

Recognizing Abuse

Workbook



Abuse is so rampant that many victims do not realize they are being abused. This is especially true if they have been raised in an abusive family. They grow up thinking abuse is “normal” treatment. It becomes a vicious cycle that is very hard to break. Although both men and women can be abusers, the majority of domestic violence cases are perpetrated by men. Therefore, this workbook has been written as if a male is the abuser. If this does not apply to your situation, keep in mind that women can be perpetrators as well.

In situations where the man is the abusive partner, their children grow up with 2 expectations. Boys learn through modeling that women are to be disrespected or treated as beneath men, and girls learn that they should expect mistreatment from men. This is not an excuse nor justification for abuse, however, it is a factor that makes the cycle difficult to break. The purpose of this short workbook is to help you be able to identify abuse- specifically domestic violence- and to help you determine if you might be in an abusive situation.

Were you or are you currently being abused? _____

What type of abuse? _____

What do you consider to be physical abuse? _____

Verbal abuse? _____

Do you know anyone currently who is being abused? _____

How do you know? _____

Signs of an abusive personality

Many women are interested in ways that they can predict whether they are about to become involved with someone who will be physically abusive. Below are a list of behaviors that are seen in people who beat their girlfriends or wives. That last four signs listed are almost always seen only if the person is a batterer. If the person has several of the other behaviors, say three or more, there is a strong potential for physical violence. The more signs the person has, the more likely the person is a batterer. In some cases, a batterer may have only a couple of behaviors that the woman can recognize, but they are very exaggerated, e.g. extreme jealousy over ridiculous things. Initially the batterer will try to explain his behavior as signs of his love and concern, and a woman may be flattered at first.

As time goes on, the behaviors become more severe and serve to dominate the woman.



Jealousy: At the beginning of the relationship, an abuser will always say that jealousy is a sign of love, however, jealousy has nothing to do with love, it's a sign of insecurity and possessiveness. He may question the woman about who she talks to, accuse her of flirting, or be jealous of time she spends with family, friends, or children. He may also be jealous of time she spends doing hobbies such as reading, etc. As the jealousy progresses, he may call her frequently during the day or drop by unexpectedly. He may refuse to let her work for fear she'll meet someone else, or even do strange behaviors such as checking her car mileage, cell phone, e-mail, or asking friends to watch her.

Controlling Behavior: At the first, the batterer will say that this behavior is because he's concerned for the woman's safety, her need to use her time well, or to make good decisions. He will be angry if the woman is "late" coming back from the store or an appointment, he will question her closely about where she went, and who she talked to. As this behavior gets worse, he may not let the woman make personal decisions about the house, her clothing, make-up, going to church and he may even keep all the money and make her ask permission to leave the house or room.

Quick Involvement: Many battered women dated or knew their abuser for less than six months before they were engaged or living together. He comes on like a whirl-wind claiming "love at first sight," and will tell her flattering things such as "you're the only person I have ever been able to talk to- be honest with" or "I've never felt loved like this by anyone." He needs someone desperately and will pressure the woman to commit to him.

Unrealistic Expectations: He is very dependent on the woman for all of his needs; he expects her to be the perfect wife, mother, lover and friend. He will say things like "if you really love me, I'm all you will ever need and you're all I will need." The woman is expected to take care of everything for him emotionally and in the home. In some cases, he may even expect her to work outside the home and be responsible for all the cleaning, cooking, and other domestic issues beyond her physical and emotional capacity to cope.

Isolation: The man will try to cut the woman off from all resources. If she has male friends, he calls her a "whore." If she has female friends, he calls her a "lesbian." If she is close to family members, he tells her she is overly dependent, enmeshed or "tied to the apron strings." He accuses people who are her supports of "causing trouble" or trying to "tear their marriage apart." He may insist on living in the country without a phone, not allow her to use the car, or he may forbid her to work outside the home or go to school.

Blames Others for his Problems, Behaviors and Emotions: If he is chronically unemployed, he believes someone is doing him wrong, discriminating or is out to get him. He may make mistakes and then blame the woman for upsetting him and keeping him from concentrating or doing his job. He will tell the woman "you make me mad," "you are hurting me by not doing what I ask," or "I can't help being angry." In truth, he really makes the decision about what he thinks and feels, but will use feelings, good or bad, to manipulate the woman. Even statements such as, "You make me happy," are ways to manipulate others to do what he wants and really mean, "I can't control how I feel. You are responsible for my feelings and actions."

Hypersensitivity: The man is easily insulted, he claims his feelings are "hurt" when he's really very mad, or he takes the slightest set backs 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 work overtime, getting a traffic ticket, or being asked to help with chores. When confronted about his behavior, he may counter with, "You always try to make me feel bad and expect everyone to be perfect. You are never happy no matter what I do."

Cruelty to Animals or Children: This is a man who punishes animals brutally or is insensitive to their pain or suffering. He may say, “animals and children do not have feelings the way we do.” He may give animals or infants/children food or candy that is exceedingly sour / spicy / hot (such as jalapeno peppers) and laugh at their reactions. He may expect children to be capable of doing things far beyond their ability such as punishing a toddler for wetting their pants or diaper or he may tease children until they cry (e.g. tickling children until they scream or cry, holding children down to exert power or control.) When they protest he may say, “I was just kidding and playing around. You are such a baby!” Note that 60% of men who beat women also beat their own children. He may not allow children to eat at the table, he may eat special food in front of the children without giving them any, or expect them to stay in their room all evening while he is home.

“Playful” Use of Force in Sex: This man 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. He is letting the woman know that the idea of “rape” excites him. He may show little concern about whether the woman wants to have sex and will use sulking or anger to manipulate her to comply. He may also start having sex with the woman while she is sleeping or demand sex when she is ill, tired, or just given birth.

