

Domestic Violence Transcript

Note: **If you need help while in a domestic violence situation go to thehotline.org or call 1(800)799-7233**

0:04 Welcome to A Dose of the Healthy Truth podcast with Dr. Cecil Bennett. Learn more about this podcast and other episodes at cecilbennettmd.com. Now here's Dr. Bennett.

0:15 Welcome to another episode of A Dose of the Healthy Truth with Dr. Cecil Bennett. It is always good to be with you. The main reason I decided to do this podcast was to be different. I saw that there were volumes of medical health-related podcasts out there. I thought what difference or impact could my podcast make? After a few months, that is right, not a few days, not a few weeks, but a few months of thinking about it. I realized that even though I was a doctor, like a million others out there, my life experiences were unlike any other doctor that I knew. When I consider the people I helped, the places I have been, the companies I have started, and where I came from, I realized that maybe I may have something different to offer by way of my podcast. So here we are. Recently, we celebrated International Woman's Day or the day of the woman. A day recognized by countries around the world as a day to celebrate women's achievements and promote gender equality. I can see men rolling their eyes right now. Why do we need a day for women? For the same reason, we celebrate Black History Month, there are times set aside for groups of people that were essentially ignored, debased, or mistreated for centuries as a time to celebrate their achievement. So yes, we do need this special occasion to celebrate the woman internationally as we celebrate the accomplishment of women this week, unfortunately, this week, I also read a story about a father who beheaded his teenage daughter in India, because he did not

approve of her relationship with a boy in the community an honor killing. A killing where men feel they were dishonored by women and believe they have the right to take their life. This is not you. I remember years ago, probably 20 years ago seeing something on 60 minutes or 20/20 in South America where it was readily acceptable for men in power to kill their loved one, just because they believed they were being disrespected. Just unbelievable. That incident is a sobering reminder of the abuse that women live in each and every day. I remember traveling to countries in Southeast Asia on a medical trip, and I was taking care of a young girl. She had bruises all over her back and body. When she was younger, her father tied her and her mother up and set them on fire. Another honor killing her mother managed to set the child loose and the child survived but the mother did not. On another trip, I was in Saudi Arabia. My host drove me around the city. We visited a square where people were beheaded. You know, before I did this podcast today, I went online, I pulled up that square and even though this is years later, I still have that queasy feeling in my stomach about being there. I must admit my first visit to Saudi Arabia, I was very, very nervous. I knew I was going to be in a very closed religious society. No alcohol, censored internet, no clubs, no gentlemen establishments, not that I indulge or frequent such places by the way, but none of that is allowed in Saudi Arabia, which also includes no women's rights. Women were subjected to men, usually their father or later their husband. Men wore what they wanted, they did not have to cover their face, they could drive. Women dressed in a black gown termed an abaya with their faces covered. Or you could barely see where their eyes in some cases. In other cases, women's faces were completely covered with a little patch for them to see through. Women could not drive. They needed permission from a man to do almost everything in

society. What amazed me about Saudi Arabia it was just the separation everywhere. Imagine going into a fast-food place like Wendy's or Burger King and there is a separate entrance for men and a separate entrance for women that look exactly the same. So, all the women will be in one section of the restaurant being served by women, and all the men would be over in a different section of the restaurant served by men, but it was not only fast-food places or restaurants. The university systems were set up that way.

4:57 One section of the university will be for women and one section of the university will be for men in the same class. So, imagine a place like Emory University, where you would have to double the footprint to create one footprint for men and one footprint for female students. It was absolutely amazing to see the separation across society. I mentioned I was nervous when I first went to Saudi Arabia because I was afraid of doing something or saying something that would upset their religious order. But I was also nervous for security reasons. There were a lot of radical groups, underground groups in Saudi Arabia. We were living in a time and are still living in a time of terrorist activity and kidnapping. The thought did cross my mind that I had to be diligent and try not to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. I was in Saudi Arabia meeting with doctors and medical schools about medical residency opportunities in the United States. After one meeting, one of the doctors invited me to visit his camel farm. Interesting. I have never been to a camel farm before. I have been to a regular farm, seen horses, cows, but I had never seen a real camel. So, I said I would go with him. You know, it was strange to be driving down the expressway, that you saw actual signs that said camel crossing, which was hilarious. I mean, in the US, we see a sign that says deer crossing, we do not think about it twice. So, you can imagine being in another

