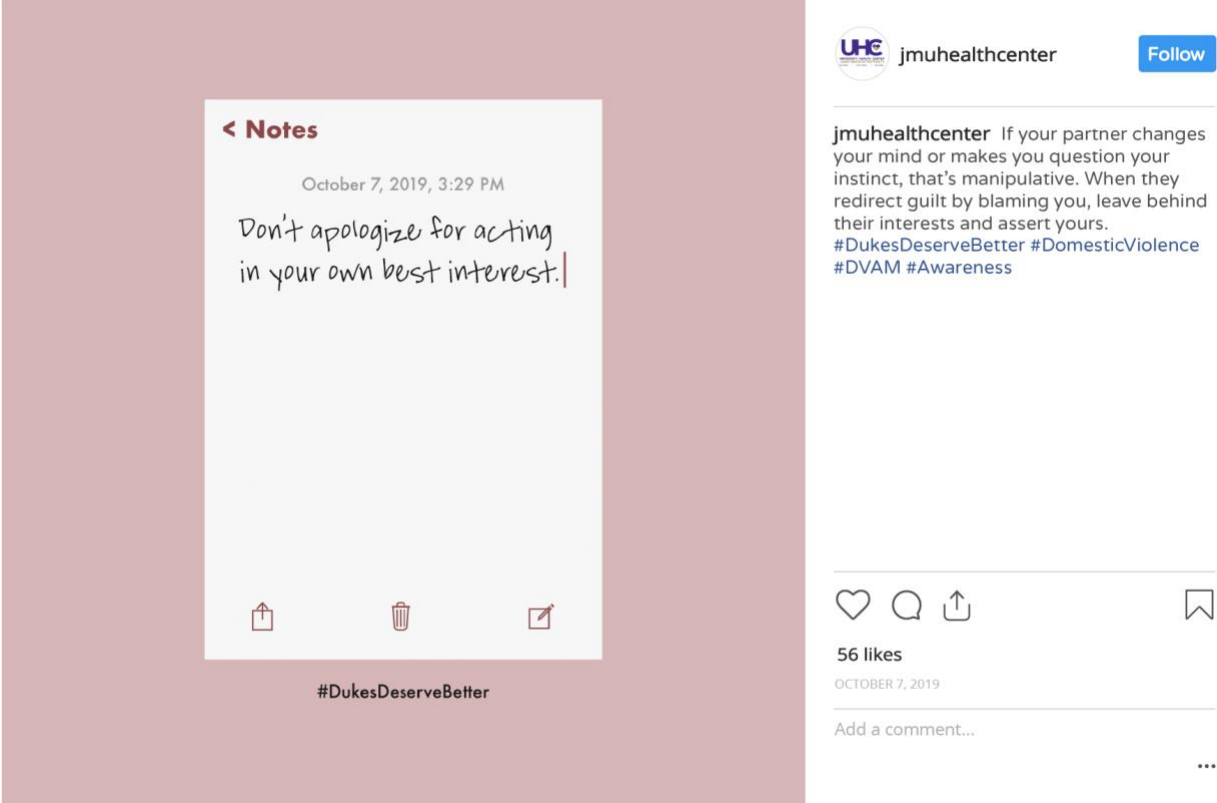
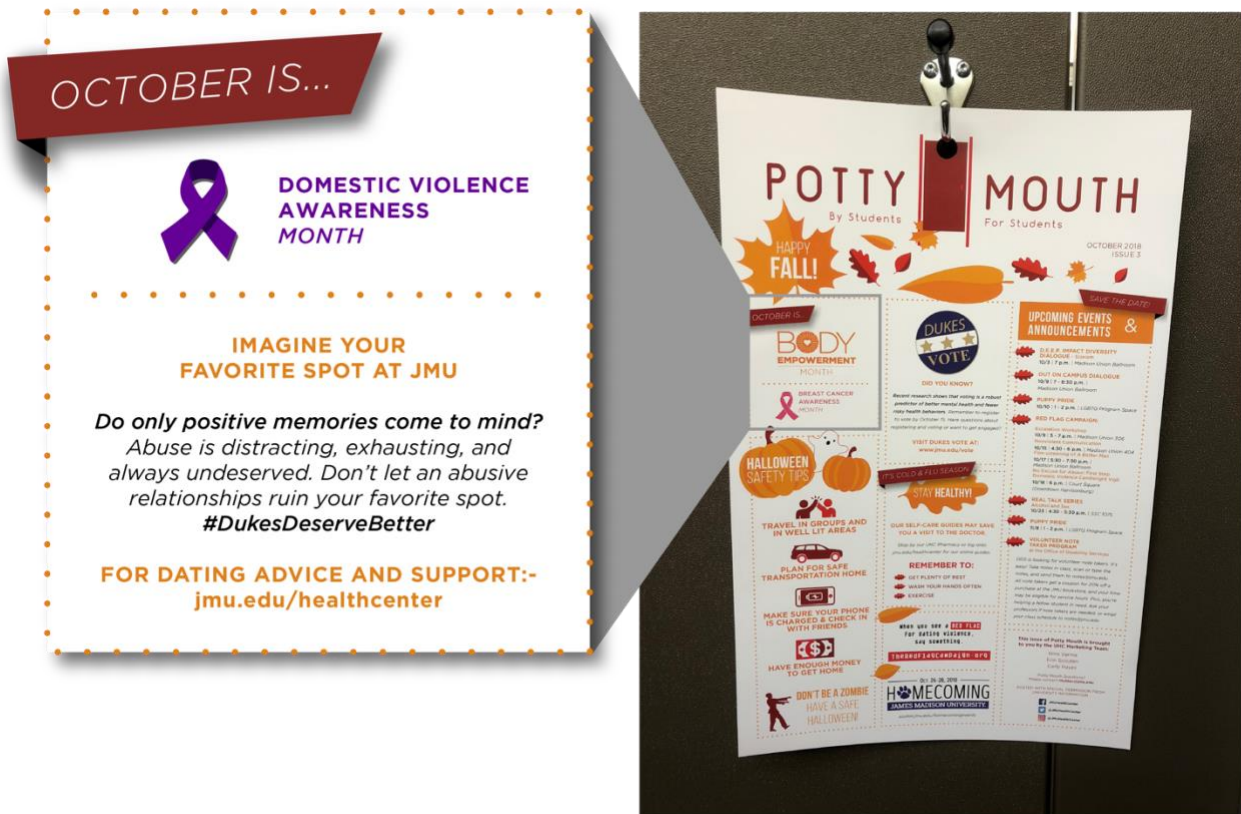*Figure 8*: Social media post 4 for the UHC's Instagram, Facebook, and/or Twitter.

