



NEW ENGLAND LEARNING CENTER FOR WOMEN IN TRANSITION

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WHAT IS AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP?

Violence in intimate relationships is not limited to certain ethnic groups, social classes, or sexual preferences – it happens across all racial, cultural, and class boundaries. Violence may happen between people who are heterosexual, bisexual, gay, lesbian, or transgendered. It may happen in dating relationships, live-in relationships, and marriages.

Signs of an abusive personality include:

- ✓ Controlling behaviors
- ✓ Isolation
- ✓ Put-downs
- ✓ Threats
- ✓ Manipulation
- ✓ Extreme jealousy

We use the term “domestic violence” to refer to an intimate relationship in which one person consistently has power and control over another person. According to Ann Jones and Susan Schechter in *When Love Goes Wrong* (Harper Perennial, 1992), the power and control imbalance can show up through:

- ✓ Criticism
*Nothing I do is ever good enough.
Even compliments are backhanded.
My partner calls me names and is always correcting me or humiliating me...*
- ✓ Moodiness, anger, and threats
*Life with my partner is nerve-wracking.
I'm always afraid he/she will get mad, and I have to figure out why and apologize.
He/she threatens to tell the authorities things about me that aren't true.*
- ✓ Overprotection and “caring”
*My partner doesn't want me go to work, do the grocery shopping, talk to friends or relatives.
He/she picks out my clothes for me and phones or comes by frequently to see if I'm “ok.”*
- ✓ Denying your perceptions
*My partner is mean and then says I can't take a joke.
He or she says I'm too sensitive or that I exaggerate or imagine things.
He or she makes me cry or hits me and then asks why I'm upset.*
- ✓ Ignoring your needs and opinions
*My partner promises to help and then forgets.
He or she expects me to listen and respond, but ignores me when I have something to say.
He or she comes and goes at any time, but I have to stay home with the kids.*
- ✓ Decision making
*My partner makes decisions which affect us both without consulting me.
He or she says some subjects are not open to discussion and always has to have the last word.*

- ✓ Money
*Whenever I need money I have to ask for it and then account for how I spent it.
My partner makes all the financial decisions and won't tell me where we stand.
My partner doesn't work, and says I should be glad to support him or her financially.
He or she takes my things and sells them.*
- ✓ Shifting responsibility
*Everything always ends up being my fault.
If we have a fight or my partner hits me, he or she says it's because of something I did.
If my partner gets drunk or uses drugs, he or she says it's because I'm so hard to live with.*
- ✓ Limiting contact with others
*If I want to go out without him/her, my partner starts a fight.
My partner accuses me of having affairs or doesn't like it if I want to spend time with relatives.
He or she says I care more for my friends or family than I do for him or her.*
- ✓ Physical intimidation
*My partner blocks the door so I can't leave during an argument, destroys my things, refuses to leave when I ask him or her to, won't let me sleep.
When we argue, I'm afraid of what he or she might do, so I stop arguing.*
- ✓ Sexual humiliation
*My partner pressures me to have sex in ways that make me uncomfortable.
He or she talks about me sexually in front of others or makes dirty jokes.
He or she makes fun of my body, forces me to dress in ways he or she thinks are sexy, or compares me to someone in a porn movie.*
- ✓ Physical and sexual violence
*My partner throws things at me, chokes me, hits, kicks, shoves, or pushes me, rapes me, forces me to have sex with others.
My partner beats me against the wall.
My partner hurts me and then won't let me go to a doctor or the hospital.*

If any of this describes your relationship or that of someone you know, help is available.

To learn about NELCWIT's services for those coping with or recovering from domestic violence and for survivors of sexual assault:

Call NELCWIT's hotline:

413-772-0806 or 888-249-0806

24 hours/day, 7 days/week

or

Visit our website: www.nelcwit.org

or

Come to our office at 479 Main Street, Greenfield MA

Monday through Thursday between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m.

or Friday 9 a.m. to noon

ALL OF NELCWIT'S SERVICES ARE FREE AND CONFIDENTIAL