Verbal Abuse: In addition to saying things that are meant to be cruel and hurtful, the man may degrade her, curse her and belittle her accomplishments. The man may tell her she is stupid and would not be able to function without him. He may also wake her up to verbally abuse her and won’t allow her to go back to sleep.

Rigid Sex and/or Religious Roles: This man expects a woman to serve him and will tell her she must stay at home and obey him in all things including criminal behaviors. The abuser may see women as inferior to men, are stupid and unable to be a whole person without a relationship. He may use religion against her (e.g. telling her women are evil because of Eve’s choice and she therefore has to obey him, and that he is the leader / patriarch of the home. He will manipulate their religion to suit his purposes.)

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde: Many women are confused by their abuser’s “sudden” changes in mood. They describe that one minute he’s nice and the next minute he explodes or that he had other rapid or sudden mood changes. This does not indicate that he has a mental problem or is “crazy.” Explosiveness and mood swings are typical of men who beat their partners and these behaviors are related to other characteristics such as hypersensitivity. These behavioral changes also serve to confuse the woman and keep her “off balance.”

***Past Battering:** The man may say he has hit women in the past, but either they made him do it, or he has other extraneous circumstances. The woman may hear from relatives or ex-spouses that the man is abusive. The man will defend himself by saying, “My ex is crazy and just trying to get back at me for leaving by telling you all these lies about me.” Truth is, a batterer will beat any woman he is with and situational circumstances do not make a person an abusive personality.

***Threats of Violence:** This would include any threat of physical force meant to control or frighten the woman such as, “I’ll slap your 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,” “I wasn’t being serious,” or “That’s just another way of saying I’m frustrated” He may also talk about hurting others like “I hope my boss gets killed in a car accident,” “I wish I could blow so-and-so up.”



***Breaking or Striking Objects:** This behavior is used as a punishment (breaking loved possessions, but it is mostly used to terrorize the woman into submission.) The man may beat on tables or walls with his fist, throw objects around or near the woman. Again, this is a very remarkable behavior; only immature people beat on objects in the presence of others in order to threaten them. He may also take his belt off in a quick whipping motion to frighten the woman or children.

***Any force During an Argument:** This may involve a man holding a woman down, physically restraining her from leaving the room, any pushing or shoving. (The man may hold the woman against a wall and say “You will listen to me!”)

Note: Case workers in a woman’s shelter stated that the majority of women that came into the shelter were not beaten by their husbands but had still suffered significant abuse. Many women who were physically abused by husbands stated the physical abuse was easier to cope with than the emotional abuse.

Were you or are you currently being abused?_____

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

Myths and Truths about Abusers *



It's hard to accept the reality of domestic violence. There is a need to understand and figure out why people would commit such atrocities. We want things to make sense but abuse does not make sense. Often the victim gets blamed for the situation (seen as the healthy person in control of the situation) and we view the abuser as "out of control" or as not having the same amount of responsibility as the victim to make the violence stop. The truth, however, is the abuser is in control and chooses to abuse his victims. If he appears out of control, it is

because he chooses to act "out of control." Here are some of the justifications or other common myths used to explain abusive behaviors and the truths about them.

1- He was abused as a child, and just needs therapy for it

A bad childhood doesn't cause a man to become an abuser, but it can contribute to making a man who is abusive especially dangerous. For those men who were abused and go to therapy for it, they often use their past history as an excuse to keep abusing.

If a man does have a history of being abused- it should give him more of a reason to not abuse because he knows what it feels like. He has just as much agency to choose not to abuse women as a person who was never abused. Also- if this were true, would he not abuse everyone or all women he meets on the street? Yet he stays in control at work and in public places because otherwise he would be put in prison.

2- His previous partner mistreated him and now he has a problem with women. It's her fault!

Past experiences may explain how a person feels, but they are not an excuse for behavior. If it is an excuse for mistreating others, then it's a distortion of thought. Often the things he complains his previous partner did to him, are things he did to his partner. Like the 1st myth, mistreatment would give a person more reason not to mistreat others because he or she knows what it feels like to be mistreated. Again, using this excuse is a ploy to gain sympathy so he can continue to abuse.

3- He abuses those he loves the most

While it is true that people we love can cause us deeper pain than anyone else, that is not to say that pain equals love. People save their best behavior for those they love and respect. People abuse those that they want to control.

4- He holds in his feelings too much and they build up until he explodes. He needs to get in touch with his feelings and express them better.

The truth is, abusers tend to have an exaggerated idea of how important their feelings are, that they are more important than other people's feelings, and express them more often than non-abusive men. When an abuser feels bad, he turns it into a crisis and believes life should stop for everyone in the house until he feels better. He doesn't need to get in touch of his feelings, he needs to focus more on the feelings of those around him and how his abusive behaviors affect them!

Abusers may appear to become increasingly withdrawn as though he is stuffing his feelings before he has an outburst but what is really happening is he ignoring those around him



* Summarized from the book, "Why does he do that?" by Lundy Bancroft

and showing a lack of sharing or caring about others. Abusers explode because they give themselves permission to do so.

5- *He has a violent or aggressive personality*

If this were true, then why is it that abusers can be in perfect control outside the home but not with their wives and children? If he truly had a violent personality, it would be a side of him that everyone could see and he would not be able to hide.

