

Signs or Characteristics of Someone Who May Abuse

Here are some signs that may indicate that you are using abusive tactics in your relationship:

Jealousy

Jealousy has nothing to do with love; it is a sign of insecurity. Someone who is more likely to abuse will often justify jealousy by calling it a symptom of love. Jealousy often leads to controlling behaviors, such as questioning one's partner about how they spend their time, who they are with, where they are going, etc. This may lead to more intense actions, such as following one's partner, checking their cell phones or email, or dropping in on them at work.

Controlling Behavior

A person who abuses is likely to say that they are controlling because they are concerned about their partner's safety or that they want to "help" their partner make good decisions. They may attempt to control finances, time, and outside relationships (such as dictating which friends or family members their partner can/should talk to).

Isolation

Someone who abuses may use isolation as a way to pacify a "need" for control. This may include cutting their partner off from everything and everyone. Those friends and family members who are a support system are relabeled as people who cause trouble. Isolation may include cutting one's partner off from money, the phone, the internet, friends, and family.

Unrealistic Expectations

Those who use abuse in their relationships often begin by expressing a concern for their partner's safety, emotionally and physically. They may ask their partner to avoid certain friends because "they aren't good for you" or "they don't have your best interest at heart." These ideas then often escalate into unrealistic expectations, such as one expecting one's partner to tell them about their day in detail, including who they spoke to, where they went, and what they did. These expectations often lead to expecting one's partner to "check in" with every decision that needs to be made.

Blame

Blame is particularly corrosive of relationships. Blame is often present in relationships, but it turns into abuse when blaming becomes chronic. One's problems are justified by blaming everyone else: their partner, their family, their partner's family/friends, the government, etc. One who blames attempts to lead others to feel like they are responsible for all the negativity in

a relationship. Blame also turns into the partner's responsibility. For example, "you make me so angry." This is a form of manipulation: no one can *make* you feel anything.

Hypersensitivity

Hypersensitivity may lead to abuse because one may be easily hurt or insulted, leading to defensiveness that results in an attack (or what one perceives as a counter-attack: "I'm just defending myself").

Cruelty to Animals or Children

One who abuses may punish animals or be insensitive to their pain and suffering. They may expect children to do things way beyond their ability, tease them until they cry, or laugh when a child is under distress.

Force Used in Sex

Using force in sex is common by people who abuse. This includes throwing their partner down on the bed or floor, holding them down during sex, acting out fantasies where their partner is helpless, or demanding sex whenever it is wanted.

Verbal Abuse

In addition to saying things that are cruel or hurtful, someone who uses abuse may degrade others, or dismiss their accomplishments or successes. Name calling is often used, as well as what Dr. John Gottman defines as contempt: "anything that one person does to put themselves on a higher level than their partner." For example, implying that you are clearly smarter than your partner is a form of contempt.

Breaking and Striking Objects

Someone is more likely to abuse if they are destructive when they get angry. Breaking and throwing things are behaviors typical of intimidation. This is made more intense if what is thrown or broken is of special significance to someone else.

Any Type of Physical Force

Physical force includes holding one down, keeping them from leaving the room, kicking, pushing, shoving, hitting, slapping, hair pulling, or any type of physical restraint that is intended to control.