



# The Lighthouse

by

E. R. Moon

*“I took years of torture and turned it into a torch, to light the way for others in the fog of an abusive relationship. Love shouldn’t hurt.”*  
*(Suzanne)*

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## Dating

- Love bombing
- Healthy dating

## Consent

- Guidelines

## Sexual Assault

- Reporting
- Myths
- Health support

## Living With Abuse

- The different forms of abuse
- Gaslighting
- Using technology to harm, control or stalk
- The path to leaving
- Tell someone

## Leaving the Relationship

- Contacting a hotline
- Planning ahead
- You’ve decided to leave
- Where can I go
- At work

## When You Leave

- Financial abuse
- How to stay hidden
- Know your rights
- DV protection orders
- Divorce
- Safety at court
- Children and child custody
- Support for your pets
- Changing your mind

## Post Separation Abuse

- Stalking
- Stalking restraining orders

## Self-Care

- Support with drugs and alcohol
- Allowing yourself time
- Starting a new relationship

## Find Support

- Helplines
- A-Z of links

## Appendix

- Duluth power wheels

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*“There are times when the ocean is not the ocean - not blue, not even water, but some violent explosion of energy and danger: ferocity on a scale only gods can summon. It hurls itself at the island, sending spray right over the top of the lighthouse, biting pieces off the cliff. And the sound is a roaring of a beast whose anger knows no limits. Those are the nights the light is needed most.”*

*M. L. Stedman — The Light Between Oceans*

”

If you have been lucky enough to explore the coasts, you have likely had the opportunity to see a lighthouse – massive structures that were essential for those who worked at sea, and their families back home who depended on their safe return. A lighthouse offered reassurance and hope, no matter how bad the weather got or how stormy the sea. A lighthouse always stands firm, offering a vital lifeline.

For a few years, I lost sight of my own guiding lighthouse. In spite of personal success and a life some might consider a dream, I was alone and lost.

I was living with a secret. On the outside I moved with a forced smile and feigned confidence while I covered up the physical and emotional scars that continued to build. I was – I am – a survivor of domestic abuse.

In the depths of my marriage, I was consumed with loneliness and fear. I was intellectually and emotionally done with that relationship shortly after it began because of the violence, but I remained within its confines because it was much safer to stay than to take action and exit. Besides, I was scared of judgment from friends and family, fearing blame and a chorus of “I told you so” or worse yet “serves you well.” I had nowhere to go, no support system.

After four years of suffering in silence it was that fear that drove me to where I am today – a survivor. The day I filed for my divorce was one of the proudest in my life, a turning point where fear was not holding me hostage, but setting me on a path to freedom, allowing me to go home.

That is why I created this guide. So that other women and men who are surviving in abusive relationships can see that they are not alone, that what they are going through is real, and there is a way out. This guide, written by the incredible team at NO MORE and with voices from other survivors, provides a roadmap for recognizing abuse in all its forms. In sum, there is no one-size-fits-all model for what abuse looks like, and some forms are easier to recognize than others. As a survivor of not only physical abuse, but of technology, verbal, and financial abuse, it was important to share the warning signs so that others in similar situations can get out before it is too late.

This guide is the first step to a new beginning. It is a community and an acknowledgment that there is more to life than suffering in silence. Abusive relationships take so much – our confidence, our health, sometimes our friendships or our families. But what I have come to realize is that leaving that marriage was my opportunity to reclaim my power and dictate a new narrative.

Getting rid of toxic energy allowed me to make space for so many blessings. I have never been more at peace and content in life. It is quite incredible how everything good and positive that was then being repelled is blanketing me now. I am not going to lie: it takes courage and strength. And in my case a good dose of faith.

Leaving darkness behind gave me the confidence to share my truth so that others might do the same.

My hope is that this resource is your guide, your lighthouse, providing the tools so you can navigate safely to the next part of your journey. It will not be easy, and it may not happen right away, but know that there are millions of survivors, myself included, who are here to hold your hand every step of the way. Abuse does not define you. Abuse is not love. You deserve love, respect and safety and you will find all that once you extract yourself from chaos and heal.

You are the architect of your own destiny, make it exciting!

When we are lost at sea and losing hope, it is the lighthouse in our life that brings us home. And when there are others in need of our support, we can shine a light to help guide them back home too.

**Karoline Starostik**

This Guide provides support links and information about domestic and sexual violence - from experiencing dating through to after separation. The cover of 'The Lighthouse' purposely looks like a book of fiction, and it can be reached by clicking on the NO MORE symbol at the bottom right hand side of every page.

Victims and survivors of domestic and sexual violence have helped to name this guide, and they speak within it; it was also written for them. It's for you, for your friend, your neighbor, your colleague. It's for everyone who needs to know if they are being abused. And if they are, where to get help.

***We are proud to have included quotes from victims and survivors who have shared their stories with NO MORE over the years.***

***Their voices, along with Karoline's, are the inspiration for this guide.***

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***I was a victim of domestic violence and didn't know there were so many resources to help me. I know it's overwhelming when you feel so alone.***

***(Kat)***

”



We have used the term 'victim-survivor' throughout this guide to describe all sufferers of domestic and sexual violence. We understand that both words have different implications for different people, so please read your choice when this term arises.

IMPORTANT! Please note that general personal safety advice provided in this booklet does not suggest that taking such actions will eliminate incidents of aggression and violence. The guidance was produced to help you better understand how to assess risks to your personal safety and should always be used in conjunction with contacting a domestic and sexual violence professional.



Tapping this symbol on any page will take you to the support and helpline page.

Domestic violence can happen to anyone at any point in their life, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, economic status, religion, or relationship type. This is a widely said statement, used frequently to highlight that people from all walks of life can experience domestic violence.

Although those experiences will vary, they follow similar patterns in many instances. This guide aims to highlight the different experiences of domestic and sexual violence and provide light on identifying abuse in a relationship and what support is available.

We know that relationships take many forms – from how we meet and how quickly things move on, to meeting each other's friends and family, and perhaps choosing to get married. We've framed this guide around the whole relationship journey, from when you first meet and date, define yourself as in a committed relationship, move in together and get married, to ending a relationship.

We recognize that deciding to end your relationship or leave is a difficult choice. We appreciate that there are many factors that you may need to consider and hope that this guide will help you make an informed decision. When the time comes, your risk of significant harm will increase, and the harassment, stalking, threats, and physical abuse may not end at the point of separation.

A large part of this guide will highlight tools and resources that could assist you.

As a victim of domestic and/or sexual violence, you may often find yourself grappling with overwhelming emotions and a desperate need for support. We hope that 'The Lighthouse' will serve as a beacon of hope and assistance to you on your journey towards healing and reclaiming your life.

Throughout the following pages, you will find information on helplines, counseling services, legal aid, and other resources tailored to address the multifaceted needs of victim-survivors. We hope this will help you to find your path towards a brighter future.

This guide is intended to light the way towards empowerment, resilience, and healing for those who have endured the unimaginable. Together, let's strive towards a world with no abuse. Until then, we will work to enable the voices of survivors to be heard, their experiences acknowledged, and their journey towards recovery illuminated by a community dedicated to eradicating domestic and sexual violence.

**We thank all the amazing organizations who work tirelessly to support victim-survivors of domestic and sexual violence, some of whose information we have listed and linked to in this guide. We share their passion and commitment to put an end to these abuses.**

Tapping this symbol on any page will take you straight back to the cover page.



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*When I first met him, he was charming, loving, affectionate, and intelligent. I felt like the most important person in the world. I thought I found someone who understood and accepted me like no one else. Over the next few years, I realized he lied to me about who he was. He mirrored my values and goals to trap me.*

(Sarah)

”

You may have found yourself looking back at the early stages of your relationship for signs that your partner could be abusive or incidents that you should have seen as red flags. It is more likely that they behaved like non-abusive people.. It is important to remind ourselves that we do not fall in love with aggressive, violent, manipulative, or controlling people.

When we meet someone, we're often attracted to their confidence, ability to engage with others, and ambition. We enjoy getting to know them. Their interest in us bowls us over. We're intrigued by their dedication to learning everything about us and their commitment to the relationship.

We feel empowered by their need to be around us; they imply that when we are together, they feel complete and that without us, they are less of themselves. They make friends with our friends, entertain us, and are charismatic and charming. People around us tell us that they are great and a good catch...

That's often the person we meet. That's who we choose to start a relationship with.



## Healthy dating

You're excited - you've arranged to meet someone new! You have butterflies in your stomach, wondering what they'll be like, if you'll get on and where this could lead.

Whatever path you take, dating should always be fun and safe. There are a few things that you can do to help this happen.

- **Be true to yourself:** Be truthful in any dating app profiles you create. Always be yourself - if you don't want to drink alcohol on a date, don't. Similarly, don't say you're a vegan if you eat meat! Never feel under pressure to do something you don't want to do or be someone you're not.
- **Meet online first:** It's a good idea to meet your date virtually first. This will make sure they are who they say they are (if you have met via an app) and will also help to see if you get on well. If you need another meeting online to make up your mind, set one up. If they are worth knowing, they won't mind.
- **Arrange your date in a public place:** For the first few dates, it's a good idea to meet in a public place, preferably someplace familiar. Have your travel planned for getting there and returning home, and keep your friends/family updated on the name and location of the date. Don't be pressured into meeting somewhere private.
- **Don't do anything that makes you uncomfortable:** There's nothing wrong with saying 'no' to something your date requests. Don't share all your contact details while you're still getting to know each other. If it feels better to pay your own way, do it.
- **Don't rush things; there's no stopwatch - take your time:** As charming and brilliant as they may appear, take your time. There's no rush to jump into anything you're not ready for. Make it clear from the beginning and be transparent. Outlining your intentions from the beginning is a more direct way to determine whether you're both on the same page.



## Love bombing

A common tactic employed by abusers is 'love bombing,' a term that aptly captures the experience—it feels like being 'bombed' with an overwhelming outpouring of 'love'.

During this phase, victim-survivors often find themselves showered with presents, cards, and gifts, creating an illusion of feeling special, wanted, and deeply loved. The constant stream of affectionate texts reinforces the belief that a caring and genuine connection has been established.

The continuous praise can be flattering, and the indulgent treats and shared trips enhance the sense of being cherished. In a remarkably short span, the abuser may propose moving in together, leaving you feeling incredibly fortunate.

It's crucial to question what might seem like an enchanting experience, as it could be a manipulation technique employed by an abuser. They aim to impress you, draw you into their spell, and foster dependence on this idealized version of themselves.

Once they establish this influence, they are likely to isolate you from friends and family gradually, chip away at your self-esteem, and subject you to an emotional rollercoaster. This cycle of abuse may persist throughout your entire relationship with them.

**Genuine love develops over time and should not be rushed. While healthy relationships involve expressing admiration and excitement through gifts and affectionate messages, the intensity and pace of what you're experiencing may be at another level—and potentially dangerous.**

## SIGNS OF LOVE BOMBING



*Love bombing is a form of emotional abuse and can occur during any stage of a relationship, though it's frequently seen in the early stages - like when you're dating. It may appear that your date/partner really likes you, but this tactic can often serve as a warning sign of an unhealthy relationship.*



## If you're dating and concerned about your relationship:

### Is your partner jealous?

Jealousy, a complex emotion, often intertwines with notions of commitment and devotion, making it challenging to decipher. Society may teach us that jealousy is a sign of genuine interest, complicating our understanding.

To help untangle this web of emotions, consider a simple test:

1. Are you pressured to alter your behavior, friendships, job, or interests to appease the jealousy?
2. Are they demanding explanations, checking your phone, insisting on constant updates, displaying anger, sulking, or avoiding social situations?
3. Do they justify their jealous behavior by claiming it's for your safety?
4. Do their actions leave you feeling unsafe or controlled?

### Do they dismiss your thoughts and feelings?

We're not all great communicators, and some of us may run from challenging conversations, but if you find your thoughts, feelings, and opinions being routinely dismissed or undermined, this could be a sign of concern.

### Do you feel that things are moving too quickly?

Feeling that things are moving too quickly can be a cause for concern. Assess your comfort level with the questions being asked, the frequency of interactions, and whether it allows you space for maintaining connections with friends, family, and personal interests.

### Are you talking about money?

Pay attention to financial exchanges. If your partner offers money or requests financial assistance, be cautious. Financial abuse can manifest subtly, seemingly in your favor but may have underlying control dynamics.

## KNOW MORE

[Guide to Healthy Dating](#) from NO MORE, in partnership with Tinder.

[Teen Dating Violence Facts](#) from CDC

[Online Dating](#) from RAINN

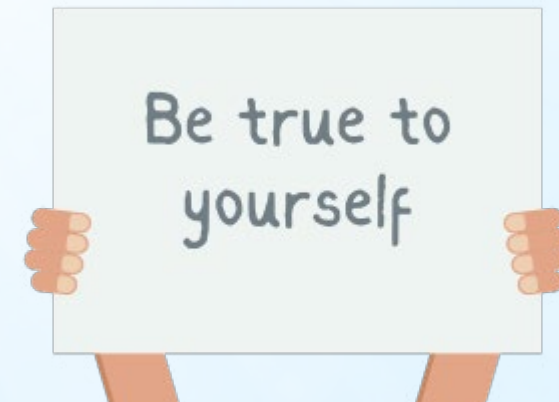
[Safe Online Dating](#) from Get Safe Online

For download: [Relationship Rights](#) from loveisrespect

For download: [Dating Matters - a guide to healthy and safe relationships for LGBTQ+ youth](#) from CDC

About [Love Bombing](#)

About [Prenuptial Agreements](#)





*Consent shouldn't be assumed! Silence and lack of resistance does not automatically = consent. How about first asking permission and knowing what IS ok instead of pushing boundaries?*

*(Madeline)*



Consent within a relationship is often a topic overlooked in broader discussions about consent. We all understand the importance of being clear-headed, free from the influence of alcohol or drugs—whether prescribed or illegal—and that consent should be expressed through an enthusiastic “yes” rather than merely the absence of a “no.”

In the initial stages of a relationship or during the early stages of getting to know someone, consent tends to be a prominent point of discussion. However, as a relationship progresses, the boundaries surrounding consent can become blurred and more challenging to discern.

For some people, particularly those in relationships with abusive partners, having open and fulfilling conversations about consent may not always be safe or possible. They may find themselves feeling coerced into agreeing to things they're uncomfortable with or consenting to sexual activities to maintain peace, demonstrate love, or dispel suspicions of infidelity. In such situations, a partner may exploit sex or withhold affection as a means of emotional manipulation and harm.

If you feel unsafe or unable to talk about consent with your partner, we'd encourage you to reach out to [RAINN](#), one of the [state organizations](#) or [national hotlines](#), who can provide confidential support.



## Guidelines

- Consent can be withdrawn at any time, even if you've already started getting intimate. All sexual activity must stop when consent is withdrawn.
- Being in a relationship doesn't oblige anyone to do anything. Consent should never be implied or assumed, even if you're in a relationship or have had sex before.
- You haven't consented if you've been coerced into sex - when someone has used guilt, intimidation, or threats to force you. Saying yes out of fear is not consent.
- Silence or a lack of a response is not consent.
- Be clear and concise when giving consent. Consenting to go back to someone's place doesn't mean you're consenting to sexual activity.
- If you're incapacitated through drugs or alcohol, you are unable to consent.
- Any type of sexual activity without consent, including touching, fondling, kissing, and intercourse, is a form of sexual assault and may be considered a crime.
- Consent is a voluntary, enthusiastic, and clear agreement between the participants to engage in specific sexual activity.
- If you do not give or are unable to give clear, voluntary, understandable, and ongoing consent, it's sexual assault. There's no room for being vague or making assumptions when it comes to consent, and the rules don't change for people who have engaged in sexual activity before.
- Online consent is just as important. Make sure you ask for consent before you send explicit messages or photos. You can find out more in [NSVRC's Digital Consent page](#).