6- *He loses control of himself.*

Truth is, when abusers break items it's usually never their own things. Additionally, an abuser almost never does anything that he himself considers morally unacceptable. He may verbally berate his wife and yet not beat her- or he might beat her but not strangle her. Even abusers have a mental line they won't cross that is different for each of them. In their mind they will see emotional abuse as ok so long as they don't leave a physical mark. In every incident there is a point that the abuser gives himself permission to abuse his partner. In addition, if the police are called, he can quickly become cool and collected- completely in control again. This is because he was always in control to begin with.

7- *He is too angry. He needs anger management skills.*

Perpetrators are not abusive because they are angry. They are angry because they are abusive.

Everyone gets angry. Not everyone abuses others.



8- *He is mentally ill or mentally retarded*

Research shows that even in physically violent abusers, the rate of mental illness is not high. Mental illness does not cause abusiveness. It can complicate matters in a person who chooses to abuse, but it does not cause the abusive behavior. Even among some of the most dangerous abusers, there were many who did not show any clear psychiatric symptoms of any kind.

Also the more dangerous abusers are those who are educated because they are better at being manipulative. Class, race, and social status does not indicate

whether a person will be abusive. People are abusive if they choose to be.

9- *He hates women. His mother must have been mean to him.*

The disrespect that abusive men so often direct towards women tends to come from cultural values and conditioning rather than victimization. Men may use this excuse as justification to make women responsible for their abusive behaviors. Disrespect and negative attitudes towards women come from those with abusive fathers- not those with abusive mothers. Either way, he still has a choice whether to follow the example of his father or to not.

10- *He is afraid of intimacy and abandonment*

Many people are afraid of abandonment, however, not all of them abuse their partners. Logically, if a person does not want to be abandoned, it seems to reason he would want to treat his partner well so as to not give her a reason to want to leave!

11- *He has low self-esteem*

This myth is rewarding to an abuser because it gets him more attention and more emotional catering to. Abusers are actually more narcissistic, ignore the worth of others and inflate their own importance. They may feel remorseful or ashamed after an incident, but that is a result of the abuse, not a cause of the abuse. Additionally, how many abused women have low self-esteem due to the abuse of their partner? If that isn't an excuse for her to become abusive, then it isn't an excuse for him either!

12- *His boss mistreats him*

There are plenty of successful men that still abuse their wives. For those that are not successful and still choose to abuse- they don't suddenly stop abusing if their job situation improves.

13- *He has poor skills in communication and conflict resolution*

Abusive men are not unable to resolve conflicts non-abusively; they are unwilling to do so! Part of this is their unwillingness to compromise. They want everything their way, right now. Their partners needs and desires do not matter to them.

14- *There are as many abusive women as abusive men. Abused men are too ashamed to tell.*

It is true that some women abuse their partners- but women are ashamed to reveal abuse also. In many cases they are terrified to tell because of threats of increased violence from their husbands. In cases of abuse, men actually try to use the excuse that their wife was the one abusing them! Also, some wives who hit their husbands do so in self-defense which the husbands use as an excuse to abuse them further saying, "Well she deserved it for hitting me!" The reason why there are so few cases of women abusing their husbands is because it is rare.

15- *His abusiveness is as bad for him as for his partner. They are both victims.*

"An abuser can usually outperform his victim on psychological tests, such as the ones that are routinely required during custody disputes, because he isn't the one who has been traumatized by years of psychological or physical assault."

16- *He is a victim of racism*

Men of color are among the most visible leaders in the United States against the abuse of women. If a man has experienced oppression himself, he could just as easily be more sympathetic to a women's distress. See myth #1.

17- *He abuses alcohol or drugs*

Alcohol cannot create an abuser any more than sobriety can cure one. Men hide their abusiveness under the cover of alcohol and drugs so they can continue to abuse. If this were true, then men would stay away from drugs and alcohol as to not abuse others. However the truth is, men choose to abuse before they take the drugs or alcohol and only use the drugs so they will have an excuse for their decision.



How many of these myths had you heard before? _____

Which ones? _____

What do you think now? _____

Do you know any abuser who use any of these myths to justify their abusive behavior? _____

Any other thought or feelings? _____

The next section will help you identify Verbal Abuse.

What is crazy-making behavior?

"My soul knew it wasn't right before I knew it. My feelings were right all along. It's wrong to be where you're put down and yelled at, no matter how much the other person says he's not putting you down and not yelling. Don't they usually yell that they're not yelling?"



"Crazy-making" is basically the denial of reality by an abuser. For example, the abuser may have angry body language, be irritable, and yell at someone, yet when they are confronted about their anger they say, "I'm not angry. You are just overly sensitive." An abuser may do something one day and deny it the next, "I didn't do that. Why are you always making things up to make me feel bad?" or "You just want to fight all the time. You can't stand having a moment of peace can you?" This is all crazy-making behavior because this type of abuse is meant to throw the victim off balance or make them question their own reality or sense of self. After a time, the victim becomes more and more confused and disoriented until the victim feels he or she is the "crazy" one in the relationship. Other definitions of crazy-making are; 1) verbal abuse that is used to control the victim without his or her knowledge; and 2) a way of asserting dominance while denying its existence

While name calling is an obvious form of verbal abuse, other forms are more difficult to recognize. This is because:

- ☒ Verbal abuse is usually secretive. It isn't done in front of others.
- ☒ Verbal abuse becomes more intense over time. The partner becomes used to and adapts to it.
- ☒ Verbal abuse takes many forms and disguises.
- ☒ Verbal abuse consistently discounts the partner's perceptions of the abuse.

If at any time you are defined in a negative way, threatened, raged at, put down, or lied to - know that it is verbal abuse. **It is important to know that explaining yourself to the abuser doesn't work.** This is so for two reasons: The abuser is not behaving rationally so won't comprehend a rational explanation. And, the abuser is not hearing you address the real problem: which is that he is defining you as if he knows who or what you are, your motives, thoughts, and so forth.

