

Signs of a Batterer and Predictors of Potential Abusers

SCREENING
The use of the pronoun "he" is meant to indicate that most abusers are men. In heterosexual relationships, 95% of the time the batterer is the man and the one who is being abused is the woman. Violence does occur in lesbian and gay male relationships. There are rare situations where a man is battered by a woman.

When you are dating or involved with someone, watch out for any of the following "danger signs." Many of the questions describe situations which are no longer in the "warning stage," but rather dangerous battering relationships.

- ① **Did he grow up in a violent family?** Men who grow up in families where their mother was beaten or where they or their siblings were abused run the risk of becoming abusers. They grew up with the idea that violence is an acceptable and normal way of getting what you want, and that you can get away with it.
- ② **Does he use force or violence to "solve" his problems?** Does he have a criminal record? Does he get into fights with people? Actually most batterers do not attack anyone except their partners or children who are safe, low-risk targets. In addition, most batterers do not have a police record.
- ③ **Does he overreact to small problems or frustrations** such as not finding a parking space or having to wait in line?
- ④ **Is he destructive when angry?** Does he punch walls or throw things when he is upset? Does he smash dishes or break valuables in a rage? Does he drive like a maniac just to scare you?
- ⑤ **Is he cruel to animals?** Those who abuse animals are often abusive to partners and children.
6. **Does he have problems with alcohol or other drugs?** Although alcohol or other drug use does not cause battering, it is frequently associated with more serious injuries. Alcohol or other drug use is present in domestic violence situations about half the time. Does he use alcohol or other drugs and then blame it for his behavior? Does he challenge or encourage you to use alcohol or other drugs?
- ⑦ **Is he very insecure?** Is he worried or touchy about his masculinity? Does he boast about his sexual ability and his success with women? Does he try to act tough?
- ⑧ **Does he think everyone treats him badly?** Does he talk about "getting even" or "getting back" at people? Does he think everyone is out to get him?
9. **Has he hit former partners, wives or girlfriends?** The man who has battered one partner will batter the next.
- ⑩ **Is he extremely jealous and possessive of you?** Does he keep tabs on you? Does he want you with him all the time even when it is inconvenient for you? Does he demand a minute-by-minute accounting of your time? Does he accuse you of having affairs with everyone you know? Does he use his jealousy or concern for your safety to limit your activities?
- ⑪ **Does he discourage or prevent you from going to school, getting a job, working for a promotion, or doing other things that would make you more independent?** Does he try to keep you from improving your life?

12. Does he drive away your friends and family so that the only person you have in your life is him? Does he try to isolate you? Does he criticize others for "putting ideas" in your head?
13. Does he have rigid traditional ideas about what men and women should be and act like? Does he feel that men should wear the pants in the family? Does he treat you like his property? Does he expect you to anticipate and fulfill all his needs? Does he feel that men are in charge of disciplining their wives and children? Does he make all the decisions for both of you? Does he keep information from you?
14. Does he treat women like second class citizens? Does he dislike women, except for sexual purposes? Does he talk about women as if they are only good for sex? Does he treat women like objects? Does he tell anti-woman jokes and expect you to laugh? Does he make fun of strong and independent women?
15. Does he play with or seem obsessed with weapons? Does he threaten to use them? Has he used them?
16. Does he read or view pornography? Violent pornography? Does he try to persuade, coerce or force you to act out what he reads or sees?
17. Does he go through extreme highs or lows as if he were two different people?
18. When he gets angry, are you afraid of him? Do you try to anticipate what he wants to keep him from getting angry? Do you change your behavior to avoid upsetting him? Do you feel like you are walking on eggshells? Are you scared of him? Do you worry about he might do?
19. Does he force you to have sex? Call you sexually derogatory names? Does he force you to do things you do not want to do? Does he try or force you to get drunk or high, and then get you to do things he knows you do not want to do? Forced sex is rape, even if the rapist is your partner, husband or boyfriend.
20. Does he take your money from you? Does he make you ask for money?
21. Does he threaten to hit you? Threaten to kill you?
22. Does he threaten to hurt or kill your children, your family or your friends?
23. Does he threaten to kill himself if you leave him?
24. Are you afraid to leave or break up with him?
25. Has he hit you? Choked or bit you? Locked or tied you up?

If you are already a battered woman, you are not to blame for his violence. You cannot change him. The abuse will get worse and worse until he decides he must change. Marriage or having children will only make it worse. Stopping his drinking or other drug use will not stop the violence. Couples counseling or marital treatment will make the abuse worse.

Help is available.

In Washtenaw County, call **995-5444**.

Elsewhere, call 1-800-333-SAFE.

*These questions are meant to be indicators or danger signs. They should not be used for diagnosis or assessment.