

James J. Tedesco III, Bergen County Executive
and the Bergen County Board of Commissioners

Alternatives to Domestic Violence
Bergen County Department of
Human Services



**STAYING SAFE
IN OUR
RELATIONSHIPS
—
TOOLKIT** 

Contact our 24-Hour Confidential Hotline 201-336-7575
to speak with a counselor or schedule an appointment
1 Bergen County Plaza, 2nd Floor, Hackensack, NJ 07601

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INTRODUCTION

At **Alternatives to Domestic Violence**, we envision a Bergen County where all persons, families, and communities are able to access and thrive in safe, equitable, and autonomous relationships.

This "**STAYING SAFE IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS**" toolkit was prepared to support all persons striving towards the pursuit of healthy, loving, and affirming relationships and recognizes that there are different kinds of love and relationships with family members, friends, and partners.

It was created to provide support to teens, young adults, and allies on how to recognize healthy connections that bring out the best in us, and how to safely detect and detach from unhealthy, toxic, or abusive relationships that leave us feeling unsafe and disconnected from our best selves.

Statistics tell us that **1 in 4** women and **1 in 7** men will experience some form of intimate partner abuse in their lifetime. For teens and young adults, the risk of finding yourself in an unhealthy relationship is at its highest - up to **3 times higher** than the national average. It's difficult to know what to do in these situations at any age but it's toughest when we feel alone in our experience.

If you've made it here in search of support for healthier relationships, we want you to know that you're **NOT ALONE**. Seeking education is a **HUGE** step and a personal form of **POWER** that will follow you everywhere you go!

Feel free to share all or part of this safety planning toolkit with your friends, roommates, resident assistants, family members, and or your therapist. When you come across information that you think others should know about, take a screenshot or download a section of the toolkit and post it on social media. The information you share could save a life.



The PTE Team at ADV

ADV'S ANTI-RACISM STATEMENT

Alternatives to Domestic Violence (ADV) celebrates diversity, equity, and inclusion. ADV disavows racism, homophobia, sexism, and actions that attempt to silence, threaten, and marginalize the most vulnerable in Bergen County, NJ.

ADV recognizes that the land now known as New Jersey has been home to the Lenape for over 14,000 years. Some tribal nations, officially recognized by the state of New Jersey, maintain communities that still thrive in the state today.



Alternatives to Domestic Violence, County of Bergen

STAYING SAFE IN RELATIONSHIPS

TOOLKIT



While no relationship is perfect, relationships remain **healthy** when we maintain our emotional, physical, mental, sexual, and financial boundaries with healthy relationship practices:

honesty & accountability

shared decision-making

trust & support

mutual respect

maintaining separate identities

commitment to nonviolence

An intimate relationship becomes **unsafe** when a person has noticed issues affecting relationship wellness but is unable to take steps towards healthier practices, usually as a direct result of their loved one's behaviors. It doesn't mean someone hasn't tried to make things better or that they're okay with how things feel.

Despite a person's best efforts to communicate, negotiate, or problem-solve issues, their boundaries and rights are not respected by their loved one. It may also mean that any attempts to change or end the relationship have been blocked by their loved one.

This is **NOT** healthy and is a strong indicator that the person is experiencing a **toxic or abusive** relationship.

If you've come here in support of yourself or someone else who is feeling unsafe in a relationship, you are not alone and this is not your fault. Read the next sections to learn more.

ADV counselors are available to talk to you 24/7: 201-336-7575

WHAT IS A TOXIC RELATIONSHIP?



A toxic, or abusive, relationship includes a **repeat pattern** of abusive behaviors that are used to gain or maintain power and control over a loved one or the relationship. It may also be referred to as Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), Domestic Violence (DV), or Dating Abuse (DA).

Abusive behaviors include any physical, sexual, emotional, economic or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person or stop them from exiting the relationship.

What types of relationships can become toxic?

Abuse can happen to anyone of any race, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, or education level. **It can happen to anyone.**

Patterns of abuse can occur in any type of intimate relationship where at least one person can misuse power in the forms of attachment, trust, vulnerability, or access to resources in the relationship. That includes, but is not limited to, persons who are or were:

dating or romantically involved

married or share children

sexually active

close friends or confidants

family members

roommates or living together

THE RISK FACTORS OF AN UNSAFE RELATIONSHIP



Your partner separates you from your friends and family

Your partner verbally abuses you either in private or in public

You lose your self-identity as you depend more on your partner

Your partner takes control, not leaving any space for your preferences

You are afraid of telling the truth for fear of upsetting your partner

You may have low self esteem and your partner makes you feel worthless and unattractive

Your partner has blamed you for issues in your relationship and may try to make you change

You feel that your thoughts, words, opinions, and accomplishments have little to no value










Your partner can be overpossessive and jealous

THE WARNING FLAGS OF AN UNSAFE RELATIONSHIP



Warning flags of abuse can be subtle and are sometimes mistaken for a genuine interest in us.