People in a verbally abusive relationship may relate to the following:

- ☐ He seems irritated or angry with you several times a week. When you ask why he's mad, he either denies it or tells you it's in some way your fault.
- ☐ When you feel hurt and try to talk with him, the issues never get resolved. He might refuse to discuss your upset feelings by saying "You're just trying to start an argument!" or claiming he has no idea what you're talking about.
- ☐ You frequently feel frustrated because you can't get him to understand your intentions.
- ☐ You're upset—not so much about concrete issues like how much time to spend together, but about communication: what he thinks you said and what you heard him say.
- ☐ You sometimes think, "What's wrong with me? I shouldn't feel so bad."
- ☐ He seems to take the opposite view from you on almost everything, and his opinion isn't stated as "I think," but as if you're wrong and he's right.
- ☐ You can't recall saying "Cut it out!" or "Stop it!"



¹Here are some symptoms that may indicate you are a victim of “crazymaking” behavior:

1. Feeling temporarily thrown off balance and momentarily unable to right oneself.
2. Feeling lost, not knowing where to turn, searching aimlessly.
3. Being caught off guard.
4. Feeling disconnected, confused, or disoriented.
5. Feeling off balance, as if the rug had been pulled from under one’s feet.
6. Receiving double messages but somehow unable or fearful to ask for clarification.
7. Feeling generally “bugged” by the simple presence of a person.
8. To discover that one was mistaken in one’s evaluation of where one stood or what it was all about.
9. Feeling totally unprepared for a broken promise or unfulfilled expectation.
10. Experiencing the shattering of an important “dream.”
11. Where one assumed goodwill, ill seems to prevail.
12. One feels pushed around, not in control of one’s own direction.
13. Unable to get off redundantly spinning circles of thoughts.
14. What seemed clear becomes muddled.
15. An uneasy, weird feeling of emptiness.
16. A strong wish to get away, yet feeling unable to move, as if frozen.
17. One is befuddled, not able to attack the problem.
18. Feeling vaguely suspicious that something is wrong.
19. Feeling that one’s subjective world has become chaotic.

If you are in a verbally abusive relationship, here are some effects you may be feeling:

1. Distrust of spontaneity.
2. Loss of enthusiasm.
3. A prepared, on-guard state.
4. Uncertainty about how you are coming across.
5. Concerns that something is wrong with you.
6. An inclination to soul-searching and reviewing incidents with the hope of determining what went wrong.
7. A loss of self-confidence.
8. Growing self-doubt.
9. An internalized “critical voice.”
10. A concern that you aren’t happier and ought to be.
11. An anxiety or fear of being crazy.
12. A sense that time is passing and you are missing something.
13. A desire to not be the way you are, e.g. “too sensitive” etc.
14. A hesitancy to accept your perceptions.
15. A reluctance to come to conclusions.
16. A desire to escape or run away.
17. A belief that what you do best may be what you do worst.
18. A tendency to live in the future- “Everything will be great when / after”
19. A distrust of relationships.

¹from “Stop! You’re Making me Crazy!” by Dr. George R. Bach and Ronald M. Deutsch

Here are some strategies that abusers use to manipulate victims. (Note: these are all verbal tactics. It doesn't have to be physical to be abusive.)²

Withholding: is a choice to keep virtually all one's thoughts, feelings, hopes, and dreams to oneself and to remain silent and aloof toward one's partner, to reveal as little as possible, and to maintain an attitude of cool indifference. The partner may think he is a very quiet person, self-contained, or shy.



This type of verbal abuser may say:

- ☒ There's nothing to talk about.
- ☒ What do you want me to say.
- ☒ What are you complaining about; I do talk to you.
- ☒ You never let me talk.
- ☒ Why should I tell you if I like it? You'll just do what you want anyway.
- ☒ You wouldn't be interested.

These types of comments only add to the partner's confusion.

Forgetting: involves both denial and covert manipulation. The declaration by the abuser that what occurred didn't occur is abusive. While it is true that people forget things from time to time, if it is consistent and specific in the things he does forget versus what he doesn't, then it is abusive. (For example, he forgets to get your medicine from the pharmacy but he doesn't forget to buy something he needs.) Another example is that he consistently forgets agreements you have made about finances or other domestic matters.

Ordering: this denies the equality and autonomy of the partner. If he gives orders instead of asking respectfully for what he wants, he is treating his partner as beneath him.

Denial: this form of verbal abuse denies the reality of the partner.

- ☒ I never said that.
- ☒ You just want to make me feel bad.
- ☒ You are making this all up.
- ☒ You live in a fantasy world.
- ☒ We never had that conversation.
- ☒ You are getting upset about nothing.
- ☒ I don't know where you get these crazy ideas.

Trivializing: this says in so many words that what you have done or expressed is insignificant. Trivializing can be very subtle so that the partner is left feeling depressed and frustrated but isn't quite sure why.

Undermining / Sabotaging: this is a way of withholding support and eroding confidence and determination. The abuser may sabotage his partner's conversations with others by causing some disturbance such as laughing or turning up the music. He may feign emotional support for things that are important to her and then not follow through or make it difficult for her to achieve her goals so if she unable to complete them he can say, "Oh honey. That was so important to you. At least you gave it your best shot. Don't beat yourself up about it. It was just too hard for you." Other examples may be:

- ☒ You wouldn't understand.
- ☒ It's over your head.
- ☒ You'll never make it.
- ☒ What makes you think you're so smart.
- ☒ You want to make me look bad by being better.
- ☒ All you care about is yourself.
- ☒ Whom are you trying to impress?



