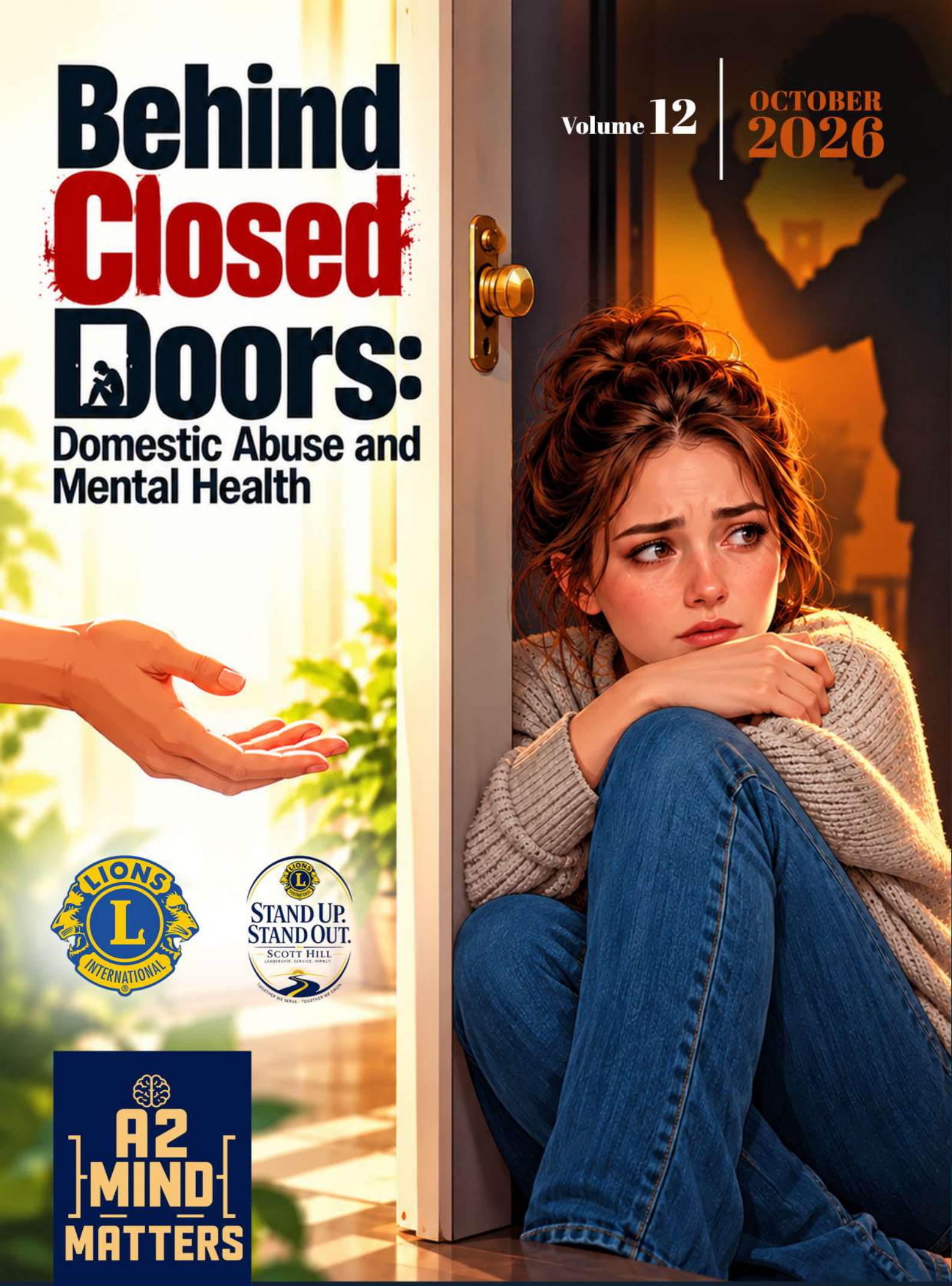
Behind Closed Doors:

Domestic Abuse and Mental Health

Volume 12 | OCTOBER 2026



STAND UP. STAND OUT.
SCOTT HILL

A2 MIND MATTERS

MENTAL HEALTH NEWS LETTER

A2 LIONS CLUB

Editor's Note

Dear Lions and friends,

Home should be a place where we feel safe, respected and free to be ourselves. Yet, for some people, home is where they feel most afraid or alone.

This October, Mind Matters explores domestic abuse and its connection to mental health. We look beyond visible injuries to recognise the harm caused by humiliation, threats, isolation and control.

As Lions, friends and neighbours, we can help create a community where people feel able to speak and seek support. Sometimes, that begins with listening patiently and saying, "I believe you."

Please read this issue at your own pace. If it feels close to home, you may pause or share it with someone you trust.

You deserve safety and kindness. Abuse is never your fault, and support is available.

With care,
Lion Sharmmila Rajkumar
District A2 Mental Health Chair

3

Behind Closed Doors

Someone can smile at a meeting, support their neighbours and carry out their daily responsibilities while feeling frightened in their own home. What we see in public may reveal very little about what a person is experiencing privately.

Domestic abuse can include physical or sexual violence, emotional cruelty, financial control, stalking and coercive control—a pattern of behaviour that restricts another person's freedom. It can affect people of any gender, age or background. (canada.ca)

Recognising the quieter signs

Abuse may involve repeated insults, monitoring messages, restricting contact with friends, controlling access to money or threatening someone when they try to make their own choices. A person may begin planning every word or action around avoiding their partner's reaction.