Be on the lookout for the following red flags that often indicate the sneaky progression of an abusive relationship.

-  They immediately and intensely shower you with gifts, flattery, and attention, beyond what is reasonable
-  They express an interest in deepening the level of intensity or commitment of the relationship quickly and beyond your comfort level
-  They share very personal details about their life right away and expect you to do the same
-  They have an opinion about everything you do and say, and are not open to receiving feedback or criticism
-  They make excuses to separate or isolate you from your friends and family
-  They accuse you of being unfaithful or untrustworthy without cause
-  They set rules for you in the relationship, usually under the guise of needing validation from you
-  They blame their problems or any failed past relationships on other persons, such as ex-partners
-  They have a history of abusive behaviors against other persons, especially those they have power or authority over
-  They lose control around you but are capable of controlling their emotions around other persons such as supervisors or law enforcement

THE WARNING FLAGS OF AN UNSAFE RELATIONSHIP



Certain behaviors or situations indicate a statistically **higher risk factor for lethal violence** in the relationship. The following behaviors by an abuser **multiply** a victim's likelihood to experience lethal violence in the relationship.

	RISK FACTOR MULTIPLIER*
Assault you with a gun or other weapon OR a threat to do so	x20
Make verbal or written threats to kill you	x15
Attempt to strangle or compress your neck	x10
Are violently or constantly jealous of who you see or talk to	x9
Force you to have sex when you do not want to	x7.6
Keep a gun in the home	x6
Recent increase in the frequency of physical violence	x4.3
Recently increase in the severity of physical violence	x5.2
Control of most or all of your daily activities	x5
Use illicit drugs OR are drunk every day or almost every day	x4
Perpetrate physical violence against you while you are pregnant	x3.8
Do or say things to make you believe they are capable of killing you	x3.3
Stalk you or have stalked you in the past	x3
Lack employment or recently lost their job	x4
Indicate that they are suicidal	x1.3
You recently separated and are seeing someone new...	x4
OR you recently left after living together with a very controlling partner	x9

If you, or someone you know, are experiencing any of the above, counselors are available to discuss any safety concerns:

Bergen County, NJ residents can call:
 Alternatives to Domestic Violence
 24-hour hotline 201-336-7575

National & State-wide:
 National Domestic Violence Hotline
 New Jersey Domestic Violence Hotline

chat at loveisrespect.org
text "loveis" to 22522
call 1-866-331-9474
 (peer advocates available 24/7)

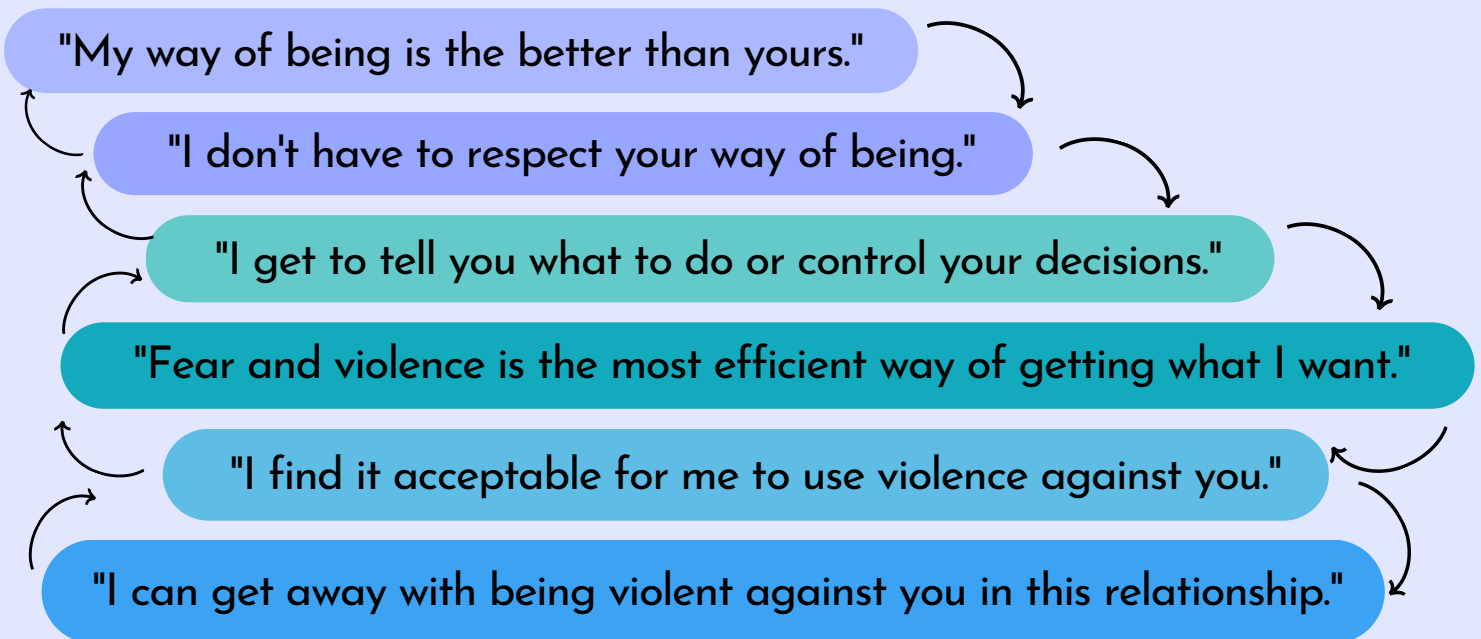
THE ROOT CAUSE OF ABUSIVE BEHAVIORS

If any of these things are happening in your relationship, it's important to find support for what to do next.

