

Characteristics of an Unhealthy, Dysfunctional Romantic Relationship

(Characterized by use of coercive power & control of your significant other in order to have your way)

*As females statistically are more likely to be victims of dating violence, these items are addressed toward female victims. Please note males can be victims of dating violence as well. SAFE (local domestic violence resource center) estimated 11-14% of victims served during 2010 were male.

<i>Using Intimidation:</i>	Making her afraid by using looks, actions, gestures, expressions, loud voice, yelling, smashing things, name calling, displaying weapons, attacks against pets or property, destroying her property, making her think she's crazy, playing mind games, forcing her to do degrading things, humiliating her, making her feel guilty.
<i>Using Coercion & Threats:</i>	Making and/or carrying out threats to do something to hurt her, others, or self (abuser). Threats to harm family, pets, or objects of personal value. Threatening her with a weapon, not allowing her to leave or physically confining her. <i>Making her:</i> drop legal charges, do illegal things, do things against her will. <i>Threatening to:</i> leave her, commit suicide, report her to authorities, expose a secret.
<i>Destruction of Property:</i>	Destroying personal effects (clothing, car, pictures, letters, gifts), ruining belongings, defacing & causing damage to partner's possessions (objects of personal value).
<i>Using Emotional Abuse:</i>	Putting her down/criticizing, making her feel bad about herself, calling her names, making her think she's crazy, playing mind games, stalking, telling "secrets" to others, ignoring or "silent treatment", humiliating her, making her feel guilty, insulting her. Using guilt as a weapon of control. Telling the victim she is to blame for things that go wrong.
<i>Using Jealousy, Possessiveness & Isolation:</i>	Controlling or manipulating her by controlling what she does, who she sees & talks to, what she reads, where she goes, limiting her outside involvement. Using jealousy to justify actions, using jealousy as a sign of love instead of insecurity. Accusations of cheating, unfaithfulness, infidelity. Abuser treats her as if he owns her; he doesn't want her to share her time/attention with anyone else. Isolating the victim – controlling her schedule, limiting her involvement in activities, limiting access to telephone/internet, limiting access to enroll in certain classes, controlling her access to resources (e.g., health care, medications, car, friends, school, job, etc.). Abuser seeks to destroy her social support system – not allowing her to spend time with family or friends, criticizing her friends, so she won't spend time with them, discouraging her from being close with anyone else. <i>Isolation is intended to make the abuser the center of the victim's universe, as well as to limit purposefully the victim's access to others who might attempt to help her/him escape.</i>
<i>Using Male Privilege:</i>	Treating her like a servant, making all the (big) decisions (her point of view is not important), acting like the "master of the castle", being the one to define and enforce men's roles and women's roles, going out with friends & not allowing her to do the same, walking out on an argument, knowing her whereabouts at all times; acting like an owner or master, expecting her to obey like a child.
<i>Using Economic Abuse:</i> <i>(controlling \$ and/or resources such as car, cell phone)</i>	Preventing her from getting or keeping a job, making her ask for \$, giving her an allowance, taking her \$, make her give him all her \$, not allowing her to have enough \$. Not letting her know about or have access to income, making most financial decisions, not contributing financially to the relationship, making her account for every dollar she spends, harassing her at work.
<i>Using Verbal Abuse:</i>	Name-calling, criticizing, publicly humiliating, put downs, embarrassments.
<i>Using Physical Abuse:</i>	Any attempt to hurt or scare partner physically by: hitting open-handed &/or closed-handed, hitting with objects, slapping, kicking, biting, punching, pinching, pushing, shoving, arm twisting, choking, hair pulling, tripping, grabbing, scratching, spitting, poking, shaking, dragging, pinning (to the ground or against a wall), burning, stabbing, cutting, shooting, using or threatening with a weapon/other object. Using physical force or threats to prevent person from leaving physically (i.e., physically confining, restraining, blocking escape).
<i>Using Sexual Abuse:</i>	Any sexual relations without the consent of the other person. Unwanted or uncomfortable touching, forcing sex, continued sexual advances after being told "no", "playful" use of force during sex, treating her like a sex object, humiliating sexual activity, persistently pressuring for sex, coercing sex through a variety of tactics, physically forcing or harming the victim sexually, etc.
<i>Minimizing, Denying, Blaming*:</i>	Making light of the abuse & not taking her concerns about it seriously, saying the abuse didn't happen, or that the behavior wasn't abusive. Shifting responsibility for abusive behavior, saying she caused it.

