



**SAFE
HARBOUR**

Domestic
Violence
Shelter

SURVIVOR PACKET FOR SAFETY AND HEALING



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*"When someone shows you who they are,
believe them the first time"*

~Maya Angelou

*"We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely
admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty."*

~Maya Angelou

*"Work on being in love with the person in the mirror
who has been through so much but is still standing"*

~Anon



WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

Domestic violence simply means violence, or the threat of violence, between members of a family or household.

Legal definition of domestic violence includes:

- Causing (or attempting to cause) bodily injury including sexual assault
- Making another person believe they are about to be seriously physically harmed
- Committing menacing by stalking or aggravated trespass
- Abusing a child.

It is generally not considered domestic violence if someone:

- Calls you bad names (without an act of violence or threat to harm);
- Accuses you of cheating or having an affair;
- Threatens to take your child(ren) or refuses to return them;
- Threatens to call Children and Family Services (Child Protective Services);
- Threatens the filing of legal actions against you (e.g., divorce, custody, visitation);
- Threatens to destroy or take personal property (e.g., keys, cell phone, car);
- Has no history of physical abuse or threat of violence;
- Is abusing drugs or alcohol without a prior history of abusive or threatening behavior toward you or other family or household members;
- Has mental health issues without a prior history of abusive or threatening behavior towards you or other family or household members;
- Uses reasonable parental discipline.



VERBAL ABUSE

Verbal abuse doesn't happen out of anywhere in a relationship. It's a lot more calculating and insidious, causing people on the receiving end to question themselves, wonder if they are overreacting, or even blame themselves. Verbal abuse usually happens in private where no one else can intervene and eventually becomes a regular form of communication within a relationship. For people experiencing it, verbal abuse is often isolating since it chips away at your self-esteem making it more difficult to reach out to a friend.

Many people who experience it rationalize the abuse in their mind and don't even realize it's an unhealthy form of communication. But that doesn't make it any less distressing or mentally exhausting for people on the receiving end. Ultimately, verbal abuse is a means of maintaining power and control over another in the relationship. And there are many subtle forms verbal abuse can take, making it even harder to recognize. For example, verbal abuse includes being subjected to name-calling on a regular basis, constantly feeling demeaned or belittled, and being subjected to the silent treatment by a partner.

If you can't tell whether your partner is being "funny" or "belittling," here are a few tell-tale signs you are being diminished in your relationship.

Here are the 11 most common verbal abuse patterns to look out for in a relationship:

1. Name-calling

This type of verbal abuse is probably the easiest one to recognize. This includes being called names and/or being shouted at on a regular basis. Arguments that always resort to yelling and the use of aggressive phrases in a conversation are all signs that your communication with your partner is anything but healthy. In a healthy relationship, partners step away from an argument or try to talk through the issue. In a verbally abusive relationship, the abuser will yell until they get what they want.

Example: "You idiot, now you have made me angry!"

2. Condescension

Light sarcasm and a sarcastic tone of voice should not be a constant part of your interactions with a partner. This can also include being the constant butt of your partner's jokes. It can start off funny, which is why it often goes undetected, but over time condescension becomes belittling.

Example: "No wonder you are always moaning about your weight, look how clean your plate is!"

3. Manipulation

Sometimes it can be easy to spot a controlling personality, especially when someone continuously pushes their partner to do and say things they are not always comfortable with. Manipulation, on the other hand, can be more difficult to detect. It can be subtle, like turning situations around and putting the blame on the abused partner.

Example: "If you really loved me you wouldn't say or do that."

4. Criticism

It's OK to provide constructive criticism when requested on occasion; being honest with your partner is healthy. However, constant criticism and belittling of a significant other are NOT healthy, and over time can lead to a significant loss of self-esteem.

Example: "Why are you so disorganized? I can always count on you to ruin our nights out!"

5. Demeaning Comments

If a partner puts you down using demeaning comments that refer to your race/ethnic background, gender, religion, background in general, it is unhealthy. This doesn't even need to be consistent, if it happens once, it is no doubt going to happen again, and should not be normalized. A partner who loves and respects you will not use something that is an inherent part of you to put you down.