country where you are not seeing deer crossing signs, but actual camel crossing signs, a different world. So, I went with him. He picked me up in the afternoon, and we sped away from the hotel to his camel farm. As the sun was setting, we turned off the main expressway and onto a side road. We drove a little bit and we turned off that road to a little dirt road. We drove a little bit then we turn off that dirt road. It was just driving into the desert. You can imagine what I was thinking at this time, where the heck were we going? I looked at my phone and I had no signal. I found myself in the Saudi desert with someone had just met that day with no cell signal as the sun was setting. So much for me trying to avoid being in the wrong place at the wrong time. I will say that the thought did cross my mind about being kidnapped. I was a little bit anxious. But eventually, we made it to the camel farm. I had an opportunity to ride a camel, I will never do that again. I was offered some camel milk and some camel cheese. I politely declined. I had an incident in India when I was offered some local delicacies which I will go into in another podcast. My host and I sat on a mat in the Saudi desert, discussing life, discussing medicine, discussing the Quran, and also discussing the Bible for about an hour. It was a really, really enlightening experience. But that was my first trip to Saudi Arabia. On my second trip to Saudi Arabia, things would be a little bit different. I was a little bit looser, and I had been there before. You know I went to Riyadh the first time this time I went to Jeddah, I went to Mecca. And I went back to Riyadh again, again dealing with medical doctors and medical schools. I was a lot more relaxed. I felt I knew the place after one trip. On this trip, I was not invited to go to a camel farm with my host. This was a different host by the way. I was invited to go to Bahrain. Have you ever heard of a country named Bahrain? Well, let me tell you about Bahrain. In the United States on the east coast. You can go to Panama

City, the party in Texas, if you want to party, you can go to San Padre Island. On the west coast. If you want to party, you can go to Sin City itself, Las Vegas, in the Middle East. Bahrain is the party location, or another term is the Sin City of the Middle East. It is hard to believe but it is true. Bahrain is a little island that sits in the Persian Gulf. Remember I told you about how religious people are in Saudi Arabia. It is probably the most religious country in the Middle East. There are 15 miles of water between the coast of Saudi Arabia and the coast of Bahrain.

9:55 The country of Saudi Arabia built a 15-mile Causeway or roadway across the Persian Gulf to Bahrain. On weekends the causeway was bumper to bumper with Saudi drivers trying to get to Bahrain mostly men I may add I do not remember if I saw one woman on the causeway on the weekend trying to get to Bahrain leaving Saudi Arabia. In Bahrain you can drink, you can party, you can club, you can womanize to your heart's content and then drive back home to a suppressive society. It was absolutely amazing. Only men though can get away with anything you want you can get away with this when you are in a society that does not respect women. So yes once again, we need the year of the woman. But domestic violence or violence, in general, is not just a foreign stain it's also a stain in the United States as well. Would you believe that over 10 million cases of domestic violence are reported every year in the United States and those are reported cases mostly again, against women. Domestic violence also knows no boundaries rich, poor it doesn't matter Black, Brown, or White it doesn't matter all cultures all creeds it's important to remember that domestic abuse does not only mean physical violence but mental abuse as well. Mental abuse can take the form of calling women ugly, overweight, stupid, weak, or unwanted on a consistent daily basis until the abuser's perception becomes the woman's reality. For some that

mental abuse can lead to suicidal thoughts and the act of suicide itself. Doctors are required by law to report domestic violence to law enforcement. During this podcast, I'm going to talk about different patients. It'll be a mixture of some patients I've had as well as other patients I'm familiar with just to make sure I protect the identity of people that I know that have gone through issues of domestic violence. Understand though that doctors are between a rock and a hard place when it comes to reporting domestic violence encounters. Think of what this means; Let's say we report a case, the police intervene, things may get worse in the home and our patients may not be able to go back there or we may lose a patient because we have broken trust. Think of cases where we don't intervene with the police and now our patient is critically harmed. Who wants to live with that guilt but trust is preserved with our patients in that situation and they know they have a safe place to go to talk when they come to our offices. Let me just say when it comes to reporting or not reporting that I've been fortunate so far in my 20-year career. Doctor/patients have confidentiality agreements and so I understand that we have with each other that whatever is discussed there stays with us. You can imagine how difficult it is for us at times when it comes to dealing with issues of domestic violence. It reminds me of when we're talking about confidentiality. Let me give you an example of where that came into play in my practice and another issue. I had a patient let's just say his name is Wally who was a senior. He was starting to have some issues of dementia, he lived by himself. Wally loved his guns. Well, they had guns in every room of his home, while they had guns for years but it came to the point where he was starting to see things that were not there. He started shooting holes in the walls and the police had to be called. He was actually hospitalized once because of a mental break. His family

sold all his guns to try and make the environment safer for him but Wally just bought more. So while he was sitting in my office and he's telling me that when he was in the hospital last time that there was a guy in the bed next to him that really annoyed him. I won't describe what the guy looked like but it was this guy that really annoyed him. He said he's going to go find that guy and he's going to shoot him, this actually did happen, and I said Wally you have no idea who was lying next to you or in a bed in the same area that you were in the hospital. He said, "no I have a general idea of what he looks like and you know the first guy that I see that looks a little bit like him I'm going to shoot him".

