

SOME SPECIFIC TYPES OF ABUSIVE BEHAVIOR

Volatile and explosive anger and controlling and abusive behavior are always destructive in a relationship and always contribute to a loss of trust, respect, and intimacy. They are never helpful in problem-solving or conflict resolution. Both men and women can be abusive in relationships. Abusive behavior, as it is defined in this article, occurs in many relationships at some point. Abuse by either partner is not okay. However, the gender of the person who is abusive can make a significant difference in the ongoing impact of abusive actions, especially when there is a **consistent, ongoing, and systematic pattern of abuse** in the relationship.

Although abusive behavior can happen between any two people, in the large majority of cases, it is men in heterosexual relationships who are more able and more likely to direct methodical and systematic threats and physical force in order to maintain their control in a relationship with a partner. Women can also be abusive and violent in relationships. This is not alright either. However, there is generally a significant difference in the impact of male and female violence. Even when men do experience physical abuse from their partners, they are not as likely to feel the intense fear, humiliation, and intimidation nor are they as likely to suffer the severity of physical injury that women do. Because of basic differences in musculature and socialization, women usually cannot compete with men once physical conflict begins to occur in a relationship. Men are, on the whole, more likely to be able to dominate a partner relationship through the use of physical force than are women.

Moreover, once a man has actually been physically or sexually abusive in a relationship (or if his partner believes that there is the potential for him to do this), other types of abuse take on additional impact. At that time, emotional and verbal abuse then become much more frightening and controlling for the female partner. A single act of using physical force against property or people clearly demonstrates that a man, if he is unable to control his partner through verbal and emotional abuse and threats, then has the potential to “up the ante” again to physical abuse in order to maintain his dominance and control in the relationship. Both the man and his partner know that he has already used violence in the past. Once physical abuse has occurred, it becomes that much easier to violate this physical boundary the next time he becomes explosive and threatening. The following outlines eight types of abuse and gives specific examples of each. Read through them and see which ones you have seen yourself do with your current partner or with others in your life.

1) MALE ENTITLEMENT: Having an attitude that conveys male dominance, a general disrespect for women, and the idea that men are just naturally more competent and capable than women. This attitude leads directly to the belief that:

“I, as a man, have the right and even the responsibility and obligation to control how my partner thinks, feels, and acts and to make her into the person that I think she should be.” This desire to shape and control a partner underlies all abusive behavior.

- Making generalizations, telling disrespectful jokes, and believing stereotypes about women
...e.g. thinking to yourself or actually saying things like *“Women are irrational/It’s your job to take care of me and the kids/Women are only good for one thing/Women should be barefoot and pregnant”*
- Having the expectation that you will make all the important decisions in the relationship and in the family
...e.g. where to live, with whom his partner will spend time, the activities that you do as a couple
- Treating her like a “servant” or an employee
...i.e. demanding that she do things for you and expecting her to “wait on” you (e.g. saying to her, *“Go get me a beer”* or *“I’m hungry; hurry up and get dinner on the table”*)
- Controlling how household money is spent and handled and making all the important financial decisions
...e.g. pressuring her to account for all the money she spends, withholding money from her, giving her an “allowance,” acting as if her work around the house and with the children has no economic value to the family and is not as important as your outside job, keeping the checkbook or charge cards in your possession or monitoring these closely if she has access to them
- Believing that you have to be the “breadwinner” and the moneymaker in the family
...i.e. pressuring her not to go to school or work or sabotaging or discouraging her efforts to do these activities due to your own insecurity
...e.g. telling her that going to school is “stupid” or coming home late so that she will be not be on time for her class or her job
- Making the decisions about “who does what” in terms of household/yard chores and parenting responsibilities
...e.g. refusing to make meals, do the dishes or the laundry, or to do what you consider to be “women’s work”
- Communicating to her or others that she is your “property” or that you “own” her and she “belongs” to you because the two of you are living together, in a relationship, or are married
- Being overly possessive and often reacting in a jealous way with her
...e.g. making the assumption that she is always “on the make” and looking to get involved with someone else, brooding about or continually bringing up her real or imagined relationships with other men

