

English Edition

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**Domestic  
Violence  
AND  
Abuse**

## *What is domestic violence?*

Domestic violence can be defined as any violence in the home, including between adult children and other adult family members. However, most people use the term to mean any abusive, threatening or violent behavior between one intimate partner and another.

## *Affected by domestic violence?*

Domestic violence can happen anywhere to anyone of any race, religion, culture or economic status and it affects both partners, their children, other family members, friends and colleagues. Domestic violence can occur in ANY intimate relationship, including same-sex relationships and including by women towards men. However, most domestic violence is committed by a man against a woman. Domestic violence is dangerous. Too often, conflicts escalate into injury or death.

## *Signs of Abuse*

Domestic violence and abuse can happen to anyone, yet the problem is often overlooked, excused, or denied. This is especially true when the abuse is psychological, rather than physical. Noticing and acknowledging the signs of an abusive relationship is the first step to ending it. No one should live in fear of the person they love. If you recognize yourself or someone you know in the following warning signs and descriptions of abuse, reach out. There is help available.

## *Understanding*

Domestic abuse, also known as spousal abuse, occurs when one person in an intimate relationship or marriage tries to dominate and control the other person. Domestic abuse that includes physical violence is called domestic violence. Domestic violence and abuse are used for one purpose and one purpose only: to gain and maintain total control over you. An abuser doesn't "play fair." Abusers use fear, guilt, shame, and intimidation to wear you down and keep you under his or her thumb. Your abuser may also threaten you, hurt you, or hurt those around you.

Domestic violence and abuse happen among heterosexual couples and in same-sex partnerships. It occurs within all age ranges, ethnic backgrounds, and



economic levels. And while women are more commonly victimized, men are also abused—especially verbally and emotionally, although sometimes even physically as well. The bottom line is that abusive behavior is never acceptable, whether it’s coming from a man, a woman, a teenager, or an older adult. You deserve to feel valued, respected, and safe.

### ***First step to help***

Domestic abuse often escalates from threats and verbal abuse to violence. And while physical injury may be the most obvious danger, the emotional and psychological consequences of domestic abuse are

also severe. Emotionally abusive relationships can destroy your self-worth, lead to anxiety and depression, and make you feel helpless and alone. No one should have to endure this kind of pain—and your first step to breaking free is recognizing that your situation is abusive. Once you acknowledge the reality of the abusive situation, then you can get the help you need.

### ***Abusive relationship***

There are many signs of an abusive relationship. The most telling sign is fear of your partner. If you feel like you have to walk on eggshells around your partner—constantly watching what you say and do in order to avoid a blow-up—chances are your relationship is unhealthy and abusive. Other signs that you may be in an abusive relationship include a partner who belittles you or tries to control you, and feelings of self-loathing, helplessness, and desperation. To determine whether your relationship is abusive, answer the questions below. The more “yes” answers, the more likely it is that you’re in an abusive relationship.

#### ***SIGNS THAT YOU’RE IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP***

**Your Inner Thoughts and Feelings    Your Partner’s Belittling Behavior**



### **Do you:**

- Feel afraid of your partner much of the time?
- Avoid certain topics out of fear of angering your partner?
- Feel that you can't do anything right for your partner?
- Believe that you deserve to be hurt or mistreated?
- Wonder if you're the one who is crazy?
- Feel emotionally numb or helpless?

### **Your Partner's Violent Behavior or Threats**

#### **Does your partner:**

- Have a bad and unpredictable temper?
- Hurt you, or threaten to hurt or kill you?

### **Does your partner:**

- Humiliate or yell at you?
- Criticize you and put you down?
- Treat you so badly that you're embarrassed for your friends or family to see?
- Ignore or put down your opinions or accomplishments?
- Blame you for their own abusive behavior?
- See you as property or a sex object, rather than as a person?

### **Your Partner's Controlling Behavior**

#### **Does your partner:**

- Act excessively jealous and possessive?
- Control where you go or what you do?

## ***SIGNS THAT YOU'RE IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP***

- Threaten to take your children away or harm them?
- Threaten to commit suicide if you leave?
- Force you to have sex?
- Destroy your belongings?

- Keep you from seeing your friends or family?
- Limit your access to money, the phone, or the car?
- Limit your access to money, the phone, or the car?
- Constantly check up on you?