Examples: "I'm not surprised, you are Asian, you all do that" or "You women, always crying stupid tears for nothing."

6. Threats

While this may seem like an easy one to recognize, it isn't always the case. Threats can be dressed up in a way that makes them appear as if they "aren't so bad," or in a way that makes you question if you really heard right. But a threat is a threat and a loving partner does not resort to them to get their way.

Examples: "I will hurt myself if you leave me tonight" or "If you don't do that you might find that your cat spends the night outdoors!"

7. Blame

Blame is one of the most common forms of verbal abuse and involves constantly putting the blame for one's actions onto their partner instead of taking responsibility for them. This can include blaming a partner for something they had nothing to do with, to blaming the partner for the abuser's emotions.

Examples: "You are the reason why we are never on time for anything!" or "Look what you made me do now!"

8. Accusations

Often stemming from severe jealousy, repeated accusations are a form of verbal abuse. Being constantly accused of something often leads a partner to start questioning themselves on whether they are doing something wrong/dressing inappropriately/talking too much, etc.

Examples: "I bet you are cheating on me!" or "I saw you had fun flirting with your boss again, while I was stuck chatting to your boring coworkers."

9. Withholding

Sometimes a partner may walk away from an argument, preferring to let the dust settle to engage in a more constructive conversation without flaring emotions. While this is definitely a sign of a healthy relationship, the silent treatment, often called withholding, is not. Withholding may include your partner refusing to answer your calls when they don't get what they want or downright ignoring you over nothing.

Example: You are discussing restaurant options and don't want to go with your partner's preference. They leave the room and refuse to talk to you until you apologize for being "mean."

10. Gaslighting

Gaslighting includes discounting a partner's emotions and making them wonder if their feelings are meaningless and/or wrong. This is a very common form of emotional abuse, and often goes undetected, as it can be discreet and severely manipulative. Gaslighting can make one feel isolated and unable to express their feelings. People being gaslighted often find themselves apologizing for behavior that they never committed.

Examples: "Why are you always so sensitive to everything?"

11. Circular Arguments

If your partner constantly disagrees with you, and starts an argument whenever they see an opportunity, or if conversations and arguments seem to go round in circles, leaving you tired and drained, then these are all signs of an unhealthy relationship. People on the receiving end of these types of disagreements tend to feel like they're walking on eggshells in order to avoid going back to the same argument again and again. We do not need to always agree on everything in a relationship, but there should be a mutual acceptance of this, rather than an atmosphere of one-upping the other or engaging in arguments you can never win.

If you feel like you are constantly on edge and walking on eggshells around your partner, or if some of these patterns feel familiar to you, you may be in an unhealthy relationship. Also, if your trusted friends and/or family are telling you that something is wrong, hear them out. They may be seeing, or hearing, something that you cannot. Remember, by setting boundaries and being honest about how something makes you feel, you can learn to empower yourself in a relationship.

WHY STAY?

People who have never been abused often wonder why a person wouldn't just leave an abusive relationship. They don't understand that leaving can be more complicated than it seems. Leaving is often the most dangerous time for a victim of abuse, because abuse is about power and control. When a victim leaves, they are taking control and threatening the abusive partner's power, which could cause the abusive partner to retaliate in very destructive ways. Aside from this danger, there are many reasons why people stay in abusive relationships. Here are just a few of the common ones:

Fear: A person may be afraid of what will happen if they decide to leave the relationship.

Believing Abuse is Normal: A person may not know what a healthy relationship looks like, perhaps from growing up in an environment where abuse was common, and they may not recognize that their relationship is unhealthy.

Fear of Being Outed: If someone is in an LGBTQ relationship and has not yet come out to everyone, their partner may threaten to reveal this secret.

Embarrassment or Shame: It's often difficult for someone to admit that they've been abused. They may feel they've done something wrong by becoming involved with an abusive partner. They may also worry that their friends and family will judge them.

Low Self-Esteem: When an abusive partner constantly puts someone down and blames them for the abuse, it can be easy for the victim to believe those statements and think that the abuse is their fault.