### Consent should always be:

- ✓ Clear
- ✓ Ongoing
- ✓ Coherent
- ✓ Voluntary





### When to give consent

Consent must be received *before* engaging in sexual activity. Talking openly about what you both want and setting boundaries is important in any casual or long-term relationship.



In a healthy sexual encounter, both parties should feel comfortable communicating their needs without feeling fearful. If your partner initiates sex and becomes angry, frustrated, or insistent when you decline any sexual activity, this is not okay. Sexual or nonsexual activity that occurs because of fear, guilt, or pressure is coercion - and coercion is a form of sexual assault.

Remember that consent needs to be ongoing. This means even if you're in the throes of a heavy make-out session or foreplay, you both need to consent before you take things to the next level.

### When you can't consent

You can't give consent if you're asleep, incapacitated by drink or drugs\*, unconscious, or underage. You also haven't consented if you feel pressured, bullied, or scared into doing something you don't want to do.

\*There are times when gaining consent is especially important, like when one or all participants are under the influence of drugs or alcohol. We've all heard discussions about consenting under the influence, and in truth, it is a tricky subject. It's unrealistic (and not legally accurate) to say consent isn't possible if the parties have been drinking. Plenty of people drink and remain coherent enough to consent. However, if you're stumbling about, or can't stand without leaning on something, slurring your words, falling asleep, or have vomited, you're incapacitated and cannot be in a fit enough state to consent.



#### KNOW MORE

Consent = permission for something to happen or agreement to do something.

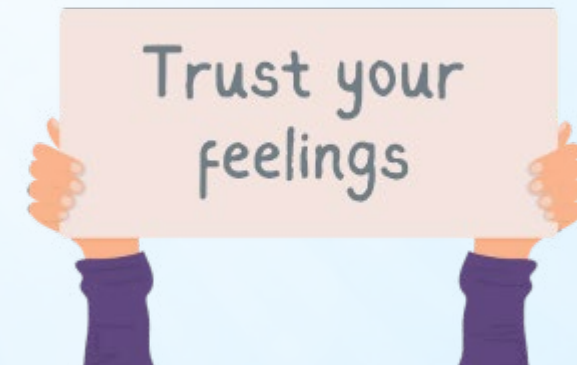
To understand what consent means, [The 'Cup of Tea' video\\*](#) (2 mins 49 secs long) is worth watching. \*Copyright ©2015 Emmeline May and Blue Seat Studios

[What is Consent?](#) from RAINN

[What is Healthy Consent?](#) from The Hotline

[The Legal Role of Consent](#) from RAINN

[Understanding Consent](#) from NO MORE



“

*I'm tired of feeling dirty after a shower. I'm tired of not being able to look in a mirror. I'm tired of not being able to look people in the eyes. I'm tired of not holding my head high. I'm tired of not being able to accept or enjoy love. I'm tired of feeling isolated, awkward, and scared. I'm tired of letting someone else's actions control me. I don't deserve this, nor do the rest who endured, survived, and persevered.*

*(Barbara)*

”

Sexual violence, like domestic violence, can happen to anyone at any point in their life, regardless of their age, gender, sexuality, economic status, religion, what they were wearing, what they had to drink, or prior consensual sexual behavior. It's important to know that it was not your fault.

We've included a list of 'what is sexual assault' (right), which is often used by law enforcement to define the incident as a crime. We would widen that definition to include anything you deem as a sexual or intimate act that you were forced or coerced into doing. In a healthy relationship or sexual encounter, intimate behavior - from touching to sexual intercourse - should always be consensual. You should be able to (and feel comfortable to) change your mind at any point. The pace of your relationship should not hinge on pleasing or satisfying your partner.



The aftermath of sexual violence can be overwhelming, impacting various aspects of life. We strongly encourage you to seek specialist support, including medical intervention, even if you choose not to report the incident to the police. Your well-being is paramount, and resources are available to assist you on your journey to healing and recovery.

## What is sexual assault?

- Rape, which includes by a spouse or partner
- Child sexual assault and incest
- Unwanted sexual contact or touching
- Sexual harassment
- Sexual exploitation and trafficking
- Exposing one's genitals or a naked body to other(s) without consent
- Masturbating in public
- Watching someone engage in private acts without their knowledge or permission
- Nonconsensual image sharing.

If any of these have happened to you, it is sexual assault and is a crime in all 50 States.



Laws and procedures do vary from state to state - [check out yours](#) or contact your local [Sexual Assault Coalition](#) for support.

It is also a good idea to contact a [rape crisis center](#) in the area where you were assaulted, as they should be familiar with the laws that apply.

If you didn't consent to sex or weren't in a fit position to give consent, or someone forced you to have sex, that's rape.

**Nearly 1 in 5 women in the United States have experienced completed or attempted rape at some point in their lives. (CDC)**



## Surviving sexual assault: overcoming the emotional struggle

Feeling numb, helpless, angry, scared, withdrawn, lonely, anxious, ashamed, overwhelmed, and detached—these are all valid emotions following the trauma of rape.

You might even find yourself harboring negative thoughts, blaming yourself, or entertaining the notion that you could have prevented the assault. Recognizing that these feelings, while normal given the circumstances, do not reflect any truth about your worth or responsibility is essential.

You should not blame yourself for what happened; there is nothing for you to feel ashamed about—this was not your fault. Consider what you would tell a friend in a similar situation. You wouldn't attribute blame to them, and the same applies to you.



It's crucial to understand that abusers don't commit rape because they've had too much to drink or simply got carried away. Your clothing or behavior does not influence the act. Rape is a conscious choice made by the abuser, and the responsibility lies entirely with them. You are not to blame, and your healing journey is valid.

## KNOW MORE

For **emergency support**, contact

The National Sexual Assault Hotline (run by [RAINN](#)) 24/7 - through [Online Chat](#), or call 800-656-4673, download the [RAINN Mobile App](#), or use their [Chatbot](#).

[Support for men](#) from Male Survivor

For members of the Department of Defense community: [DoD Helpline](#)

[Find out more about sexual assault.](#)

[Find out more about rape.](#)

Visit [NO MORE Silence, Speak your Truth](#) platform, which provides a safe and supportive space for people impacted by domestic or sexual violence to share their experiences, learn from other survivors, and connect to resources.

**If you are in immediate danger, dial 911.**

An illustration of two hands, one on the left and one on the right, holding up a rectangular yellow sign. The sign has the text "You're not to blame" written on it in a simple, black, sans-serif font. The hands are rendered in a light skin tone.



## Reporting rape to the police

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*I want everyone to know that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. You are not alone and there will come a time when you no longer feel guilt or fear, just pride, and joy'.*

(Ashley)

”

Take your time and come to your own decision about reporting the rape to the police. You may feel overwhelmed with everything - so give yourself time to reflect on what you want to do. (At the same time, remember that if you proceed with reporting, possible evidence must be gathered within 72 hours.)

If you decide to report to the police, you can contact your [local police station](#), who should arrange a meeting with you. They will want to know things like:

- Where and when did it happen?
- Do you know who assaulted you, and what is your relationship with them?
- What did they do?
- Was a weapon involved?

For more information on reporting options and legal help, see [Helping Survivors](#).

There's no time limit on reporting, but in many states, there are time limits on when charges can be filed

and on the prosecution of a case, called 'the statute of limitations'. Check on your state laws [here](#).

Deciding whether to report an incident to law enforcement is a deeply personal choice, and it is entirely yours to make. Opting not to report doesn't restrict your access to medical assistance and counseling. And if you initially choose to report but later decide not to, it's okay to change your mind at any point. The reporting process may feel overwhelming, and your comfort is paramount, so remember you have the right to reassess your decision and take the path that aligns with your well-being.

It's important to acknowledge that if law enforcement or the legal system opts not to prosecute or convict the perpetrator, it does not invalidate your experience. What happened is real, and it happened to you. Your journey to recovery is uniquely yours to define, and seeking support, whether or not legal action is taken, is a valid and courageous step forward.

## Rape myths

**Myth:** *If you've been drinking, it's your fault you got raped.*

**Fact:** No one is ever to blame for being raped or sexually assaulted - it doesn't matter what the circumstances were. Raping someone is always a crime, and 100% of the blame, shame, and responsibility for that crime lies with the perpetrator or perpetrators.

**Myth:** *If you didn't scream, try to run away, or fight back, then it wasn't rape.*

**Fact:** Many victim-survivors are frozen to the spot from fear or shock and unable to move or speak. Keeping still and quiet is an automatic response designed to keep us safe.

**Myth:** *If you didn't say 'no,' it wasn't rape.*

**Fact:** The absence of a 'no' does not mean 'yes'. (See the [Consent](#) section for more info).

**Myth:** *It's not rape if it's your partner or spouse.*

**Fact:** If you didn't consent, it's rape. It doesn't matter if it's a partner or spouse that you've been with for years; it's still rape.

**Myth:** *Most perpetrators are strangers to the victim.*

**Fact:** In their lifetimes, 56.1% of women and 57.3% of men were raped by an acquaintance, and 39.3% of women and 12.5% of men were raped by an intimate partner. ([CDC](#))

**Recovering from sexual violence:** See [Self-Care](#).



## Health support

“

*I still have flashbacks of those times. The damage is still there.*

(Judy)

”

Healing from this traumatic event will take different periods and bring different priorities for each of us.

It has probably affected you in many ways, physically and mentally, and you may feel like locking yourself away to try and get over this on your own. But try to talk to a friend or family member if you can; their support could be invaluable.

You can also view the [NO MORE Silence](#) platform, which provides a safe and supportive space for people impacted by domestic or sexual violence to share their experiences, learn from other survivors, and connect to resources.

It's important that you recover in a way that is right for you, but please bear in mind that there are some important things that you may need to do because of the rape (see box, right).

**Help for any costs** may be available through your [State's Victim Compensation program](#), which provides payments to survivors of sexual assault and other violent crimes to cover costs like health bills or loss of wages.

- You may need to see a doctor, or talk to a counselor if you are feeling constantly on edge, having nightmares or flashbacks, or are depressed or anxious.
- If you feel suicidal, please talk to someone. There's lots of support out there, and people want to help you. [The National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: 988](#) or, for the hearing impaired, contact the Lifeline by TTY at: 1-800-799-4889 or [chat online](#).
- You may need to get a health check for any injuries that you have sustained or for sexually transmitted infections (STIs). You may also need emergency contraception and [HIV PEP medication](#) - 'post-exposure prophylaxis' which is a treatment that can prevent HIV infection.
- If the rape took place within the last 72 hours (3 days), you can take a [Sexual Assault Forensic Exam](#) (often called a 'Rape Kit' and free of charge), which will gather any DNA evidence from your body, clothes, and personal belongings. It would help if you don't take a bath or shower, don't change your clothes or comb your hair - if you do any DNA evidence may be lost. You can do this whether or not you decide to report to the police (or while you are deciding).

## KNOW MORE

If you need to chat to someone you don't know, please reach out for support:

The National Sexual Assault Hotline (run by [RAINN](#)) 24/7 through: [Online Chat](#), Call 800-656-4673, the [RAINN Mobile App](#), or by using their [Chatbot](#).

### [Support for men](#)

[The National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: 988](#) or for the hearing impaired, contact the Lifeline by TTY at 1-800-799-4889; or [chat online](#).

[The Hopeline](#) for children and young adults in crisis;

[LGBTQ Crisis Counselor 1-866-488-7386](#)

Find your local Rape Crisis Center [here](#)

About reporting rape: [Reporting to Law Enforcement and The Criminal Justice System](#)

Find out more about Victim Compensation programs [here](#).

Find your [State Sexual Assault Coalition](#).

Find your local police station [here](#).

Find your local health center [here](#).



“

*My partner controlled many aspects off my life, but I was so blind I didn't see what was happening right in front of me for most of our relationship.*

*(Lenni)*

”

Moving from dating to becoming “official” varies in each relationship; it might be marked by changing your social media status, meeting each other’s families, or even moving in together.

However, be aware that this next phase can offer abusive partners new opportunities to isolate, control, and undermine you. Like the dating phase, these behaviors are often subtle; they may manifest suddenly, and then your relationship may return to how it was before. It is normal to feel confused by these sudden changes and look for reasons outside of your partner for their sudden behavior change.

Recognizing these patterns is crucial. Sudden shifts from attentiveness, to aggression or controlling behaviour, to moments of apology, subtly placing blame elsewhere, can be part of the cycle of abuse. As your relationship progresses, you may find yourself entangled in various cycles, each unique but sharing a similar rhythm.

With each cycle, there’s a gradual erosion of your self-perception and trust in reality. Unbeknownst to you, a growing distance from friends and family may occur.

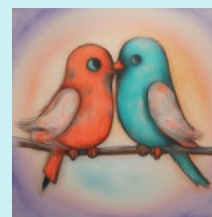
It’s important to emphasize that those engaging in abusive behavior make a deliberate choice. Rooted in control, their actions aren’t caused by mental health conditions, substance misuse, their childhood, past relationships or even stress. While these factors may amplify behavior, they are not the root cause. Abusive partners often craft a precise image to conceal their true nature from the world.

**‘All relationships exist on a spectrum from healthy to abusive, with unhealthy in between’ (The Hotline)**

## Legal options - prenuptial agreements

If you’re considering moving in together, entering a civil partnership, or getting married, it’s crucial to carefully consider your legal options for safeguarding your property and assets.

While your partner may be highly regarded in the community, and wedding bells may be on the horizon, it’s essential to proceed cautiously. Especially if you own a business that possesses significant assets, valuable property, jewelry, or any other items of worth, it’s prudent to explore the possibility of a Prenuptial Agreement, commonly known as a ‘prenup.’



A prenup is a legally binding contract between engaged individuals that outlines the division of assets in case of divorce.

It also addresses matters such as alimony payments, if applicable. Each party must seek independent legal counsel to ensure fairness and understanding.

Furthermore, a prenup should be considered if you have children from a previous relationship, anticipate receiving an inheritance, or if your future spouse has substantial debts.

Without a prenup, the distribution of assets acquired during the marriage will be subject to the general [laws of your state](#) in the event of divorce.

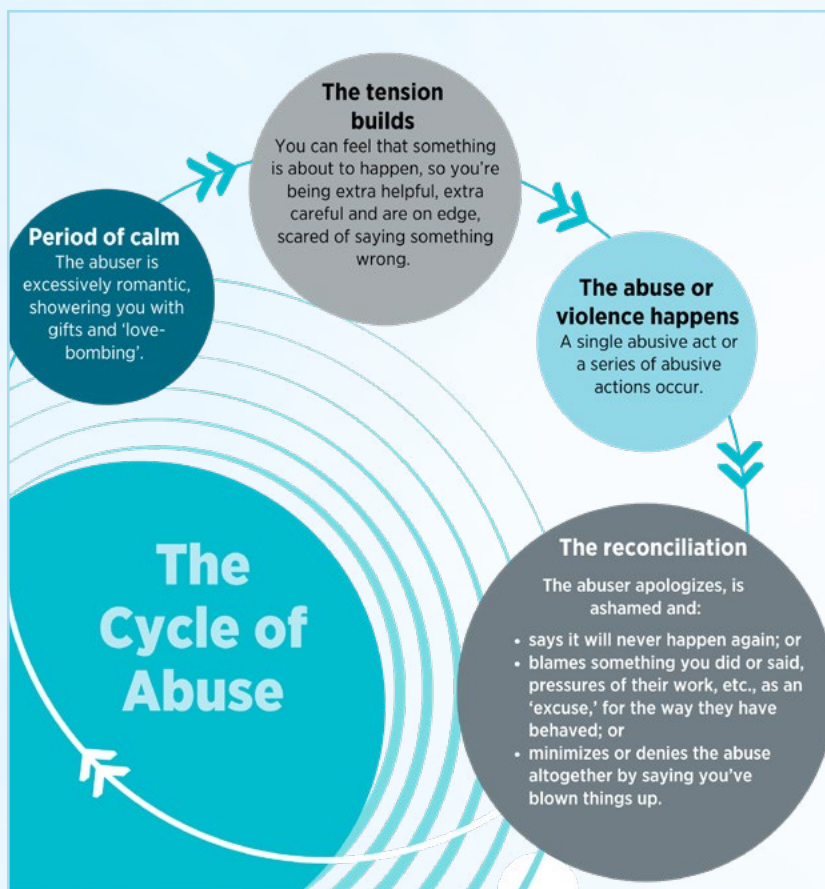
While contemplating divorce before your marriage may seem unconventional, it can save significant time and resources in the long run. And if you’ve truly found a partner who values your well-being, they’ll understand the importance of discussing and planning for such matters.

