

Tips For Victims of Domestic Violence

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1. Don't blame yourself for provoking the abuse in your relationship. In a healthy relationship you can make mistakes, get angry or even be critical and not pay such a high price. You are not the "cause" of your partner's rage or violence and you cannot be the cure.
2. Acknowledge your efforts to maintain good home for your family, to create a safe environment and to support your partner. When we make promises to stay for better or worse, in good times and bad, we take those promises and commitments seriously. The important thing to realize is that one person cannot keep those commitments and promises; it takes both adults in the relationship.
3. You cannot change someone else's behavior. Try to focus on problems you can solve like breaking your isolation by talking to people you trust, creating a safety plan for you and for your children, nurturing and caring for yourself.
4. Get help. Call a local domestic violence hotline. They can provide you with direct services including counseling and, if you need it, emergency housing. They can also give you referrals to additional community resources.
5. Compassion for your partner may mean strongly encouraging him/her to seek help, calling the police or even leaving. Remember love shouldn't hurt.

You may be in an abusive relationship if:

- Your partner has an explosive temper
- Your partner threatens, criticizes or puts you down enough that your self-esteem is effected
- Your partner breaks or throws things
- Your partner grabs, kicks, shoves or slaps you
- Your partner attempts to isolate you from family, friends or co-workers
- Your partner attempts to control your ideas and/or behaviors
- Your partner is extremely jealous
- Your partner drinks or uses drugs often
- Your partner gives you the "silent treatment"
- Your partner blames you for problems in the relationship while refusing to take responsibility for his/her own behaviors

You are in an abusive relationship if your relationship is characterized by fear (emotional and/or physical), oppression and control.

Intimates should aim to keep their friendship and partnership alive and well.

Most of us learn about adult relationships by reading books, watching television or going to the movies. We learn that love equals romance, that men and women have specific roles once they establish an intimate bond and that real love is a crazy, roller coaster ride. Unless we observed our parents treating each other respectfully and affectionately, these media caricatures become our reality. But real love is not crazy or based on fear. Fear gets in the way of love. Real intimacy is about friendship, affection, trust, respect, sexual and mental health.

Children who grow up in abusive families are affected even if they don't witness an incident. They feel the tension, hear things or see the results. And they learn survival skills that get in the way of their adult relationships. They learn that violence and rage - solve problems. They learn to be reactive and not proactive. They learn to interpret the behavior of others as threatening or betraying even when it isn't... and they learn how to survive in a persistent state of fear. You can interrupt the intergenerational cycle of violence by getting help.

All relationships have their share of problems and difficult times. No relationship is perfect. Adults expect particular things from each other. We do not unconditionally love, we have some conditions even though acceptance of the other person's basic personality is very important. Abuse gets in the way of intimacy. It creates a mood of apprehension and not a mood of trust. Abusive partners do not just stop being abusive because they tell you they will or make promises that they will change. Your abuser will not change without appropriate intervention, but you can change things for yourself and for your family. Call for help.