

Warning Signs of Abusive or Potentially Abusive Relationships

(Note on pronouns: Abusers and victims can be of either gender but the majority of cases involve men abusing women.)

He is controlling and abusive. . .

- She is restricted in communicating with others; her use of phone, mail, or e-mail is monitored.
- She is forbidden to see friends or family, or limited in her contact with them.
- He is intensely jealous of her interactions with other men.
- He invades her privacy - her home, her room, her diary, her mail, her e-mail, her possessions.
- He grills her about what she did at work or at school.
- He controls finances and decision-making.
- He refuses to accept her termination of the relationship.

He seems to be two different people. . .

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

He is desperate or extreme about her. . .

- He may push for commitments too early in the relationship.
- He threatens to kill her or himself if she leaves him.
- He says he cannot live without her or she cannot live without him.
- He seems obsessed with having her for himself.

He is verbally abusive. . .

- He puts her down, privately or publicly.
- He plays on her guilt or past love for him.
- He makes her question her sanity or accuses her of being crazy.
- He insults her intelligence, her body, or her looks.

He speaks disparagingly of women. . .

- He denigrates her friends.
- He talks about the inferiority of women or the need to keep women in line or for men to be "on top."

He is violent. . .

- He loses his temper easily over small things; his anger seems frightening or out of proportion.
- He grabs her, twists her arm, pushes her, pulls her into the car; otherwise uses physical force.
- He is violent to her pets or cruel to animals in general.
- He was physically violent to a former partner.
- He throws things, kicks things, breaks things.
- He demands sex; he forces her or persistently urges her to perform sex acts without her consent.

He disowns responsibility. . .

- He denies being verbally or physically abusive.
- He blames her or someone else for the abuse. She "made him do it" or "drove him to it."
- He excuses the abuse on grounds of his great love for her.

She shows signs of physical, sexual, or psychological abuse. . .

- She excuses his actions toward herself or others. Thus, she cannot name what is happening to her.
- She speaks of the inferiority of women or of their responsibility to keep relationships or homes intact.
- She accepts responsibility for his abuse, verbal and physical.
- She wants to end the relationship but fears what it will do to him or that he will retaliate.
- She has recurring, non-specific aches, pains, or ailments, which can signify stress.
- Her self-esteem suffers. She speaks poorly of herself, especially in relation to him.
- She makes significant lifestyle changes to benefit or appease him.
- She has bruises or seems physically hurt.

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From the Domestic Violence Workshop held at Kalamazoo College on October 27, 1999, eight days after Maggie was killed on that campus by her ex-boyfriend who then killed himself. For more about Maggie's story, visit <http://www.rememberingmaggie.com>