

EARLY WARNING SIGNS FOR FUTURE ABUSE

Many of the behaviors that society socializes women to interpret, as caring, attentive, and romantic, are usually early warning signs for future abuse.

1. **INTRUSION** – Constantly wants to know your whereabouts, who you were with, where were you going, when were you coming home. *Examples: constant phone calls, showing up at friend's house unexpectedly.* At first this made us feel missed and cared for, but in actuality, these are signs of suspicion and distrust.
2. **ISOLATION** – Spending all or majority of your time alone together; cutting you off from friends and family; makes fun of any activities, books, clubs you are interested in. *Examples: calling friends "sluts", "stupid", or other derogatory names; discourages you from keeping in touch with family; discourages you from doing activities apart.* This makes you feel wanted and needed because he devotes all of his time to you. Actually, this cuts down on your resources (friends, family), so when you really need them, they may not be there for you.
3. **POSSESSION & JEALOUSY** – Constant accusations of sexual interactions with anyone in your life (teachers, bosses, counselors, friends, etc.), accuses you of flirting, monitoring what you wear, how you wear it, how much make-up you put on. *Examples: "I want you to be all mine." "I don't want any other guys looking at you." "You look like a whore with all of that make-up on."* This is treating you like an object, not a human being.
4. **PRONE TO ANGER** – Easily angered, quick mood changes, unpredictable behavior, and anger may be out of proportion to the incident. *Examples: His anger is directed towards a pet, possessions, and objects – he might kick your dog, or tear up some of your pictures. You show up to class 5 minutes late and he is overly angry.* It is important not to ignore what may even seem like small over-reactions. It is not acceptable for someone to use aggression to get their point across. Just because men are almost expected to be more violent, that does not mean it's okay.
5. **UNKNOWN PASTS AND RESPECT FOR WOMEN** – Do you know about his past girlfriends, his family upbringing, and his relationship with his mother and other women? How do his friends look at women? Does he believe in stereotypic male/female roles? *Example: "She's got nice tits." "Women are good for only one thing." Pinching your body parts when he knows you don't like it.* It is important to take the "mystery" out of his past, like talking to his ex-girlfriends. Be in touch with your feelings, how do you feel when he degrades women? By degrading women, he is also degrading you.
6. **BLAMES OTHERS FOR HIS PROBLEMS** – If he does poorly in school or is chronically unemployed, someone is always doing him wrong or out to get him. He may make mistakes and then blames the person he is dating for upsetting him and keeping him from concentrating on his job. He will tell the woman she is at fault for almost anything that goes wrong.
7. **BLAMES OTHERS FOR HIS FEELINGS** – He will tell the woman, "You make me mad," "You're hurting me by not doing what I ask," "I can't help being angry." He really makes the decision about what he thinks and feels, but will use feeling to manipulate the woman. Harder to catch are his claims that "You make me happy," or "you control how I feel."
8. **HYPERSENSITIVITY** – The abuser is easily insulted. He claims his feelings are "hurt" when he is really mad, or he takes the slightest setbacks as personal attacks. He will "rant and rave" about the injustice of things that have happened to him – things that are really just part of living, like being asked to turn in his homework on time, getting a traffic ticket, being told that something he does is annoying, or being asked to help with chores.
9. **CRUELTY TO ANIMALS AND CHILDREN** – This is a person who punishes animals brutally or is insensitive to their pain or suffering. He may expect children to be capable of doing things far beyond their

ability (whips a two year old for wetting his/her diaper) or he may tease children or brothers or sisters until they cry (60% of men who beat the woman they are with also beat their children).

10. **PLAYFUL USE OF FORCE DURING SEX** – This man may like to throw the woman down and hold her arms during sex. He may want to act out fantasies during sex where she is helpless. He is letting her know that the idea of “rape” excites him. He may show little concern about whether she wants to have sex, or sulk, or use anger to manipulate her into compliance. He may start having sex with the woman while she is sleeping, or demand sex when she is sick or tired.
11. **VERBAL ABUSE** – In addition to saying things that are meant to be cruel and hurtful, this can be seen by the man degrading the woman, cursing her, running down any of her accomplishments. This man will tell her that she is stupid and unable to function without him. This may involve waking her up to verbally abuse her or not letting her sleep. He rarely calls her by her own name but uses terms such as butch, whore, slut, fatso, or stupid to address her.
12. **RIGID SEX ROLES** – The abuser expects a girlfriend to serve him. He may say she must meet his needs, that she must obey him in all things, even things that are criminal in nature. The abuser will see women as inferior to men, more stupid, unable to be a whole person with a relationship.
13. **DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE** – Many women are confused by the abuser’s “sudden” changes in mood – they will describe that one minute he is nice and the next minute he explodes as though he has some special “mental problem” or like he is crazy. Explosiveness and mood swings are typical of men who beat their partners, and they are just another way to control and manipulate a person. These behaviors are related to other characteristics such as hypersensitivity.
14. **PAST BATTERING** – The man may say he has hit girlfriends in the past, but they made him do it. The woman may hear from relatives that the man is abusive. A batterer will beat any woman he is with, situational circumstances do not make an abusive personality.
15. **THREATS OF VIOLENCE** – This would include any threat of physical force meant to control the woman, “I’ll slap you mouth off,” “I’ll kill you,” “I’ll break your neck.” Most men do not threaten their mates, but a batterer will try to excuse this behavior by saying, “everybody talks like that.”
16. **BREAKING OR STRIKING OBJECTS** – The behavior is used as a punishment (breaking loved possessions), but is mostly used to terrorize the woman into submission. The man may beat on tables with his fists, throw objects around near the woman. Only very immature people beat objects in the presence of other people in order to threaten them. He may say, “See I hit the rear view mirror, not you. I don’t want to hurt you.” Don’t be fooled, it is an implied threat.
17. **ANY FORCE DURING AN ARGUMENT** – This may involve a man holding a woman down, physically restraining her from leaving the room, as well as pushing or shoving her. *Example: The man may hold the woman against a wall and say “You’re going to listen to me.”*

Source: Brown, A. (1987).

Created by: Project for Victims of Family Violence