**Be vigilant and prioritize your well-being.**



## The cycle of abuse

Though everyone's experiences differ, there are some behaviors that are commonly used by abusers:



*Please note that not all victim-survivors will face this cycle - especially the 'period of calm'. Some abusers will think there is nothing wrong with their behavior and therefore will believe that there is nothing for them to apologize for.*

## Who are these abusers?

Abusive partners possess full control over their behavior. They are often charming, helpful, and patient with others, including colleagues, family members, friends, and even law enforcement, while opting for a contrasting demeanor of control, anger, and violence exclusively with you. Often, they meticulously craft their public image to conceal their abusive tendencies from friends, family, business associates, and employees. This calculated effort aims to ensure that their abusive behavior remains hidden from those who might otherwise intervene or hold them accountable.

Similar to victim-survivors, abusers hail from diverse backgrounds, encompassing various nationalities, ages, faiths, income levels, sexual orientations, and genders. Throughout this guide, we discuss abusers and the violence they inflict, yet it's crucial to acknowledge that there's no definitive appearance, age, or demographic profile that identifies an abuser.

Despite the lack of a fixed profile, certain behavioral traits are commonly observed, particularly in the initial stages of a relationship. Identifying these patterns can be instrumental in recognizing and addressing abusive dynamics.

**'Being abusive is a decision: it's a strategic behavior by your partner to create their desired power dynamic.'**

**Tactics of abuse (in any form) are aimed at dismantling equality in the relationship in order to make their partners feel less valuable and undeserving of respect.' [\(The Hotline\)](#)**



## A quick relationship health check

(You should be able to say 'yes' to all the following points):

- Both of you have equal input into making decisions
- If you have a difference of opinion, you agree to disagree (you're not bullied into agreeing)
- You both support each other's interests, goals, ambitions and careers
- Neither of you feels pressured about giving or lending the other money
- You both put an equal amount into making the other feel loved and cared about
- You are honest with each other
- You show each other respect
- You both also enjoy spending time apart
- You are both comfortable saying 'no' to things you don't want to do
- You both feel physically safe and don't feel forced to have sex or do things that make you feel awkward or embarrassed.

If you can answer 'no' to any of the above, step back. Your relationship may be moving into unhealthy territory.

## Different types of abuse

Abusers are experts at finding ways to manipulate and control, and by doing this gradually - bit by bit, and day by day, they are able to change the whole frame of your relationship without you even realizing it.

Maybe the only thing you are aware of is that you keep doing things wrong, or not well enough. Or that the things you say are making the abuser angry, and sometimes so angry that they hit you. And you think it's all your fault.

### WRONG!!

The change in your relationship was orchestrated by the abuser - who has transformed from the ultimate charmer that you may have known for months. This change is not your fault. It has nothing to do with you, your actions, how smart or old you are, where you were born, how much money you have, or anything else.

**Domestic abuse is a pattern of behaviors used by one partner to maintain power and control over another partner in an intimate relationship**, and that is exactly what has happened to you if you identify with the following examples.

The abuse is not fueled by a loss of temper, mental health problems, or too much alcohol. It is systematic and purposeful manipulation by an abuser to control their victim.

Domestic abuse can also be called domestic violence (DV), inter-partner violence (IPV), family violence, relationship abuse, and dating abuse. Still, they all relate to the same behaviors, which can take many forms.

*The tactics an abuser uses to victimize continually evolve. We have listed the most common forms but please be aware this is not an exhaustive list.*





“

*I endured mental and physical abuse. For all of those that have been, or are in, pain - YOU are not alone.*

(Wesley)

”

**Physical abuse** involves any harmful contact with your body, which induces fear, pain, or vulnerability. It includes hitting, slapping, shoving, kicking, grabbing, and more. It goes beyond direct harm, encompassing actions like throwing objects or restraining you, leaving you feeling trapped.

It also extends to insidious tactics such as denying sleep, food, or essential medical care, damaging both your physical and emotional well-being. This deprivation creates a sense of helplessness and dependence.



Additionally, physical abuse may involve coercive substance use, forcing you into alcohol or drug consumption against your will, violating your autonomy and risking severe consequences for your mental and physical health.

“

*I am a human being with feelings, and I don't deserve to be treated like an object for "pleasure".*

(Michaela)

”

**Sexual abuse** is a term that covers any sexual activity that's unwanted and forced upon you. Also called sexual violence and sexual assault, it includes rape, marital rape, unwanted rough sexual activity, being forced to pose for sexual pictures, forced oral sex, unwanted sexual touching and unwanted kisses.

If your partner removes the condom during sex without your consent (called 'stealthling'), refuses to wear condoms, or refuses your access to birth control, these are also sexually abusive acts.

“

*I was verbally and emotionally abused for nearly 4 years. Controlled and isolated. I lost my smile. I finally have it back - and everyone deserves to smile!*

(Kilee)

”

**Emotional abuse** means that someone uses your emotions to abuse you. The desired effect is that you will feel bad about yourself, feel worthless, lose your confidence and be scared to do anything wrong. Methods include: Constant criticism, name-calling, putting you down; Intentionally embarrassing you in public; Threatening to take away your children; Threatening to kill or harm themselves, you, your family, friend, or pet; Telling you that you are not gay, a man, a woman, etc.

“

*I remember feeling powerless and being told I was nothing. I am somebody and I want to tell others, You are somebody!*

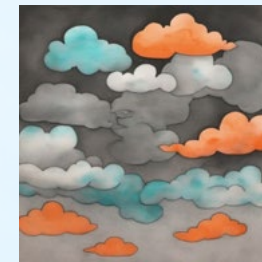
(Raquel)

”

**Psychological abuse** includes actions by the abuser that harm your sanity and make you believe you are going mad (see below section on gaslighting). Methods include denying they have moved things around the house; telling you that people are saying bad things about you when they're not, and telling you that your friends or family don't like you.

**Coercive control** takes place in nearly all cases of domestic violence, and: *'Refers to any pattern of behavior an abuser uses to dominate their partner and limit their freedom. It can include physical abuse and emotional abuse, but often, coercive control is more subtle. Abusers use coercive control tactics to control their partners through isolation, gaslighting, monitoring and more'.* [DomesticShelters](#)

It encompasses a range of manipulative and controlling behaviors, including intimidation, isolation, surveillance, and threats. Through psychological, emotional, and financial manipulation, the abuser exerts power and control over the victim, eroding their autonomy, self-esteem, and sense of identity.



“  
*I am tired of hiding and living in fear*  
 (Kelly)  
 ”

### Tech abuse

(also known as technology-facilitated abuse (TFA) or digital abuse), refers to the misuse of technology to control, harass, intimidate, stalk, or harm an individual. *This behavior is often a form of verbal or emotional abuse conducted online* ([NRCDV](#)).

As our daily lives increasingly rely on technology, we've grown accustomed to its presence. Abusers can appropriate these tools to surveil, stalk, disturb your sense of reality, and impact your online communities of friends, family, and colleagues through your social media accounts.

Despite its severity, this type of abuse remains widely misunderstood. Sometimes, you may feel it's a struggle to get the assistance and understanding you need. However, we strongly recommend reaching out to a domestic violence advocate or national hotline for support. These advocates may advise against deleting your online accounts or changing passwords, as such actions could alert the abuser and potentially escalate the risk of harm.

Crucially, it is important to know that the abusive behaviors—such as surveillance, stalking, or harassment—perpetrated through technology constitute prosecutable crimes.

Here are some more examples:

**Cyberstalking:** Someone sending you unwanted messages, monitoring your online activity, or using GPS tracking to monitor your movements without your consent; taking information from your online accounts (e.g social media) to track and stalk you.

**Online harassment:** Someone using text, email, social media and any other online platforms for offensive name calling, threatening messages, humiliation and bullying.

**Sextortion:** Someone threatening you with the release of private and sensitive information unless sexual favors, nude photos, or other demands are met.

**Doxing:** Gathering and publishing information about you on the internet with the aim of causing harm.

**Intimate image abuse (also referred to as 'revenge porn'):** Someone sharing intimate or explicit images or videos of you without your consent, or demanding you do the same - often as a form of revenge or coercion.

**Monitoring and surveillance:** Someone installing spyware or other tracking software on your device to monitor your communications, location, or online activity without your knowledge.

**Impersonation and identity theft:** Someone creating fake profiles or impersonating you online to harass or deceive you, or gain access to your personal information.

**Financial abuse:** Using technology to control or exploit someone financially, such as stealing their identity or accessing their bank accounts without permission.

**Gaslighting:** Manipulating or distorting information online to undermine your sense of reality or make you doubt your own perceptions or experiences.

### Around the home

We all use so many technological aids these days that are helpful, time-saving, and great support around the home. But the constant advances in technology bring new opportunities for an abuser to misuse items to keep track of you, to scare you - or to manipulate household devices to 'gaslight' you.



Items that might be connected in your home and open to misuse include turning on and off:

- thermostats: heating and hot water;
- smart electrical outlets with lights or other devices plugged into them;
- entertainment systems (stereo, TV, etc.): also switching channels;
- smoke detectors;
- smart locks;
- appliances (refrigerator, vacuum, etc.);
- video doorbells.

Spying on you by using:

- security cameras and motion detectors: using these to spy on you;
- nanny cameras;
- pet cameras;
- pet toys and trackers (GPS systems that allow you to know where your pets are);
- children's toy cameras and trackers.



These all allow you to control parts of the home remotely (e.g., turning the heating up while you are in the car on your way home). But of course, the abuser will also have control of these. This means an abuser could turn your lights and heating on and off, spy on you in the home, and track you when you are outside of the home.

“  
***My partner manipulated circumstances so I had no access to the accounts, and would freeze my card if things didn't go his way.***  
 (Claire)  
 ”

### Financial abuse

(sometimes referred to as economic abuse) occurs when someone uses - or misuses - money and other assets to restrict your freedom and maintain control over you. It's one of the most powerful methods that an abuser can use to stop you from leaving, and occurs in nearly all abusive relationships.

If an abuser restricts your access to money, by, for example, taking or hiding your bank or credit cards, you'll become more vulnerable and dependent on them.

Financial abuse encompasses various tactics and extends beyond access. It may involve extravagant spending, accruing debts in your name that they subsequently demand you repay, or coercing you into covering their expenses. Furthermore, an abuser may attempt to adversely affect your professional life, jeopardizing your employment and tarnishing relationships with business partners or clients.

By assuming control over your finances, an abuser gains power over every aspect of your life, dictating your choices and actions. Survivors have shared these examples of financial abuse:

- requesting money from you or requiring detailed reports of everything you spend;
- taking out loans or credit cards in your name without consent;
- stopping you from working or stealing your earnings if you do work;
- planning to steal from you, possibly through joint bank accounts or shared debit cards;
- coercing you into supporting investments or projects that never materialize;
- compelling you to cash in or transfer ownership of financial assets, such as stocks or property;
- displaying sulking or anger if you spend money on yourself instead of them, leading to self-restraint in your spending.

Talking about money for many of us isn't easy, you may feel embarrassed or fearful that if you did tell someone that it would make the situation worse. If you are faced with abusive behavior like this, seek an opinion from someone you trust, and who isn't close to your abuser - like your accountant, lawyer, or a close friend or family member, and tell them about it. If you need external support, [Savvy Ladies](#) offers free financial advice. Also, see the 'Financial Support' section.

To keep safe, it's crucial that you also talk to a domestic violence professional for advice on one of the [Helplines](#) listed.



## KNOW MORE

About [Domestic Violence](#)

About [coercive control](#) from DomesticShelters

[Types of Abuse](#) from The Hotline

[Types of Abuse](#) from LoveisRespect

If you recognise these abusive behaviors in your relationship, you can reach out for support:

[LoveisRespect](#) offers confidential support for teens, young adults, and their loved ones seeking help, resources, or information related to healthy relationships and dating abuse in the US. Available by text (“LOVEIS” to 22522), call (866-331-9474), or live chat online.

[The National DV Hotline](#), 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, the National Domestic Violence Hotline provides essential tools and support to help survivors of domestic violence. Tel:1-800-799-7233 1-800- 799.SAFE (7233) TTY 1-800-787-3224 Or Text “START” to 88788

[LGBTQ+ Hotline](#)

[LGBTQ Crisis Counselor](#)

**Myth:** “It’s not domestic abuse - there was no physical violence.”

**Fact:** Domestic abuse comes in many forms, only one of which is physical violence. See other ‘Myths’ [here](#).

## Gaslighting

“

*I was not allowed to have friends, he controlled me on how I look, who I talk to... There was hitting, shoving, grabbing, shaking, choking, kicking, constant criticism and name calling. He got rid of the phone, and was always embarrassing me, mocking me, humiliating me and everything was my fault.*

*His quote was ‘you made me do this to you, it is not my fault!’*

*(Brenda)*

”

Gaslighting is a manipulative tactic often used by emotional abusers to gradually make you question your own judgment, feelings, memories, and reality. As it can happen over a prolonged period, executed subtly, and involve others (sometimes unbeknownst to them), it is often difficult to know that it is happening.

Abusers use this tactic to gain power and control over their victims. They slowly break down your confidence by making you second-guess yourself. Some common strategies that abusers may use follow:



***“That never happened.”***

Has your partner said or done something abusive and denied it has ever happened? Have you asked them to pick something up from the store or made plans, and they’ve denied you’ve asked them? Abusive partners will consistently deny events or conversations ever happened. They may even get other people involved in the denial process, for example, ‘let’s ask... as they were there’, knowing you are unlikely to want to involve that person in the discussion. This pattern of abusive behavior is often the most difficult to identify as it is subtle and sometimes takes place over a period of time. However, it greatly impacts your sense of self and your ability to trust your experience of reality.

***“You’re too sensitive.”***

Have you tried to express your hurt or let them know a situation made you uncomfortable, and they’ve told you you’re too sensitive or overreacting? They could be making jokes at your expense or embarrassing you, and when you mention it, they tell you’re being silly or ridiculous. This consistent dismissal of your feelings is a tactic an abusive partner will use to encourage you to question yourself, discourage you from trusting in your feelings, and, importantly, prevent you from speaking up.

***“You’re crazy - other people think so, too.”***

Do you feel that you’re questioning your own sense of reality, that at times you feel that you’re losing yourself and your mind? Has your partner told you that you’re crazy or need to see a therapist? Do they tell you that other people think you’re a bit crazy? Over time, the abusive partner’s lies, twists of the truth, and hiding of objects will encourage you to question your sanity. They feel they have more power and control when you question your sense of reality. Sometimes, they may convince friends, family members, business partners, and community members that you need help and cannot be trusted.