Without help, the abuse will continue. To understand why, let's discuss the real source of abusive behaviors.

Contrary to popular belief, abuse is **NOT** caused by high stress, alcohol or drugs, mental health issues, or childhood trauma. These factors may worsen relationship conflict but do not singularly cause abusive behaviors. People perform abuse because they **believe** it is acceptable. Abusive behaviors are learned!

Repeat patterns of abusive behaviors come from a person's underlying **beliefs and attitudes** about what is normal or justifiable to do in intimate relationships. Here are the most common beliefs and attitudes held by persons who abuse loved ones.

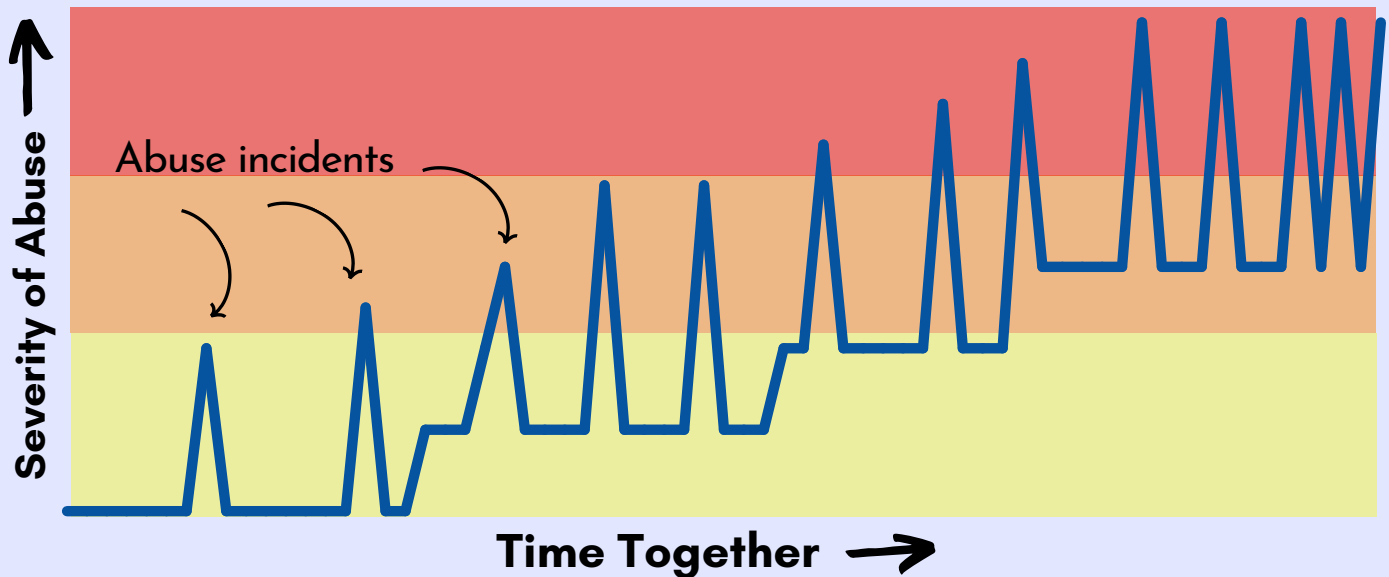


It's difficult to interrupt abuse because a person must unlearn and reject an interconnected network of beliefs that support unequal power and justification for abusive behavior!

THE TRAJECTORY OF A TOXIC RELATIONSHIP



Research tells us that in most cases of abuse, **the frequency and severity of abuse gets worse over time, not better.**



The graph above is one example of how abuse incidents may start off mild and infrequent but become more patterned and dangerous over time. While there may appear to be periods of calm in between incidents, they do not last and only create the illusion that things are getting better.

Be advised that abuse **DOES NOT** always follow predictable cycles. Abuse **DOES** tend to get worse after certain key events in a relationship, such as moving in together, having sex for the first time, engagements and marriage, becoming pregnant, or separations.

Certain events may trigger new abuse because of how abusive persons react to increases/decreases to their power or influence in the relationship. Abuse is about maintaining power and has nothing to do with your efforts to fix or improve the relationship!

WHAT IS POWER & CONTROL?