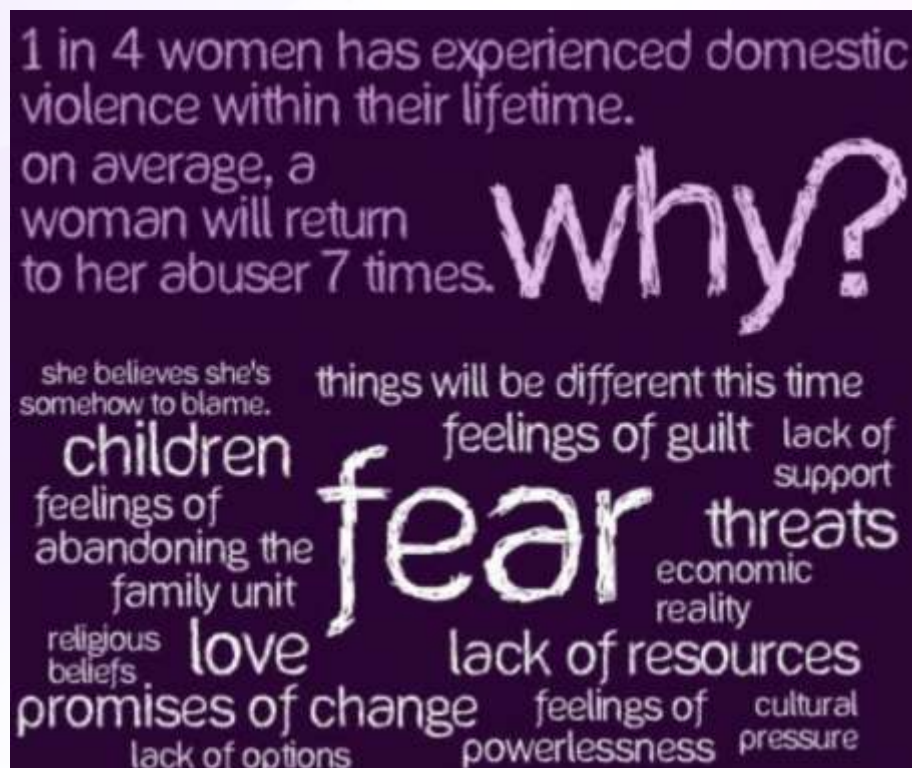
Love: So often, the victim feels love for their abusive partner. They may have children with them and want to maintain their family. Abusive people can often be charming, especially at the beginning of a relationship, and the victim may hope that their partner will go back to being that person. They may only want the violence to stop, not for the relationship to end entirely.

Cultural/Religious Reasons: Traditional gender roles supported by someone's culture or religion may influence them to stay rather than end the relationship for fear of bringing shame upon their family.

Language Barriers/Immigration Status: If a person is undocumented, they may fear that reporting the abuse will affect their immigration status. Also, if their first language isn't English, it can be difficult to express the depth of their situation to others.

Lack of Money/Resources: Financial abuse is common, and a victim may be financially dependent on their abusive partner. Without money, access to resources or even a place to go, it can seem impossible for them to leave the relationship. This feeling of helplessness can be especially strong if the person lives with their abusive partner.

