

DO YOU THINK YOUR PARTNER MIGHT BE ABUSIVE?

Anyone can be an abuser. They come from all groups, all cultures, all religions, all economic levels, and all backgrounds. They can be your neighbor, your pastor, your friend, your child's teacher, a relative, a coworker -- anyone. It is important to note that the majority of abusers are only violent with their current or past intimate partners. One study found 90% of abusers do not have criminal records and abusers are generally law-abiding outside the home.

There is no one typical, detectable personality of an abuser. However, they do often display common characteristics.

- An abuser often denies the existence or minimizes the seriousness of the violence and its effect on the victim and other family members.
- An abuser objectifies the victim and often sees them as their property or sexual objects.
- An abuser has low self-esteem and feels powerless and ineffective in the world. He or she may appear successful, but internally, they feel inadequate.
- An abuser externalizes the causes of their behavior. They blame their violence on circumstances such as stress, their partner's behavior, a "bad day," on alcohol, drugs, or other factors.
- An abuser may be pleasant and charming between periods of violence and is often seen as a "nice person" to others outside the relationship.

The following are some of the signs often occur before manifestation of full abuse and may serve as clues to one person in a relationship becoming abusive of the other. Think about the following questions and apply them to your partner. If you can identify with one or more of the scenarios or answer "yes" to any of the questions below, you may be with an abusive partner.

- Did your partner grow up in a violent family?
- Does your partner tend to use force of violence to "solve" their problems?
- Does your partner have a quick temper? Do they over-react to little problems and frustration? Are they cruel to animals? Do they punch walls or throw things when they are upset?

- Do they abuse alcohol or other drugs?
- Do they have strong traditional ideas about "roles" in relationships? For example, do they think all women should stay at home, take care of their husbands, and follow their wishes and orders?
- Are they jealous of your other relationships -- anyone you may know? Do they keep tabs on you? Do they want to know where you are at all times? Do they want you with them all of the time?
- Do they have access to guns, knives or other lethal weapons? Do they talk of using them against people or threaten to use them to get even?
- Do they expect you to follow their orders or advice? Do they become angry if you do not fulfil their wishes or if you cannot anticipate what they want?
- Do they go through extreme highs and lows almost as though they are two different people? Are they extremely kind one time, and extremely cruel another?
- When your partner gets angry, do you fear them? Do you find that not making them angry has become a major part of your life? Do you do what they want you to do, rather than what you want to do?
- Do they treat you roughly? Do they physically force you to do what you do not want to do?
- Do they threaten or abuse your pets?

Threats and physical abuse are prevalent in relationship violence, often occurring in an escalating cycle.