

HOW DO I KNOW I'M ABUSIVE

HEALTHY CONFLICT

Healthy conflict in relationships is normal. Everyone has to deal with healthy conflict if they want the benefits of being in a relationship. What do you do when you get angry with your partner? When you argue with your partner, do you become abusive?

ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR

Abusive behaviour, also called domestic violence, is about more than just hitting. It is when one person uses abuse to gain power and control over their partner. This often prevents the partner from doing what they want to do. People who abuse are not 'out of control' because of poor anger management, stress or alcohol or drugs. Rather, they have learned to use abuse to get what they want. The good news is that because abuse is learned behaviour, it can be unlearned.

Domestic violence takes many forms. It includes behaviour that results in physical, sexual and/or psychological damage, forced isolation, economic deprivation or behaviour that causes the partner to live in fear.

Physical Abuse

Punching, choking, hitting, pushing, shoving, throwing things, smashing things, damaging property, hurting pets and threatening to do any of these things.

Sexual Abuse

Demands for sexual intercourse when one person does not want to participate, threats of physical violence during sex, or forcing a person to participate in acts they do not wish to perform.

Verbal Abuse

Continued verbal harassment, including put-downs, insults, name-calling and swearing.

Social Abuse

Not letting your partner have friends, isolating your partner from family, not letting them use the car or the phone.

Economic Abuse

One person takes total control of the family income, so that the other person isn't allowed to have any money or is only allowed to have money for household expenses and none for personal use.

Psychological and Emotional Abuse

Humiliation, threats, insults, harassment or constant criticism. This may include verbal abuse, as described above.

Perhaps you haven't hurt your partner, but you're worried that you will? If you're worried, ask yourself these few important questions.

HOW YOU TREAT YOUR PARTNER

1. Do you often call your partner names and constantly criticise them? yes no
2. Have you ever tried to stop your partner doing something that they wanted to do? (For example, going out with friends, having a job, doing some study. yes no
3. Do you take control of the finances, so your partner is not allowed to have money for their own personal use? yes no
4. Have you ever threatened to hit or throw something at your partner? yes no
5. Have you ever unfairly accused your partner of paying too much attention to someone else? yes no
6. Have you ever slapped, hit, pushed or shoved your partner? yes no
7. Have you ever pressured your partner to have sex when they didn't want to? yes no

If you answered YES to any of these questions, chances are you can't simply sort things out by yourself. You will need to seek help from a professional trained in domestic violence. The Men's Domestic Violence Helpline has professionals on the line that you can talk to.

Many couples in intimate relationships disagree about things and fight. Disagreements are part of a normal, healthy relationship. It's a problem if one partner feels too threatened or scared to argue back or have their say. When this happens, the balance of power is no longer equal. Your relationship may seem peaceful as a result, but it will be undermined by unexpressed anger and resentment. Such relationships are not satisfying to anybody and are likely to break down if you do not get help.