Figure 9: *Potty Mouth* write-up for on-campus restroom stalls, mockup on October 2018 (3).

Figure 10: Informational infographic for the UHC website promoted through aforementioned deliverables.

DATING ABUSE
Dukes Deserve Better

IT'S MORE THAN JUST PHYSICAL

Emotional •Monitoring where you go •Getting angry or jealous when you spend time with others •Making you question your memory of events, aka gaslighting •Insisting no one else will love you the way they do •Threatening to commit suicide if you leave

Verbal •Name calling •Blaming you for their actions •Exposing your secrets or private matters in front of others •Withholding or omitting information that would upset you •Discounting your feelings •Excusing hurtful comments as jokes •Promising to do better next time

Digital •Angering over what you like or who you follow •Using social media to monitor your activity •Pressuring you to send/reciprocate unwanted photos •Looking through your phone •Making you feel guilty for not responding

Physical •Slapping, pulling, choking, spanking, shoving you •Preventing you from receiving help or medical attention •Forcing you to drink or use drugs •Leaving you in unfamiliar places •Throwing or breaking objects near you

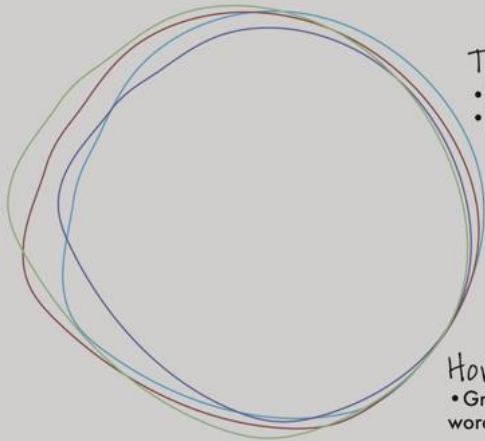**Sexual** •Ignoring your feelings about sex •Making you perform unwanted or uncomfortable sexual activities •Holding you down during sex •Continuing a sexual activity even if you say it hurts •Forcing you to watch porn •Purposefully lying or faking information about STDs

