

“Stay at Home” Order – A Terrifying Sentence for Those Living with Domestic Violence

March 23 2020 11:38 AM



Saturday, Governor J.B. Pritzker issued an executive order mandating that all Illinois residents “stay at home,” only leaving their home for health and safety reasons. All nonessential business was shut down in order to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 across the state of Illinois. It’s no doubt that our safety is at hand, but what is seen as a safety measure by some is quite the opposite for others.

Anyone who has jumped on social media lately has seen the thousands of memes making light of our current situation. Some joke about working at home with children, others poke fun at a parent's lack of patience in home-schooling their children, but for those living in homes with domestic violence, the "stay at home" order is no laughing business.

The *Never Alone Again* program, a non-profit domestic violence organization and resource center, completed a study in 2018 claiming that a woman is a victim of physical violence every nine seconds. This statistic doesn't include those acts of violence that go unreported. For women in these types of circumstances, spending hours at home without the safe haven of work or school can be terrifying. "To be forced to spend so many hours with your abuser, with no excuse to get away for even a few minutes at a time, is the worst nightmare imaginable," says one woman who had been a victim herself for nearly a decade before finally escaping her abusive home environment. She went on to explain that even on inclement weather days when the roads are too bad to travel, she would be "scared to death from the first snow flake because it was just a matter of time before he snapped."

Unfortunately, the COVID -19 virus and subsequent social distancing may slow the spread of the virus, however, it also makes domestic abuse invisible to a woman's support system – family, friends, co-workers.

Many women find ways to remove themselves from the violence, using resources such as the *Never Alone Again* program, or the resources offered by the Domestic Abuse Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 or by texting LOVEIS to 22522, but many are still living in abusive, violent homes. The "Stay at Home" order which is meant to save the masses from illness, may subsequently hurt those living in abusive homes.