### ***Physical abuse***

When people talk about domestic violence, they are often referring to the physical abuse of a spouse or intimate partner. Physical abuse is the use of physical force against someone in a way that injures or endangers



that person. Physical assault or battering is a crime, whether it occurs inside or outside of the family. The police have the power and authority to protect you from physical attack.

## *Sexual abuse*

Any situation in which you are forced to participate in unwanted, unsafe, or degrading sexual activity is sexual abuse. Forced sex, even by a spouse or intimate partner with whom you also have consensual sex, is an act of aggression and violence. Furthermore, people whose partners abuse them physically and sexually are at a higher risk of being seriously injured or killed.

## *It Is Still Abuse If . . .*

- The incidents of physical abuse seem minor when compared to those you have read about, seen on television or heard other women talk about. There isn't a "better" or "worse" form of physical abuse; you can be severely injured as a result of being pushed, for example.
- The incidents of physical abuse have only occurred one or two times in the relationship. Studies indicate that if your spouse/partner has injured you once, it is likely he will continue to physically assault you.
- The physical assaults stopped when you became passive and gave up your right to express yourself as you desire, to move about freely and see others, and to make decisions. It is not a victory if you have to give up your rights as a person and a partner in exchange for not being assaulted!
- There has not been any physical violence. Many women are emotionally and verbally assaulted. This can be as equally frightening and is often more confusing to try to understand.

## *Emotional abuse*

When people think of domestic abuse, they often picture battered women who have been physically assaulted. But not all abusive relationships involve violence. Just because you're not battered and bruised doesn't mean you're not being abused. Many men and women suffer from emotional abuse, which is no less destructive.

The aim of emotional abuse is to chip away at your feelings of self-worth and independence. If you're the victim of emotional abuse, you may feel that there is no



way out of the relationship or that without your abusive partner you have nothing.

Emotional abuse includes verbal abuse such as yelling, name-calling, blaming, and shaming. Isolation, intimidation, and controlling behavior also fall under emotional abuse. Additionally, abusers who use emotional or psychological abuse often throw in threats of physical violence or other repercussions if you don't do what they want. The scars of emotional abuse are very real, and they run deep. In fact, emotional abuse can be just as damaging as physical abuse—sometimes even more so.

### *Economic or financial abuse:*

Remember, an abuser's goal is to control you, and he or she will frequently use money to do so. Economic or financial abuse includes:

- Rigidly controlling your finances.
- Withholding money or credit cards.
- Making you account for every penny you spend.
- Withholding basic necessities (food, clothes, medications, shelter).
- Restricting you to an allowance.
- Preventing you from working or choosing your own career.
- Sabotaging your job (making you miss work, calling constantly).
- Stealing from you or taking your money.

### *If the victim refuses to leave*

Leaving might not be a realistic choice in a culture that condemns women who leave and does not offer resources such as food and shelter. Even in cultures where a woman might have a place to go, there are many obstacles that make it hard for an abused partner to walk away from the relationship. In order to leave, an abused woman has to be able to put her own well being above the love she might feel for her husband or partner. She has to know where to go, how to get help, how to keep custody of her children and how she will survive economically. She has to overcome the isolation and shame of having failed to preserve the relationship. She often believes that the failure is her fault. Women will not leave an abusive relationship until they are ready.



## Alcohol and drug

Substance abuse leads to loss of control, and any loss of control is likely to escalate a potentially violent situation. Both partners in a violent relationship are more likely to lose their tempers or to panic if they are drunk or high. Many people in treatment for alcohol or drug recovery are also survivors or perpetrators of violence and abuse – and sometimes have been in both roles.

## Violent and abusive behavior

Despite what many people believe, domestic violence and abuse is not due to the abuser's loss of control over his or her behavior. In fact, abusive behavior and violence is a deliberate choice made by the abuser in order to control you. Abusers use a variety of tactics to manipulate you and exert their power:

- **Dominance** – Abusive individuals need to feel in charge of the relationship. They will make decisions for you and the family, tell you what to do, and expect you to obey without question. Your abuser may treat you like a servant, child, or even as his or her possession.
- **Humiliation** – An abuser will do everything he or she can to make you feel bad about yourself or defective in some way. Insults, name-calling, shaming, and public put-downs are all weapons of abuse designed to erode your self-esteem and make you feel powerless.
- **Isolation** – In order to increase your dependence on him or her, an abusive partner will cut you off from the outside world. He or she may keep you from seeing family or friends, or even prevent you from going to work or school.
- **Threats** – Abusers commonly use threats to keep their partners from leaving or to scare them into dropping charges. Your abuser may threaten to hurt or kill you, your children, other family members, or even pets. He or she may also threaten to commit suicide, file false charges against you, or report you to child services.
- **Intimidation** – Your abuser may use a variety of intimidation tactics designed to scare you into submission. Such tactics include making threatening looks or gestures, smashing things in front of you, destroying property, hurting your pets, or putting weapons on display. The



clear message is that if you don't obey, there will be violent consequences.

