

Red Flags of LGBTQ Relationship Abuse

If you are uncertain whether your partner is abusive or if you want to be able to tell at the beginning of the relationship if the other person has the potential to become abusive, there are behaviors you can look for, including the following:

- 1. JEALOUSY:** An abuser will always say that jealousy is a sign of love. Jealousy has nothing to do with love; it's a sign of possessiveness and lack of trust. In a healthy relationship, the partners trust each other unless one of them has legitimately done something to break that trust.
- 2. CONTROLLING BEHAVIOR:** At first, the batterer will say this behavior is because they are concerned for your safety, a need for you to use time well or to make good decisions. Abusers will be angry if you are "late" coming back from the store or an appointment; you will be questioned closely about where you went, who you talked to. At this behavior gets worse, the abuser may not let you make personal decisions about things like your clothing, or who you hang out with. They may keep all the money; or may make you ask permission to leave the house or room.
- 3. QUICK INVOLVEMENT:** Many relationship abuse victims only knew their abuser for a few months before they were living together. The abuser may come on like a whirlwind, claiming "you're the only person I could ever talk to" and "I've never felt loved like this by anyone". Abusers are generally very charming at the beginning of the relationship. You will be pressured to commit in such a way that later you may feel very guilty if you want to slow down involvement or break up. If you are newly out, be careful; abusers often target those they know are new to the GLBT community because it is a time when you are vulnerable and may not know very many people in the community.
- 4. UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS:** Abusive people will expect their partner to meet all their needs: the perfect partner, lover, and friend. They say things like "if you love me, I'm all you need and you're all I need". You are supposed to take care of everything for them; emotionally, physically, and sometimes economically.
- 5. ISOLATION:** The abusive person tries to cut the partner off from all resources. If you have same-sex friends, you are a "whore", a "slut" or "cheating". If you are close to family, you're "tied to the apron strings". The abuser will accuse people who are supportive of causing trouble, and may restrict use of the phone. They will gradually isolate you from all of your friends. They may try to keep you from working or going to school. Some abusers will try to get you into legal trouble so that you are afraid to go out.
- 6. BLAMES OTHERS FOR PROBLEMS:** If your partner is chronically unemployed, someone is always doing them wrong or is out to get them. They may make mistakes and then blame you for upsetting them so that they can't concentrate on their work. They will tell you that you are at fault for almost anything that goes wrong.
- 7. BLAMES OTHERS FOR FEELINGS:** Abusive people will tell you, "you made me mad" and "I can't help being angry". Although they actually make the decision about how they think or feel, they will use feelings to manipulate you. Abusers see themselves as the "victim" in the relationship, and do not take responsibility for their own feelings or behaviors.

8. **HYPERSENSITIVITY:** Abusers are easily insulted, and may take the slightest setback as a personal attack. They will rant and rave about the injustice of things that are really just a part of living, such as having to get up for work, getting a traffic ticket, or being asked to help with chores.
9. **CRUELTY TO ANIMALS OR CHILDREN:** This is a person who punishes animals brutally or is insensitive to their pain. They may expect children to be capable of things beyond their ability. They may tease children and younger brothers and sisters until they cry. They may be very critical of other people's children or any children you bring into the relationship. Your partner may threaten to prevent you from seeing children you have no biological rights to, or punish children to get even with you. About 60% of people who beat their partner also beat their children.
10. **"PLAYFUL" USE OF FORCE IN SEX:** Some people like to role play different scenes in sex, even rape fantasies. If both partners consent to this and have agreed on a "safe" word if one wants to stop this can be very healthy and normal. However, an abusive partner may like to act out fantasies where the partner is helpless – even if you don't find it a turn on. They let you know that the idea of rape is exciting. They may show little concern about whether you want to have sex, and use sulking or anger to manipulate you. They may start having sex with you while you are sleeping, or demand sex when you are ill or tired. They may want to "make up" by having sex after they have just been physically or verbally abusive to you.
11. **VERBAL ABUSE:** In addition to saying things that are meant to be cruel, this can be seen when the abuser degrades or curses you, belittling any of your accomplishments. They may say accuse you of not being a "real" lesbian or gay man. If you aren't out, they may threaten to out you to family members or your employer. The abuser will tell you that you are stupid and unable to function without them. They may wake you up to verbally abuse you, or not let you go to sleep.
12. **RIGID SEX ROLES:** Abusers expect the partner to play the "servant" or sometimes they see this as the "female" role; to serve them, and insists that you obey them in all things. The abuser sees you as unintelligent, inferior, responsible for menial tasks, and less than whole without the relationship. They will often tell you that no one else would want you or that you are nothing without them. They will remind you of everything they have done for you.
13. **DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE:** Many victims are confused by their abuser's sudden changes in mood, and may think it indicates a special mental problem. Abusers may be nice one minute, and explode the next. Explosiveness and moodiness are typical of people who beat their partners. Many victims feel if their partner would just quit drinking or using drugs, the violence would stop. This is usually not the case. Abusive people continue the abuse, even after they stop using alcohol or drugs, unless they also seek help for their abusive behavior.
14. **PAST BATTERING:** These people say they have hit a partner in the past, but the previous partner made them do it. You may hear from relatives or ex partners that the person has been abusive. A batterer will beat any person they are with if they are with that person long enough for violence to begin; situational circumstances do not make a person an abusive personality.
15. **THREATS OF VIOLENCE:** This could include any threat of physical force meant to control you: "I'll slap your mouth off", "I'll kill you", "I'll break your neck". Most people do not threaten their mates, but a batterer will say "everyone talks like that", or "it didn't mean anything".

16. **BREAKING OR STRIKING OBJECTS:** This behavior is used as a punishment (breaking loved possessions), but is used mostly to terrorize you into submission. The abuser may beat on the table with their fist or throw objects around. This is not only a sign of extreme emotional immaturity, but indicates great danger when someone thinks they have the "right" to punish or frighten their partner.

17. **ANY FORCE DURING AN ARGUMENT:** A batterer may hold you down, restrain you from leaving the room, push you, or shove you. They may pin you to the wall, saying, "You're going to listen to me!"

18. **GASLIGHTING:** This is a form of mental abuse in which false information is presented with the intent of making a victim doubt his or her own memory, perception or sanity. Instances may range simply from the denial by an abuser that previous abusive incidents ever occurred, up to the staging of bizarre events by the abuser with the intention of disorienting the victim. The term derives from a 1938 stage play called *Gas Light*. The plot concerns a husband who attempts to convince his wife and others that she is insane by manipulating small elements of their environment, and subsequently insisting that she is mistaken or misremembering when she points out these changes.