**A person does not commit abusive acts out of love,
it is to maintain POWER & CONTROL**

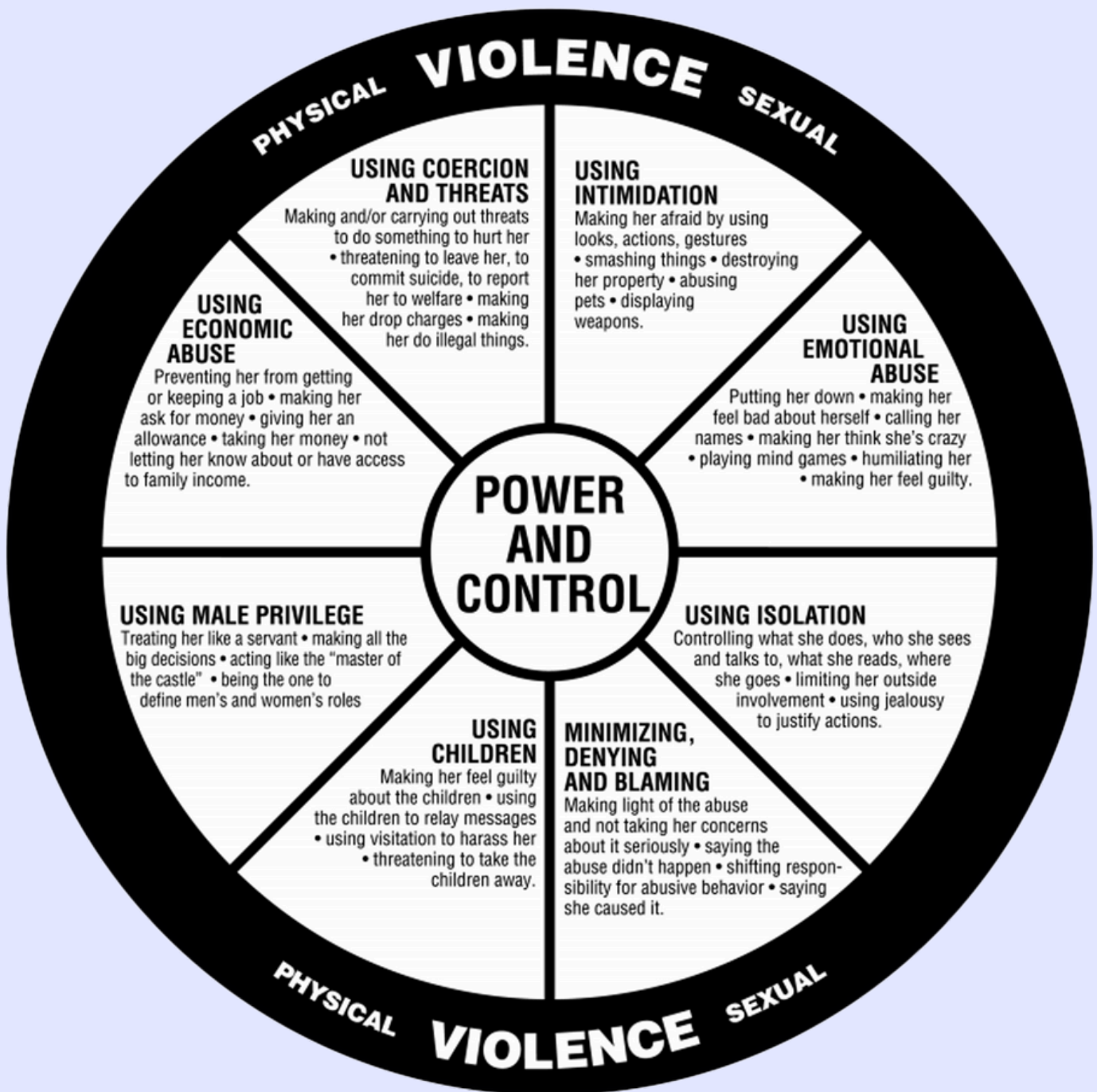
- An abuser has a system of beliefs, attitudes, and expectations that justifies their abuse
- Abusers are NOT usually open to the idea of change and respond negatively to the idea of bringing in outside help
- Couples or family counseling is NOT recommended unless the abuser has completely abstained from violent or controlling behaviors
- Abusers must take full accountability for how it's affected their loved ones

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS A PATTERN OF
BEHAVIORS USED TO GAIN OR MAINTAIN
POWER AND CONTROL**

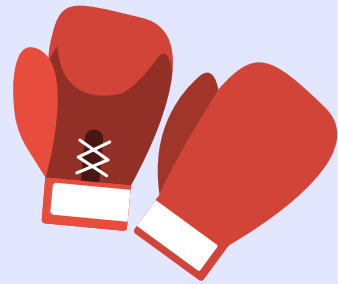
POWER & CONTROL WHEEL

Developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, MN, the Power & Control Wheel is a helpful tool in understanding the overall pattern of abusive and violent behaviors.

The wheel shows tactics that an abusive partner uses to keep their victims in a relationship. The inside of the wheel lists the subtle, continual behaviors over time, while the outer ring represents physical and sexual violence.