2) EMOTIONAL ABUSE: Using behavioral or non-verbal methods to hurt, punish, demean, humiliate, intimidate or control your partner

- Sulking and pouting or withdrawing affection, approval, or attention from her when you are angry with her
...i.e. punishing her with “the silent treatment” or “giving her the cold shoulder”
- Sneering at her and acting disgusted or contemptuous with her
...e.g. giving her “dirty looks,” rolling your eyes, or clicking your tongue when she is talking to or around you
- Yelling and screaming at her
- Staring or glaring at her
...i.e. giving her “the evil eye/the death stare/the glint”
- Following her around your residence to continue an argument even though she wants to stop talking about the issue
- Standing near or over her and using your size to intimidate her
...e.g. “getting in her face” or “moving into her space”

- **Monitoring what she does (i.e. doing “detective work”)**
 ...e.g. following her or having her followed to find out where she is going or who she is spending time with; listening in on her phone conversations or actually taping her phone calls; calling to see if she is where she says she is going to be; checking her phone, texting, e-mail records, or internet activity
- **Attempting to control her movements or to isolate her (i.e. trying to keep her away from family and friends)**
 ...e.g. taking or hiding her car keys, removing the car battery or disconnecting the distributor cap, preventing her from using the phone, erasing or not giving her phone messages from other people
- **Interrupting her eating**
 ...e.g. to “finish a discussion” at dinnertime when you are angry with her
- **Forcing her to stay awake or to get up from sleep**
 ...e.g. waking her up or keeping her up and not allowing her to go to bed in order “resolve an argument”
- **Coercing her into doing humiliating behavior**
 ...e.g. making her kneel or bow in front of you
- **Looking for, following, or stalking a partner to find out where she is and what she is doing**

3) VERBAL ABUSE: Using words or statements to hurt, punish, demean, humiliate, intimidate, or control your partner when the two of you are alone or when you are around other people

- Referring to women and girls in dismissive or derogatory terms (calling women and girls “chicks/bimbos”)
- Making ongoing critiques and impatient and judgmental comments about her (e.g. about her weight, her clothes, her hair, her activities, her friends and family)
- Criticizing/discounting/ignoring her thoughts, feelings, opinions and values
 ...e.g. telling her things like “that’s a dumb idea” or “you’re absolutely ‘nuts’ to feel that way”
- Making “jokes” about her as a way to demean her in front of others (e.g. telling “dumb blonde” jokes if your partner has blonde hair)
- Being sarcastic with her (e.g. “You are such a winner,” “Who made you queen of the world?”)
- Mocking her or mimicking what she has said (e.g. repeating what she has said to you in a “sing-song” voice)
- Lecturing her about “what’s right” or about “the way she should feel, be, and act”
- Twisting things she says to get her to feel confused, “crazy,” and “off balance” (i.e. “gaslighting her”)
 ...i.e. trying to manipulate her with “mind games,” lies, and contradictions
 ...e.g. asking her to do something and then denying later that you asked her to do it
- Making negative or derogatory comments about the activities she likes and the places she goes
- Interrupting her (e.g. talking over her; refusing to “give up the floor”)
- Interrogating her (e.g. continually questioning her about where she goes, what she does, and who she sees)
- Being accusing toward and blaming her for things that go “wrong”
 ...e.g. saying that she “can’t do anything right” around the house, with finances, with the children, in your relationship
- “Ranting and raving” around her
 ...e.g. about her, the children, the government, politicians, “welfare cheats,” taxes, the next door neighbor, your boss or co-workers
- Swearing/cussing at her (e.g. “fuck you, go to hell, God damn you, screw you, this is bullshit”)
- Using put-downs and name-calling with her (e.g. “bitch, cunt, asshole, idiot, lazy, stupid, unfit mother, failure, silly, ugly, fat, cow, ball-buster, drama queen, slut, whore”)
- Insulting, ridiculing, or belittling other people she cares about
 ...i.e. “put-downs” about her parents (“your mother is always trying to come between us”), calling her women friends “losers” or “dykes,” referring to her male friends or colleagues as “your boyfriend” or “your lover”