Coercion •Making you feel like you owe them sex because of your relationship •Convincing you not to use a condom or to stop taking birth control •Pressuring you to have sex after you refuse •Using situations involving alcohol to make sexual requests or moves

IT'S LIKE AN ENDLESS ROLLER COASTER

Tension • Routine
• Unease • Anticipation
• Accusations • Trigger

Incident • Abuse
• Excuses • Apologies
• Blame • Denial

Honeymoon • Promises
• Grand gestures • Loving
words • Affection • Hope

YOUR EMOTIONS GET TANGLED

Heartache

Anger

Criticism

Blame

Numbness

Intensity

Isolation

Sabotage

Control

Denial

Jealousy
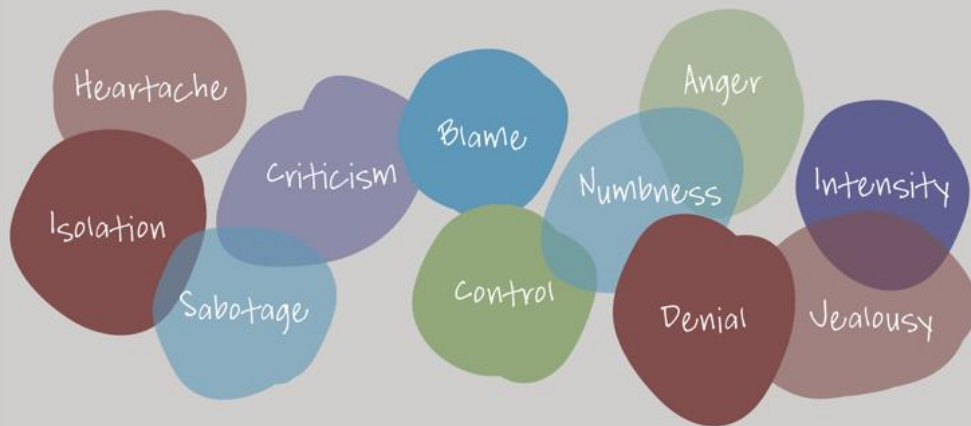
YOU'RE NOT ALONE

48%
of women
& men

1/3
of college
women

61%
of bisexual
women

Everyone
___
—

Abuse doesn't discriminate. No matter your age, education, or orientation . . .
Abuse is always undeserved.

IT WAS NEVER YOUR FAULT

It's NOT because . . .
- You're stupid
- You're naive
- You're too trusting
- You're too sensitive
- You're unlovable

- You need to communicate better
- You need to try harder
- You need to forgive more
- You thought it could be fixed
- You thought it wasn't that bad
- You thought you were responsible

It IS because . . .
- Abusers lack empathy, seek control, and are self-centered
- Abuse is a choice, never a reflection on anyone except the abuser

ENDING IT IS THE HARDEST PART

Normal break-up etiquette doesn't apply • Doesn't have to occur in-person • Should be short, as you don't have to explain yourself • Meet in public • Bring someone else with you

You will grieve over someone who hasn't died • The mask has fallen off the person you thought they were • By releasing how you wish things were, you'll discover new opportunities, priorities, and aspirations

PUT YOURSELF FIRST AGAIN

- Surround yourself with family
- Journal to work through feelings
- Absorb yourself in work & hobbies
- Make more time "me time"
- Disconnect from your phone
- Research dating abuse to process your experience
- Vent to someone unbiased (UHC or Counseling Center)

MAKE A PACT WITH YOURSELF

I HAVE:

1. The right to love and be loved
2. The strength to move on
3. The power over my happiness
4. The authority to make my own decisions
5. The support of those that matter

Source: https://www.thehotline.org/

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