

WARNING SIGNS OF AN ABUSER

Something's not right in your relationship and you can't put your finger on it. So, here's some help. If your partner is displaying a combination of these behaviors, then you may have a potential abuser on your hands.

A PUSH FOR QUICK INVOLVEMENT: Comes on very strong, claiming "I've never been in love like this before" after a couple of dates. An abuser usually pressures the woman for an exclusive commitment almost immediately.

JEALOUSY: Excessively possessive; calls constantly or visits unexpectedly; prevents you from going to work because you "might meet someone"; checks the mileage on your car.

CONTROLLING: Interrogates you intensely (especially if you're late) about whom you talked to and where you were; keeps all the money; insists you ask permission to go anywhere or do anything.

UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS: Expects you to be the perfect woman and meet his every need.

ISOLATION: Tries to cut you off from family and friends; accuses people who are your supporters of "causing trouble;" abuser may deprive you of a phone or car, or try to prevent you from holding a job.

BLAMES OTHERS FOR PROBLEMS AND MISTAKES: It's always someone else's fault when anything goes wrong.

MAKES EVERYONE ELSE RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS/HER FEELINGS: "You're hurting me by not doing what I tell you"

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS AND TO CHILDREN: Kills or punishes animals brutally; also may expect children to do things that are far beyond their ability (whips a 2-year-old for wetting a diaper) or may tease them until they cry. Sixty-five percent of abusers who beat their partner will also abuse children.

"PLAYFUL" USE OF FORCE DURING SEX: Enjoys throwing you down or holding you down against your will during sex: says (s)he finds the idea of rape exciting.

VERBAL ABUSE: Constantly criticizes or says blatantly cruel, hurtful things, degrades, curses, calls you ugly names. This may also involve sleep deprivation, waking you up and keeping you up with relentless verbal abuse.

RIGID GENDER ROLES: Expects you to serve, obey and remain at home.

SUDDEN MOOD SWING: Switches from loving to explosively violent in a matter of minutes.

HAS A HISTORY OF BATTERING: Admits to hitting women in the past but says it was their fault.

THREATS OF VIOLENCE: Makes statements like, "I'll break your neck," or "I'll kill you," then dismisses them with, "Everybody talks that way," or "I didn't really mean it." If there is a threat to kill, it is time to get help or get out.

Adapted from "Signs to Look for in a Battering Personality". Project for Victims of Family Violence. Fayetteville, Arkansas.