

Four Types of Abuse

Abuse can take on many forms. Some types are more subtle than others and might never be seen or felt by anyone other than the victim. The abuser uses a combination of tactics that work to control the victim. The abuse also usually increases in frequency and severity over time.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is easier to recognize and understand than other types of abuse. It can be indicated when the batterer:

- Scratches, bites, grabs or spits at a current or former intimate partner.
- Shakes, shoves, punches, strangles or burns the victim.
- Twists, slaps, punches, strangles or burns the victim.
- Throws objects at the victim.
- Subjects their partner to reckless driving.
- Locks partner in or out of the house.
- Refuses to help when the victim is sick, injured or pregnant, or withholds medication or treatment.
- Withholds food as punishment.
- Abuses the victim at mealtime, which disrupts eating patterns and can result in malnutrition.
- Abuses the victim at night, which disturbs sleeping patterns and can result in sleep deprivation.
- Attacks partner with weapons, or kills the victim.

Rape and Sexual Abuse

Rape and sexual abuse can be extraordinarily difficult for victims to talk about because of the unimaginable ways in which this type of violence often is perpetrated. Sexual abuse or rape can be indicated when the batterer:

- Is jealously angry and assumes their partner will have sex with anyone.
- Withholds sex and affection as punishment.
- Calls the victim sexual names
- Pressures the victim to have sex when they don't want to.
- Insists that their partner dress in a more sexual way than they want to.
- Coerces sex by manipulation or threats.

- Physically forces sex or is violent during a sexual assault.
- Coerces the victim into sexual acts that she/he is uncomfortable with, such as sex with a third party, physically painful sex, sexual activity they find offensive, or verbal degradation during sex.
- Inflicts injuries that are sex-specific.
- Denies the victim contraception or protection against sexually transmitted diseases.

Psychological Abuse

It is the abuser's use of physical and sexual force or threats that give power to psychologically abusive acts. Psychological abuse becomes an effective weapon in controlling a victim because the victim knows through experience that the abuser will at times back up the threats or taunts with physical assaults. Psychological abuse can be indicated when the batterer:

- Breaks promises, doesn't follow through on agreements, or doesn't take a fair share of responsibility.
- Verbally attacks and humiliates their partner in private or public.
- Attacks her vulnerabilities, such as language abilities, education level, skills as a parent, religious and cultural beliefs, or physical appearance.
- Plays mind games, such as when denying promises made previously, or when undercutting the victim's sense of reality.
- Forces the victim to do degrading things.
- Ignores the victim's feelings.
- Withholds approval or affection as punishment.
- Regularly threatens to leave or tells partner to leave.
- Harasses the victim about affairs they imagine the victim to be having.
- Always claims to be right.
- Is unfaithful after committing to monogamy.

Economic Abuse

Economic abuse can be indicated when the batterer:

- Controls all the money.
- Doesn't let the victim work outside the home or sabotages the victim's attempts to work or go to school.
- Refuses to work and forces the victim to support the family.
- Ruins the victim's credit rating.