Disagreements happen in relationships. A pattern of intimidation, punishment or control deserves serious attention. You do not need a visible injury to deserve help.

4

Behind Closed Doors

The connection to mental health

Living with abuse can contribute to anxiety, depression, fear and post-traumatic stress. Canadian research also links emotional abuse in intimate relationships with lower wellbeing, happiness and life satisfaction. (canada.ca, health-infobase.canada.ca)

Repeated humiliation may leave someone doubting their judgement or believing they are responsible for another person's behaviour. These feelings do not make the abuse their fault. Responsibility belongs to the person choosing to cause harm.

Support begins with listening

If someone confides in you, give them space to speak. Helpful words include:

"I believe you."
"You do not deserve this."
"What would feel helpful to you right now?"

5

Behind Closed Doors

Avoid pressing them for details or asking why they have stayed. Their circumstances may involve fear, children, finances, housing or other barriers you cannot see. Respect their choices and offer to help them connect with a trained support worker. Avoid confronting the person causing harm, as this could increase risk.

A step towards support

Someone experiencing abuse does not have to decide their whole future today. A private conversation with a specialist service can help them explore options and plan for safety.

In Haldimand and Norfolk, Women's Services offers crisis support, counselling, advocacy and shelter services. Its 24-hour crisis/support line is **1-800-265-8076. (hnws.on.ca)**

Ontario's Assaulted Women's Helpline: **1-866-863-0511** offers free, confidential support and safety planning, 24 hours a day. Call 911 in an immediate emergency. If your phone or internet use may be monitored, seek support through a safer device when possible. **(awhl.org, canada.ca)**

You do not have to prove that things are "bad enough" to ask for support. You deserve to be heard.

7

APP OF THE MONTH

PTSD Coach Canada

Experiencing trauma can leave a person needing support long after an event—or while difficult circumstances continue.

PTSD Coach Canada is developed by Veterans Affairs Canada with the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Mental Health Association.

Learn

Information about post-traumatic stress

Manage

Tools for managing distress and self-assessme

Find Support

Guidance for professional and crisis support, and for family and friends.

Privacy matters:

If someone monitors your device, downloading an app or entering personal information may create risk. Use it only when safe; information stored in the app is only as secure as your device.

Available for iOS and Android.

Find information and download links on the PTSD Coach Canada website.

veterans.gc.ca >

6

FIVE-MINUTE ACTIVITY

Pause, Notice, Connect

5 MINS

This gentle check-in offers a moment to notice your needs. Try it only somewhere you feel physically safe. Keep your eyes open, skip anything uncomfortable and stop whenever you wish. No writing is needed.

1 Minute 1

Notice your surroundings

Look around and name three ordinary things you can see. Notice their colours or shapes.

2 Minute 2

Find a comfortable point of contact

Feel your feet on the floor or the chair supporting you. Let your breathing stay natural.

3 Minute 3

Name your feeling

Ask yourself, "What am I feeling right now?" Perhaps tired, worried, sad, hopeful or uncertain. There is no correct answer.

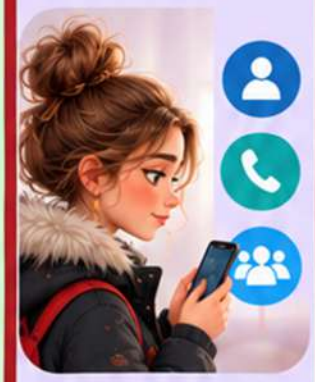
4 Minute 4

Notice one need

Ask, "What might help me in this moment?" It could be water, rest, company or a conversation with someone supportive.

5 Minute 5

Choose one small connection



Think of a trusted person or support service you could approach, if safe. You may choose to contact them later; there is no pressure to act immediately.

Finish with:

"My feelings matter. I deserve care and respect."

This activity is a pause for reflection.
If you are unsafe, prioritise reaching safety and getting help.

STAND UP. STAND OUT.
SCOTT HILL

If you ever need someone to talk to,

please know that I am here to listen with care and without judgment.

You can call or text me at 289-887-3217.

Immediate Help in a Crisis

Talk suicide Canada
1-833-456-4566 (24/7)
Text: 45645 (4pm-12am ET)
talksuicide.ca

9-8-8; Suicide Crisis Helpline
Call or Text: 988
(24/7, free and Confidential)
Nationwide access

Mental health Support Lines

Wellness Together Canada
wellnesstogether,ca
1-866-585-0445
(Talk to a counsellor,24/7)

Text: "WELLNESS" to 741741
Connexontorio (for mental health, addiction, and gambling)
1-866-531-2600 (24/7)
connexontorio.ca

Support for specific Groups

Kids Help Phone
1-800-668-6868 (24/7,for youth)
Text: "CONNECT" to 686868
kidshelpphone.ca

Hope for wellness (for indigenous peoples)
1-855-242-3310 (24/7)
chat:hopeforwellness.ca

LGBT Youthline
1-800-268-9688
text:647-694-4275
youthline.ca

Therapy and Community Services

BounceBack Ontario
Self-guided CBT program for anxiety and depression
bouncebackontario.ca

211 Ontario
Dial 2-1-1
211 ontario.ca
for finding mental health, housing, food and community programs