Accusing / Blaming: These are pretty self-explanatory. The abuser either treats the partner as though she is the enemy or he blames her for his behaviors and emotions.

Blocking: is one way of taking control of communication where the abuser refuses to communicate, establishes what can be discussed or withholds information. It can be by direct demands, switching the topic, or even accusations. Here are some examples of blocking.

- ☒ You're just trying to have the last word!
- ☒ You know what I meant!
- ☒ You think you know it all!
- ☒ You heard me. I shouldn't have to repeat myself!
- ☒ You're talking out of turn!
- ☒ I don't see where this is going! The discussion is ended!
- ☒ That's a lot of crap!
- ☒ Quit giving me all that flack!
- ☒ Will you get off my back!
- ☒ Just drop it!
- ☒ You always have to be right!
- ☒ Quit yakking!
- ☒ Did anybody ask you?
- ☒ Where did you get a crazy / stupid / weird / dumb idea like that?
- ☒ Who asked for your opinion?
- ☒ Quit your bitching!



Countering: is saying the opposite of whatever someone else says, such as playing “devil’s advocate.” It is destructive to a relationship because it prevents all possibility of a discussion, it consistently denies the victim’s reality, and prevents understanding.

Diverting: like blocking, this is used to regain control of the conversation and avoid talking about the issue. Imagine the example of asking your partner to account for some missing money they spent. Here are some possible statements that person would use if he or she wanted to divert you.



- ☒ What are you worried about? You have plenty to spend!
- ☒ There's no way I'm going to look through all the receipts for that!
- ☒ Don't complain to me unless you are the one making all the money to support this family!
- ☒ I've explained it before and I'm not going to explain it again.
- ☒ All you married me for is my money.
- ☒ Do I have to account for every penny?
- ☒ How about you accounting for every penny you spend!
- ☒ I'm sick of you complaining!
- ☒ You're always trying to start something.
- ☒ It's too complicated for you to understand!
- ☒ If you think it's so simple, then you do the taxes and I'll quit work and lay around all day!
- ☒ Who are you, my mother?
- ☒ I work all day and the last thing I need is you asking me what I do with the money I earn!
- ☒ You are so ungrateful!

Criticizing: The verbal abuser may judge his partner and then express his judgment in a critical way. If she objects, he may tell her that he is just pointing out something to be helpful, but in reality, he may be expressing his lack of acceptance of her. Most “you” statements are judgmental and critical.

- ☒ You cheat.
- ☒ You’re never satisfied.
- ☒ You’re a lousy winner.
- ☒ You’re stupid.
- ☒ You can’t take a joke.
- ☒ You’re crazy.
- ☒ You can’t let well enough alone.

Here are some additional statements he may make to others about his partner that are abusive.

- ☒ She’s afraid of her shadow.
- ☒ She can’t keep anything straight.
- ☒ She never sticks to anything.
- ☒ She never stops nagging.
- ☒ She doesn’t know if she’s coming or going.

Discounting: denies the reality and experience of the partner. It distorts the partner’s actual perception of the abuse so that they begin to question themselves. Discounting statements are said to avoid having to take responsibility for behaviors. Here are some examples of some discounting statements.

- ☒ You’re too sensitive.
- ☒ You’re jumping to conclusions.
- ☒ You can’t take a joke.
- ☒ You blow everything out of proportion.
- ☒ You’re making a big deal out of nothing.
- ☒ You don’t have a sense of humor.
- ☒ You see everything in the worst possible light.
- ☒ You take things too seriously.
- ☒ You feel too much.
- ☒ Your imagination is working overtime.



- ☒ You don’t know what you’re talking about.
- ☒ You think you know it all.
- ☒ You always have to have something to complain about.
- ☒ You’re trying to start something.
- ☒ You’re not happy unless you’re complaining.
- ☒ You take everything wrong.
- ☒ You’re making a mountain out of a mole hill.
- ☒ You read things into my words.
- ☒ You twist everything around.
- ☒ You’re looking for a fight.

Verbal Abuse Disguised as Jokes: Abusers use this form because it is easy to back out when confronted by saying, “I was just kidding. Can’t you take a joke?” The victim may begin to doubt herself and not recognize this as abuse. The victim may start to think, “Maybe I am overly sensitive and can’t take a joke.”

Threatening: verbally abusive threats usually involve a threat of loss or pain.

- ☒ Do what I want or I’ll leave.
- ☒ Do what I want or I’ll have an affair
- ☒ Do what I want or I’ll get a divorce.
- ☒ Do what I want or I’ll hit / strangle / slap / kill you.
- ☒ Do what I want or you will never see your kids again, etc...

Now that you know what verbal abuse is and how to recognize it, here are some ways to respond to verbal abuse.

Caution: “If you are feeling stunned, shocked, or in too much pain to speak, if your partner seems to go out of control with anger; if you are feeling fearful of him, if he has threatened you with any harm, if he has hit you or threatened to hit or hurt you, you should not be dealing with his abusive behavior alone and you must question the health of staying around him.”

You may notice that most of these tell you to not try to explain yourself to the abuser. Part of this is because the abuser is already being irrational and you can't reason with someone who is being unreasonable. The other reason is because they are being abusive and destructive. If someone was throwing rocks at your windows, you wouldn't try to explain to the person why they shouldn't break things and why it isn't good to throw rocks. You would immediately tell them to stop. No questions asked. We should do the same for verbal abuse and tell partners that it will not be tolerated.

Withholding: If you have experienced hours or days or whatever is your limit of non-responsive closed silence, leave the area stating firmly, clearly, and matter-of-factly as you leave, “I am feeling very bored with your company.” Then leave and do something nice for yourself.

