

## Battering Characteristics and Red Flags

Many people are interested in ways they can predict whether they are about to become involved with someone *potentially physically abusive*. Below is a list of behaviors that are seen in people who abuse their partners. If a person has several of the following behaviors, there is a strong potential for *physical violence* in the relationship. The more signs the person exhibits, the more likely it is that the person does have a battering personality. Initially the batterer will try to explain the behavior as signs of love and concern, which may be flattering at first. However, as time goes on, the abusive behaviors become more severe and serve to dominate the partner. Please note that if you have many of these there is a good chance that you are already in an unhealthy relationship.

1. **Jealousy:** At the beginning of a relationship, an abuser will always say that the jealousy is a sign of love. Jealousy has nothing to do with love. It's a sign of insecurity and possessiveness. The abuser will question you about who you talk to and accuse you of flirting. The abuser may be jealous of time spent with family, friends, or children. As the jealousy progresses, the abuser may call you frequently during the day or drop by unexpectedly. The abuser may refuse to let you work for fear you'll meet someone else. The abuser may engage in unpredictable behaviors. For example, checking your car mileage or asking friends to watch you.
2. **Controlling Behavior:** At the onset of the relationship, the batterer will say that this behavior is because of concern for your safety, your need to use time well, or your need to make good decisions. The abuser will get angry if you are "late" coming back from the store or an appointment. The abuser will question you closely about where you went and whom you talked to. As this behavior gets worse, the abuser may not let you make personal decisions about the house, your clothing and/or practicing your religion. The abuser may keep all the money and/or make you ask permission to leave the house or room.
3. **Quick Movement:** Many people who were abused dated or knew their partners for less than six months before they were engaged or started living together. The abuser will come on like a whirlwind, claiming "love at first sight." The abuser will tell you flattering things such as "you're the only person I can talk to" and "I love you more than anyone in the world." The abuser may claim to need someone desperately, then pressure you to commit to the relationship.
4. **Unrealistic Expectations:** The abuser is very dependent on you for all kinds of needs; expects you to be the perfect partner, spouse, parent, lover or friend. The abuser will say things like "if you love me, I'm all you need, you're all I need." You are supposed to take care of everything emotionally, physically, and in the home.
5. **Isolation:** The abuser tries to cut you off from all resources. If you have friends of the opposite gender, you are a "whore" or a "cheater"; if you have friends of the same gender, you are "gay" or "lesbian;" if you are close to your family, you are "tied to the apron strings." The abuser accuses people who are your support of "causing trouble." You may be pressured to move away from everyone you know. The abuser may not allow you access to a phone, may not let you use the car, or may try to keep you from working or going to school.
6. **Blaming Others for Personal Problems:** If the abuser is chronically unemployed, someone is always doing them wrong or out to get them. They may make mistakes and then blame you for upsetting them or for keeping them from concentrating or doing their job. The abuser will tell you that you're at fault for practically anything and everything that goes wrong.
7. **Blames Partner for Feelings:** The abuser will tell you, "you make me mad," "you're hurting me by not doing what I ask," "I can't help being angry." Abusers use feelings as a tool to blame and manipulate you.

8. **Hypersensitivity:** The abuser is easily insulted. They take the slightest set back as a personal attack, “ranting and raving” about the injustice of things that have happened, things that are really just part of living like being asked to help with chores.
9. **Cruelty to Animals or Children:** This is a person who punishes animals brutally or is insensitive to their pain or suffering. An abuser may expect children to be capable of doing things far beyond their ability (whips a two-year-old for wetting their diaper) or may tease children until they cry. An abuser may not want children to eat at the table or expects them to stay in their room and be quiet all evening.
10. **“Playful” use of Force in Sex:** An abuser may throw you down and/or hold you down during sex, may want to act out fantasies during sex where you are helpless, or may let you know that ideas of “rape” are exciting. An abuser may show little concern about whether you want to have sex and may use sulking or anger to manipulate you into compliance. An abuser may also start having sex with you while you’re sleeping or demand sex when you’re ill or tired.
11. **Verbal Abuse:** In addition to saying things that are meant to be cruel and hurtful, an abuser may constantly degrade you by cursing you and/or belittling your accomplishments. An abuser will tell you that you’re stupid and incapable of functioning without them.
12. **Rigid Roles:** An abuser expects you to serve them and obey in all things, sometimes even things that are criminal in nature. Abusers see their partners as inferior, less intelligent, and unable to be a whole person without them. Men who abuse women often have very strict definitions of sex-role stereotypes that must be adhered to and see themselves as the “King of the Castle.”
13. **Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde:** An abuser’s “sudden” mood changes can be confusing. One minute they’re nice and the next minute explodes. One minute happy, the next minute sad. These mood swings do not indicate some special “mental problem” or that the abuser is “crazy.” It is typical abusive behavior that results in you always feeling like you have to be “on guard” for the unexpected or that you should’ve “seen it coming” when you really couldn’t have.
14. **Past Battering:** An abuser may have battered in a prior relationship, but blames the former partner for the abuse. You may hear from others that your partner has been abusive in the past. Abusers will batter partners that they’re with because of their controlling personality, not because of situations or circumstances.
15. **Threats of Violence:** This would include any threat of physical force meant to control you, “I’ll slap your mouth off,” “I’ll kill you,” or “I’ll break your neck.” Most people do not threaten their partners, but an abuser will try to excuse this behavior by saying, “everybody talks like that.”
16. **Breaking or Striking Objects:** This behavior is used as a punishment or threat. It is used to terrorize you into submission. An abuser may hit the table, door or wall, throw objects around or near you, or break possessions that are special to you.
17. **Any Force During an Argument:** This may involve your partner holding you down, physically restraining you from leaving the room, and/or pushing or shoving you. For example, your partner may hold you against a wall and say, “You’re going to listen to me.”

**Remember, it’s never your fault when someone abuses you . . . help is available!**

**You’re not alone!**