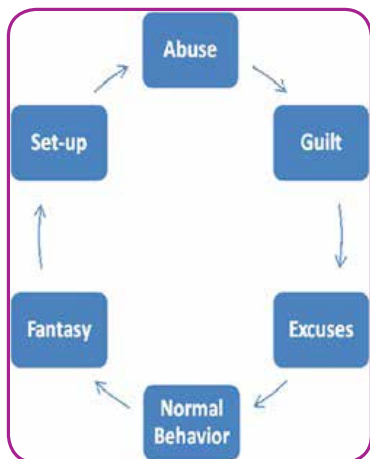
- **Denial and blame** – Abusers are very good at making excuses for the inexcusable. They will blame their abusive and violent behavior on a bad childhood, a bad day, and even on the victims of their abuse. Your abusive partner may minimize the abuse or deny that it occurred. He or she will commonly shift the responsibility on to you: Somehow, his or her violent and abusive behavior is your fault.

### Control of behavior

- Abusers pick and choose whom to abuse. They don't insult, threaten, or assault everyone in their life who gives them grief. Usually, they save their abuse for the people closest to them, the ones they claim to love.
- Abusers carefully choose when and where to abuse. They control themselves until no one else is around to see their abusive behavior. They may act like everything is fine in public, but lash out instantly as soon as you're alone.
- Abusers are able to stop their abusive behavior when it benefits them. Most abusers are not out of control. In fact, they're able to immediately stop their abusive behavior when it's to their advantage to do so.
- Violent abusers usually direct their blows where they won't show. Rather than acting out in a mindless rage, many physically violent abusers carefully aim their kicks and punches where the bruises and marks won't show.

### The cycle of violence:

- **Abuse** – Your abusive partner lashes out with aggressive, belittling, or violent behavior. The abuse is a power play designed to show you “who is boss.”
- **Guilt** – After abusing you, your partner feels guilt, but not over what he's done. He's more worried about the possibility of being caught and facing consequences for his abusive behavior.
- **Excuses** – Your abuser rationalizes what he or she has done. The person may come up with a string of excuses or blame you for the abusive behavior—anything to avoid taking responsibility.





- **“Normal” behavior** — The abuser does everything he can to regain control and keep the victim in the relationship. He may act as if nothing has happened, or he may turn on the charm. This peaceful honeymoon phase may give the victim hope that the abuser has really changed this time.
- **Fantasy and planning** – Your abuser begins to fantasize about abusing you again. He spends a lot of time thinking about what you’ve done wrong and how he’ll make you pay. Then he makes a plan for turning the fantasy of abuse into reality.
- **Set-up** – Your abuser sets you up and puts his plan in motion, creating a situation where he can justify abusing you.

Your abuser’s apologies and loving gestures in between the episodes of abuse can make it difficult to leave. He may make you believe that you are the only person who can help him, that things will be different this time, and that he truly loves you. However, the dangers of staying are very real.

### **General warning signs**

People who are being abused may:

- Seem afraid or anxious to please their partner.
- Go along with everything their partner says and does.
- Check in often with their partner to report where they are and what they’re doing.
- Receive frequent, harassing phone calls from their partner.
- Talk about their partner’s temper, jealousy, or possessiveness.

### **Warning signs of physical violence**

People who are being physically abused may:

- Have frequent injuries, with the excuse of “accidents.”
- Frequently miss work, school, or social occasions, without explanation.
- Dress in clothing designed to hide bruises or scars.

### **Warning signs of isolation**

People who are being isolated by their abuser may:

- Be restricted from seeing family and friends.
- Rarely go out in public without their partner.



- Have limited access to money, credit cards, or the car.

### *The psychological warning signs of abuse*

People who are being abused may:

- Have very low self-esteem, even if they used to be confident.
- Show major personality changes.
- Be depressed, anxious, or suicidal.