FACT VS. MYTH REALITY CHECKING CONFLICT



Conflict is a normal part of healthy relationship. However, not all behaviors follow the rules of fair fights in relationships.

Continue to the next page for our relationship reality checklist to help differentiate between healthy and toxic forms of conflict



WHAT WE THINK IS NORMAL...

WHAT IS ACTUALLY NORMAL...

1 I don't express my feelings because it leads to arguments that make things worse.

I can share my feelings at any time to prevent resentment from building.

2 I wait until the right time to bring up topics to avoid loved one "exploding."

My loved one is responsible for managing their feelings and reactions.

3 When they call me lazy, stupid, or selfish, it's okay because it's out of love.

Real love is when others can identify behaviors without judging character or damaging self-esteem.

4 After fights, I help us move on by pretending that it never happened.

We decide together whether a conflict is resolved or not, and make time to talk about it.

5 During arguments, my loved one doesn't let me leave the conversation until they are done.

My loved one lets me take care of my needs during a conflict and trusts that I'll talk when I'm ready.

6 When I tell them something upsetting, they leave, give me the silent treatment, or punish me.

When hurtful things are said, we talk about the impact and identify the boundaries needed.

7 A loved one justifies threatening, humiliating, or hurting me, because I "pushed their buttons."

It is never okay for my loved one to knowingly hurt me. They are accountable for their behaviors.

8 When my loved says or hurts, offends or threatens me, I am justified in doing the same things.

When the relationship is abusive, I am entitled to consider my safety and get help.

9 I can't bring up my loved one's past violence because it has nothing to do with today's argument.

I can raise concerns about past behaviors if I don't feel safe or able to negotiate my needs.

10 It's on me to make things right, even if it means taking all blame or giving them what they want.

During conflicts, we are equally responsible for repair.

WHY IS IT SO HARD TO LEAVE? THE ANSWER . . .

"Why didn't you just leave?"



is a **common**, but **wrong** question to ask.

Instead of asking "Why do people stay in abusive relationships?", the questions should be "How did the person causing harm, prevent their partner, friend, or family member from leaving?" or "Why do abusers hurt the person they claim to love?"

Identifying a pattern of abuse and making the decision to leave can be incredibly difficult and there are many barriers to consider:

- Leaving an abusive partner can be dangerous
- Concern about children
- Isolation from friends and family
- Hope that things are going to change
- Lack of resources
- Unhelpful response from clergy
- Police officers who don't provide support to survivors
- Lack of safe and affordable housing and shelters
- Divorce isn't a viable option
- Having a disability
- Belonging to a sexual minority
- Immigration status

Leaving an abusive relationship is a process. Research shows that it can take **approximately 7 attempts before a survivor permanently leaves an abusive situation.**

MAKING THAT FIRST CALL TO SEEK HELP IS A COURAGEOUS STEP ✨ ✨ ✨



LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY & ABUSE

Domestic violence affects individuals of all sexual orientations and genders.

Within the LGBTQ+ community, intimate partner violence (IPV) occurs at a rate equal to or even higher than that of the heterosexual community.

- **45% of victims do not report the violence** they experience to police because they believe it will not help them.
- Members of the LGBTQ community may be denied assistance and domestic violence services as a result of homophobia, transphobia, and biphobia.
- **43.8% of lesbian women and 61.1% of bisexual women** have experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner at some point in their lifetime.
- **26% of gay men and 37.3% of bisexual men** have experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime.
- LGBTQ Black/African American victims are more likely to experience physical intimate partner violence.
- Threatening to reveal one partner's sexual orientation/gender identity ("outing") may be used as a tool of abuse.



LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY & ABUSE

Some tactics used by perpetrating partners include but are not limited to:



IDENTITY-BASED VIOLENCE

For some people, it may be very difficult to be out in the workplace, community, or to family. Abusers may use their partner's trauma against them through manipulation or threats in order to gain control.

GENDER-AFFIRMING CARE

If someone does not allow their partner access to hormones, it is abuse. 146,300 trans youth have lost or are at risk of losing access to gender-affirming care.

(The Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law, 2023)

MIS-GENDERING & DEADNAMING

Purposely deadnaming or mis-gendering individuals is a form of abuse. Misgendering is using the wrong pronouns and deadnaming is calling a person by a name they don't feel comfortable with. For example, calling a trans or non-binary person "it" instead of using the correct pronouns.

LIMITING ACCESS TO SERVICES

Most LGBTQ+ people have difficulty accessing services. Abusers may use this to their advantage by manipulating their partner into believing that no one will believe or help them.

LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY & ABUSE

Barriers to Seeking Services & Receiving Assistance

- Domestic violence does not occur in LGBTQ+ relationships
- Homophobia from staff of service providers
- Lack of appropriate training regarding LGBTQ+ DV victims
- Concern that problems among the LGBTQ+ population will take away from progress toward equality
- Domestic violence shelters are typically female only, and transgender people may not be allowed
- Risk of rejection from family, friends, and society
- The lack of LGBTQ+ assistance resources
- Lack of confidence in the legal system for LGBTQ+ people

These organizations are working to support LGBTQ victims and survivors of domestic violence:

- ✦ Anti-Violence Project
- ✦ FORGE
- ✦ Community United Against Violence
- ✦ Human Rights Campaign



MARGINALIZED SURVIVORS OF ABUSE

Victims from historically marginalized racial and ethnic minority communities or underserved populations may experience additional barriers to seeking safety and receiving support. Abusive partners often use cultural ideals, gender-based violence, and language barriers to maintain power and control.

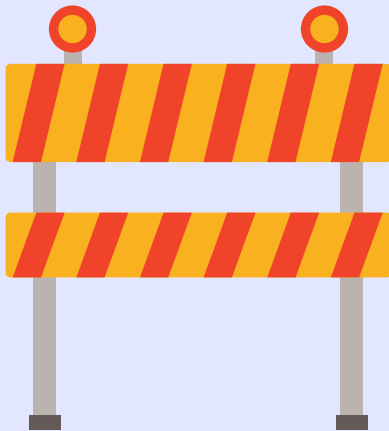
Marginalized and underserved populations include:

- People in Black, Latina/Hispanic Asian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities
- Children & Youth
- Immigrants
- ESL
- LGBTQ+ communities
- Native American/Indigenous populations
- Older adults
- People with disabilities



Barrier include:

- Stereotypes
- Erasure/Invisibility
- Fear of Being Outed
- Poverty/Homelessness
- Discrimination
- Police Brutality/Mass Incarceration
- Stigma
- Language
- Accessibility
- Internalized Oppression



TYPES OF ABUSE

The following pages will explain the different types of abuse and provide some ideas on how you can keep yourself safe



EMOTIONAL
PSYCHOLOGICAL
FINANCIAL
PHYSICAL

DISCLAIMER: This is not a substitute for speaking with a counselor. It is meant to help gain a better understanding of your relationship dynamics.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Can sound and look like:

- name calling
- embarrassing you in public
- blaming you for their problems
- tracking you
- gaslighting
- turning others against you
- keeping you from friends & family



WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Leave the room/house temporarily
- Take a deep breath
- Speak in a calm, even voice
- Do not yell or mutter
- Remind yourself that nobody has the right to put you down, and that what is happening is not something you deserve
- Set boundaries
- Let your abuser know that you will talk to them about what is making them upset, but not while they are screaming at you

PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

Can sound and look like:

- intense praise followed by verbal abuse
- making you feel like you've lost your mind
- sabotaging friendships
- making you the enemy for having feelings & reactions
- constant lying to avoid responsibility
- blaming you for everything
- lack of interest in who you are



WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Learn about healthy relationship dynamics
- Recognize unhealthy behaviors for what they are
- Create a safety plan and leave as soon as you can
- Seek help from trusted friends, family members, neighbors, law enforcement, or organizations
- Maintain a record of the abuse
- Don't engage your abuser
- Work on developing healthy relationships
- Consider therapy to help you process your emotions, develop coping skills, build self-esteem, and heal from the trauma
- Join a support group
- Remember that you're not to blame

FINANCIAL ABUSE

Can sound and look like:

- controlling how money is spent
- withholding money or giving an allowance
- preventing you from getting or keeping a job
- stealing your identity, property or inheritance
- running up large amounts of debt on joint accounts
- refusing to pay bills and ruining your credit score
- filing false insurance claims

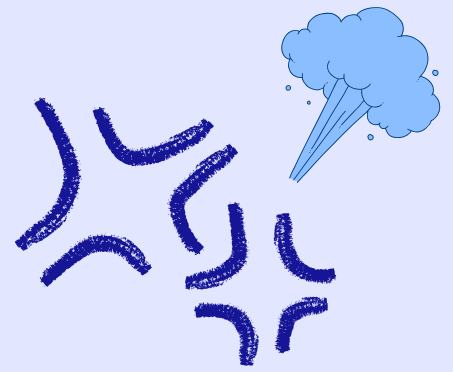


WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Identify your resources, i.e. money, credit card, ATM card, and transportation
- Organize your documentation, i.e. birth certificate, drivers' license & registration, financial statements, checkbook, Order of Protection, passport, Social Security card, medical records, insurance policies, police records, children's school and immunization records
- If it's unsafe to take the originals, make copies
- Keep documentation in a safe place until you're able to safely leave
- Get financially educated by speaking to someone at your bank, or meeting with a financial planner
- Check your credit score and learn about the impact of credit scores

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Can sound and look like:



- throwing objects at you
- driving recklessly or dangerously with you in the car
- preventing you from leaving your apartment or house
- using weapons against you including firearms, knives, bats, and things around the house like plates or books
- pushing, shoving, slapping, kicking, punching, shaking, biting, or strangling you

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Consider calling the National Domestic Violence Hotline or ADV at (201) 336-7575
- Get connected with an advocate who can provide support, referrals, and information about available services
- Identify and connect with trusted friends, family members, a local shelter, and organizations who can be of help to you
- Check local programs and services such as emergency shelters, transitional housings, legal advocacy, childcare, counseling, support groups, and more
- Make a safety plan. For more information, see <https://www.thehotline.org/plan-for-safety/create-a-safety-plan/>

DIGITAL ABUSE

Can sound and look like:



- Coercing you to share your location
- Coercing you into sharing your passwords
- Constant calling and texting, instilling fear
- Using social media sites to keep tabs on their partner
- Sharing unwanted explicit pictures
- Looking through a partner's phone (text messages, calls, etc.)

