

Warning Signs of Abusive or Potentially Abusive Relationships

The abuser is controlling and possessive . . .

- The survivor is restricted in communicating with others; their use of phone, e-mail, or Internet is monitored.
- The survivor is forbidden to see friends or family, or limited in contact with them.
- The abuser is intensely jealous of the survivor's interactions with others.
- The abuser invades the survivor's privacy – their home or room, walks or drives, diary, mail, e-mail, Facebook page, possessions.
- The abuser grills the survivor about what they did at work or at school.
- The abuser controls finances and decision-making.
- The abuser refuses to accept the survivor's termination of the relationship.

The abuser seems to be two different people . . .

- The abuser has a Jekyll-and-Hyde personality, often showing a charming, charismatic side to others.
- The abuser seems deeply penitent, sorrowful, and loving after an emotionally, verbally, or physically violent episode.

The abuser is desperate and extreme. . .

- The abuser may push for commitments too early in the relationship.
- The abuser threatens to kill the survivor or themselves if the survivor leaves them.
- The abuser says they cannot live without the survivor or the survivor cannot live without them.
- The abuser seems obsessed with having the survivor for themselves.

The abuser is verbally abusive . . .

- The abuser puts the survivor down, privately or publicly.
- The abuser plays on the survivor's guilt or their past love for them.
- The abuser makes the survivor question the survivor's sanity or accuses the survivor of being crazy.
- The abuser insults the survivor's intelligence, body, or looks.
- The abuser is unable or unwilling to communicate verbally without shouts, curses, or insults.

The abuser speaks disparagingly of the opposite sex . . .

- The abuser denigrates the survivor's friends.
- The abuser talks about the inferiority of the other sex, or the need to keep them in line.

The abuser is violent . . .

- The abuser loses their temper easily over small things; their anger seems frightening or out of proportion.
- The abuser grabs the survivor, twists their arm, pushes them, pulls them into the car, otherwise uses physical force.
- The abuser is violent toward the survivor's pets or cruel to animals in general.
- The abuser was physically violent to a former partner.
- The abuser throws things, kicks things, breaks things.
- The abuser demands sex, forcing the survivor or persistently urging them to perform sex acts without their consent.

The abuser disowns responsibility . . .

- The abuser denies being verbally or physically abusive.
- The abuser blames the survivor or someone else for the abuse. (The survivor "made them do it" or "drove them to it.")
- The abuser excuses the abuse on grounds of their great love for the survivor.

The survivor shows signs of physical, sexual, or psychological abuse . . .

- The survivor excuses the abuser's actions to themselves or others. (So the survivor cannot name what is happening to them.)
- The survivor speaks of the inferiority of their sex or of their responsibility to keep relationships or homes intact.
- The survivor accepts responsibility for the abuser's abuse, verbal or physical.
- The survivor wants to end the relationship but fears what it will do to the abuser or that they will retaliate.
- The survivor has recurring, non-specific aches, pains, or ailments, which can signify stress.
- The survivor's self-esteem suffers. They speak poorly of themselves, especially in relation to the abuser.
- The survivor makes significant lifestyle or appearance changes to benefit or appease the abuser.
- The survivor has bruises or seems physically hurt.