### *Speak up if you suspect domestic violence or abuse*

If you suspect that someone you know is being abused, speak up! If you're hesitating—telling yourself that it's none of your business, you might be wrong, or the person might not want to talk about it—keep in mind that expressing your concern will let the person know that you care and may even save his or her life.

### *Dating or Courting*

Looking back to the beginning of the relationship, some survivors of domestic violence will say that they saw many signals that there were problems that they did not recognize as trouble at the time because they were “too much in love” or “too lonely” or “really wanted the relationship to work out.” Others will say that the man's behavior was wonderful until after they were married or living together.

At any phase of an intimate relationship, personal safety means learning to separate superficial appearance and actions from what really counts in terms of someone's character. Many women are seduced into loving someone because of – how he looks, how he dresses, the loving sweet things he says, the gifts he gives, the excitement and fun of being with him, the economic security he offers and the prestige he seems to have.

None of these qualities will lead to a safe, positive relationship unless the man also consistently treats the woman and others with respect and caring.

Useful assessment questions that we encourage students to consider while dating are:

- Does he act possessive of you?
- Does he seem jealous of the attention you get from others?
- Does he try to pressure you into doing more sexually than you want?



- Does he try to separate you from others who are important to you?
- Does he take full responsibility for his behavior?
- Does he try to get you to be dependent on him?
- Does he do his full share of the work in the house and with money?

Women are often taught that a man being possessive, jealous, demanding, needy, or wanting them all to himself means that he cares. The truth is that a man believing that a woman is his property is dangerous.

One excellent predictor of someone's future behavior towards any of us is that person's behavior towards others. Useful assessment questions are:

- How does he act towards others?
- What does he do when he is mad at someone or upset about something?
- Does he take responsibility for his share when things go wrong with another person, or is his story that everything is the other person's fault?
- Does he try to make women feel sorry for him because of all the hard luck he has had with other people?

Another important assessment tool is to notice what someone is like when he is disappointed, frustrated or not getting what he wants. Is he unhappy but respectful or does he become aggressive? "Even if someone is wonderful to you, it is a danger signal if he is mean or threatening to others or if he blames others instead of taking responsibility. Act as if you are extremely allergic to any sign of possessiveness, emotional coercion or threat. Remember that you do not owe loyalty or love to someone who endangers you."

These are some of the practices for dating situations:

- Protecting themselves emotionally from words like, "Stuck up bitch!"
- Leaving and saying, "I am not interested."
- Saying clearly and firmly, "I do not want to go out with you."
- Not giving in to emotional coercion or feeling guilty even if someone is very sad.
- Pulling away, getting into a strong posture and saying in a firm loud calm voice, "That is NOT okay with me. I am leaving now."
- Pushing someone away and saying, "I am going home now."
- Resisting pressure and saying, "My NO means NO!"

## Assessment

It is normal for people who care about



each other to get upset with each other sometimes. People in healthy relationships sometimes yell and say mean things that they later wish they had not. In healthy couples, each partner accepts his or her share of responsibility for what went wrong, apologizes, and hopefully learns to deal with conflict in less upsetting ways. Yelling and saying mean things



in a conflict is not the same as someone trying to control another person through violence. Violence can include:

- Threatening language about hurting the woman or someone she cares about physically, economically or legally.
- Aggressive gestures such as shaking a fist or picking up a knife.
- Destructive behavior such as throwing or breaking things or driving recklessly.
- Physical domination such as shoving, shaking.
- Sexual assault through forced sexual contact of any kind.
- Physical attack such as hitting, pinching, forcing the woman into submissive or degrading positions, or kicking.

If this behavior happens, apologies and regrets are not enough. The odds are that a man who has used violent behavior to control a relationship is very likely to do it again. There is no single right answer for everyone. If an abusive partner is committed enough to learning and using nondestructive ways of handling frustration and anxiety, change is possible.

Far more common is a pattern of repeated abuse for which the man blames the woman or goes through a cycle of alternating violence and abject

apologies. Unfortunately, too often the unrealistic hope that things will get better keeps women in dangerous relationships far too long.

### *Do's*

- Ask if something is wrong.
- Express concern.
- Listen and validate.
- Offer help.
- Support his or her decisions.

### *Don'ts*

- Wait for him or her to come to you.
- Judge or blame.
- Pressure him or her.
- Give advice.
- Place conditions on your support.

Talk to the person in private and let him or her know that you're concerned. Point out the things you've noticed that make you worried. Tell the person that you're there, whenever he or she feels ready to talk. Reassure the person that you'll keep whatever is said between the two of you, and let him or her know that you'll help in any way you can.