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Disable geolocation in apps
- Change all PINs & passwords
- Use a password manager & do not give the primary login details to anyone
- Use one email account for communicating with friends & a different one for handling finances
- Disable the location feature when posting online
- Block your abuser if it is safe to do so
- Change your phone number
- Document the harassment

SEXUAL ABUSE

You may be in a sexually abusive relationship if your partner:

- Accuses you of cheating or is jealous of other relationships
- Wants you to dress in a sexual way
- Insults you in sexual ways
- Has forced or manipulated you into having sex
- Holds you down during sex
- Demands sex when you are sick, tired or after beating you
- Hurts you with weapons or objects during sex
- Involves other people in sexual activities with you
- Ignores your feelings regarding sex
- Withholds birth control or refuses to use birth control

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Find a safe place where you can think through your next steps
- Reaching out to a trusted friend or family member
- Speak with a counselor, sexual assault hotline, or support group
- Seek health care at an emergency room or health clinic as soon as you can after being assaulted
- Contact a sexual assault advocate in the area who can assist you and answer questions
- If it's safe to do so, report what happened to law enforcement and pursue criminal legal recourse against your attacker
- Remember that the abuse was not your fault

SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE U.S.



1 in 2 women have experienced sexual violence other than rape in their lifetime



1 in 5 men have experienced sexual violence other than rape in their lifetime

9 out of 10 college women who are victims of sexual assault, knew the person who sexually assaulted them

90%

1 in 3 women experience physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner

33%

Women have a 50% to 95% chance of developing post-traumatic stress disorder after being raped

50%

95%

Fewer than 5% of completed or attempted rapes against college women were reported to law enforcement

5%

67.5% of instances of rape are estimated to go unreported

1 in 5 women have experienced completed or attempted rape in their lives

1 in 67 men in the US have experienced rape or attempted rape

What is CONSENT?

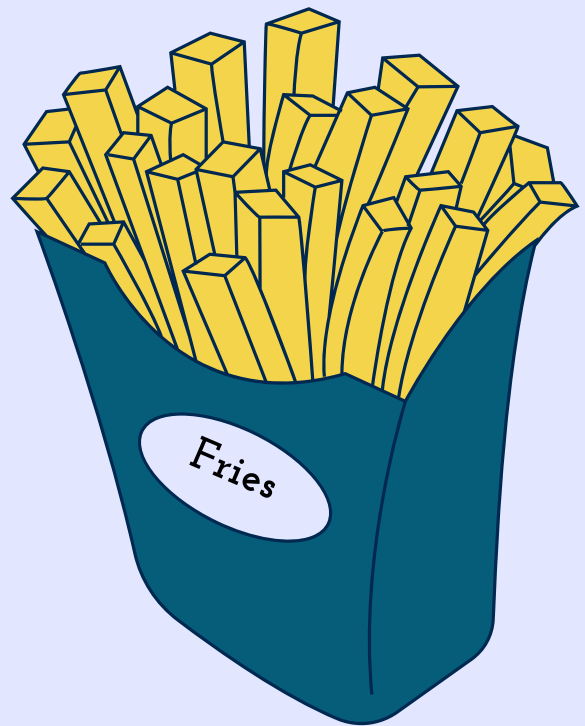
Freely given

Reversible

Informed

Enthusiastic

Specific



CONTINUE TO NEXT PAGE



CONSENT IS...



FREELY GIVEN

Consenting is a choice you make without pressure, manipulation, or under the influence of drugs or alcohol

ENTHUSIASTIC

When it comes to sex, you should only do stuff you WANT to do, not things that you feel you're expected to do.

INFORMED

You can only consent to something if you have the full story. For example, if someone says they'll use a condom and then they don't, there isn't full consent.

REVERSIBLE

Anyone can change their mind about what they feel comfortable with, at any time. Even if there has previously been consent, and even if the individuals are both naked.

SPECIFIC

Saying yes to one thing (like going to the bedroom to make out) doesn't mean you've said yes to others (like having sex)

CONSENT IS NOT...

Granted because there is flirting taking place.

Based on how someone is dressed.

Waived when someone is intoxicated.

Assumed when someone is silent and does not explicitly say "no"

Substitutable. Consenting to Activity A does not mean consent is granted for Activity B.

Automatically extended from a past time when someone consented.