***“You have a terrible memory.”***

Have you ever been certain that you recall a conversation, the date and time of a past event, or that you’ve met someone before? Is your partner consistently denying that your recollection of events is accurate or that your memory is reliable? An abusive partner wants you to question yourself and feel you cannot trust your memory; this increases their control over you, as you’re likely to trust their interpretation of events - they’ll often present them in a very convincing way.

***“I’m sorry that you think I hurt you.”***

Have you ever had an argument or conversation with your partner, where you walk away asking yourself, ‘Did I just apologize for telling you that you upset me?’. Abusive partners will rarely take responsibility for their own behavior. They will readily explain it away due to something that someone made them do, and that they had no choice, or (the most frequent statement), “you made me do it”.

***“You should have known how I would react.”***

Has your partner ever behaved badly, threatened to, or confronted someone you’ve innocently been talking to? Thrown objects around the house, drove recklessly, or threatened to harm themselves and then told you that you should’ve known they would behave this way? Abusive partners regularly place responsibility for their actions and behavior on their partners. They imply that their partner has some control over their behavior and that, ultimately, it is their fault.

Being caught in the web of an abusive partner using gaslighting techniques is incredibly difficult; their behavior is often subtle, and they use (with or without their knowledge) your friends, family members, and business associates to support their view of reality. It is not easy to identify that this is happening.

Asking for help may feel impossible as you fear no one will believe you.

If you feel this is happening to you, contact a domestic violence hotline. Chatting with someone who understands can enable you to tell someone else and start the journey to separation.



“

*She would manipulate me into doing things I would never do and then convince me I was doing things I never even did.*

*(Honey)*

”

You find yourself withholding information from friends and family, so you don't have to explain or make excuses.

You can't understand why, with so many apparently good things in your life, you aren't happier.

You ask yourself, "Am I too sensitive?" multiple times a day.

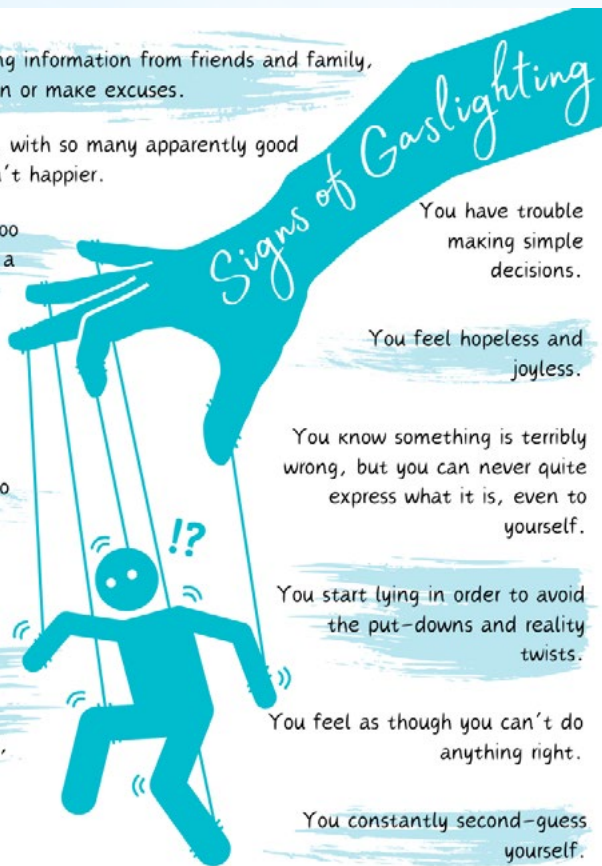
You frequently make excuses for your partner's behavior to friends and family.

You're always apologizing to your partner.

You often feel confused and even crazy.

You have the sense that you used to be a very different person - more confident, more fun-loving, more relaxed.

You wonder if you are a "good enough" partner.



You have trouble making simple decisions.

You feel hopeless and joyless.

You know something is terribly wrong, but you can never quite express what it is, even to yourself.

You start lying in order to avoid the put-downs and reality twists.

You feel as though you can't do anything right.

You constantly second-guess yourself.

From [The Hotline](#)

## KNOW MORE

About [Gaslighting](#)

About [Cyberstalking](#)

About [Reporting Cyber-Crimes](#)

The [Safety Net Project](#) has Toolkits and resources for victim-survivors

[Personal Safety User Guide](#) (from Apple)

**Relevant Laws:** Laws that may be able to help you if this happens are:

[18 U.S.C. § 2261A](#) Prohibits using the internet to severely harass or stalk someone;

[47 U.S.C. § 223](#) Prohibits making harassing or threatening phone calls or threatening messages across State lines;

[18 U.S.C. § 1030](#) Prohibits Computer Hacking;

[18 U.S.C. § 1028](#) Prohibits identity theft.

“

*Gradually my life was becoming controlled by his moods and behavior. I was constantly feeling like I had been punished for something I hadn't done. It was almost as if he had me on invisible strings. I felt like I was tiptoeing on an unexploded mine.*

*(Claire)*

”



“

***It is not your fault!! You have no reason to feel guilty, you are worthy. No one asks to be abused but you can ask for help.***

***(Marietta)***

”

The path from recognizing you're in an abusive relationship to deciding to leave is rarely straightforward. It's a journey fraught with conflicting emotions and thoughts. You might hold onto hope that either you or the circumstances will change, believing that staying is the best option. External voices may add to this struggle, urging you to “work it out” or suggesting that leaving would be improper.

You might find yourself rationalizing your decision to stay for the sake of your children. However, the overwhelming majority of adults who grew up in homes where domestic violence occurred would attest that no amount of shielding, hiding, or moving them to a different room could conceal the violence from their awareness. Many would say that witnessing their parent living in fear, experiencing hurt, or being controlled was profoundly impactful. Ultimately, they would emphasize that the benefits of leaving far outweighed any reasons for staying.

We cannot underestimate the impact that living within the confines of an abusive relationship can have on your mental health. It shatters both your self-image and your sense of security.

However, it's essential to realize that you're not alone. Many have walked similar paths, finding the support and resources needed to escape abuse. Despite the darkness, it's easy to normalize the abusive dynamics or sympathize with your abuser, convincing yourself that staying is safer than the unknown.

If you're unable to leave or have chosen to remain, any domestic violence organization or hotline will be happy to support you - whether you are living with the abuser, thinking about leaving, or have left.

The period prior to leaving an abusive relationship can be just as dangerous as leaving itself and the months that follow. We offer the following tips and suggestions gleaned from the experiences of other survivors. These insights may aid you in planning your departure or help you navigate your relationship:

- reach out to a hotline, a colleague or a medical professional;
- avoid areas with potential weapons if the abuser becomes aggressive (e.g., kitchen, bathroom, garage);
- prepare for escalation if the abuser's pattern is predictable;
- plan multiple escape routes from your home;
- keep your car backed into the driveway with a full tank of gas and keys readily accessible;
- ensure your mobile phone is charged - consider downloading the [Bright Sky App](#) for a directory of domestic violence services unless the abuser monitors your phone;
- consider [eBodyGuard](#), an app that alerts 911 and a chosen contact with your location and records audio for evidence;
- take copies of important documents and store them outside your home - at a trusted friend or family member's house.

Understanding the risks, however daunting, is essential—especially considering sobering statistics like [in 2021, 34% of female and 6% of male murder victims fell at the hands of an intimate partner.](#)



## Tell someone

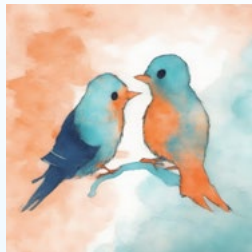
*Every survivor needs someone to stand by them.*  
(Kelsey)

Throughout the guide, we encourage you to tell someone. Who that someone will be will differ from person to person, and they may change during the different stages of your relationship. We understand that domestic abuse thrives in silence. Abusers employ various tactics to isolate you from friends, family members, and anyone else who could offer support.

Someone to talk to, who knows what's going on, can be invaluable. Just knowing there's someone out there who is ready to help you if you need it, can be such a comfort.

But you may (wrongly) feel ashamed or embarrassed about what's happening or be too scared to speak out. You might think you are the only one in your neighborhood going through something like this, and nobody will believe you. You may think that you live in a community where things like this aren't discussed or that people will think less of you for being unable to deal with it yourself.

Considering that 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men have experienced some form of physical violence by an intimate partner, statistically, you're not the only one going through this, wherever you live, and in whichever community. Domestic and sexual violence sadly occur in every country, every state, every county, down to every street. You really aren't alone suffering these abuses.



You can disclose as much or as little as you want to about what you have experienced, and are experiencing, but the more you are able to share, the more whoever you speak to will know how to help you. If you need suggestions on how to tell someone, see the KNOW MORE box.

If you don't feel like sharing your experiences with someone close, try calling a helpline for support or speak to a medical professional?

Coping on your own with no support is a heavy burden, but you may think it's safer that way. You still love the abuser, and you still believe that you can change them, or that their abusive behavior is your fault, and if you're careful things will get back to how they were at the beginning. You also believe them when they say that they love you.

But love is not abuse. Jessie, who has shared experience of abuse with NO MORE, puts it perfectly:

*Love should put a twinkle in your eye, not a tear.*  
(Jessie)

## KNOW MORE

[About Safety whilst Living with an Abuser](#) from WomensLaw.org

**About support networks:** Telling someone can be unnerving, so here are some suggestions that may help:

Choose someone that you trust, who will be able to understand, and help. Before you have any chats, think about what, and how much, you want to reveal.

Try to have the chat without any distractions around.

Don't be embarrassed, or ashamed – remember, the abuse is not your fault. You are not responsible.

If you encounter someone who isn't providing the support you need, try not to be discouraged. It's possible they may not fully comprehend the complexities of abusive dynamics, especially if they perceive the abuser as charming or if they're unfamiliar with the signs of abuse. In such instances, consider seeking support from someone else who may have a better understanding of your situation and can offer the empathy and assistance you require. It's essential to surround yourself with individuals who validate your experiences and offer the support you deserve.

[The Hotline: 24 hour support](#) – call 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or text START to 88788





“

*We are programmed by our abuser to believe that we can't leave. We feel paralyzed. Step out of the illusion. You CAN leave. You are NOT paralyzed.*  
(Audra)

”

The decision to leave an abusive relationship is profoundly personal, and the path from making that decision to leave can vary greatly. For some, it might be a sudden choice, seizing an opportunity as it presents itself, possibly resulting in leaving with only what can be carried. Others may meticulously plan their escape. In either scenario, support is readily available. From housing assistance to emotional support, specialized domestic violence advocates are ready to provide guidance and assistance.

During this time, and the weeks and months afterward, it is completely normal to have conflicting thoughts and emotions. At times, you may even look back and remember situations differently. It is not unusual to consider returning to the relationship and life that you knew. Leaving will often come with a huge amount of change. Embracing a new network of support - fellow survivors' advocates, and trusted friends and family members can be invaluable.

If you're a parent or a legal guardian, we would always encourage you to take your children, even if it means changing their schools or leaving their friends and community. Negotiating child custody and contact arrangements can be complex - your children's safety is paramount.

And finally, leaving should be your decision, when you feel ready and safe to do so.

**Don't give the abuser any idea that you are thinking of leaving - that would be extremely dangerous.**

## Contacting a hotline

Hotlines provide more than just a contact number for shelters. You have the option to speak with them anonymously or share your personal details, whichever makes you feel more comfortable.

They can support you by finding local resources, offering guidance, providing emergency support, or offering emotional help. They can also assess your risks and help you put together a safety plan, and if you are thinking about leaving, it's important that you speak to a professional who can advise you on how to do this in the safest way possible. Many helplines are available 24 hours a day, and have text, email and online chat options as well as telephone contact.

If you are in danger or need to leave urgently, please call the police on 911 or The National Domestic Violence Hotline on 1.800. 799.SAFE(7233).

Each State also has a [Coalition Against Domestic violence](#) who will know your local support providers and will be able to advise you on who best to contact.

You can also view the [NO MORE Silence](#) platform, which provides a safe and supportive space for people impacted by domestic or sexual violence to share their experiences, learn from other survivors, and connect to resources.



### Possible barriers to leaving

When considering whether and when to leave, it's common for the list of reasons to stay to outweigh the reasons to leave. This is normal, and the obstacles to leaving an abusive relationship are indeed real. However, with support, these barriers can be overcome. These are some of the most common barriers that survivors face:

#### Being scared about the future

This is a natural thing to worry about. Where will you live? How will you cope in a new environment? It's scary, but leaving could also be seen as a new, exciting beginning for you. Remember, the support is out there to help you regain your life. And you are not alone.

#### Fear of not being believed

Choose who you tell carefully. Is there a friend you've known for years, prior to your relationship with the abuser that you could talk to? Or a member of your family? If not, confide in a helpline professional, or a colleague at work or college. If you're living in a community where 'things like this don't happen around here', or where the abuser is 'admired and respected', it would be better to choose someone from outside your circle. Don't be scared to speak out. The saying is true – silence does breed violence.

#### It wouldn't be fair on the child/ren

You may feel bad about taking the child/ren out of the family home, away from the abuser. After all, you don't think they have witnessed any of the abuse. But even if they haven't, the chances are they've heard something, or sensed a stressed atmosphere in the house.

#### Being scared about leaving

You need to remember that leaving is **the most dangerous time** for survivors, so please make sure that you talk to a domestic violence professional who can advise you on how to leave as safely as you can. Be careful who you confide in about your plans - tell only trusted friends and family who won't communicate with your abuser. ***It's really important that the abuser doesn't suspect that you are leaving or planning to leave.***

#### You feel isolated and alone

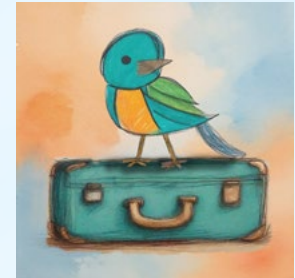
This guide contains details of organizations that prove you are never alone. There's help available for you wherever you are in the US, and at whatever stage of your journey. If you feel disconnected from your friends and family, it's more than likely something to do with your abuser. Isolating you from them is a tactic used to gain more control over you, and to leave you with no support network to talk to, lean on, or seek advice from.

#### The abuser might change

For an abuser to change, they would first need to accept and admit to their abusive behavior. They would have to accept responsibility for their actions and stop blaming you. And that's just for starters. Statistically, this isn't going to happen. According to The Hotline, a very low percentage of abusers truly change their ways.

## Planning ahead

There are some things you can do that may help you if you decide to leave. However, all of them carry some risks, so please use the resources listed in the KNOW MORE box to do so as safely as possible.



**Keep records** of every incident of physical or emotional abuse that involves you or your children. This means noting down the date, time, and place of every incident, with a description of what happened and any injuries that occurred.

This will help you if you request a protection order, or for child custody matters. You can keep confidential records via the [Bright Sky App](#) or obtain more info from The Hotline on [how to keep records](#).

Think about speaking to your doctor or other health professional about the abuse. They can make notes of any abuse-related injuries (physical or mental) in a way that won't be flagged to the police.

Put some money aside to build up a fund. Having cash will help you if you leave, and won't identify your location in the way using a bank or credit card could. Give cash to a trusted friend or family member to keep for you.

### Important risk factors on leaving

Leaving the abuser will be dangerous, so plan your escape in conjunction with a domestic violence professional. Any of the helplines listed can provide you with support on this.



