

ASPEN

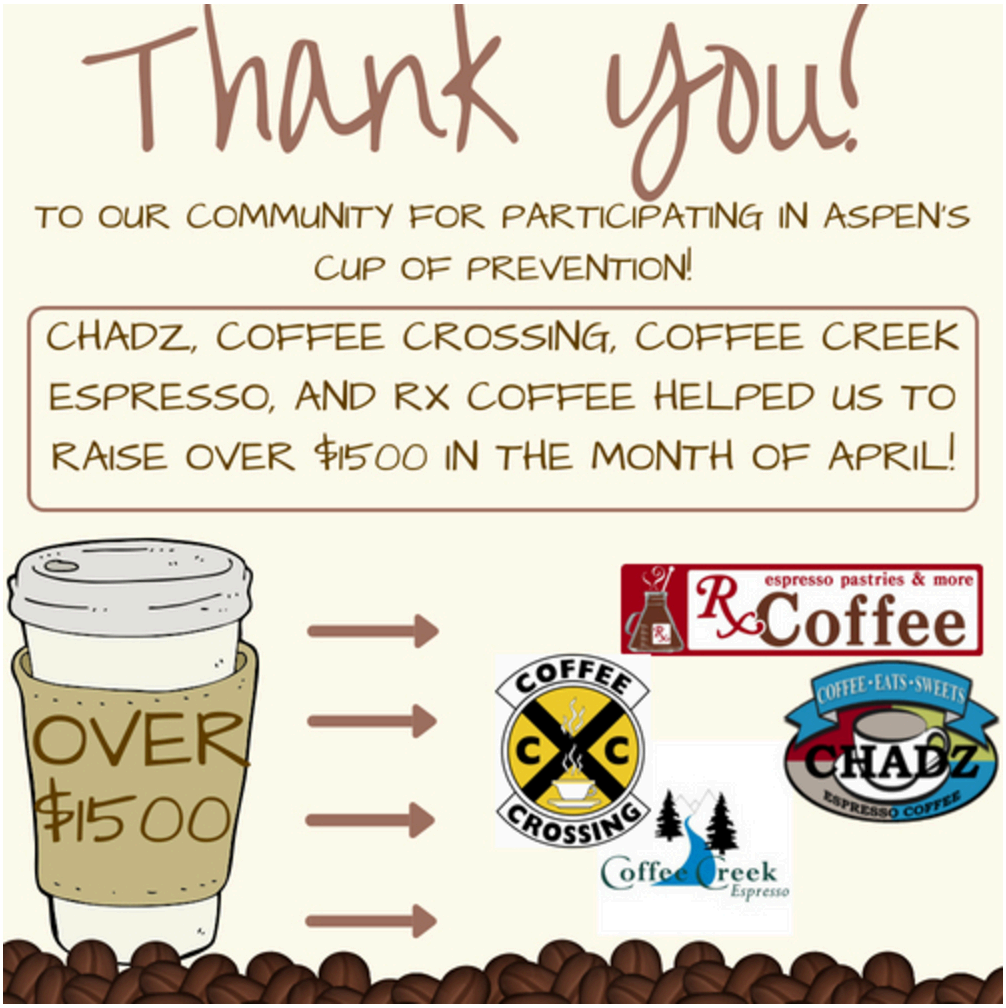
Abuse Support & Prevention Education Network

May Newsletter



Donor Spotlight

ASPEN would like to extend a generous thank you to Grace, a Park County Community member who recently turned 6 years old and chose to donate money from her birthday celebration to ASPEN. We are so grateful to young people in our community who help us to make Montana an even better place to live healthy lives. Grace says she chose to give her money to ASPEN because, "She wanted to help people." Thanks Grace, you're an inspiration to us all!


