

Signs to Look for in a Battering Personality

Below is a list of behaviors that are seen in people who beat their partners. If the person has three or more of the following behaviors, there is a strong potential for physical violence. The more signs a person has, the more likely the person is a batterer. In some cases, a batterer may have only a couple of the behaviors, but they are very exaggerated (e.g., will try to explain the behavior as signs of their love and concern, and the partner will be flattered at first) but as time goes on, the behaviors become more severe and serve to dominate and control the relationship.

- **Jealousy** - At the beginning of a relationship, an abuser will always say that jealousy is a sign of love. Jealousy has nothing to do with love; it's a sign of possessiveness and lack of trust. The abuser will question the partner about who they talk to, accuse them of flirting, or be jealous of the time they spend with their family, friends or children. As the jealousy progresses, the abuser may call frequently during the day or drop by unexpectedly. The abuser may refuse to let the partner work for fear they will meet someone else, or even do such strange behaviors such as checking the car mileage or asking friends to "watch" them.
- **Controlling Behavior** - At first, the batterer will say this behavior is because they are concerned for the partner's safety, the need to use their time well, or the need to make good decisions. They will be angry if the partner is "late" coming back from the store or an appointment, will question closely about where they went and who they talked to. As this behavior gets worse, the offender may not let the partner make personal decisions about the house, clothing, going to church, and may keep all the money or even ask the partner to ask permission to leave the house.
- **Quick Involvement** - Many victims of domestic violence dated or knew their abusers for less than six months before they were married, engaged, or living together. The relationship starts like a whirlwind, with claims such as, "you're the only person I've ever been able to talk to" or "I've never felt loved like this by anyone." There will be pressure to commit to the relationship in such a way that the victim may feel very guilty or that they are "letting the other person down" by wanting to slow down or break off the relationship.
- **Unrealistic Expectations** – Abusive people will expect their partners to meet all their needs: they expect the partner to be the perfect spouse, parent, lover, friend. They will say things like "If you love me, I'm all you need and you're all I need."
- **Isolation** – The abusive person tries to cut the person off from all resources. If, for instance, the abusive person is a male and his partner has male friends, he might say that she's a "whore" and if she has female friends, she's a "lesbian." The abusive person accuses people who are supportive of the partner of "causing trouble." They may try to keep the partner from having a phone, car, or they may try to keep them from working or going to school.
- **Blames Others For Problems** – They may feel that others are always doing them wrong or are out to get them. They may make mistakes and then blame the partner for upsetting them and keeping them from concentrating on the task. The abuser may tell the partner that they are at fault for almost anything that goes wrong.
- **Blames Others For Feelings** – An abuser may tell the partner "You make me mad," "It's your fault that I hit you."

- **Hypersensitivity** – An abuser is easily insulted. They claim their feelings are “hurt” when really they’re very mad. They take the slightest setback as personal attacks. They will “rant and rave” about the injustices of things that have happened –things that are really just part of living, like being asked to work overtime, getting a traffic ticket, being told some behavior is annoying, or being asked to help with chores.
- **Cruelty to Animals or Children** – The abuser is a person who punishes animals brutally or is insensitive to their pain or suffering, they may expect children to be capable of doing things beyond their ability (e.g. spanking a two year old for wetting a diaper) or he may tease children until they cry (60% of abusers also beat the children in the same home). They may not want children to eat at the same table or expect them to stay in their rooms all evening while he is home.
- **Verbal Abuse** - In addition to saying things that are meant to be cruel and hurtful, the abuser can be degrading, vulgar and running down the partner’s accomplishments.
- **Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde** – Many partners are confused by their abuser’s “sudden” changes in mood – they may think the abuser has some special mental problem because one moment they are nice and the next they’re exploding. Explosiveness and moodiness are typical of people who beat their partners, and these behaviors are related to other characteristics like hypersensitivity.

Applies mostly to male abusers:

- **Playful Use of Force in Sex** – This type of abuser may like to throw the woman down and hold her down during sex, he may want to act out fantasies during sex where the woman is helpless, letting her know that the idea of rape is exciting. He may show little concern about whether the woman wants to have sex and uses sulking or anger to manipulate her into compliance. He may start having sex with the woman while she is sleeping, or demand sex when she is ill or tired.
- **Rigid Sex Roles** – The abuser expects a woman to serve him; he may say the woman must stay at home, that she must obey in all things – even things that are criminal in nature. The abuser will see women as inferior to men, responsible for menial tasks, stupid, and unable to be a whole person without a relationship.

The following are red flags that victims often fail to identify as being the beginning of physical abuse:

Past Battering – This person may say that they have been involved in domestic violence in the past but that the victim “made them do it.” The partner may hear from relatives or ex-spouses/partners that the person is abusive.

Threats of Violence – This could include any threat of physical force meant to control the other person such as, “I’ll slap your mouth off,” or “I’ll kill you,” etc. Most people do not threaten their mates, but an abuser will try to excuse threats by saying, “everybody talks like that.”

Breaking or Throwing Objects – Breaking a loved one’s possessions can be used as punishment, but mostly it is used to terrify the partner into doing what they want. This

demonstrates a sign of extreme emotional immaturity, but there is also a great danger when someone thinks they have the “right” to punish or frighten their partner.

Any Force During an Argument – This may involve taking car keys, barring the person from leaving the room, physically restraining, or any pushing or shoving.