***Blaming the Victim for Abuser's Actions** – One myth about abusive relationships that victims often believe is: "if I didn't do....then I wouldn't get hit" OR "my partner only abuses me when I do something wrong" OR "I shouldn't have made my partner angry enough to hit me". This dialogue doesn't only come from within the victim, but often is mirrored by the abuser who is there to reinforce the idea that the abuse is the result of a failure on the part of the victim. The problem here is: everyone has moments of disappointment, anger, even rage; but the decision of how to REACT to or EXPRESS those feelings is a personal choice made by the abuser, NOT something brought on by the victim. An abuser can make the choice to talk through an issue or to leave the room until they cool down. The decision to abuse, and thus the responsibility for the violence, ALWAYS rests with the abuser.

Warning Signs of an Abusive Relationship:

Physical abuse in a relationship rarely starts out as severe violence. Some behaviors that show the possibility that a dating partner may eventually become physically violence may include **extreme jealousy, blaming others for all problems, never being able to admit to wrongdoing, cruelty to animals, and holding rigid beliefs about sex roles for men and women.**

The following stories show some warning signs that a boyfriend may get more controlling or violent.

Jealousy: *“My boyfriend is really crazy about me. He just hates it when I talk to other guys. I tell him they’re just friends, but he says they’re all after me. One time we got into a fight because he saw me sitting with another guy in the cafeteria. I tried to tell him we were just studying for a math test, but he said I was lying and slapped me. I guess he gets jealous because he loves me so much.”*

If someone is jealous we often think it’s a compliment—like it’s his way of showing he cares. It’s normal to feel jealous now and then, but we can’t keep someone from having other friends. No one has the right to control whom we see or whom we choose as friends. A slap (or any kind of violence) is not a sign of love and affection. It’s a sign of control and no one deserves it. We have no right to control what someone does by threatening or hurting them. When we get so mad we want to hit somebody, we should walk away from the situation. When we cool off we can try talking about what happened.

Using Anger and Control: *“Last night I went out for pizza with my girlfriend. She wanted to go to a party at a guy’s house, but I wasn’t really up for it. She said she was going no matter what I did, so I grabbed her arm and told her she couldn’t leave me with nothing to do. She started walking away, so I pulled her hair and yanked her around. She ran away, yelling she never wanted to see me again.”*

Anyone can get frustrated when things don’t go their way, but abusing people we care about to get what we want is never okay. Being hurt by someone’s words or actions doesn’t justify using physical force. If you can’t handle the situation, walk away & talk it out at another time. Using physical violence never makes problems go way, and someone can get seriously hurt (or even die). If a partner uses violence, they are choosing this behavior to try to control things because they think they have a right to do so. This is wrong. You can choose other ways to solve problems and negotiate in your relationships. No one has the right to make decisions for another person. It’s OK to end a relationship with someone who tries to control you with force.

Healthy Relationships: Arguments in relationships are normal, but using physical violence is never okay. A healthy relationship is one in which partners treat each other with respect, support each other’s goals in life, & expect each other to have their own opinions, feelings, friends, and activities. In an equal relationship, decisions are made together, both partners make compromises & admit mistakes, and communication is open & truthful.

Females: Does your boyfriend strike out at you or make you feel afraid or uncomfortable? Do you change your behavior to try to keep him happy? Are you afraid you will get hurt if you try to end the relationship?

It’s important to know that no one has the right to hurt you as a way to control you. It’s against the law for someone to use violence against you (you can contact law enforcement). If you are being abused, talk to a trusted friend or family member, counselor, minister, professor, or call a local domestic violence program in your area. It’s also not okay to treat your boyfriend in abusive ways.

Males: Do you have a problem controlling your anger? Have you hit or hurt someone you care about? Have you lost friends because of the abusive way you acted?

It’s important for you to reject the idea that physical abuse is okay—before it gets worse. If you are abusive to a girlfriend, stop it now. Talk to a mental health professional and ask for help to change your behavior. It’s also not okay for your girlfriend to treat you in abusive ways.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES:	National Domestic Violence Hotline	1-800-799-SAFE (7233)	http://www.thehotline.org/
	National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline	1-866-331-9474	http://www.loveisrespect.org/
	SAFE of Harnett County	(910) 893-SAFE (7233)	http://www.safeofhc.org/
	Interact of Wake County	(919) 828-7740 1-866-291-0855 toll-free	http://www.interactofwake.org/
	Harbor, Inc. Crisis Line	(919) 631-5478 Office (919) 938-3566	http://www.harborshelter.org/
	Daymark Recovery Services	1-800-256-2452	
	Hopeline (Raleigh Crisis Line)	(919) 231-4525	http://www.hopelinenc.com/
	Smithfield Crisis Line	(919) 934-6161	
ON-CAMPUS RESOURCES:	Campus Safety (x1375) OR x1911 for emergency situations; Campus Minister (x1547); Counseling Services (x5709); Student Health Services (x1560); Vice Pres. for Student Life (x1540).		