Thank you!
TO OUR COMMUNITY FOR PARTICIPATING IN ASPEN'S CUP OF PREVENTION!
CHADZ, COFFEE CROSSING, COFFEE CREEK ESPRESSO, AND RX COFFEE HELPED US TO RAISE OVER $1500 IN THE MONTH OF APRIL!
OVER $1500
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Support groups bring together people facing similar issues and challenges. Whether experiencing illness, relationship problems or major life changes, members of support groups often share experiences and advice. It can be helpful just

getting to talk with other people who are in the same situation.

While not everyone wants or needs support beyond that offered by family and friends, you may find it helpful to turn to others outside your immediate circle. A support group can help you to better cope and feel less isolated as you make connections with others facing similar challenges.

Benefits of support groups

Members of a support group usually share their personal experiences and offer one another emotional comfort and moral support. They may also offer practical advice and tips to help you deal with your situation.

Benefits of participating in support groups may include:

- Feeling less lonely, isolated or judged
- Gaining a sense of empowerment and control
- Improving your positive coping skills and sense of adjustment
- Talking openly and honestly about your feelings
- Reducing distress, depression, anxiety or fatigue
- Developing a clearer understanding of what to expect with your situation
- Comparing notes about resources, such as doctors and alternative options

ASPEN Support Group

The ASPEN support group meets the third Thursday of each month at 7pm. The location is non-disclosed for safety purposes. The survivor support group is facilitated by April Stuart, a Licensed Professional and Addiction Counselor. The co-facilitator is Mary Baker, ASPEN Program Advocate. Light refreshments and childcare is provided. For more information, contact Mary Baker at 406-222-5902 ext. 3 or via email at marybaker@aspenmt.org.



Concealed Carry Reciprocity:

a Recipe for Diaster

As a domestic violence prevention advocate in Livingston, my colleagues and I work tirelessly to keep survivors of domestic violence safe. However, “concealed carry reciprocity” legislation -- currently pending in the U.S. Congress -- would make Montanans less safe. Last year, the U.S. House of Representatives passed this dangerous



legislation, and it's expected to be voted on in the Senate later this year. As it stands now, every state decides for itself a set of standards for who can carry a concealed handgun in public, but if this legislation becomes law, it would force Montana -- and every other state -- to follow the laws of the least-restrictive states in the union.

I am particularly concerned about this policy as an advocate for the prevention of domestic violence and abuse. This might not seem like a women's issue at first glance, but gun violence and domestic violence are inextricably linked, and we know that guns and domestic abusers are a deadly combination._ More than half of the women killed with guns in the U.S. between 2010 and 2014 were killed by intimate family members, and the majority of mass shootings in the U.S. are related to domestic or family violence. And, when a gun is present in a domestic violence situation, it's five times more likely that a woman will be killed.

Federal law blocks abusers from possessing firearms if they have been convicted of a violent crime or are subject to a final restraining order. However, the law stops short and does not cover abusive dating partners or convicted stalkers from having guns. The law also doesn't prohibit a person who has a history of domestic disturbances from carrying a concealed handgun. No one is safer when someone with these types of dangerous histories is carrying a hidden, loaded handgun in our communities.

Many states -- including Montana -- have taken steps to fill in this gap in the federal law and block abusive dating partners

from carrying concealed handguns in public. Montana also gives law enforcement discretion to check for red flags when issuing a concealed carry permit. These are good, common-sense standards that we've fought hard to protect here in Montana. Gov. Steve Bullock has stood with domestic violence advocates and law enforcement in vetoing efforts to dismantle the concealed carry system in our state. But federal "concealed carry reciprocity" would let Washington, D.C. undermine our carefully crafted concealed carry standards here in Montana.

To make matters worse, twelve states do not even require a permit -- or a background check -- to carry a concealed handgun in public, and "concealed carry reciprocity" would force Montana to allow visitors from those states (including neighboring Idaho, Wyoming and North Dakota) to carry within our borders. By enabling people with no permit to carry concealed guns across state lines, "concealed carry reciprocity" would make it easier for domestic abusers to evade the law and carry them into our state.