- Being demanding
...i.e. pressuring her verbally to do what you want her to do and be who you want her to be

4) THREATS:

- a) **NON-PHYSICAL THREATS:** Communicating an intention (either directly or indirectly) to do something that is designed to create emotional distress, fear, indecision, and insecurity in a partner, which then increases your ability to control her.

THIS INCLUDES THREATENING TO:

- Withdraw affection or refuse to talk to her
- Expose personal things that she has told you to others
e.g. *“Wait ‘til I tell your parents what you said about them”*
- File assault charges or get a restraining order against her
- Take the children away or keep them from her if she leaves your relationship
...e.g. *“If you ever leave me, you will never get to see the kids again”*
- Withhold money from her or “ruin her financially” if she leaves
- “Throw her out in the street” or abandon her
- Go out or be sexual with other women
- Sue your partner’s family, friends, or counselor for “ruining” or “interfering” with your relationship
- End the relationship, separate, or divorce

- b) **VIOLENT THREATS:** Communicating an intention (either directly or indirectly) to do violence or physical harm to your partner, your children, other family members and relatives, friends, pets, yourself, or property

- Standing in her way, blocking her, or “cornering” her to keep her from leaving or going somewhere
- Throwing objects in her direction or at her
- Hitting walls or slamming your fist on surfaces such as countertops or tables
...and then refusing to repair damage you have done
- Making threats to hurt family pets
- Making vague but fear-producing statements such as *“You’re really asking for it this time,” “Go ahead, keep it up and let’s just see what happens”* or *“Remember the last time you got me this pissed off”*
- Making physically intimidating gestures such as holding up a clenched fist in front of her face or raising your arm as if you are going to hit her
- Making statements about pushing, grabbing, or hitting her (e.g. *“I’d love to smash your face right now, I really feel like letting you have it, Knock it off or I’ll kick your butt, I really feel like smacking you upside your head”*)
- Making threats to be harsh or abusive with the children (e.g. *“Wait ‘til your mother’s not around to protect you anymore”*)
- Driving recklessly when you are angry to frighten her or “make a point”
- Threatening her with an object (e.g. belt, broom, knife, gun)
- Playing with or discharging a weapon around her
- Making direct or veiled threats to kill her, the children, her parents, or others
...e.g. *“Your parents are going to pay for their interference with our relationship, There’s no way you’re ever leaving this damn marriage”*
- Making direct or veiled threats to hurt or kill yourself
...e.g. *“I’ll never be able to go on without you; If you leave, I just don’t know what I’m going to do”*

5) PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE:

This category can include any or all of the categories already mentioned above. **Psychological abuse is present when there is a consistent, ongoing, and systematic pattern of abusive behavior** in an intimate relationship by a person who has more power than their partner. It occurs when the less powerful partner either feels fearful that there might be violence or when there has been at least one incident of property destruction or physical or sexual abuse toward her or others. When there is the potential for violence or when any kind of threats or violence have already occurred in a relationship, verbal and emotional abuse and additional threats then take on additional impact. At this point, these behaviors are significantly more likely to create an atmosphere of terror, degradation, and humiliation than would occur in a relationship where threats or violence have not been present. Many relationships involve some of the types of abuse noted above on an occasional or infrequent basis. But **psychological abuse becomes part of the relationship dynamic when there is a systematic and persistent effort by a man, through the use of violence, threats, and other abusive and controlling attitudes and behaviors:**

- **to undermine a woman's self-esteem, self-respect, self-confidence, and motivation;**
- **to create a devastating and debilitating emotional insecurity and fear in her; and**
- **to render her less capable of taking care of and protecting herself (and her children) and of functioning independently in the future.**

6) VIOLENT ACTIONS DIRECTED AT PROPERTY OR PETS: Damaging or destroying property or hurting pets to coerce or intimidate a partner into doing what you want her to do. These actions are also always perceived as violent threats to those who are around when they are occurring or when they see the damage that is left behind (e.g. holes in the walls).

