



The 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 batterer on your hands.

- **A push for quick involvement:** Comes on very strong, claiming "I've never been in love like this before" 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.
- **Unrealistic expectations:** Expects you to be the perfect woman and meet his/her every need.
- **Isolation:** Tries to cut you off from family, 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 make me angry" instead of "I am angry," or "you're hurting me by not doing what I tell you." Less obvious is "you make me happy."
- **Hypersensitivity:** Is easily insulted claiming that his/her feelings are hurt when (s) he actually is angry. (S) he'll rant about the injustice of things that are just part of life.
- **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 that 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:** Expect you to serve, obey and remain at home.
- **Sudden mood swings:** Switches from loving to explosively violent in a matter of minutes.
- **Has a history of battering:** Admits to hitting a woman in the past but says it was their fault.
- **Threats of violence:** Make statements like, "I'll break your neck," or "I'll kill you," then dismisses them with, 'Everybody talk 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 of Victims of Family Violence
Fayetteville, Arkansas