Remember, abusers are very good at controlling and manipulating their victims. People who have been emotionally abused or battered are depressed, drained, scared, ashamed, and confused. They need help to get out, yet they've often been isolated from their family and friends. By picking up on the warning signs and offering support, you can help them escape an abusive situation and begin healing.

### *Surviving the Abuser*

If someone is in a domestic violence situation that she does not believe she can leave, then her challenge is to try to defuse conflict as much as possible. She can learn to think strategically instead of reacting to the other person's behavior. She can plan to use verbal self-defense tactics rather than waiting helplessly for the next outburst or wishing unrealistically that it will never happen again. These are some of the practices we do with our students that can be helpful in domestic violence situations:

- Becoming centered by having them imagine being upset and then taking a



moment to breathe and feel their bodies.

- Moving and standing with awareness, calm, and confidence.
- Using their imaginations to throw away the hurtful, scary things that an abusive partner says instead of taking this in as the truth about themselves.
- Identifying and taking the power out of their triggers so that they are able to make choices instead of automatically reacting to what someone says or does.
- Saying nice things to themselves to counteract the mean things that have been said to them.
- Letting an aggressive person have the last word without feeling like they have given away their power.
- Setting firm, polite, respectful boundaries.
- Making a safety plan for how to get help if there is an emergency
- Being persistent and effective in asking for help from people who do not want to get involved.
- Making a report to a police officer in a way that is calm and factual rather than sounding out of control. "I was attacked. I had to defend myself. I need to talk with an advocate."

It is normal to want to get even or to try to stop someone from saying something awful to you. It is important to remember that you can feel one way and act another. Instead of trying to win an argument, it is safer to stay calm and say calming things."

While an outburst can seem to come out of nowhere, women often can predict times when a partner is more likely to blow up or become punishing. Are there triggering events such as times of stress or transition, disappointing or frustrating experiences, being turned down for sex, or use of alcohol or drugs? Are there warning signs of impending violence like demeaning comments, threatening gestures, etc?

Some verbal tactics practice are:

- **To go to a safe place for the moment.** Is there a neighbor, family member or friend you can take your children to stay with until things blow over?
- **To leave with love.** It is dangerous to scream, "I hate you and I never



want to see you again!” Instead, go to a safer place while saying quietly and warmly, “I love you and I want us all to be safe. I will come back when you feel better.”

- **To lie.** You do not owe an attacker the truth. You can lie and say whatever the other person wants to hear about your feelings or your plans.
- **To distract.** Have a plan ready if someone is about to blow up. A distraction could be someone important to your abusive partner who you have asked to expect a call so you can say, “Your brother called with some exciting news,” and be able to count on the brother coming through.
- **To offer a face-saving way out.** Some people will fight to the death to preserve their image of themselves as being powerful and in control. Instead of arguing, it can be more effective to agree with an abusive partner who is being unreasonable in order to buy some time and calm the situation down. “Yes, it is all my fault. I am sorry. I will come back later.”

It is dangerous to fight back and stay. Instead, pull their arms away from a grab, dodge or block a hit or get out of a choke without hurting the other person – and then to leave as quickly as possible. “What sorts of things get you into conflict?” A common answer might be, “When he wants to have sex and I do not.” “What happens if you say NO?” “He will accuse me of cheating on him.” Or “He will tell me that if I don’t give him what he wants, he will cheat on me.” Or “He will say that I do not love him.” Typically, she will rush into the face of the person pretending to be her partner and shout, “DON’T SAY THAT!”

Getting into an upset person’s face and shouting makes it more likely that he will hit her. Leave calmly while saying in a warm voice, “I LOVE you. I would NEVER cheat on you. I want us both to be safe. I will come back when we are feeling better.” This is just one of many choices she has if she can keep thinking clearly instead of getting overwhelmed with feelings.

### *The next step...*

Getting out of an abusive relationship. Do you want to leave an abusive situation, but stay out of fear of what your partner might do? While leaving isn’t easy, there are things you can do to protect yourself. You’re not alone, and help is available.



"Domestic Violence and Abuse" is a publication of Shaan Creations International. This brochure gives you information about domestic violence and how to protect yourself. Take care of yourself and don't allow to be belittled by anyone. It's strongly recommended to look for help whenever you are abused. Feel free to express your opinion about this brochure at [www.shaancreations.com](http://www.shaancreations.com).

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