

+ SIGNS OF AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

The following are some of the ways a partner may try to gain power and control in a relationship. These behaviors can be predictive of partner violence, and can be a cause for concern.

Isolation

A partner may try to control what you do, where you go and who you talk to in order to keep you cut off from others.

Does your partner:

- + Check up on you to make sure you are where you said you'd be?
- + Tell you that you can't go out with friends or family?
- + Accuse you of cheating when you are out with friends, coworkers or family?
- + Attempt to monitor your phone calls, email, text messages, or web browsing?
- + Only want you to talk to certain people?

Emotional abuse

A partner who emotionally abuses you is trying to make you feel bad about yourself and unworthy of good treatment or attention.

Does your partner:

- + Call you names or embarrass you in front of your friends, coworkers or family?
- + Put down your accomplishments?
- + Point out what is "wrong" with you and what you do?
- + Tell you that you're crazy or wrong when you express your feelings?
- + Call you fat, ugly, stupid, worthless or other demeaning names?
- + Say you "deserve" these words because of your behavior or feelings?

Intimidation

A partner may try to intimidate you to make you feel scared and helpless.

Does your partner:

- + Punch walls, throw objects, kick things or have other violent outbursts when he or she is upset?
- + Make you feel like you have to watch what you say or do?
- + Destroy your or your children's personal belongings?
- + Make you scared by giving you certain looks?

Physical abuse and threats

A partner may use physical abuse to scare you if you do something that makes them mad. He or she also may threaten you to keep you from doing things he or she doesn't like.

Does your partner:

- + Hit, push, bite, choke or grab you? Studies have found that women who have been strangled by their partner are seven times more likely to be killed by them (Glass et al., 2008).
- + Threaten to commit suicide if you leave?
- + Force or pressure you to do sexual acts that make you feel uncomfortable or unsafe?
- + Make you feel there is no way out of the relationship?

Economic abuse

A partner may use money to keep you under their control. It can be hard for people to leave a violent partner if they have no source of their own income. Sometimes the thought of not having any financial support is more terrifying than the abuse itself.

Does your partner:

- + Give you an allowance or make you ask for money?
- + Make you feel like you could not survive financially without them?
- + Prevent you from getting a job or having any income?
- + Take your money?

Gender stereotypes

This is a common tactic abusive partners use to gain control. They may say things like, "A good wife always does xyz," "Women belong in the kitchen," or "A real man would be able to take it."

Does your partner:

- + Make all the decisions?
- + Make you wait on them like a servant?
- + Not let you talk when you are out in public?
- + Treat you like you're their property and they own you?

Blame/deny/minimize/make excuses

A partner will blame, deny, make excuses and minimize their abusive behavior. This is an attempt to make themselves feel better and to make you feel worse.

Does your partner:

- + Blame you for their feelings and actions? For example, "You asked for it" or "You made me mad."
- + Deny the abuse ever happened?
- + Make you feel like the abuse was not a big deal and that you are overreacting?
- + Make excuses for the abuse? For example, "I had a bad day." or "I've been under a lot of pressure lately."

Use children

A partner may use children to make you feel guilty or to scare you away from leaving them.

Does your partner:

- + Threaten to take your children away?
- + Tell you that if you leave you are hurting the children by breaking up the family?
- + Threaten to harm the children?
- + Tell the children bad things about you

If you checked many of these behaviors...

...you may be involved in an unhealthy relationship. If you are in this situation, it's important to remember that it's not your fault. Help is available. For more information or to get help, you can contact your Employee Assistance Program or the National Domestic Violence Hotline.

The National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (TDD 1-800-787-3224)

This hotline offers crisis intervention, information about sources of assistance and referrals for shelters, programs, social service agencies, legal programs and other helpful organizations.

References

- Domestic Abuse Intervention Project. (n.d.). Power and control wheel. Retrieved May 27, 2021 from <http://www.ncdsv.org/images/powercontrolwheelnoshading.pdf>
- Glass, N., Laughon, K., Campbell, J., Wolf Chair, A., Block, C., Hanson, G., ... Taliaferro, E. (2008). Non-fatal strangulation is an important risk factor for homicide of women. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2573025/>

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