

SIGNS THAT COULD MEAN A LOVED ONE IS IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

The abuser might...

Purposefully disagree with things their partner says.

Silence their partner during conversations.

Tell jokes that hurt their partner's feelings then complain that they are too sensitive.

Make their partner feel as if their emotions don't matter.

Make their partner apologise for things they didn't do.

Make their partner feel selfish or stupid because of their actions.

Put words in their partner's mouth or speak for them without their consent to undermine their self-esteem.

Have sharp mood swings. One moment they seem distant, the next they are not available, and then they are loving.

Deny things said or actions that took place, including previous abuse from a past relationship.

Blame their partner for everything and not take any responsibility themselves.

Say things like they can't live without their partner.

Dislike a lot of their partner's friends and not want them to spend time with other people.

Use other people (e.g. family members or friends) to spy on them and report back or to make their case for them.

Push for commitment and declarations of love early on in the relationship, so the relationship gets serious quickly.

Be jealous of other people their partner sees, including family and friends, but also things they spend their time on like work and activities.

The victim might...

Avoid doing things they know will make their partner angry.

Feel the need to constantly check in and update their partner of their whereabouts.

Change their appearance and/or behaviour.

Seem confused as the abuser creates doubt in the victim's perception or memory.

Defend their partner to their friends and family and make excuses for their behaviour.

Question their sanity or behaviour.

Ask their partner how they feel about everything or not be able to make a decision without their partner's approval.

Seem defensive and feel you are judging them.

Be around less and be less available for social events.

Have location sharing on their phone and share their passwords with their partner.

Say their partner is insecure, jealous, worried about (or has accused them of) cheating.

Stop doing things they previously enjoyed, like hobbies, studying and even leaving their job.

Hide things they've bought or seem anxious about their partner seeing what they've bought.

Blame themselves for their partner's behaviour.

Should I get involved?

It can be really difficult to tell when a relationship is abusive, especially for others outside the relationship. Maybe the relationship is an unhappy one, or challenging for different reasons, or it's just a relationship that looks different from what we're used to ourselves. However, if something doesn't feel right, or you've noticed a potential sign of abuse, don't ignore your gut feeling. Ignoring the signs could leave the person you're worried about feeling more alone. Taking notice is the first step to helping them.

Questions to ask someone you are worried about

We haven't seen much of you lately, is everything OK?

You said they don't like it when you do (X) - what happens when you do things they don't like?

How do you feel when they do (X)?

How often do they "kick off" like that?

I'm worried about you, I saw the way they looked at you and you seemed scared.

Wow, they text you a lot, do they do that all the time?

What do you think they would do if you left?

How can I help?

Be patient: Usually it takes people who experience domestic abuse several years to seek help. This means patience is key when expressing your concerns. Don't take it personally if they don't immediately confide in you. Instead, make sure they know you are always there if they do need you, and trust that when they can, they will speak up.

Listen & believe: If someone tells you about abuse, or worrying behaviour they are experiencing, make sure you listen and validate their experience. Brushing it off or trying to reassure them that it's a one-off will make it harder for them to talk about it. Trust what they say and let them know that you believe them. Simply giving someone space to talk, and listening to how they're feeling, can be really helpful in itself. If they're finding it difficult, let them know that you're there for when they are ready.

Remind them they're not alone: Seeking help can feel lonely, and sometimes scary. The person you care about may have been deliberately isolated. Say you are there for them, and that there are solutions. Tell them that they are not alone and that there are many people in the same situation. Let them know they have options and that there are support services available. Be ready to provide information on organisations that can offer support. Reassure them by letting them know that they are not alone, and that you will be there to help. Explore the available options with them.

Be calm: Even though it might be upsetting to hear that someone you care about is being treated that way and at risk of harm, try to stay calm. This will help the person you care about feel calmer too, and show them that they can talk to you openly without upsetting you.

Be there: The abuser will try to isolate them, making it harder to reach out to someone or ask for help. Whether they leave or stay, be understanding and available. Even if they always say no, contact them to ask if they want to meet up, invite them to social activities and ask how they are. Try and keep in touch with them, stay connected - it might seem like something small, but it can make a huge difference.

Be safe: Finally, be safe - don't put yourself or the person you're worried about at risk. Try to talk face-to-face and in private if you can. Remember that their social media, phone, and emails might be monitored. Never confront the abuser or act as a go-between.

What *not* to say

Using language such as "just leave" or "don't let him". Unfortunately victims often have very little power and control over their situation, therefore, they don't have a lot of choice.

Suggesting they are to blame in any way for their abusers behaviours. Such as "what did you do to annoy them that much/make them do that?"

Using any cultural or religious beliefs to influence their decisions.

Using ultimatums such as "it's him or me" - there are many barriers to leaving which means this could lead to you becoming more isolated from the victim.

Using your previous experience to try and school them on the "right" or "wrong" way to handle their situation, remember, every situation is different.

Forcing them to disclose to you, or pressuring them to leave the relationship.

Remember: leaving is the most dangerous time. Pressuring someone can push them away and could also be dangerous.

Excusing the abuser's behaviour, for example, "you know what they're like when they've had a drink" and "she's like that with everyone"

Minimising the situation in any way - such as "this sort of stuff happens all the time in marriages" - remember, domestic abuse is never OK!

Places to go for further support & information

If you or others feel in danger right now call 999 and ask for the police to help. If you don't speak or answer questions, press 55 or tap when prompted and your call will be transferred to the police. They will attempt to locate you using your phone's location.

National Domestic Abuse Helpline

www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk

0808 2000 247

A 24/7 free and confidential helpline

Northern Ireland's Domestic and Sexual Abuse Helpline

www.dsahelpline.org

0808 802 1414

A 24/7 free and confidential helpline for those living in Northern Ireland

Scotland's Domestic and Sexual Abuse Helpline

www.sdafmh.org.uk

0800 027 1234

A 24/7 free and confidential helpline for those living in Scotland

Findaway

www.wefindaway.org.uk

0300 140 0061

Dedicated support service for family & friends worried about someone else's relationship

Women's Aid

www.womensaid.org.uk

A federation working to keep women and children safe

Scottish Women's Aid

www.womensaid.scot

A lead organisation in Scotland working towards the prevention of domestic abuse

Welsh Women's Aid

0808 8010 800

www.welshwomensaid.org.uk

A lead organisation in Wales working towards the prevention of domestic abuse

SafeLives

www.safelives.org.uk

A UK-wide charity dedicated to ending domestic abuse, for everyone and for good.

ManKind Initiative

www.mankind.org.uk

0808 800 1170

Helping male victims of domestic abuse

Respect

www.respect.org.uk

0808 8010327

UK charity stopping perpetrators of domestic abuse

For more helplines visit www.itv.com/helplines