

Warning signs of abusive relationships

Extreme jealousy:

Jealousy is a sign of insecurity and lack of trust, however, the abuser will say that it is a sign of love. The abuser will question the victim about who they talk to, accuse them of flirting or be jealous of time spent with their friends, family, or children. The abuser may refuse to let the victim work or go to school for fear of meeting someone else. The abuser may call the victim frequently or drop by unexpectedly. The abuser may accuse the victim of flirting with someone else or having an affair.

Controlling behavior:

One partner completely rules the relationship and makes the decisions. This includes "checking up" on the victim, timing a victim when they leave the house, checking the odometer on the car and/or questioning the victim about where they go. The abuser may check the victim's cell phone for call history and they may check the victim's e-mail account and website history on their computer. The abuser may control the finances and try to tell the victim how to dress, who to talk to and where to go.

Quick involvement:

The abuser comes on strong at the beginning of the relationship, pressuring for a commitment and claims "Love at first sight" or "You're the only person I could ever talk to" or "I've never met anyone like you before". Often, in the beginning of a relationship, the abuser is very charming and romantic and the love is intense.

Unrealistic Expectations:

Abusers expect their partners to meet all their needs and be "perfect". They may say things like "If you love me, then I'm all you need".

Isolation:

The abuser tries to keep the victim from friends and family by putting down everyone the victim knows, including their family and friends. They may keep the victim from going to work or school.

Blames others for their problems and feelings:

The abuser does not take responsibility for their own problems; blaming others (usually the victim) for almost everything ("you made me mad").

Hypersensitivity:

An abuser is easily insulted and takes everything as a personal attack and blows things out of proportion.

Cruelty to animals or children:

The abuser may punish animals brutally or be insensitive to their pain. They may have unfair expectations of children or tease them until they cry.

“Playful” use of force in sex:

The abuser may throw or hold their partner down during sex, may pressure their partner into having sex, may demand sex when their partner is tired or ill or doesn't want to have sex. They may ask the victim to do things they do not want to do.

Verbal abuse:

The abuser says cruel and harmful things to their victim, degrades them, curses at them, calls them names, or puts down their accomplishments. The abuser tells their victims they are stupid and unable to function without them. They embarrass and put down the victim in front of others as well.

Rigid sex roles:

The abuser believes in rigid gender roles and sees women as inferior to men and unable to have their own identity. They may see men as the “master of his castle”.

Dr. Jeckel and Mr. Hyde:

The abuser experiences severe mood swings and the victim may think the abuser has a mental health problem. One minute they can be charming and sweet and the next minute they become angry and explosive. Explosiveness and moodiness are typical of people who beat their partners.

Past battering:

The abuser has a history of past battering of partners and although they may admit to that, they say their previous partner provoked them to do it. A batterer will beat any partner they are with if the person is with them long enough for the violence to begin; situational circumstances do not **cause** a person to have an abusive relationship.

Threats of violence:

This includes any threat or physical force meant to control the victim: “I’ll kill you”, “I’ll break your neck”, “If you ever leave, I’ll kill you.”

Breaking or striking objects:

This behavior is used as a punishment (breaking treasured possessions), but is mostly used to terrorize the victim into submission. The abuser may break or strike objects near the victim to frighten them.

Any force during an argument:

The abuser may hold the victim down, restrain them from leaving the room, push, shove, or hold them against a wall.

Adapted from “Project for Victims of Family Violence”, Fayetteville, Arkansas and the Domestic Violence Resource Center of South County materials.