14:54 I had a decision to make. Wally had been my patient for about 15 years. We had a very good relationship. I wanted to preserve the confidentiality that we had in that relationship but I was concerned for the life of another individual. I tried to talk Wally down "Wally that's a bad idea you will get into trouble. You may shoot the wrong person; you may shoot me actually". I said that for real and he said "no Dr. Bennett I trust you know it's alright I just know what I need to do. Well, he left the office. I sat there for about one minute thinking about the situation and I called the police. I called the local police in the county. I informed them of what had happened and they called me back and said they were able to locate Wally's truck outside of a supermarket. They had a little discussion with him, they went back to his home with him and they confiscated all his weapons. About a month later Wally comes back to my office for a follow-up visit and he said "you know Dr. Bennett I really appreciate what you did for me. You know I really wasn't in my right mind at the time and you may think that you know I'm upset with you but I'm really happy that you actually called the police." That made me feel good because I knew that I made the right decision regardless of whether or not he thought it was

the right decision or not because literally, somebody's life could have been in the balance. But when it comes to women and domestic violence, I've faced the same problems. Women's lives are in the balance, decisions have to be made regarding what the next steps will be, what will be the next thing that they will do or they won't do. I can talk about a patient, years ago from the Midwest that was in her 30s and had a loss of her short-term memory. She would go to work, come home, and have no memory of what she did for that day. She confided in me that years earlier she was in a relationship that was abusive. She suffered a fractured skull, broken ribs, a broken arm, multiple concussions, and daily mental abuse needless to say she also suffered from PTSD. So I asked the question that I really knew the answer to, because I've heard it from other women before: why do you stay or why did you stay? I can remember the look on her face, a look I've seen on the faces of women before in the past.

17:47 These are some of their responses: "I have no place to go.", "I have no family or friends I can call.", "I have the kids to worry about.", "I have no money.", or "I have no skill or education to get a job." There are also other cases with women who have careers and I asked them "why do you stay here? you make a lot of money, you can leave." Their response: "I love him." "He doesn't mean it." "He will change." "It's my fault." "If I leave him who would want me?" They see themselves as unattractive, unwanted, and would rather be in an abusive relationship than no relationship at all. Their self-esteem is so low that someone beating on them gives them more value than them being alone. Fortunately, for that last person, she did leave her husband. So what is the answer to all of this? I wish I knew. All I can tell you is what I've told them, what I've done in the past. First, understand it's not your fault. It's not about you, it's about decisions that they're making that are

wrong, bad decisions, and hurtful decisions. I try to get them to build their self-esteem, I encourage them to be strong, I encourage them to endure, but mostly I encourage them to call domestic abuse agencies where they can get help. I tell them if you're not prepared to call at least start to prepare. Prepare to leave; siphon off a few dollars if you can every week from the account learn a skill online, enter chat rooms with other people. There's power in planning, start to create a plan. But most importantly, do not leave a trail. Be very, very diligent in where you are searching and erasing the different websites, you have gone to our calls that you have made. If you need to go to a shelter, get out now, do not risk your life. Unfortunately, COVID had made it worse for many women who had to give up their jobs to stay home to take care of their children, and to homeschool them, which has been a disaster.

20:36 It means less money. And it means more opportunity for abuse, unfortunately. But do not just listen to what I am saying here. I am not an expert. If you're encountering these issues if you're being abused physically or verbally need to call the abuse hotline that's available to you 24 hours a day, seven days a week. That website you can go to is [thehotline.org](https://www.thehotline.org). That is [thehotline.org](https://www.thehotline.org) or you can call 1-800-799-help. That is 1-800-799-help (7233). I have called the hotline in the past. And these are things that may be available to you. Transportation to remove you from a dangerous situation, a place to stay for 30, 60, or even 90 days while you decide what your next move is going to be. If you need long-term housing that can be arranged as well. job skills can be learned, and your kids can go with you. They may be employment opportunities through their partners. The important thing is to leave and leave now if your life or the life of your children are at risk. Stay safe or get safe. Thank you for joining me for this podcast. I will speak with you soon.

22:08 Thanks for joining us for A Dose of the Healthy Truth Podcast with Dr. Cecil Bennett. Learn more about this podcast and other episodes at Cecilbennettmd.com. The views expressed on this podcast are opinion only and are not meant to be taken as medical advice.