## KNOW MORE

If you are in danger or need to leave urgently, please call the police on 911 or [The National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) on 1-800-799-SAFE (7233);

Find your State DV Coalition [here](#)

Search for local support providers using the [Bright Sky App](#)

About [Seeking Help](#)

More information on [Leaving an abusive relationship](#) Office on Women's Health ([womenshealth.gov](#))

About [what to expect if you call a Hotline](#)

About [keeping records](#) from The Hotline

[What are support systems at home?](#) From Love is Respect

[NO MORE Silence](#) platform for victim-survivor stories



## You've decided to leave

“

*I was controlled, belittled, screamed at, manipulated and lied to. I was completely isolated from my friends and family, but I found the strength to run and never look back. Love doesn't feel like this - know when to run. And do NOT keep silent!*

*(Marisa)*

”

You've made the decision to leave. Now more than ever, we'd encourage you not to change your behavior or allude to the fact that you are leaving. Domestic violence is fueled by the abusers' need to have absolute power and control. If they feel that this is slipping, their behavior can spiral, and it could increase the risk of significant harm that you face.

If you've been planning your escape for months, or if you see a moment where it is safe to leave - do it. There are domestic violence advocates waiting for your call, they will be able to offer you both practical and emotional support and work with you to keep you safe.

Leaving an abusive relationship is an act of incredible courage, resilience, and self-preservation. In the weeks and months following your departure, it's normal to experience a range of emotions. It's not merely a physical escape from a harmful environment; it's also an emotional and psychological upheaval. You may grapple with fear, uncertainty, guilt, shame, and conflicting feelings of attachment and loyalty toward your abuser. Moreover, you may encounter stigma and misconceptions about abuse dynamics.

Despite these challenges, leaving signifies a brave step toward reclaiming your sense of self-worth. It's an affirmation of self-love and a refusal to tolerate mistreatment any longer.

Recognizing the need to leave is significant, but knowing where to turn and how to proceed can be overwhelming. One crucial step is reaching out to a domestic violence helpline. These services offer invaluable support and guidance, helping you develop a safe departure plan.



## Keep safe

Leaving can be the most dangerous time for a victim-survivor of domestic violence, fraught with heightened and additional risks. We strongly encourage you to seek guidance from a DV professional who can help you to leave in the safest way possible. Your safety is paramount, and consulting with a professional ensures that your exit plan is created to minimize risks and prioritize your well-being.

You can complete a **risk/danger assessment** by talking to an advisor on the domestic violence [hotline](#), [DomesticShelters.org](http://DomesticShelters.org), or your [local State Coalition](#). This assessment is a series of around 15 questions, mostly with 'yes' or 'no' answers, so it shouldn't take too long to complete. *If you can, ask a friend or family member to be with you for support.*

If your risk of danger is high, the advisor may suggest that you leave the abuser as soon as possible. If you have been advised to leave immediately, you should dial 911, contact the [Hotline](#) on 1-800-799-SAFE (7233), go to your nearest police department, download the [Bright Sky App](#) to find your local domestic violence support organization, or look online [here](#) for support.

## Create a safety plan

A safety plan can help you to stay as safe as you can whilst in an abusive relationship or help you to think about a safer way to leave.

You know your abuser better than anyone, and you may have a feeling about when is the best time to leave. You can always chat through any concerns you may have with any domestic violence organization, who will be happy to help you. The type of things included in a safety plan are:

- If it's safe for you to do so, keep a **bag of essentials** (e.g., change of clothes, money, important documents) with a friend or family member in case you need a quick escape. Here's a [list of things that may come in useful](#).
- If you can, leave your phone at home and purchase a **pay-as-you-go phone** that's not traceable.
- Keep an **address book** with details of your close contacts to take with you (especially if you are leaving your phone).

- If you take your mobile phone, check that it is free of spyware [using information here](#). Even better, if you're able to - buy a new phone and leave your old one at home.

When you leave, you can take steps to protect yourself by applying for a **DVRO** – a Domestic Violence Restraining order (also called protection order) which can help to keep you safe from a person who is harassing or hurting you.

## KNOW MORE

About [Safety when preparing to leave from WomensLaw](#)

### Risk assessments

If you are unable to speak to support agencies, online tools are available from the [Bright Sky App](#)

Please note, if you complete a risk assessment yourself, it should be for guidance only. It won't replace the professional input you could gain from speaking to an experienced DV worker. Make sure that you use a safe computer when doing this - preferably one outside the home, such as in a library, internet café, at work, or a friend or family member's PC.

### Police

If you are unsure about calling the police, you can get help and support [here](#).

### Safety planning

[A Guide to DV Safety Planning](#) from DomesticShelters;

[Advice for Friends and Family on Safety Planning](#) from NCADV;

[Safety Planning with Children](#) from WomensLaw

[About Safety When Leaving](#) from WomensLaw



## Where can I go?

“

*I knew if I stayed in my toxic marriage my child would grow up thinking that mental and physical abuse is LOVE.*

*(Annie)*

”

### To a shelter

The Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE (7233), [DomesticShelters.org](https://www.DomesticShelters.org), or your [local State Coalition](#) will help to find a safe place for you.

A shelter is a safe, private location where you can receive emergency confidential support for you/you and your children. All shelters will be different, but from most of them, you can expect help with the basic necessities (like food, clothing, toiletries), and laundry facilities.

In most shelters, you will share the kitchen, bathroom, and common living areas with other residents. You may also need to share a bedroom, depending on availability. All residents at the shelter will be escaping abuse. Find out more information about shelters [here](#).

In the United States, most shelters for victims of domestic violence are provided free of charge. Domestic violence shelters are typically funded by a combination of government grants, private donations, and community support. They prioritize providing a safe haven for individuals and families fleeing abusive situations, regardless of their financial circumstances.

### To a Transitional Housing Program

Whilst shelters are an immediate short-term place of safety and support, Transitional Housing Programs can offer victim-survivors with a housing option and supportive services - including counseling, childcare, transportation, life skills, education, and/or job training - for up to 24 months. Transitional housing programs give victim-survivors the time and services they need to achieve goals for long-term safety and stability. [Find out more about these programs here](#).

### The Federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program

If you are living in, or would like to apply for, LIHTC housing, the [Violence Against Women Act](#) (VAWA) provides you with housing protections.

VAWA ensures that survivors are not denied or lose LIHTC housing because of the violence committed against them. The LIHTC program creates the largest number of affordable rental housing in the country.

### To a friend or family member

Remember that the abuser will probably know where your friends and family live and may try to trace you there. There is an increased risk that the abuser will become more abusive once you have left the relationship, so an unknown address may be a safer place for you.

### To a hotel

Use a hotel or motel unknown to your abuser and, if you are able to, pay with cash so that the abuser can't establish your whereabouts from card and bank records. If affordable, a hotel may be a good option while you think about your next move.

### With a pet

[Support to find a temporary home for your pet](#) from Safe Havens.



### Help with transport

[Wheels of Success](#) can provide transportation to victims of domestic violence who are escaping their abuser.

[800 Charity Cars](#) provide donated cars to families in need.

**If you are moving to a different state with your child/ren, please speak with a legal advocate first, so that you are not accused of doing anything unlawful.**



## At work

“

*Getting out of a physically abusive relationship at times can seem impossible. I am living proof that you too can get out. I saw a commercial with a hotline number and called and was directed to all the right resources that saved my life.*  
(Kat)

”

You may be worried that the abuser will be able to find you through your workplace (if you have left the relationship), or cause trouble for you at work.

Consider keeping your work colleagues, manager, or HR department updated on what's happening as they will be able to support you - whether you are living with the abuser or have left the relationship.

Your employer may be able to offer you practical support - ask your HR department if they have a Domestic Violence Policy. The type of support they could provide includes:

- offering you a transfer to a different location;
- giving you time off for medical, legal, and other appointments;
- agreeing to flexible leave options;
- providing a private location to take related calls;
- changing your phone extension number;
- supporting you in contacting a local domestic violence program.

83% of respondents to an [IWPR survey](#) reported that their abusive partners disrupted their ability to work.

Among those who reported experiencing one or more disruptions, 70% said they were not able to have a job when they wanted or needed one, and 53% said they lost a job because of the abuse. 49% said they missed 1 or more days of work, 18% missed out on a promotion or raise, and 38% said they lost out on other work opportunities.



## KNOW MORE

The [Family Violence Prevention and Services Program \(FVPSA\)](#) helps victims of domestic abuse and their dependents secure immediate shelter and related assistance.

Find your nearest [public housing agency](#)

[Workplaces Respond](#) has produced a [downloadable guide](#) on support offered by each state in the following areas:

**Anti-discrimination protections** to stop you being discriminated against for being a survivor or for taking leave to address the abuse;

Protections that allow employees to request certain **adjustments at work** to address abuse;

**Leave protections**, which allow eligible employees to take paid or unpaid time off for certain reasons; and

**Unemployment insurance eligibility protections**, which allow survivors to qualify for unemployment even if they voluntarily leave their jobs to address abuse

Find your State's information on workplace protections at [WomensLaw](#).



## Financial abuse



It's essential to recognize that financial abuse goes beyond controlling money; it's a tactic used by abusers to exert power and control over you. It typically occurs alongside other forms of abuse, but the implications of financial abuse are wide reaching.

You might find yourself leaving with nothing, lacking funds for even basic necessities, and needing to rebuild your life from the ground up. Alternatively, you could be burdened with significant debt and poor credit due to the actions of the abuser, who may have also stolen money or assets from you.

### Our top tips

- Don't feel ashamed. Tell someone who you trust, or a financial adviser, or work with an advocate to review all of your financial records.
- Contact your bank, credit card companies, loans (including student loans) and utility companies, and ask them to freeze repayments, change addresses, and who they can communicate with.
- Use an online company to undertake a credit check, this helps in identifying any debt or accounts that may have been taken out in your name.
- Work with an attorney to freeze assets. Attorneys who specialize in family law or domestic violence cases can help you navigate the legal process, obtain a restraining order if necessary, and take appropriate steps to protect your assets.
- Seek guidance on budgeting. If you've never had control over your finances or wish to maximize your resources, consider working with a financial professional. Being financially savvy is a learned skill, and many of us haven't had the opportunity to develop it fully.

You may need some support to get you back on the right financial path, and to help with budgeting, debt, taxes - or basic money managing skills. There are many resources available to help you get back on your feet (see KNOW MORE box).

You might have lost money through an abuser who took control of your finances, or who begged, stole, or borrowed money from you and never paid you back. The abuser may also have taken out loans or credit cards in your name without you knowing.

### A debt in your name

Your abuser may have forced you or used your information to open a bank account, take out loans, or get credit cards without your knowledge.



If you think this may have happened to you, you should apply for a credit report to see if there are any unknown debts associated with your Social Security Number.

From [WomensLaw.org](http://WomensLaw.org): There are various companies that allow you to request a free credit report. At [AnnualCreditReport.com](http://AnnualCreditReport.com), for example, you can request a free credit report every 12 months by going to their website or by calling toll free at 1-877-322-8228. Don't be fooled by websites or companies using similar names since many of them are not reputable.

Your credit report can show what accounts you have open and what the balances are on each. Check to make sure your credit report accurately reflects your financial history. If there is incorrect information or accounts that you don't recognize, please read [What can I do if someone opened up accounts in my name without my permission?](#)

This is financial abuse, as well as [identity theft](#), and there are steps you can take to reclaim your identity and freeze your credit. You can speak to an expert advisor at the [Identity Theft Resource Center](#) (ITRC) toll-free by phone at 888-400-5530.

### Can I get my money back?

If the abuser has stolen money from you or failed to repay a loan from you, and you are **not married**, you may be able to take them to small claims court. There is a limit on the amount of money you can request via these courts, and rules in each State differ. See '[Suing an Abuser for Money](#)' from WomensLaw.org for more information on this.



If you are **married**, it is slightly more complicated, as generally, money earned during a marriage by either spouse is considered joint, marital property. If you came into the marriage with assets that were 'loaned' to the abuser, or if you had an inheritance that was left to you during the marriage and wrongfully taken by the abuser, you should speak with a lawyer about your state's marital property laws.

Debts that the abuser accrued during the marriage are usually handled as part of the divorce, and the judge will decide how to divide this debt. Generally, if debt is not declared or dealt with in the divorce, you may be prohibited from later suing for that money unless the divorce decree specifically allows for this to be done in a separate proceeding.

**Before suing the abuser, please consider your safety.** Please speak to one of the Helplines listed for advice on keeping as safe as you can.

### No access to money

If you have no access to money, there are initiatives in place that can help you:

- **Victim compensation and support**: There are resources in your immediate area that offer services to victims of crime. You may be eligible for crime victim compensation benefits, including reimbursement for medical services, mental health counseling, lost wages, and other costs incurred as a result of the crime.
- **The FreeFrom Compensation Compass** is a tool to help you find any funds you might be eligible for based on your state and the crimes committed against you as the result of an abuser.
- **Benefit checker**: Use the benefit checker to see if you are eligible for other financial assistance - and where to apply. You'll answer questions about yourself, be given a list of benefits you may be eligible for, and be directed to apply on the agency website.
- **The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program** gives grant funds to states and territories to provide families with financial assistance and related support services. State-administered programs may also include childcare and work assistance, and job preparation.

- **The American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry Charitable Foundation** (AACDCF) offers dental services and support programs to women and children who have suffered dental injuries as a result of domestic violence. The AACDCF will help connect you with local dentists in your area.
- **The Independence Project**: The National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV)'s Independence Project provides credit-building microloans to survivors of financial abuse to help them build or establish credit.
- Your **local domestic violence coalition** may have details of funds for emergency financial assistance. If they do, you could get help for rent deposit or utility payments as well as bus tickets and other essentials

### KNOW MORE

Moving Ahead is a complete guide to managing your finances provided by the Allstate Foundation. Divided into five sections of online training, it is also downloadable in Spanish, French and Vietnamese as well as English.

Financial Tips for Survivors from NNEDV

Financial Education Webinars from NCADV





## Precautions you could take

- Buy a **new phone** or sim card if you can. If you are unable to, or need to have the same phone with you for now, [check your phone for any apps](#), etc. that may give away your location.
- [Change the passwords](#) to your social media and email accounts to stay safe online.
- Let your **bank** know that you have moved - change any passwords to your account or move to another bank.
- Give your new contact details to trusted friends/family members only. Do this in stages, asking them not to share your number without your agreement.
- Obtain emergency [Protection Orders](#) as necessary.
- [Address Confidentiality Programs \(ACP\)](#) can protect your real address by providing a mail forwarding service and a legal substitute address to use in place of your physical address. This substitute address can be used whenever an address is required by public agencies (such as driver's license registries, schools, courts, police departments, etc.). First-class mail sent to the substitute address is forwarded to your actual address.
- If you have children, inform their teachers, childminders, etc, who has your permission to collect them. If you have an injunction, give a copy to the school.
- If you have any regular appointments that your partner is aware of, change their dates and/or times.
- Don't take any objects with you that could remind you of the abuse.
- Get advice from a [local DV organization](#) if you need any support.

If you move into a new home, try and keep it as secure as possible, by:

- installing motion detector lights;
- remembering to lock all doors and windows when you go out/to bed;
- trimming any shrubs or hedges near your front door to eliminate hiding places.

## Know your rights

As a victim-survivor of domestic and sexual violence, there are laws to protect you as follows:



### Federal laws

- [The Violence Against Women Act \(VAWA\)](#) provides services and support for victims of domestic and sexual violence, including protection of federally subsidized tenants from being denied housing or from being evicted because they are the victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.
- [The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act \(FVPSA\)](#) helps victims of domestic violence and their children by providing shelters and national, state, and community programs.