Countering: If your partner continually counter your ideas, feelings, or perceptions, say authoritatively and decisively, “Stop!” while holding your arm out in front of you at a right angle to your body and your palm facing him. Then say “Please look at my lips,” and repeat your original statement. Do not explain what you said or meant because he will simply counter you again. You may also say, “No,” then disengage and leave the room. Remember, countering is a violation of your boundaries. It is not solely a difference in opinion. It is the abuser's method of saying, “I'm right and you are always wrong.”

Discounting: In this case, don't try to convince your partner that you don't blow things out of proportion. Say, “Stop that kind of talk right now!” or “I don't want to hear that kind of talk from you!”

Abuse disguised as a joke: Don't try to explain to your partner why his joke wasn't funny. You may try responding emphatically with, “I'm wondering. Now that you have (put me down)(interrupted me)(laughed at me), do you feel more important? I'd like you to think about this.” Then leave the room.

Diverting: If your partner tries to divert you rather than answer your question, simply continue to repeat the question and ignore all his attempts at diverting you.

Accusation and Blame: Do not try to explain that you didn't do what he accused you of doing. State clearly, “Don't let me hear you talk like that again.” “Remember whom you are talking to.” “Don't talk to me like that.” “I think you know better than that.”

Judging and Criticizing: No one has the right to judge and criticize your personal qualities and performance. Defining you violates your boundaries. Here are some possible responses:

- 👏 Stop judging me!
- 👏 Do you hear yourself?
- 👏 Cut out the criticism.
- 👏 Enough of that.
- 👏 I don't accept that.
- 👏 That's nonsense!
- 👏 Please keep your comments to yourself.
- 👏 This is not your concern.

Then disengage or leave. Don't continue with a discussion because it will dilute the impact of your response.



Trivializing: This is abusive behavior which makes light of your work, efforts, interests, or your concerns. It states that things which are meaningful to you have little meaning. Here are some possible responses:

- 👏 I certainly don't feel supported when I hear that kind of talk.
- 👏 I'd rather not be hearing this from you.
- 👏 I've heard all I want to hear from you.

Undermining: This type of abuse undermines the partner's self-esteem and is an expression of the abuser's sadistic tendencies. The best response is to be direct.

- 👏 I don't like your attitude.
- 👏 That felt like a low blow.
- 👏 Cut that out!
- 👏 I am definitely not having any fun with you.

Threatening: If you are physically threatened including sexual assault or perceive a situation that seems as if it might become physically threatening to you or your family, it is extremely important that you find support and help as soon as possible. If you are threatened in other ways, your partner is trying to manipulate you. Respond clearly and calmly with:

- 👏 Don't bother me with those threats, please.
- 👏 Stop threatening me!
- 👏 I don't want to hear it!
- 👏 Leave me alone!

Ordering: If your partner orders you around, he is not treating you like a separate person. You might say:

- 👏 Who are you giving orders to?
- 👏 Do you hear yourself?
- 👏 Can you say please nicely?
- 👏 I don't follow orders.
- 👏 That's not what I had in mind.

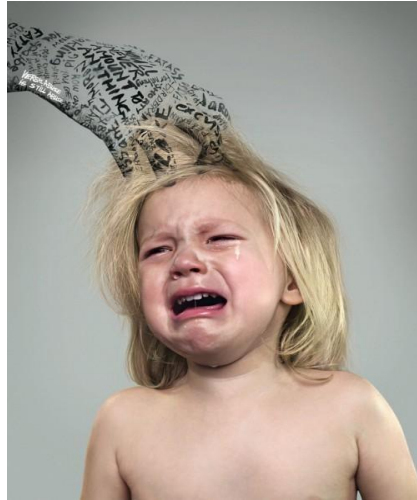
Forgetting and Denial: The important thing to remember with this tactic is you can't respond appropriately if you believe the abuser. Believing the abuser's denial gets you caught up in a cycle of trying to explain to him how he hurts you or how disturbing his behavior is. Explaining doesn't work. Don't give him a chance to deny the abuse or to discount your feelings. Immediately respond with:

- 👏 Cut it out!
- 👏 Stop it!
- 👏 Stop making me crazy!
- 👏 I don't believe you and I don't want it to happen again!

Here are some other suggestions for responding to a verbal abuser When an abusive statement is made, respond with, "What did you just say?" When he repeats it, laugh while you say "That's what I thought you said!" This approach may demonstrate how wrong the statement was. You might define yourself and say, "That's silly, you aren't me. You don't know what I am (or what I'm trying to do, or what I want, and so forth)." If the abuser is yelling, you may choose to state that they are yelling and leave for a day or two. If the abuser is dangerous to you, then it may be a good idea not to respond to the statements and make a safety plan to leave the relationship.



A young boy is shown from the chest up, looking upwards and to the right with a tearful expression. His face is wet with tears. He is wearing a scarf made of various words, including 'NO', 'PAIN', 'LOVE', 'HAPPY', 'WORTHLESS', 'IN AVAL', 'POOR', 'LOVE', 'HAPPY', 'WORTHLESS', 'IN AVAL', 'POOR', 'LOVE', 'HAPPY', 'WORTHLESS', 'IN AVAL', 'POOR'. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.



My thoughts and feelings about verbal abuse:

[illegible]

The next section will help you understand what the abuser is thinking and how he justifies his abuse.

