

PREDICTORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Many have asked us if there are any signs that occur before actual abuse that might serve as clues to potential abuse. We recently saw the following in Monthly Memo published by the National Technical Assistance Center on Family Violence. We hope it will be of use to you.

1. **Did he grow up in a violent family?** People, who grow up in families where they have been abused as children, or where on parent -- usually the father -- beats the other, are likely to become wife-beaters or child-beaters, or both. They have grown up learning that violence is normal behavior. Those who come from violent homes may claim they may never behave that way, but often resort to violence when faced with the problems of marriage and parenting.
2. **Does he tend to use force or violence to “solve” his problems?** A young man who has a criminal record for violence, who gets into fights, or who likes to act tough is likely to act the same way with his wife and children. Does he have a quick temper? Does he over-react to little problems and frustrations, such as not finding a parking place or having a bad seat at the movies? Is he destructive when he’s angry? Does he punch walls or throw things when he’s upset? Any of these behaviors may be a sign of a person who will work out bad feelings with violence. Do not minimize a tendency he may have to be cruel to animals. Cruelty to animals is a common behavior of men who are also cruel to woman and children.
3. **Does he abuse alcohol or other drugs?** There is a strong link between violence and problems with drugs and alcohol. Be alert to his possible drinking/drug problem, particularly if he refused to admit that he has a problem, or refused to get help. **Do not think that you can change him.**
4. **Does he think poorly of himself?** Does he guard his masculinity by trying to act tough? He may think he’s acting like a man, but in fact, he may be acting like a future batterer.
5. **Does he have strong traditional ideas about what a man should be and what a woman should be?** Does he think a woman should stay at home, take care of her husband, and follow his wishes and orders? In other words, does he act like women are second-class citizens?
6. **Is he jealous of you—not just of other men that you may know—but also of your girlfriends?** Does he keep tabs on you? Does he want to know where you are at all times? Does he want you with him all of the time, even when it is inconvenient for you?

7. **Does he play with guns, knives, and other legal instruments?** Does he talk of using them against people, or threaten to use them to “get even”?
8. **Does he expect you to follow his orders or advice?** Does he become angry if you do not fulfill his wishes, you cannot anticipate what he wants?
9. **Does he go through extreme highs and lows, as though he is almost two different people?** Is he extremely kind at one time, and extremely cruel at another time?
10. **When he gets angry do you fear him?** Do you find that not making him angry has become a major part of your life? Do you do what he wants you do, rather than what you want to do?
11. **Does he treat you roughly?** Hit you? Does he physically force you to do what you do not want to do? Abuse during dating is a guarantee of later abuse, and more violent abuse. Do not think that marriage will change him for the better. It will almost certainly change him for the worse. If he does abuse you, you are already a battered woman and should seek help now.
12. **Do you feel threatened by him?** Have you changed your life so you won't make him angry? If so, you are abused and should seek advice from your local battered women's center.