There are also the following federal laws (which apply to all states) that may be relevant for victims of abuse:

- [Immigration](#) remedies for undocumented immigrant victims
- [Federal Gun Laws](#)
- [VAWA Housing Laws](#)
- [Military Protective Orders](#)

### State laws

[State laws](#) deal with things like Protection Orders, Divorce, and Victim Assistance Programs



## A victim's rights

A federal domestic violence victim has the following rights under 42 U.S.C. Section 10606(b):

- 1) The right to be treated with fairness and with respect for the victim's dignity and privacy;
- 2) The right to be reasonably protected from the accused offender;
- 3) The right to be notified of court proceedings;
- 4) The right to be present at all public court proceedings related to the offense, unless the court determines that testimony by the victim would be materially affected if the victim heard other testimony at the trial;
- 5) The right to confer with the attorney for the Government in the case;
- 6) The right to restitution;
- 7) The right to information about the conviction, sentencing, imprisonment, and release of the offender.

## KNOW MORE

[Legal Aid support](#)

[List of Pro-bono Legal Service Providers](#)

[Legal Resources and Attorneys](#)

Email a question to [WomensLaw.org](mailto:WomensLaw.org)

[How to find an attorney](#)

[For victims of abuse who have been charged with a crime that is relevant to their abuse](#)

[National Center for Victims of Crime](#)

## Domestic violence protection orders

“

*I am tired of feeling scared of the person that claims to love me.*

*(Pam)*

”

As a domestic abuse victim-survivor, you can ask the court to issue an order that tells the abuser to stop having any contact with you, or with you and your children. However, as some abusers will ignore these orders, you should also prepare a safety plan by speaking to a domestic violence helpline.

This order is a legal document, part of the civil justice process, and its name can vary from state to state. It can also be called a **Civil Protection Order**, **Stay Away Order**, and a **Protection from Abuse Order**, and all will require your abuser to do or refrain from doing certain actions, like:

- staying away from you, your home, and your work;
- staying away from other places you regularly visit.

It may also provide details of:

- child support;
- temporary custody;
- relinquishment of firearms.

Some states will also allow victim-survivors to customize their requests based on their needs (find a link for your state's details in the KNOW MORE box).

[The Office on Women's Health](#) state, 'you can apply for a restraining (or protection) order at courthouses, women's shelters, lawyers' offices, and some police stations. You don't need a lawyer to get a restraining order. Federal law says that you can get a restraining order for free.'



## Divorce

Thinking about a divorce can be a really positive step to regain control of your life. However, depending on how the abuser reacts to this, it could also be another dangerous time for you so you need to be prepared.

Your abuser may feel that they have lost control over you when they find out about the divorce application, and their actions may become more violent because of this. They could try to scare you so that you will return to them. Stay strong.

Talking through [a safety plan with a domestic violence professional](#) will provide you with some strategies to stay as safe as you can while the divorce makes its way through the justice system.

A judge will need to sign a divorce decree to legally end your marriage. This can include alimony payments, how property is divided, and child custody arrangements within the divorce papers.

In general, there are two types of divorce: fault-based and “no-fault.” Some states give the option of filing a fault-based divorce (e.g., domestic violence), while in other states, all divorces are legally classified as no-fault (e.g., irreconcilable differences).

The divorce procedure [can vary from state to state](#) – follow the link to find out your specific details on residency requirements, grounds for divorce, factors that will be considered for alimony applications, basic steps you need to take, and local agencies that can help. Find your state on the map in the link and select ‘Divorce’.

### KNOW MORE

[FAQs About Protection Orders from DomesticShelters](#)

[DVROs from WomensLaw](#)

[Find your state details from WomensLaw](#)

Speak to your [domestic violence state coalition](#), or the [Hotline](#), who can help you to find local resources.



## Safety at court

*I will not be silent.*  
(Vanessa)

There will probably be times when you may need to attend court with the abuser present, for example, for a protection order, custody, child support, divorce, or criminal proceedings.

Here are some tips that could help you to protect yourself:

- work out where the court is and how you will travel there beforehand;
- ask your [state coalition](#) if they can provide a domestic violence advocate to attend court with you;
- take a trusted friend or relative with you to court for moral support;
- when you arrive at court, let the bailiff or security guard know your situation and ask them if there is somewhere private where you could wait, away from the abuser;
- ask the bailiff or judge to hold the abuser at the end of the hearing so that you can leave safely.

## Children and child custody

*I did not want my daughter to grow up thinking it was OK to be hurt both physically and emotionally.*  
(Janice)

It’s really important for a child living with domestic abuse to have at least one kind, loving parent, who can help them to develop in a positive way, despite what they’ve experienced.



Talking (and listening) to your children can really help them, but take time to think about what you want to say before you do. Try to talk when you are both relaxed and happy. Your child will be tuned in to your emotions, so do your best to remain calm during your conversations, and speak truthfully to them. Here are some suggestions on what to say:

- tell them you care about them, and you will listen to them;
- encourage them to talk about what they're feeling and thinking;
- reassure them that the abuse isn't their fault, and that they are in no way responsible for what is happening;
- explain to them that abuse is wrong.



If you are thinking about leaving, your emotions may be split if the children have a good relationship with the abuser - who might never show them any abusive behaviors and be a kind loving parent. You may think that the children will be harmed in some way if you take them away.

You might also have been trying to protect your children from the abuse, hoping that they won't have noticed what's been going on. Unfortunately, chances are, they know. If they haven't seen anything happen, they have probably heard something. Or sensed the tension and fear.

Even if they are not *physically* harmed by the abuser, children can experience *emotional* and *psychological* damage as a result of witnessing domestic abuse.

They may be confused, seeing one parent changing from being loving to being abusive. They might feel guilty that the abuser is loving to them and abusive towards you. They might blame themselves, feel anxious, have sleep problems, wet the bed, have nightmares and headaches. They may become withdrawn and passive, or aggressive and bullying. Long term effects include depression and PTSD.

They are learning that abuse is normal behavior. They could even be co-opted into the violence or be forced to watch or take part in the assaults.

If it's safe for you to do so, spend time with your child without the abuser. For further information on how you can support your children, The [National Child Traumatic Stress Network \(NCTSN\)](#), has produced factsheets to help, see the link.

If you think that the abuser is also harming your child/ren, you need to prepare to leave safely. Contact the Police on 911 or call the Hotline at 1-800-799-7233, [www.theHotline.org](http://www.theHotline.org).

### Protecting your child

“

*My earliest memories are listening to my mom cry and plead for her life.*

*(Howard)*

”

If you have left home with your children, go to court as soon as possible to obtain an emergency protective order. This will give you custody of your child/ren and will require the abuser to stay away from you. You will know better than anyone how the abuser will react to this order. Some will pay no attention – so bear this in mind when you think of your, and your child/ren's, safety.

The support of a domestic violence attorney would help you to navigate around the court system. Reach out to any domestic violence organization who can help you find legal help, or use [this link](#).

Note: Make sure that child custody is included in the protective order, otherwise you could be accused of kidnapping.

### Child custody

A child custody agreement is also called a parenting plan, parenting schedule, custody and visitation agreement, or parenting plan form.

Each will contain details of how you and the abuser will take care of the child/ren, when you will both spend time with them, and how you will share the costs of raising them. If both parents agree, a plan could be drawn up by them and filed with the court.



If not, the court case will probably involve a judge. This will involve going before a judge, who will make a decision based on the best interests of the child/ren. Be aware that most courts will probably rule on shared custody.



The custody agreement should be as detailed as possible (to avoid misunderstandings) and will state the locations, dates, and times for the handover of children. The location should be a public place with security cameras if possible, or security guards (e.g., shopping mall), and could be made by a trusted friend or family member.

The agreement will also state details of any communication with the children. If video contact is agreed, make sure the child/ren are in a space that doesn't identify your location. It will also cover communication methods between parents (text, etc.) You should be happy that all agreements will keep you and your child/ren safe – if not, don't agree to them.

### KNOW MORE

About: the laws in your state by clicking on the [WomensLaw.org map](#), and selecting Custody.

About: [Safety Planning with Children](#) from Women's Law

Find out [who will be involved in your child custody case](#) from DomesticShelters

For further information, see [Ten Things to Know about Parenting Plan Cases involving DV](#) from the Resource Center on Domestic Violence: Child Protection and Custody (RCDVCPC)

### Support for your pets

“

***71% of women in domestic violence shelters report their abuser threatened, injured or killed a pet.***

***(NCADV)***

”

Animal abuse and domestic abuse are interconnected, and as you can see from the stat above, quite common. Abusers can find all sorts of ways to hurt your pet – and knowing that this will hurt you, too, is probably the main reason they do it. It is another tool they can use to control you. This could include preventing necessary care like feeding, by saying that you can't afford pet food or supplies, saying that vet appointments are unnecessary or unaffordable, or threatening to harm or get rid of your pet.

Speak to the Hotline or see their information on [pet safety](#) if you are worried about your pet being abused. There is help available if you want to leave, but don't want your beloved pet to stay with the abuser.

[Safe Haven for Pets](#) is a searchable directory of sheltering services for pets of those experiencing domestic violence, created and managed by the Animal Welfare Institute. Also, see [ownership, essentials to take, and financial assistance](#) from PetMd.

[The RedRover Relief Safe Escape grant program](#) helps families with pets safely escape domestic violence together. Funding is mainly provided to help with the cost of temporary pet boarding while you are in a domestic violence shelter, though other costs associated with boarding (like vaccinations) can be considered.

[Pets can be included in Protection Orders](#), depending on what state you're in - check yours here.



## Changing your mind

Returning to an abuser after making the courageous decision to leave is deeply complex and often misunderstood. It's not a sign of weakness or lack of resolve, but rather a combination of the complexities that are embedded in abusive relationships.

You may feel a powerful pull back towards your abuser, influenced by a myriad of factors including [trauma bonding](#), feelings of attachment, financial dependence, and the insidious manipulation tactics employed by abusers, who, upon realizing you have left, will be furious. In their mind, they will have 'lost' their power over you – and they will probably do their utmost to get it – and you – back again.

If the abuser is able to contact you, they may tell you how sorry they are, that they didn't realize you were feeling like this, that they need you, and can't live without you. And please give them one more chance. They may even threaten to harm themselves.

The abuser may revisit the 'honeymoon stage' of buying you gifts, complimenting you, telling you how wonderful you are and how they can change with your help.

It is difficult to know what to think.

During your relationship you have had your confidence and self-esteem shattered; you may be in utter confusion and unable to make any decisions about anything. You don't recognize yourself anymore. You might have convinced yourself that you're a failure, or that no-one likes you – after all, you rarely see friends or family now - probably due to the abuser's tactics to isolate you.

If you don't succumb to the abuser's charm offensive, they may try another tactic, by trying to scare you into returning. By saying if you don't come back, they will kill the cat, hurt the children, or your family and friends. They may start rumors about you or post things online about you that are untrue. They may even start to stalk you (see [post separation abuse](#)).

They may scare you, make you feel sorry for them, or make you feel so bad about yourself that you return to them.



Talking to someone who understands your situation can provide valuable perspective and support as you navigate your decision. Please consider contacting a friend, family member, colleague, or a helpline to keep them updated with your decisions, your location, and your well-being.

If you decide to return to the relationship, it's crucial to have a safety plan in place, which you can create in conjunction with a domestic violence support organization. This may include identifying safe places to go in case of emergency, keeping important documents and belongings in a secure location, and establishing a code word or signal to alert others if you are in danger.

Remember, you deserve to be treated with respect, dignity, and kindness in your relationships. You are not alone, and there are people and organizations ready to support you every step of the way.



“

*After our separation, his abuse continued to escalate. He seemed completely out-of-control. But it seemed like no one else could see it. No one would listen to me. He presented himself so well outwardly that no one could believe how dangerous he was to me, my children, and his future partners.*

*(Sarah)*

”

Ending a relationship with an abusive partner can be a tough process, and unfortunately it doesn't always mean the end of the abuse. It could even mean an escalation of abusive tactics, though you're no longer together. Don't be put off leaving because of this. Knowing the reality of what might happen will help to prepare you.

Here's some tactics abusers might use:

- try to isolate you by starting rumors that you are mentally unstable, or persuading others that the abuse never happened;
- refuse to pay bills or alimony;
- damage your property;
- threaten to harm you, your friends, or your family;
- try to disrupt your employment or education;
- stalk or harass you or monitor where you are and what you're doing. This behavior is not limited to post separation, and you may have experienced stalking at any point in your relationship. You may find post-separation that their tactics change or escalate.

Please see the [post-separation wheel](#) in the Appendix, where you may see behaviors that have been, or are being, used against you by your abuser.

## Stalking

If your abuser is stalking you, you must be wondering when it will ever stop. You're not alone.

Anyone can become a victim of stalking, at any age and from any background, but the vast majority of victim-survivors are stalked by someone they know - **around 40% being by a current or former partner.**

And around **13.5 million people** in the US are stalked in a one year period.

*Note: The term "stalking" means engaging in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to fear for his or her safety or the safety of others or suffer substantial emotional distress. (OVW)*

Stalking may make you feel more unsafe than you've ever felt and just when you thought you'd escaped the abuse. Like the other forms of domestic violence, stalking can be subtle - like sending flowers to your new address or redirecting your mail. The goal of the abuser, along with implying that they have uninterrupted access to you, is to unsettle you and your sense of reality. The advancements of technology have provided new tools and means for an abuser to locate you and discreetly send messages to you. It's common to initially dismiss stalking incidents as coincidences or for others to underestimate the severity of the situation.

If you are being stalked by your abusive or ex-partner, you should contact your local support organization who will help you to make a Safety Plan. If you are scared and believe you are in immediate danger, call the police (dial 911).1.

Stalking can be carried out with or without the threat of violence. Either way, it can cause severe psychological distress, including PTSD. It can also make you feel scared, stressed, depressed, and paranoid, as well as unable to sleep properly. Stalking can be extremely intrusive, intimidating, and psychologically damaging. It is important for individuals to recognize the signs of stalking and seek help.

Stalking behaviors include:



**Following or watching you**, or using technology to track you, or find out information about you. This includes physical surveillance - following you in person to observe your daily routines, whereabouts, and who you see and meet; and electronic surveillance - using technology to track your movements, communications, and online activities. The abuser could also monitor your phone calls, text messages, emails, or social media messages to gather information about you, your plans, and whereabouts.

**Watching you by video**, installing hidden cameras or other spying devices in your home without you knowing or consenting.

**Tracking and monitoring you online** using social media profiles to gather information about your activities and who you're talking to.

**Gathering information** about you from friends, family members, coworkers, or other acquaintances.

**Invading your life** by showing up in your life unexpectedly and unwanted, appearing at your regular haunts, or persistently sending you unwanted phone calls, texts, emails, or social posts or unwanted presents, cards or letters.

**Intimidation:** Threatening behavior which scares you, and/or your friends and family; Entering your house without your permission to leave threatening messages or just to let you know that they can.

Note: Every case of stalking will be different, and actions taken by the stalker may or may not include a physical presence.

## Keep records

It shouldn't be your responsibility to change your behavior because of the stalking, but some changes may be vital for your safety.

Like all people accused of a crime, the stalker will be entitled to 'innocent until proven guilty' rights under the US Constitution. If you have reported, or want to report the stalking, or are applying for a restraining order, any proof that you are able to provide to the police would help your case.

Here are a few ideas for keeping records on how the stalker is impacting your life:

- Download an [Incident and Behaviour log](#) to fill in each time something happens. This will come in handy if you need to contact the police with details.
- Ask any witnesses to the stalking behavior to write down what they have seen or heard - ask them to sign and date it.
- Keep screenshots of any abusive social media posts (and don't delete them).
- Make a note of any safety strategies (as follows) that you have been forced to take.
- Ask your friends and family to let you know if the stalker contacts them to ask about you.