THE REALITY OF THE ABUSIVE MAN*

1- HE IS CONTROLLING

His beliefs are:

- ♦ “An argument should only last as long as my patience does. Once I’ve had enough, the discussion is over and it’s time for you to shut up.”
- ♦ “If the issue we’re struggling over is important to me, I should get what I want. If you don’t back off, you’re wronging me.”
- ♦ “I know what is best for you and for our relationship. If you continue disagreeing with me after I’ve made it clear which path is the right one, you’re acting stupid.”
- ♦ “If my control and authority seem to be slipping, I have the right to take steps to re-establish the rule of my will, including abuse if necessary.”
- ♦ “I have to control and or abuse my partner in order to keep her safe from herself.”



How he hides his controlling behavior

- ♦ “I love you so much that I want to be with you all the time.”
- ♦ “I just worry where you are and want to keep you safe.”
- ♦ “I know what is best for you and you will only be happy if you follow my directions.”
- ♦ “I’m afraid of abandonment and need you.”

2- HE FEELS ENTITLED

Abusers have the attitude that their partners should work like a compass and the abuser is “North.” No matter where the compass goes or is turned, the abuser expects his partner should always be focused on him.

Contrary to the common belief that abusive men have a problem with anger- the truth is **he doesn’t have a problem with his anger, he has a problem with his partner’s anger.**

He believes he has rights or is entitled to:

- ♦ Physical care-taking
- ♦ Emotional care-taking
- ♦ Sexual care-taking
- ♦ Deference (respect)
- ♦ Freedom from accountability

How he hides his entitled attitude

- ♦ “I didn’t get enough love as a child.”
- ♦ “I’m insecure.”
- ♦ “The world owes me for my sacrifices.”
- ♦ “I deserve more than you can possibly give.”

3- HE TWISTS THINGS INTO THEIR OPPOSITES

The abuser’s highly entitled perceptual system causes him to mentally reverse aggression and self-defense. In other words, instead of admitting he is the abuser, he will say his partner is abusing him!

4- HE DISRESPECTS HIS PARTNER AND CONSIDERS HIMSELF SUPERIOR

The abuser sees his partner as less intelligent, less competent, less logical, and even less sensitive than he is. He sees his partner as little more than an object rather than a human being. This depersonalization of his partner allows him to ignore or protect himself against guilt and empathy so he does not feel any remorse for his actions.

5- HE CONFUSES LOVE AND ABUSE

*Summarized from book “Why does he do that?” by Lundy Bancroft

He may say:

- ## 6- HE IS MANIPULATIVE

- ## 7- HE STRIVES TO HAVE A GOOD PUBLIC IMAGE

- ## 8- HE FEELS JUSTIFIED

- ## 9- ABUSERS DENY AND MINIMIZE THEIR ABUSE

- ◆ “You are too sensitive. Your parents must have babied you as a child.”
- ◆ “You need to be toughened up. This is the real world.”
- ◆ “You are nothing but drama all the time.”
- ◆ “You just want to act like a victim for everything.”

10- ABUSERS ARE POSSESSIVE

He may say things like:

- [illegible]

Ready for another check in?

Were you ever or are you currently being abused? _____

Have any of your views on abuse changed since the first check in? _____

Which ones? _____

This next section is additional information about various types of belief systems of abusers. Abusers usually have several categories that apply to them rather than just one.

ABUSIVE PROFILES

Do any of these sound familiar? Put a check mark by the boxes that sound like your partner.

Demand Man

- ☐ It's your job to do things for me, including taking care of my responsibilities if I drop the ball on them. If I'm unhappy about any aspect of my life, whether it has to do with our relationship or not, it's your fault.
- ☐ You should not place demands on me at all. You should be grateful for whatever I choose to give.
- ☐ I am above criticism.

Mr. Right



- ☐ You should be in awe of my intelligence and should look up to me intellectually. I know better than you do, even about what's good for you.
- ☐ Your opinions aren't worth listening to carefully or taking seriously.
- ☐ The fact that you sometimes disagree with me shows how sloppy your thinking is.
- ☐ If you would just accept that I know what's right, our relationship would go much better. Your own life would go better too.
- ☐ When you disagree with me about something, no matter how respectfully or meekly, that's mistreatment of me.
- ☐ If I put you down long enough, some day you'll see.

Water Torturer

- ☐ You are crazy. You fly off the handle over nothing.
- ☐ I can easily convince other people that you're the one who is messed up.
- ☐ As long as I'm calm, you can't call anything I do abusive, no matter how cruel.
- ☐ I know exactly how to get under your skin.

Mr. Sensitive

- ☐ I'm against the macho men, so I couldn't be abusive.
- ☐ As long as I use a lot of "psychobabble," no one is going to believe that I am mistreating you.
- ☐ I can control you by analyzing how your mind and emotions work, and what your issues are from childhood. I can get inside your head whether you want me there or not.
- ☐ Nothing in the world is more important than my feelings.
- ☐ Women should be grateful to me for not being like those other men.

The Victim

- ☐ Everybody has done me wrong, especially the women I've been involved with. Poor me.
- ☐ When you accuse me of being abusive, you are joining the parade of people who have been cruel and unfair to me. It proves you're just like the rest.
- ☐ It's justifiable for me to do to you whatever I feel you are doing to me, and even to make it quite a bit worse to make sure you get the message.
- ☐ Women who complain of mistreatment by men, such as relationship abuse or sexual harassment, are anti-male and out for blood.
- ☐ I've had it so hard that I'm not responsible for my actions.



The Player



- ☐ Women were put on this earth to have sex with men- especially me.
- ☐ Women who want sex are too loose, and women who refuse sex are too uptight.
- ☐ It's not my fault that women find me irresistible. It's not fair to expect me to refuse temptation when it's all around me; women seduce me sometimes, and I can't help it.
- ☐ If you act like you need anything from me, I am going to ignore you. I'm in this relationship when it's convenient for me and when I feel like it.
- ☐ Women who want the nonsexual aspects of themselves appreciated are bitches.
- ☐ If you would meet my sexual needs, I wouldn't have to turn to other women.

