**PROFILE OF AN ABUSER**

Spousal abuse can be mental, emotional, sexual, verbal or physical. An abuser can be anyone from any socioeconomic, religious or ethnic background. In some cases, physical abuse does not start until after marriage or during pregnancy. Thus early warning signs are especially important. Although men are also victims of spousal abuse, physical assaults are predominately against women. Following is a prototype of an abusive personality. Some or all of these characteristics may be visible. Any one of these may signal potential problems.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Specific Personality Traits</th>
<th>Other giveaways</th>
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<td>1. <strong>Poor Self-Image</strong>—insecurity about their image; unable to achieve intimacy.</td>
<td>1. <strong>Verbal Abuse</strong>—uses “put-downs” in order to damage self-esteem of spouse. “You’re so stupid no one else wants you.”</td>
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<td>2. <strong>Inability to Differentiate Feelings</strong>—emotions like fear and loneliness come out as anger.</td>
<td>2. <strong>Critical</strong>—Tries to change the other person.</td>
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<td>3. <strong>Rapidly Fluctuating Moods</strong>—Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde Personality. May be charming one minute, abusive the next. However, depression is the prevailing mood.</td>
<td>3. <strong>Blaming Others</strong>—for their problems, especially partner. May seem angry at the world; claims “There’s nothing wrong with me!”</td>
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<td>4. <strong>Child in an Adult Body</strong>—insatiable need for reassurance and approval. Views response to these demands as a sign of “Love”.</td>
<td>4. <strong>Poor Communication Skill</strong>—Dominates conversation; may seem uncaring, poor listener.</td>
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<td>5. <strong>Violent Temper</strong>—especially about little things. May begin by fists through a door, throwing furniture, violence against objects.</td>
<td>5. <strong>Extreme Jealousy</strong>—Or possessive.</td>
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<td>6. <strong>Other Probable Characteristics</strong>—history of child abuse, or witnessed abuse of mother by father. High job dissatisfaction. Heavy drinking or drug usage. Preoccupation with weapons. Violence prone background, such as prison or military.</td>
<td>6. <strong>Controls</strong>—partner in every way financially, emotionally, and physically; or tries to.</td>
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<td>7. <strong>Minimizes</strong>—or denies abuse. “I didn’t hit you THAT hard.” May be sorry after abusive episodes, promises it will never happen again.</td>
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Early Warning Signs Of Dating Violence

Are you going out with someone who...

• is jealous and possessive toward you: won’t let you have friends, checks up on you, won’t accept breaking up.
• tries to control you by being very bossy, giving orders, making all the decisions.
• doesn’t take your opinions very seriously.
• is scary. Threatens you, uses or owns weapons. You worry about how they will react to things you say or do.
• is violent: has a history of fighting, loses temper quickly, brags about mistreating others.
• pressures you for sex, is forceful or scary around sex. Attempts to manipulate or guilt-trip you by saying, “If you really loved me you would…” Gets too serious about the relationship too fast.
• abuses drugs or alcohol and pressures you to take them.
• blames you when they mistreat you. Says you provoked them, pressed their buttons, made them do it, and led them on.
• demands attention at inappropriate times such as during class.
• has a history of bad relationships and blames the other person for all the problems.
• your friends and family have warned you about the person or told you they were worried for your safety.

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Relation Bill of Rights

- I have the right to refuse a date without feeling guilty.
- I have the right to express my opinions and have them respected.
- I have the right to have my needs be as important as my partner’s needs.
- I can ask for a date without feeling rejected or inadequate if the answer is “no”.
- If I don’t want physical closeness, I have the right to say “no” and expect to be heard and respected.
- I have the right to grow as an individual in my own way.
- I do not have to act macho or seductively, or anything else I feel isn’t me.
- I have the right to start a relationship slowly, and to say “I want to get to know you better before I become too involved.”
- If I am told a relationship is changing, I have the right not to blame myself or change myself to keep the relationship going.
- I have the right to not take responsibility for my partner’s behavior.
- I have the right to an equal relationship with any person of either gender.
- I have the right to not dominate or be dominated.
- I have the right to act one way with one person and a different way with someone else.
- I have the right to not be physically, emotionally, or sexually abused.
- I have the right to change my goals whenever I want to.
- I have the right to break up and fall out of love with someone and not be threatened.
- I have the right to be myself without changing to suit others.

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Some of the Ways We Revictimize Battered Women

• We don’t believe her.
• We don’t recognize her strengths.

• We fail to realize her manipulative tendencies are survival skills.
• We question why she stayed in the relationship or returns to it.

• We question her inconsistencies and react to her not following through with goals, etc.
• We fault her parenting.

• We “evaluate” her.
• We only like “good victims” and enlightened victims.

• We hold cultural biases: we are sexist, racist and homophobic.
• We take control.

• We uphold unrealistic expectations.
• We patronize her.

• We don’t allow her much or any privacy.
• We question her need for shelter and protection when she makes contact with her partner.

• We buy into such labeling as: co-dependency, enabler, addicted to love, etc....” the woman as defective” theory.
• We blame her for failing to protect her children.

• We assume that leaving an abusive partner will set her free without recognizing the social abuse and stigma that low income, single women, and women headed families face.
• We fail to recognize her religious beliefs about marriage and family.

• We fail to validate and/or understand her positive, even loving feelings towards her partner.
• We fail to advise her about realistic outcomes of counseling for her partner.

• We fail to create bridges in the community.

---Author Unknown.