CONSENT IS...LIKE TEA

CONSENT

IT'S SIMPLE AS TEA



WATCH HERE

GASLIGHTING

Gaslighting is a form of psychological manipulation in which the abuser attempts to control their victim by twisting their sense of reality, creating self-doubt and confusion in their victim's mind.

The most basic form of gaslighting is a partner doing something abusive and then denying it happened. Gaslighting can happen in romantic relationships, as well as friendships or in families.

Signs of gaslighting include:

- Actions that contradict words
- Blatantly lying and covering up
- Broken promises
- Denying conversations or events happened
- Manipulating others to see you differently
- Feeling like you have to defend reality
- Self-esteem slowly erodes
- Questioning what is real and thinking you are bad or lost your mind



HISTORY of the phrase "Gaslighting"

The term "gaslighting" originates from a 1938 play (and 1944 film adaptation) *Gaslight*, where a husband slowly manipulates his wife into believing that she's losing her mind. In the film, the husband dims the gas lights in an upstairs flat, and when his wife brings this up he convinces her she's imagining it.



CONTINUE TO NEXT PAGE
for examples of Gaslighting



WHAT GASLIGHTING



MIGHT SOUND LIKE

"That never happened."

"It's not that big of a deal."

"You should have known how I would react."

"I did that because I love you."

"You're crazy – and other people think so, too."

"You are being dramatic."

"I'm sorry you think that I hurt you."

"You are just insecure."

"You're just being paranoid."

"You're imagining things."

"You know I'd never intentionally hurt you."

"You're just trying to confuse me. You aren't making any sense."

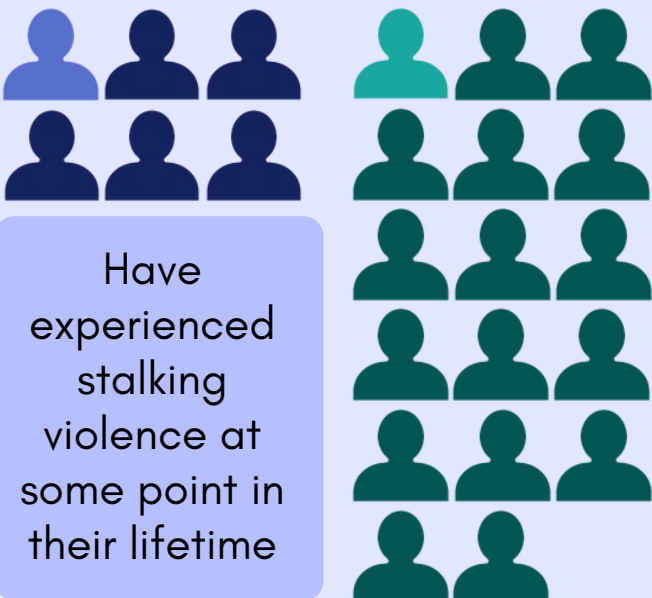
"You don't really feel that way."

"Do you really think I'd make that up?"

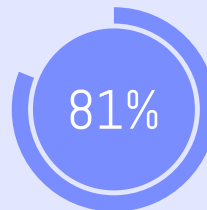
WHAT IS STALKING?

**Any
REPEATED PATTERN
of behavior that
serves no legitimate
purpose and is
intended to harass,
annoy, or terrorize
the victim**

1 in 6 women & 1 in 17 men



of those stalked by a ex-partner, had reported violence and/or coercive control while still in a relationship



of women who were stalked by a current or ex-partner, were also physically assaulted by that partner



of intimate partner femicide victims have been stalked by their partner

✦ **Stalking usually escalates**

✦ **The majority of stalking victims are stalked by someone they know**



EXAMPLES OF STALKING

- Surveillance at work, home and other places you frequent
- Showing up at your home or workplace unannounced or uninvited
- Sending you unwanted texts, messages, letters, emails, or voicemails
- Leaving you unwanted items, gifts, or flowers
- Calling you and hanging up repeatedly
- Unwanted phone calls to you, your employer, a professor, or a loved one
- Using social media or technology to track your activities and location without permission
- Spreading rumors about you online or in person
- Manipulating other people to investigate you
- Using someone else's social media account to look at your profile or connecting to your friends to get your information
- Waiting at places where they know you will be
- Damaging your home, car, or other property
- Hiring a private investigator to follow or find you

stalking is a 
CRIME

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF IF YOU ARE BEING STALKED



- If you feel like you are in danger, call 911 right away
- Tell a trusted family member or friend
- **Create a safety plan**
- Stay with others in public places
- Vary your routes and routines and pay attention to people and vehicles nearby
- If you're being followed, drive to a police station

- Block your stalker on social media and set your accounts to private
- Don't accept requests from unknown or fake accounts
- Don't share your location on social media apps
- Turn off Location Services on your smartphone
- Change your passwords and make them hard to guess
- Contact local law enforcement and bring evidence of the stalking.
- Get counseling to help you process the trauma



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