## Stay as safe as you can

- Carry a personal alarm.
- Vary your routes to work and other regular journeys.
- Put additional security measures in your home - e.g., a security or doorbell camera.
- [Check for stalkerware](#), which are software programs, apps and devices that enable stalkers to secretly spy on your private life via their mobile device. The stalker can remotely monitor the whole device including web searches, geolocation, text messages, photos, voice calls, and much more. These can be hidden in the background, without you knowing or giving your consent.
- [Address Confidentiality Programs \(ACP\)](#) can protect your real address by providing a mail forwarding service and a legal substitute address to use in place of your physical address. This substitute address can be used whenever an address is required by public agencies (such as driver's license registries, schools, courts, police departments, etc.). First-class mail sent to the substitute address is forwarded to your actual address.

Legal definitions of stalking differ depending on where you live; however, stalking is a crime under the laws of all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Territories, and the Federal government. Click [here](#) to find details in your state.





## Stalking restraining orders

“

*The person who vowed to love, honor, & cherish me is the person I need protection from.*

(Lori)

”

A [Stalking Restraining Order \(SRO\)](#) is a court order requiring a person to do (or not do) certain things. In this instance it would order the abuser from further contacting and harassing you.

The burden of proof to show that the restraining order is needed is placed on the person making the complaint (you and your legal support, if you have it). See the previous 'Keep Records' section for support with this. You will need to prove that the stalker's actions are:

- knowing and wilful;
- repeated; and
- making you feel fearful of your safety or feeling emotionally distressed.

### KNOW MORE

About: [Safety Plans](#)

About: [Documenting Online Harassment](#)

About: [Stalkerware](#) from Stop Stalkerware

Find your [Local Support organization](#) from Bright Sky

Find [Stalking laws in your State](#) from Victim Connect

About: [Restraining Orders & Online Harassment](#)



## STALKING IN THE USA

1 in 3  
WOMEN



1 in 6  
MEN



Experience stalking at some point in their lives

### COMMON STALKING TACTICS:

75% Unwanted phone calls

57% Showing up unexpectedly

57% Texts, emails, messages

52% Watching or following

26% Unwanted gifts or cards

### WHO ARE STALKERS?

Acquaintances 42%

Intimate partners 40%

Strangers 19%

Brief encounters 8%

Family members 8%

People in authority 4%

APPROX. 13.5 MILLION PEOPLE  
ARE STALKED EVERY YEAR

From [SPARC](#)



## Support with drugs or alcohol

You may be using drugs or alcohol to help you cope with the abuse, or memories of the abuse, to numb the pain and escape for a while. Or you may have been forced to take either (or both) by your abuser.

If you need help, or want to talk to someone for advice on quitting, call [The National Rehab Hotline](#) which is free and available 24/7/365 to help anyone who is struggling through a substance use or a mental health crisis get treatment suggestions, immediate crisis support and intervention, or information on local resources.

## Allowing yourself time

“  
***I am done feeling ashamed, guilty, unlovable, unbeautiful, and unworthy. The time for my healing and to take my life back is now.***  
”  
(Crystal)

If you are still with the abuser, or if you have left and are recovering, you need time to heal from your experiences, or some time to yourself to be able to cope with ongoing abuse.

Self-care means being kind to yourself, and doing things that will help you to manage - physically, emotionally, and mentally. These can range from tiny things, like making yourself a cup of coffee, to more time-consuming activities, like going to the gym.

“  
***I am proud of my recovery. I am proud of my power. I am proud of what I have learned. The days of silence are over.***  
”  
(Kate)



Be patient with yourself, it may take some time before you feel anywhere near your “old self” again, but you need time to heal. Here are some ideas that may help:

Drink plenty of water every day (8 glasses is the recommended amount)



Relax with meditation or breathing exercises to help you reduce stress and bring calm



Eat breakfast every morning to give you energy for the day ahead



[Give yourself a massage](#) to help you relax



Try cooking some new recipes - just for you



Have a warm bath or shower, using your favorite smells



Put on your favorite music and dance on your own



Write a poem, or paint a picture



Make some space for yourself - include something you enjoy doing



Watch your favorite movie with ice cream and popcorn!



Have plenty of sleep - treat yourself to a lie-in now and then



## KNOW MORE

About: [Effects on health](#) from the Office of Women's Health;

[Find a Counselor or therapist](#) through the Open Path Psychotherapist Collective, a nonprofit who can find therapists to provide affordable, in-office and online psychotherapy sessions between \$40 and \$70 (\$30 for student intern sessions).

See [5 Meditations to try](#) from DomesticShelters

[Give yourself a massage](#) with tips from WebMd

About: [Using drugs and alcohol to cope](#) from DomesticShelters

[The National Rehab Hotline](#): 866-210-1303

## Starting a new relationship

“

***I always thought it was my fault. Finally, I have realized that what happened is not my fault and that I'm worth more. I deserve someone to treat me right.***

***(Angel)***

”

It's totally understandable that you may be scared, worried, and don't want to even think about a new relationship following your experiences of abuse. The thought of putting your trust into another person after what you've been through might fill you with dread.

That's normal. Don't force yourself to start dating again, just wait until you feel ready.

Keep remembering – you didn't expect abuse from your partner. It wasn't your fault. A partner should show you respect, not ridicule you. A partner should love you, not laugh at you. They should be caring, not cruel, and value you, not be violent towards you.

“

***He kept me vulnerable and dependent on him with threats and violence. I escaped and am now in a healthy happy stable relationship.***

***(Arianna)***

”

Re-read the beginning of this booklet and keep the warning signs in your mind. There's lots of great people out there who bring possibilities of healthy relationships that value trust, equality, and honesty. But there are also abusers, lurking around with their charm and love bombing tactics.

There are also hundreds of organizations that exist to help you. Many of them are in this guide. We hope that it has provided you with the information you need or where to find it. We are stronger together, and none of us are ever alone.

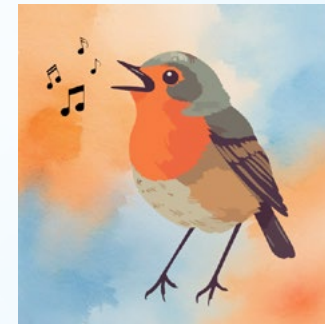
The last word, as the first, belongs to a survivor:

“

***Speaking out is scary and it takes immense courage, but there is no better feeling in the world than knowing that you did. Find your voice in whatever way you can, because you do have a voice.***

***(Em)***

”



## National Helplines

### Domestic violence

<b>National Domestic Violence Hotline</b> (The Hotline)	1-800-799-SAFE (7233) TTY 1-800-787-3224 Or Text "START" to 88788
<b>LGBTQ+ Hotline</b>	617-742-4911 (voice) 800-832-1901 (Toll-Free)
<b>The Deaf Hotline</b>	<a href="https://www.thedeafhotline.org/">https://www.thedeafhotline.org/</a>
<b>Strong Hearts Helpline</b>	1-844-7NATIVE (762-8483)
<b>National Center for Victims of Crime</b>	1-855-VICTIM (1-855-484- 2846) (call or text)

### Sexual assault

<b>National Sexual Assault Hotline (RAINN)</b>	1-800-656-HOPE (4673)
<b>National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline</b>	1-866-331-9474 800-787-3224 (TTY) Text 'LOVEIS' to 22522
<b>Department of Defense Helpline:</b>	CALL 24/7 AT 877-995-5247

### Other helplines

<b>National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline</b>	988
---------------------------------------------	-----

## All Helplines

<a href="#">National Domestic Violence Hotline</a>	1-800-799-SAFE (7233) TTY: 1-800-787-3224 Text "START" to 88788
<a href="#">The Deaf Hotline</a> is a 24/7 hotline that is ASL accessible for people experiencing abuse, where you can consult with a culturally adept and trained advocate in ASL. Whether you're in need of safety planning, crisis intervention, emotional support or have some questions, they are there for you.	<a href="mailto:nationaldeafhotline@adwas.org">nationaldeafhotline@adwas.org</a> Telephone: +1 855-812-1001
<a href="#">National Sexual Assault Hotline (RAINN):</a>	1-800-656-HOPE (4673)
<a href="#">Department of Defense Helpline:</a> for members of the Department of Defense community affected by sexual assault	Call 24/7 at 877-995-5247
<a href="#">National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline</a> (from Love is Respect)	1-866-331-9474 or 1-866-331-8453 (TTY)
National Center for Victims of Crime <a href="#">Victim Connect Helpline</a>	1-855-VICTIM (1-855-484-2846) (call or text)
<a href="#">Strong Hearts Helpline:</a> For 24/7 confidential and anonymous culturally appropriate domestic and sexual violence helpline for Native Americans.	1-844-762-8483
<a href="#">National Human Trafficking Hotline</a>	1-888-373-7888 or 711 (TTY) or Text: 233733



<a href="#">Tribal Resource Tool</a> - an online map of diverse resources for American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) survivors and victims of crime and abuse created in collaboration with the National Congress of American Indians, the Tribal Law and Policy Institute, and the NCVC.	<a href="#">List of Alliances and Coalitions</a>
<a href="#">National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline</a>	Call 988
<a href="#">Hopeline</a> - for teens and young adults	Hopeline Crisis Line: 919-231-4525 or 877-235-4525 Text 877-235-4525
<a href="#">LGBTQ+ Crisis Helpline</a> - for emotional support (from the Trevor Project)	LGBTQ Crisis Counselor Call 1-866-488-7386 or text 'START' to 678-678
<a href="#">LGBTQ+ Hotline</a> - 24-hour hotline providing confidential emotional support, information, referrals, safety planning, and crisis intervention for lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer and/or transgender (LGBTQ+) folks, as well as folks in kink and polyamorous communities who are being abused or have been abused by a partner.	617-742-4911 (voice) 800-832-1901 (Toll-Free)
<a href="#">Victim Connect Resource Map</a> : search for local and national resources	Online Search
<a href="#">National Rehab Hotline</a>	Call 866-210-1303
Help for Pets: <a href="#">Safe havens</a> are sheltering services available for individuals experiencing domestic violence to place their companion animals out of harm's way so that they may seek safety for themselves as well as their animals.	Search for local support



A-Z of Links

Abuse - types	<a href="#">Types of Abuse</a> from the Hotline
Abuse - types	<a href="#">Types of Abuse</a> from Love is Respect
Abuse - keeping records	<a href="#">Keeping records</a> from The Hotline
Abuser - warning signs	<a href="#">Red Flags</a> from The Hotline
Address confidentiality	<a href="#">Address Confidentiality Programs (ACP)</a>
Bright Sky App	Download the <a href="#">Bright Sky App</a>
Children - Child Custody	<a href="#">Find out who will be involved in your child custody case</a> from DomesticShelters
Children - safety planning	<a href="#">Safety Planning with Children</a> from WomensLaw
Children - parenting plans	For further information, see <a href="#">Ten Things to Know about Parenting Plan Cases involving DV</a> from the Resource Center on Domestic Violence: Child Protection and Custody (RCDVCPC)
Children - DV Factsheets	<a href="#">Factsheets</a> from The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)
Compensation - for victims	<a href="#">Victim Compensation programs</a>
Complaint - filing civil Rights	<a href="#">Agency funded by DoJ</a>



Consent – what is it?	<a href="https://www.rainn.org/articles/what-is-consent">https://www.rainn.org/articles/what-is-consent</a>
Consent – what is it?	<a href="https://www.thehotline.org/resources/consent/">https://www.thehotline.org/resources/consent/</a>
Consent - Cup of Tea video	<a href="https://youtu.be/fGoWLWS4-kU">https://youtu.be/fGoWLWS4-kU</a>
Court – safety at	<a href="#">Safety tips for attending Court</a>
Counseling/therapy search	<a href="https://openpathcollective.org/">https://openpathcollective.org/</a>
Criminal Justice System	<a href="#">The Criminal Justice System</a>
Cyberstalking	<a href="#">A Guide to Cyberstalking</a>
Cybercrime - Laws (Download)	<a href="#">18 U.S.C. § 1028</a>
Dating – Guide to Healthy	<a href="#">Guide to Healthy Dating</a>
Deaf - Hotline	<a href="https://www.thedeafhotline.org/">https://www.thedeafhotline.org/</a>
Deaf - resources	<a href="https://www.thehotline.org/resources/deaf-deafblind-hard-of-hearing-services/">https://www.thehotline.org/resources/deaf-deafblind-hard-of-hearing-services/</a>
Dental services	<a href="#">Find Dental services from AACDCF</a>
Divorce – state search	<a href="#">Divorce procedures in your state</a> from Women’s Law. Find your state on the map and select ‘Divorce’.
Domestic Abuse - about	<a href="#">About Domestic Violence</a> from Justice.gov
Domestic Abuse - Hotline	<a href="#">The National DV Hotline</a>

Domestic Abuse – Keeping records	<a href="#">Keeping records</a> from The Hotline
Domestic Abuse - Myths	From <a href="#">DomesticShelters</a>
Domestic Abuse - types	<a href="#">Types of Abuse</a> from the Hotline
Domestic Abuse - types	<a href="#">Types of Abuse</a> from Love is Respect
DomesticShelters – provide online and mobile searchable directory of domestic violence programs and shelters in the U.S. & Canada.	<a href="#">DomesticShelters.org</a>
Elder Abuse – local support	<a href="#">Eldercare Locator</a>
Federal – law: VAWA	<a href="#">Violence Against Women Act</a> - from NNEDV
Federal – law: FVPSA	<a href="#">The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA)</a>
Financial - advice & education	Advice and information from <a href="#">SavvyLadies</a>
Financial - assistance	<a href="#">The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)</a> - find a program in your State:
Financial - benefits	<a href="#">Benefit Checker</a> to find financial assistance
Financial - compensation	The Free From <a href="#">Compensation Compass</a> helps to source funds you might be eligible for based on your state and the crimes committed against you as the result of an abuser.