Drill Sergeant

- ☐ I need to control your everymove or you will do it wrong.
- ☐ I know the exact way that everything should be done.
- ☐ you shouldn't have anyone else- or anything else- in your life besides me.
- ☐ I am going to watch you like a hawk to keep you from developing strength or independence.
- ☐ I love you more than anyone in the world, but you disgust me.

Rambo

- ☐ Strength and aggressiveness are good; compassion and conflict are bad.
- ☐ Anything that could be even remotely associated with homosexuality, including walking away from possible violence or showing any fear or grief, has to be avoided at any cost.
- ☐ Femaleness and femininity are inferior. Women are here to serve men and be protected by them.
- ☐ Men should never hit women, because it is unmanly to do so. However, exceptions to this rule can be made for my own partner if her behavior is bad enough. Men need to keep their women in line.
- ☐ You are a thing that belongs to me, akin to a trophy.

The Terrorist

- ☐ You have no right to defy me or leave me. Your life is in my hands.
- ☐ Women are evil and have to be kept terrorized to prevent that evil from coming forth.
- ☐ I would rather die than accept your right to independence.
- ☐ The children are one of the best tools I can use to make you fearful.
- ☐ Seeing you terrified is exciting and satisfying.



The Addicted or Mentally Ill Abuser

- ☐ I am not responsible for my actions because of my psychological or substance problems.
- ☐ If you challenge me about my abusiveness, you are being mean to me, considering these other problems I have. It also shows that you don't understand my other problems.
- ☐ I'm not abusive, I'm just (alcoholic, drug addicted, manic-depressive, an adult child of alcoholics, or whatever his condition may be.)
- ☐ If you challenge me, it will trigger my addiction or mental illness, and you'll be responsible for what I do.

Many abusers apologize and say they will change. They may look and act very sincere when they do. For many, they are sincere when they state it. They are remorseful. But no amount of remorse or guilt can simply wipe out an ingrained belief system of entitlement overnight. If he truly wants to change or has changed, he will agree to make the following changes:

1. Admit fully to your history of psychological, sexual, and physical abusiveness toward any current or past partners you have abused. Denial and minimizing need to stop, including discrediting your memory of what happened. You will not change if you continue to cover up, to others or yourself, important parts of what you have done.



2. Acknowledge that the abuse was wrong, unconditionally. You need to identify the justifications you have tended to use, including the various ways that you may have blamed your wife, and to talk in detail about why your behaviors were unacceptable without slipping back into defending them.
3. Acknowledge that your behavior was a choice, not a loss of control. You need to recognize that there is a moment during each incident at which you give yourself permission to become abusive and that you choose how far to let yourself go.

4. Recognize the effects your abuse has had on you and on your wife and could have on your children. You need to talk in detail about the short- and long-term impact that your abuse has had, including fear, loss of trust, anger, and loss of freedom and other rights. And you need to do this without reverting to feeling sorry for yourself or talking about how hard the experience has been for you.
5. Identify in detail your pattern of controlling behaviors and entitled attitudes. You need to speak in detail about the day-to-day tactics of abuse you have used. Equally important, you must be able to identify your underlying beliefs and values that have driven those behaviors, such as considering yourself entitled to constant attention, looking down on your wife as inferior, or believing that men aren't responsible for their actions if "provoked" by a partner.
6. Develop respectful behaviors and attitudes to replace the abusive ones you are stopping. You will need to learn and practice listening to your wife during conflicts and at other times, carrying your weight of household responsibilities and child care, without complaining and expectations of recognition. You will need to learn how to value and support your wife's independence. You will demonstrate that you have come to accept the fact that she has rights and that they are equal to yours.
7. Reevaluate your distorted image of your wife, replacing it with a more positive and empathic view. You have to recognize that you have had mental habits of focusing on and exaggerating of her weaknesses and to begin instead to compliment her and pay attention to her strengths and abilities.
8. Make amends for the damage you have done. You have to develop a sense that you have a debt to your wife as a result of your abusiveness. You can start to make up somewhat for your actions by being consistently kind and supportive, putting your own needs on the back burner for a couple of years, talking with people whom you have misled in regard to the abuse and admitting to them that you lied, paying for objects that you have damaged, and many other steps related to cleaning up the emotional and literal messes that your behaviors have caused.



9. Accept the consequences of your actions. You should stop whining about, or blaming her for problems that are the result of your abuse, such as her loss of desire to be sexual with you and live with you.
10. Commit to not repeating your abusive behaviors and honor that commitment. You should not place any conditions on your improvement, such as saying that you won't call her names as long as she doesn't raise her voice at you. If you backslide, you cannot justify your abusive behaviors by saying, "But I've done great for 5 months; you can't expect me to be perfect," as if a good period earned you chips to spend on occasional abuse.

11. Accept the need to give up your privileges and do so. This means saying good-bye to double standards, to flirting with other women, to taking off with your friends all weekend without an agreement with your wife, and to being allowed to express anger while she is not. To accept living somewhere other than the family home until the changes are assessed by a competent therapist in the field of perpetrator rehabilitation and a process of gradual family interactions is instituted to facilitate reentry into the family.

My thoughts and feelings about change:



No one deserves abuse. If you are being abused and have children, it is your responsibility to keep them safe from abuse. Do not think that as long as “he doesn’t hit them” that it’s ok. It isn’t.

All abuse is damaging and has lasting affects.

Physical abuse in front of a child is abuse even if the child is not touched.

Make a commitment to yourself and your children that abuse in any form will not be tolerated.