This is also a recipe for disaster for law enforcement. If police stop an out-of-state resident from one of the twelve permitless states, that person would not have a permit to present to law enforcement—meaning law enforcement would be unable to confirm if they are a law-abiding gun owner. That's why many of the nation's largest law enforcement organizations oppose "concealed carry reciprocity." It endangers law enforcement and would make communities less safe by allowing people with violent criminal histories -- like domestic abusers -- and people lacking any gun safety training to carry guns in their communities.

ASPEN staff work with survivors of domestic violence every day, ensuring they're getting the support they need. I can't

imagine what would have happened to some of these women if a gun were present during conflicts with abusive partners. We must do more to ensure that guns are kept out of the hands of domestic abusers so that Montanans can live without the fear of gun violence. If “concealed carry reciprocity” passes, it would impose the concealed carry standards of every other state -- even states that have weak standards, or worse, no standards at all -- on us, forcing Montana to go in the wrong direction.

We need our elected leaders to stand up for the women and children of Montana and oppose “concealed carry reciprocity.”

Sincerely,



Heidi Barrett

Executive Director

ASPEN – Abuse Support & Prevention Education Network

***This piece was recently featured as a guest editorial with the Livingston Enterprise and the Bozeman Daily Chronicle**









Emotional and psychological abuse can take many forms, including belittling, which can manifest as judging, humiliating, criticizing, trivializing or telling hurtful jokes. But belittling is no joking matter. It's a tactic often used by abusers to make their victims feel small, unimportant or disrespected. It can take a

toll on a survivor's confidence and sense of self-esteem.

And, as with other forms of abuse, it's a tool abusers use to exert control. The more down about yourself you feel, the more dependent you will be on your abuser to validate you—or, so they believe.

While belittling can be violent and hurtful, sometimes belittling can have innocent intentions, even if it's still not kind, like a misguided attempt at a joke or a teasing that goes a little too far. How can you tell the difference between an intentionally insulting joke and one that might have just been foolish? By the way it makes you feel less than, and by the lack of a sincere apology when you express how hurtful the comment was. Sometimes, innocent jokes can be just that—said without ill will. But if a comment or action makes you feel bad, it's your right to express your discomfort directly and to expect a genuine apology. Respectful partners should build each other up, not purposefully put each other down.

What Belittling Sounds Like

- Yelling or screaming at you to get a reaction.
- Insulting you—calling you fat, ugly or stupid—or criticizing your parenting skills or intelligence.
- Ignoring how you feel, disregarding your opinion or failing to recognize your contributions.
- Humiliating or embarrassing you, especially in front of family or friends.
- Making you the butt of jokes or offhand comments that disparage you and then saying something like, "I didn't mean it. I'm just teasing," or telling you that you're being too sensitive.
- Bringing up past failures or mistakes as evidence of your incompetence or lack of intelligence.

- Forcing you to agree with them instead of forming or expressing your own opinion.
- Treating you as their property or as someone who has no value other than as a sex object.
- Denying the belittling, blaming it on you or criticizing you for making too big a deal out of it.
- Minimizing the seriousness of their abuse or accusing you of overreacting to their words or behaviors.
- Blaming you for their abusive behavior, but then turning around and telling you how much they love you.

You may be experiencing some or all of these factors and still wonder, “Is this abuse?” It’s a hard pill to swallow, believing that the person you love and trust can be purposefully trying to hurt you as a means of power and control. But ask yourself this: Are you afraid of your partner? Do you walk on eggshells whenever he or she is around? Is the belittling becoming a regular occurrence? Does your partner lack remorse for hurting you?If the answer is yes to any of these questions, you may need to face the reality that your partner is abusive. It can help to reach out to a trained domestic violence advocate and talk about your specific situation. ASPEN has a 24/7 Support Line anyone can call, at any time: 406-222-8154.


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Abuse Support & Prevention
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For helping ASPEN continue to serve
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