

**For Those in Crisis**

East Hampton

October 9, 2020

To the Editor:

We find ourselves in a very unusual time, when we are both forced and encouraged to stay in, to quarantine when possible with family and friends we know well, to stay away from large groups. We are physically together more than ever before. It is an opportunity to practice gratitude. How fortunate we are to have the time and space to cherish family and friends, to sit around a dinner table together, to walk or ride bikes to the beach or down a forest trail. It is indeed a gift living in this very special community. October is one of the most beautiful months of the year on the East End. The perfect light and cool evenings. The miracle of the changing colors around us.

But October is also a month to honor the survivors of domestic violence. For those people, this pandemic, which requires us to stay close, brings only fear and anxiety. For many, getting out of the house and away from potential violence to a job or outside activity is often, literally, a life saver. Consider for a moment what it would be like to shelter with someone whose actions are unpredictable. Perhaps they have lost a job, or are only working virtually. Stress is high, and relentless. Anything could spark an incident. And, because the victim is often under constant scrutiny, there is no escape.

Domestic violence is hard to spot. It hides itself well. Bruises may be emotional or physical. There is embarrassment, and fear that discovery will only make matters worse.

The moment when it's all too much, the Retreat becomes an invaluable resource. For those in crisis, the Retreat emergency shelter is a respite. Families are provided counseling and support to get back on their feet. For those seeking guidance, direction, or next steps, The Retreat's hot line is available 24/7 (631-329-2200). When a person is ready to make a call, there is always someone to hear their voice. And Retreat education programs at schools, community centers, and with high-risk groups of fathers and others, are delivered consistently, with the goal of breaking the cycle of violence.

I am a proud member of the Retreat's board of directors. Many people have asked me how they can help. Here are a few thoughts. First, be aware that someone around you could be a victim of domestic violence. If you suspect something, ask the question, offer the Retreat number — don't stand by. Second, help us help families by shopping at the Retreat Boutique in Bridgehampton, joining our Adopt-a-Family program, which makes sure that no family is forgotten during the holidays, or offering to volunteer.

Stories of survivors are powerful. Hear more voices at [www.allagainstabuse.org](http://www.allagainstabuse.org).

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