- **Hitting or kicking cupboards, walls, or doors**
- **Slamming your fist on surfaces (e.g. desk, counter top, arm of a chair, car dashboard or steering wheel)**
- **Throwing or breaking household items (papers, glasses, dishes, pillows, remote controls)**
- **Taking, hiding, or destroying her possessions**
...e.g. favorite pictures, family heirlooms, jewelry, presents you have given her
- **Hitting, kicking, throwing, or killing a pet in order to hurt or intimidate her**

7) SEXUAL ABUSE: Any sexually inappropriate verbal statements, any physical affection or touch that is forced on another person, or any non-consenting sexual act

- **Telling "dirty" jokes and making sexually demeaning comments about her or other women around her (e.g. calling her or other women "whores," "sluts," or "frigid")**
- **Staring or "gawking" at other women's bodies when you are with her or making sexualized comments about other women around her (e.g. "Hey, take a look at those tits")**

- Viewing and treating her or other women like “sex objects”
 - ...e.g. making unwanted or inappropriate sexual comments to her or about her in front of others, expecting or demanding sex from her, punishing her for not giving you sex whenever you want it
- Criticizing or demeaning her about her sexual past or previous sexual experiences with other men
- Insults about her body (e.g. the size of her breasts/hips/legs/butt) or about her love-making abilities (e.g. “*You make love like a corpse*”)
- Insisting or expecting that she dress in a certain manner to please you
 - ...e.g. in a “prim and proper” or a “sexy” fashion
- Unwanted touching of sexual parts of her body
 - ...e.g. grabbing or pinching her breasts or butt when she tells you not to do it or when she says that it hurts her
- Not being interested in or taking into account a partner’s lovemaking wants/needs/desires
- Coercing or pressuring her into doing any specific sexual activities that she does not wish to do
 - ...e.g. pushing her to perform oral or anal sex, wanting her to expose her breasts to other men
- Forcing sex when:
 - ...she is sleeping
 - ...she is not asked
 - ...she is sick or it could be damaging to her health
 - ...she says “no” or sets a limit (either verbally or non-verbally)
 - ...she is intoxicated or “high” and is unable to say “no” effectively
 - ...she is fearful about saying “no” due to explosive or abusive anger or the “silent treatment” that may follow her refusal about having sex
 - ...she is not allowed to use protection against disease or pregnancy
- Raping or sexually assaulting her

8) PHYSICAL ABUSE: Using any physical actions or force to control a person or situation (this includes violence perpetrated against yourself which is also threatening and frightening for a partner)

- Pinching/scratching/biting her
- Tripping her
- Ripping her clothing
- Pulling her hair
- Bumping into her or nudging her as you walk by when you are angry to “give her a message”
- Giving a partner prescription medication to keep her lethargic/unmotivated/tired
- Refusing to help her when she is ill, injured, or hurt
- Locking her out of your residence
- Grabbing/pushing her
- Wrestling with or restraining her physically
 - ...e.g. wrapping your arms around her to keep her in one place or to “calm her down”
- Tying her up
- Throwing her bodily
 - ...e.g. on a couch, on a bed, on the floor
- Slapping/punching her
- Choking/strangling her
 - ...i.e. putting your hands anywhere near or around her throat and applying pressure
- Using a object or weapon with her
 - ...e.g. broom, belt, knife, gun
- Hitting, hurting, or killing yourself
 - ...e.g. punching yourself in your chest, arm, or head; attempting suicide