

ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS

An abusive relationship is about power and control.

Partner abuse can happen to anyone! It takes many forms, including emotional and physical abuse, intimidation and isolation. Abusive relationships don't happen overnight. At first, the signs may be subtle and you may hope it will get better but they will only worsen in time.

WARNING SIGNS

- ⇒ Your partner may be violent and may yell at you, push or hit you.
- ⇒ Your partner isolates you, limiting your time with family and friends.
- ⇒ Your partner is very jealous and accuses you of things you never did.
- ⇒ Your partner controls everything, including many of your decisions.
- ⇒ Your partner may demand sex, even if you say no.

- ⇒ Your partner may threaten to hurt themselves, you or your friends.
- ⇒ You may feel you have to always act a certain way to please your partner.
- ⇒ Your partner blames you for their actions.
- ⇒ Your partner may use intimidation and make you feel afraid.
- ⇒ Your partner may criticize you to make you feel ashamed of yourself.
- ⇒ Your partner may call you names and ridicule you.
- ⇒ Your partner makes jokes to demean or humiliate you in front of others.

WHY DO PEOPLE ABUSE?

It is never OK for people to abuse others! However, to help you better understand why they abuse, here are two of the more common reasons:

1. Mental health issues -

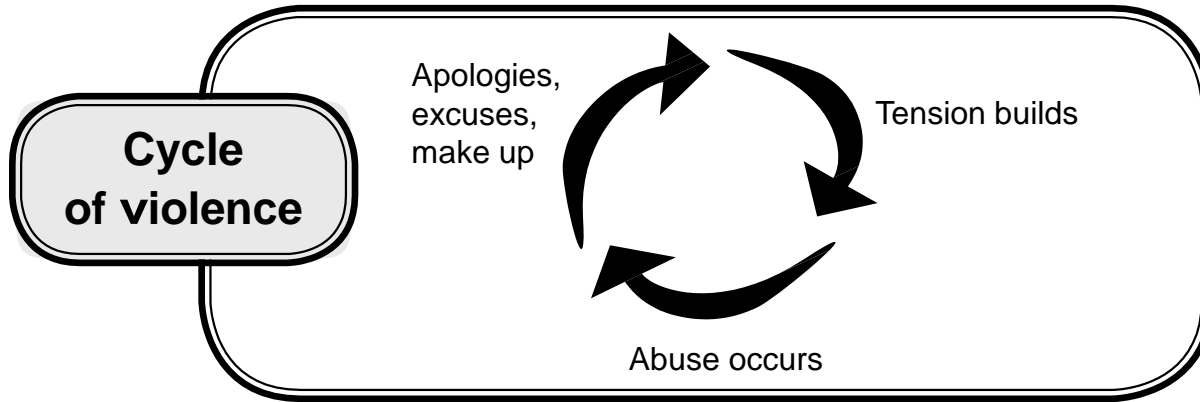
Some abusers may have anger management problems, alcohol/drug addictions or a mental disorder.

2. Abused as kids -

Some abusers were abused as kids or saw others being abused as they were growing up, so it became an expected part of life for them. However, as they grow older they often decide not to play victim anymore and take on the role of the abuser, the one in control.

GETTING OUT OF AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

The abuser may say sorry and it won't happen again, but do not second-guess yourself. He/she will do it again. It is an endless cycle and typically each time the abuse occurs, it gets worse. It is important that you know the violence will not get better until the abuser chooses to get professional help or you leave the relationship.



TIPS TO SAFELY GETTING OUT OF AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP:

- ⇒ Contact a local domestic violence shelter. They will be able to help you prepare a plan to safely get out and quickly.
- ⇒ Make sure you prepare a safety plan; know the best time to leave (when he/she is not home).
- ⇒ Arrange for a friend to be there to help you leave.
- ⇒ Prepare an emergency suitcase with everything you may need.
- ⇒ Know exactly where you are going and how to get there.
- ⇒ Notify authorities. Call the police to help you if necessary.
- ⇒ Warn your friends. The abuser may threaten them or harass them to try to find you.
- ⇒ Be aware that the abuser likely has access to your e-mail and banking information, so change all passwords and notify your bank.

Once you are out safely, it is important to seek counselling to deal with the emotional and physical fallout of the relationship. You do not want to fall back into an abusive relationship again, so it is essential that you educate yourself about the patterns of abuse and what it means to be in a healthy relationship.

~~ Learn from Sarah's story ~~

I was totally in love with this guy for three years. Then suddenly he was kicked out of school and everything seemed to change. He got really mean. I had to do whatever he wanted and whenever he wanted, including sex!

He started calling me names and pushing me around. I thought this was what relationships must be like so I never complained because I didn't want him to break up with me or think I was a bad girlfriend.

He wouldn't even let me go to the corner store without doing my hair and getting all dressed up.

What changed the situation?

One day when my boyfriend was in the shower the phone rang, so I never thought anything of it and I answered it. He came running out of the shower and ripped the phone right out of the wall and gave me a fat lip, then forced me into the bedroom. A couple days later I told my friend about it and her reaction was a real reality check!! It was then that I realized my relationship was NOT normal! So I dumped him.

It was not easy. He bought me flowers and called me constantly. I actually felt sorry for him and almost took him back, but I knew in my heart that he needed help and it was his problem, not mine. So I cut him off completely.

My advice to someone in an abusive relationship:

Get out!! You cannot change someone; it will not get better and it may get worse. The only person you can change is you. So know what you deserve and don't take anything less! Know it's his problem not yours so don't let him drag you down with him!