Financial - Independence Project	<a href="#">The Independence Project</a> from The National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) provides credit-building microloans to survivors of financial abuse to help them build or establish credit.
Financial - managing	<a href="#">Moving Ahead</a> : From the Allstate Foundation, a complete guide to managing your finances, divided into five sections of online training. Also downloadable in Spanish, French and Vietnamese, as well as English.
Financial - tips	<a href="#">Financial Tips for Survivors</a> from NNEDV
Gaslighting	<a href="#">What is gaslighting?</a> From the Hotline
Health support - center search	<a href="#">Find a health centre</a>
Health support - drug use	<a href="#">The National Rehab Hotline</a>
Health support - effects on health	<a href="#">Effects of violence against women</a> from womenshealth.gov
Health support - meditation	<a href="#">Meditation Techniques</a>
Hotlines - what to expect	<a href="#">What to expect if you call a Hotline</a>
Housing - Transitional	<a href="#">Find Transitional Housing in your state</a>
Human Trafficking	<a href="#">Human Trafficking Hotline</a>

Identity theft	<a href="#">Identity Theft</a> from the Identity Theft Resource Center (ITRC) or call for an expert advisor, toll-free by phone on 888-400-5530
Laws in your State	WomensLaw.org <a href="#">map</a>
Legal - questions to ask	<a href="#">What Questions to ask</a> to Law Enforcement and Attorneys
LGBTQ+ Hotline	<a href="#">LGBTQ+ Hotline</a>
LGBTQ+ - The Trevor Project	<a href="#">LGBTQ Crisis Counselor</a>
Local support organization	Search in the <a href="#">Bright Sky app</a>
Love is Respect - support for teens and young adults	<a href="#">LoveisRespect</a>
Men - support	Sexual Assault & Abuse Support for Men from <a href="#">MaleSurvivor</a>
Money	See Financial
Native American - support	<a href="#">Strong Hearts Helpline</a>
NO MORE Silence - Speak your Truth	<a href="#">Victim-survivors share their stories</a>
Office on Violence against Women (OVW)	<a href="#">The OVW</a> is part of federal government
Online Harassment - documenting	<a href="#">Documenting Online Harassment</a>
Online - safety guide	<a href="#">Online Safety Guide</a>
Pets - safety	<a href="#">Pet Safety</a> from The Hotline



Pets – fostering support	<a href="#">Support to keep your pet safe</a> from Safe Havens
Pets – protection orders	<a href="#">List of States that Include Pets in Protection Orders</a>
Pets – safe escape grants	<a href="#">Safe Escape grants</a> from Red Rover Relief
Pets – tips on what to take, etc.	<a href="#">Ownership, essentials to take, and financial assistance</a> from PetMd
Police – should I call them?	<a href="#">Advice if you're not sure</a> from Center for Domestic Peace
Protection Orders - FAQs	<a href="#">FAQs About Protection Orders</a> from DomesticShelters
Protection Orders – state search	From <a href="#">WomensLaw</a>
Rape – Helpline (RAINN)	National Sexual Assault Hotline: 800-656-HOPE (4673) - <a href="#">The Rape, Abuse, &amp; Incest National Network (RAINN)</a> organizes the National Sexual Assault Telephone Hotline - a referral service that can put you in contact with your local rape crisis center. Call the Hotline at 1-800-656-4673, or access RAINN's <a href="#">online chat service</a> .
Rape – about	<a href="#">About Sexual Assault</a> from RAINN
Rape - reporting	<a href="#">Reporting to Law Enforcement</a> from RAINN
Rape - support	<a href="#">End Rape on Campus</a> - working to support an end to campus sexual violence
Relationship - Rights	<a href="#">Relationship Rights</a> from loveisrespect (Download)

Restraining Orders	<a href="#">Restraining Orders &amp; Online Harassment</a>
Safety Net Project- has Toolkits and resources for victim-survivors	<a href="#">The Safety Net Project</a> From NNEDV
Safety – Address Confidentiality	<a href="#">Address Confidentiality Programs</a> from Victimconnect
Safety Planning - Children	<a href="#">Safety Planning with Children</a> from WomensLaw
Safety at Court	<a href="#">Safety tips for attending Court</a>
Safety Planning – Domestic Abuse	<a href="#">A Guide to DV Safety Planning</a> from DomesticShelters
Safety Planning – advice for friends and family	<a href="#">Advice for friends and family on Safety Planning</a> from NCADV;
Safety Plan - Stalking	<a href="#">Safety Plans</a> (Download)
Sexual Assault - Helpline	<a href="#">National Sexual Assault Hotline</a> (RAINN)
Sexual Assault – support for men	<a href="#">Sexual Assault &amp; Abuse Support for Men</a> from MaleSurvivor
Sexual Assault - About	<a href="#">Sexual assault information</a> from NSVRC
Sexual Assault Forensic exam	<a href="#">About Rape Kits</a> from RAINN
Sexual Assault – search for support	<a href="#">Find help near you</a> from RAINN





Sexual Assault - State Coalitions	<a href="#">Find your State Sexual Assault Coalition</a>
Shelters	<a href="#">About Shelters</a> from the Hotline
Stalking – Safety Plan	<a href="#">Safety Plans</a> (Download)
Stalking - Stalkerware	<a href="#">Stalkerware information</a> from the Coalition Against Stalkerware
Stalking - documenting	Download an <a href="#">Incident and Behaviour log</a>
Stalking – local resources	<a href="#">Find local support</a>
State – Laws on Domestic Abuse	<a href="#">Find your state laws</a> (click on map)
State - Laws on Sexual Assault	<a href="#">Find sexual assault laws in your state</a>
State - Sexual Assault Coalitions	<a href="#">Find your state sexual assault coalition</a>
State - Domestic abuse Coalitions	<a href="#">Find your State DV Coalition</a>
State – Protection order info	<a href="#">Find your state’s protection order information</a>
State - Victim Compensation Program	<a href="#">Find your state program</a>
State – workplace support	<a href="#">Workplaces Respond</a> have produced a downloadable guide on support offered by each state

Statutes of Limitations - State	<a href="#">State Guide on Statutes of Limitations</a>
Suicidal - thoughts and self-harm	<a href="#">The National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline</a> : 988 or for the hearing impaired, contact the Lifeline by TTY at: 1-800-799-4889; or chat online.  <a href="#">The Hopeline for children and young adults in crisis</a>  <a href="#">LGBTQ Crisis Counselor</a> 1-866-488-7386
Support systems	<a href="#">What are support systems at home?</a> From Love is Respect
Tech safety – location devices	<a href="#">Checking your phone</a> for location devices from Tech Safety
Tech Safety – changing passwords	<a href="#">Changing passwords</a> from Tech Safety
Teen - support	<a href="#">National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline</a>
Tribal - resources	<a href="#">A searchable directory</a> of services available for all AI/AN survivors of crime and abuse in Indian Country
VAWA – Violence Against Women Act	<a href="#">Violence Against Women Act</a> from NNEDV
Victim - compensation programs	<a href="#">Find your state’s details</a> from NACVCB
Victim connect (map of resources)	<a href="#">Find local support</a> from National Center for Victims of Crime
Workplace Respond	<a href="#">Workplaces Respond</a> have produced a downloadable guide on support offered by each state



If you have any comments or suggestions for this guide,  
please email us at [info@nomore.org](mailto:info@nomore.org)

You can find out about NO MORE by visiting our websites:



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[NOMOREdirectory.org](http://NOMOREdirectory.org)



[NOMOREverbalabuse.org](http://NOMOREverbalabuse.org)



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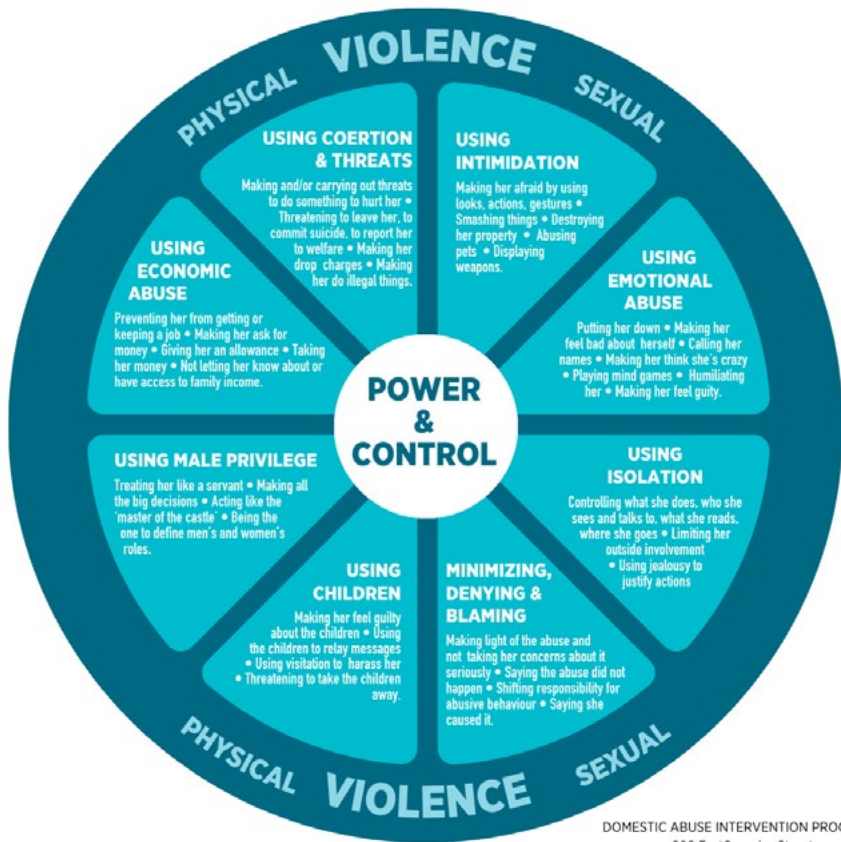
 [instagram.com/nomoreorg](https://instagram.com/nomoreorg)

 [www.youtube.com/user/NoMoreProject](https://www.youtube.com/user/NoMoreProject)

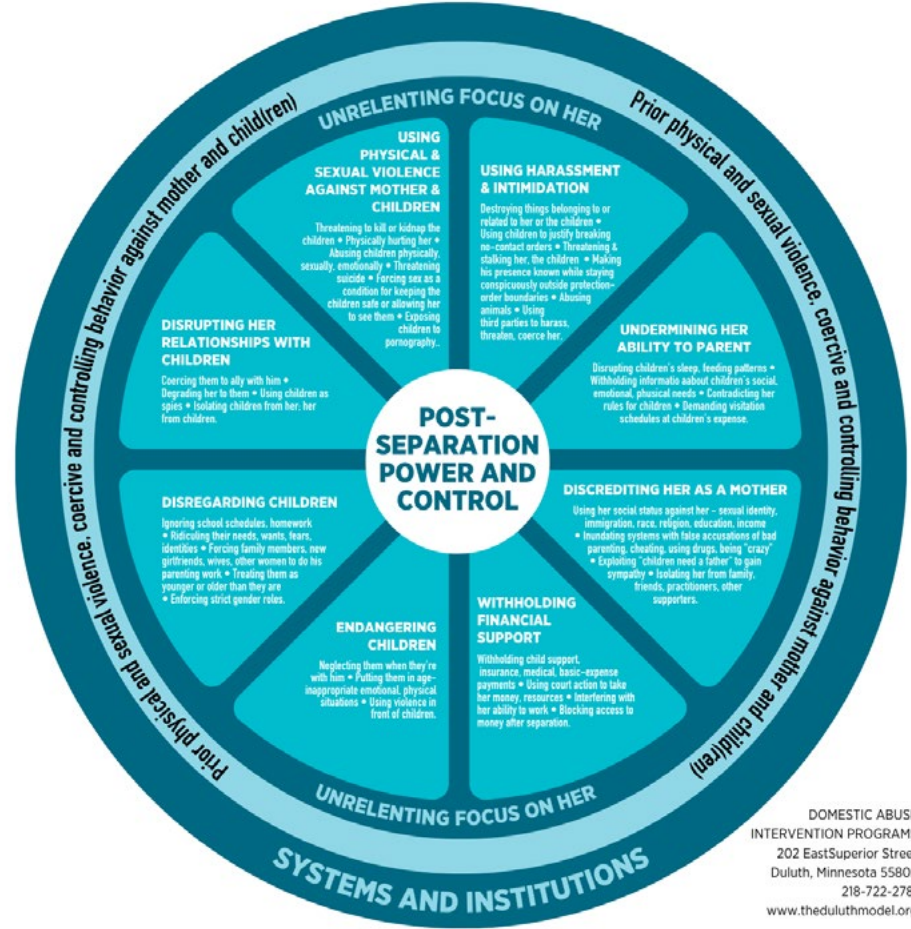


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We also send out huge thanks to the victim-survivors who have shared their stories with us and provided the quotes throughout this guide. The strength they show by speaking about their experiences is inspiring for us all.

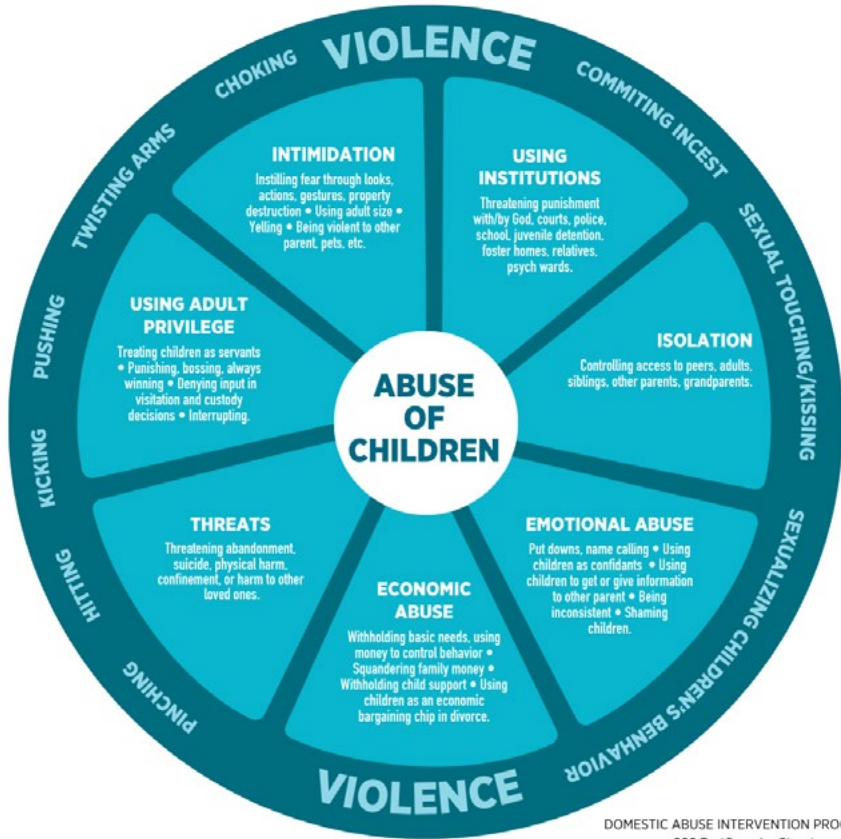


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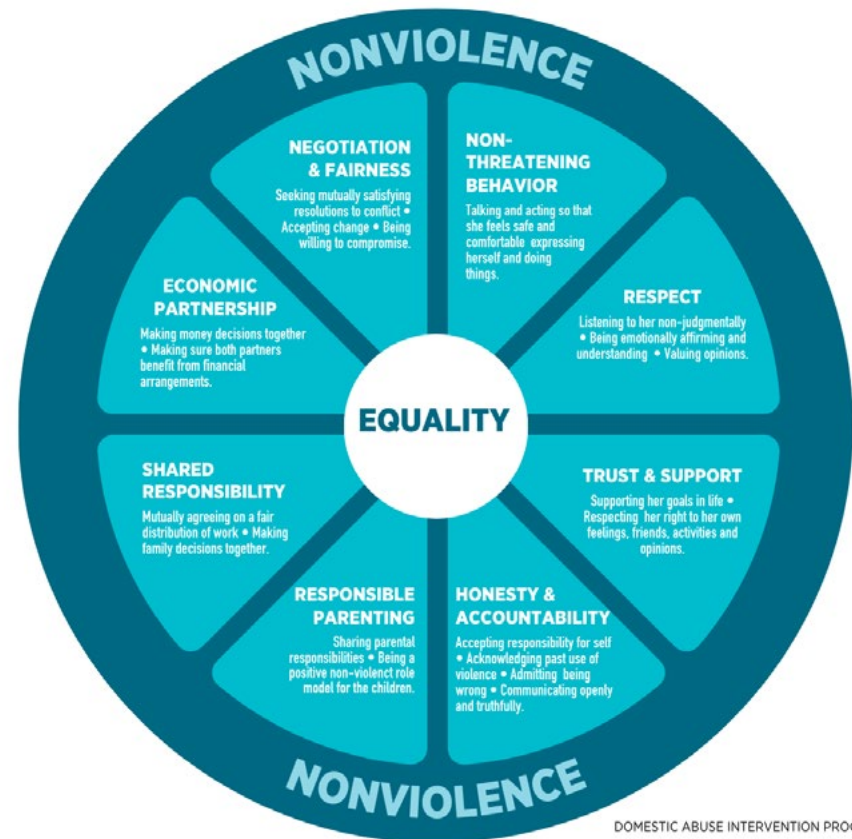


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