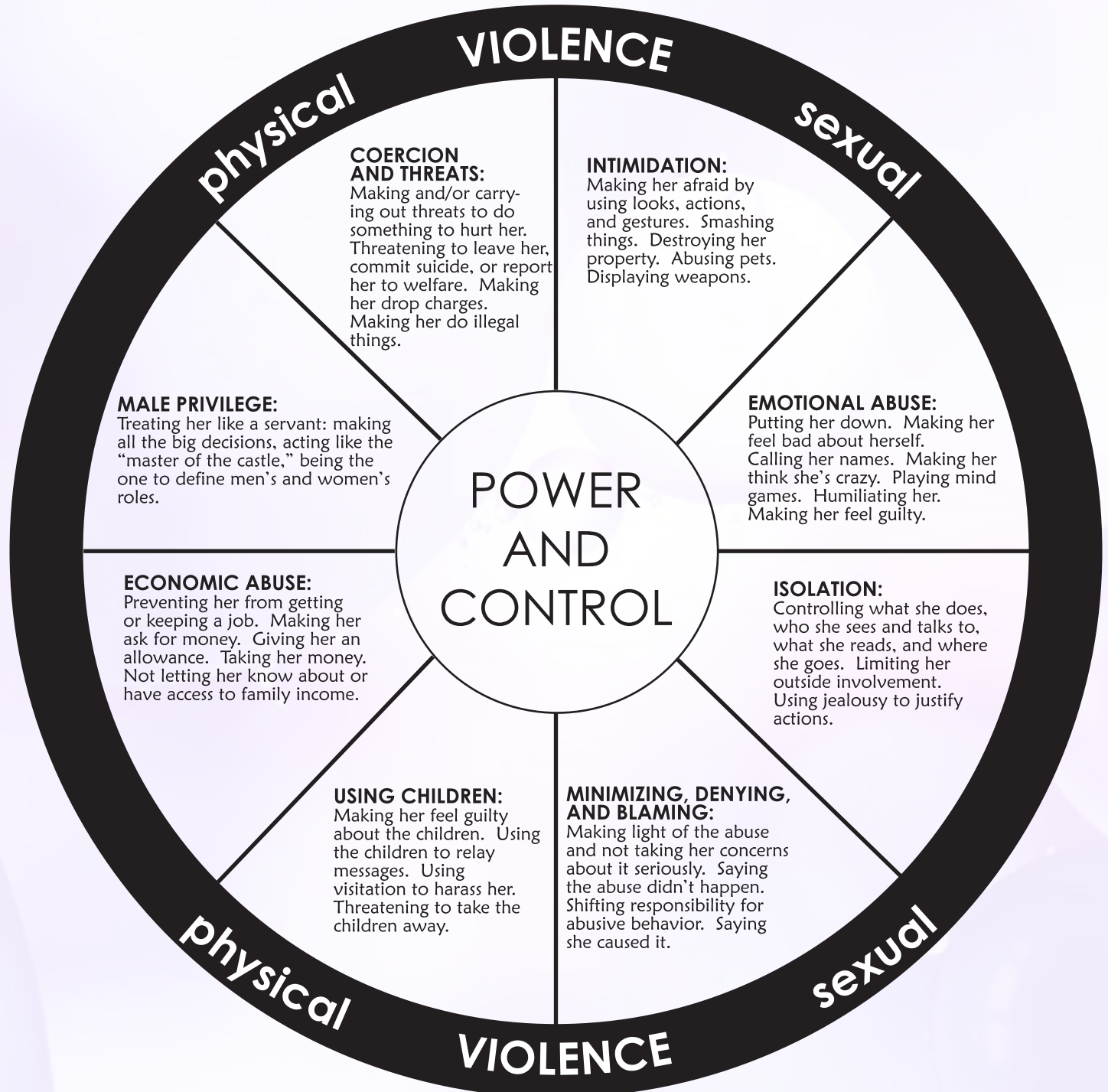
Disability: When someone is physically dependent on their abusive partner, they can feel that their well-being is connected to the relationship. This dependency could heavily influence their decision to stay in an abusive relationship.



POWER AND CONTROL WHEEL

Physical and sexual assaults, or threats to commit them, are the most apparent forms of domestic violence and are usually the actions that allow others to become aware of the problem. However, regular use of other abusive behaviors by the batterer, when reinforced by one or more acts of physical violence, make up a larger system of abuse. Although physical assaults may occur only once or occasionally, they instill threat of future violent attacks and allow the abuser to take control of the woman's life and circumstances.

The Power & Control diagram is a particularly helpful tool in understanding the overall pattern of abusive and violent behaviors, which are used by a batterer to establish and maintain control over his partner. Very often, one or more violent incidents are accompanied by an array of these other types of abuse. They are less easily identified, yet firmly establish a pattern of intimidation and control in the relationship.



LIVING IN DENIAL

How denial works at each stage of the cycle to keep the cycle going. Breaking the denial can lead to breaking the cycle.

TENSION BUILDING:

- I deny it's happening
- I excuse it as some outside stressor (work, etc.)
- I blame myself for the abuser's behavior
- I deny that the abuse will worsen
- The abuser denies by blaming the tension on the victim, work, traffic.... anything! Batterers deny responsibility for their actions by getting drunk or abusing drugs.

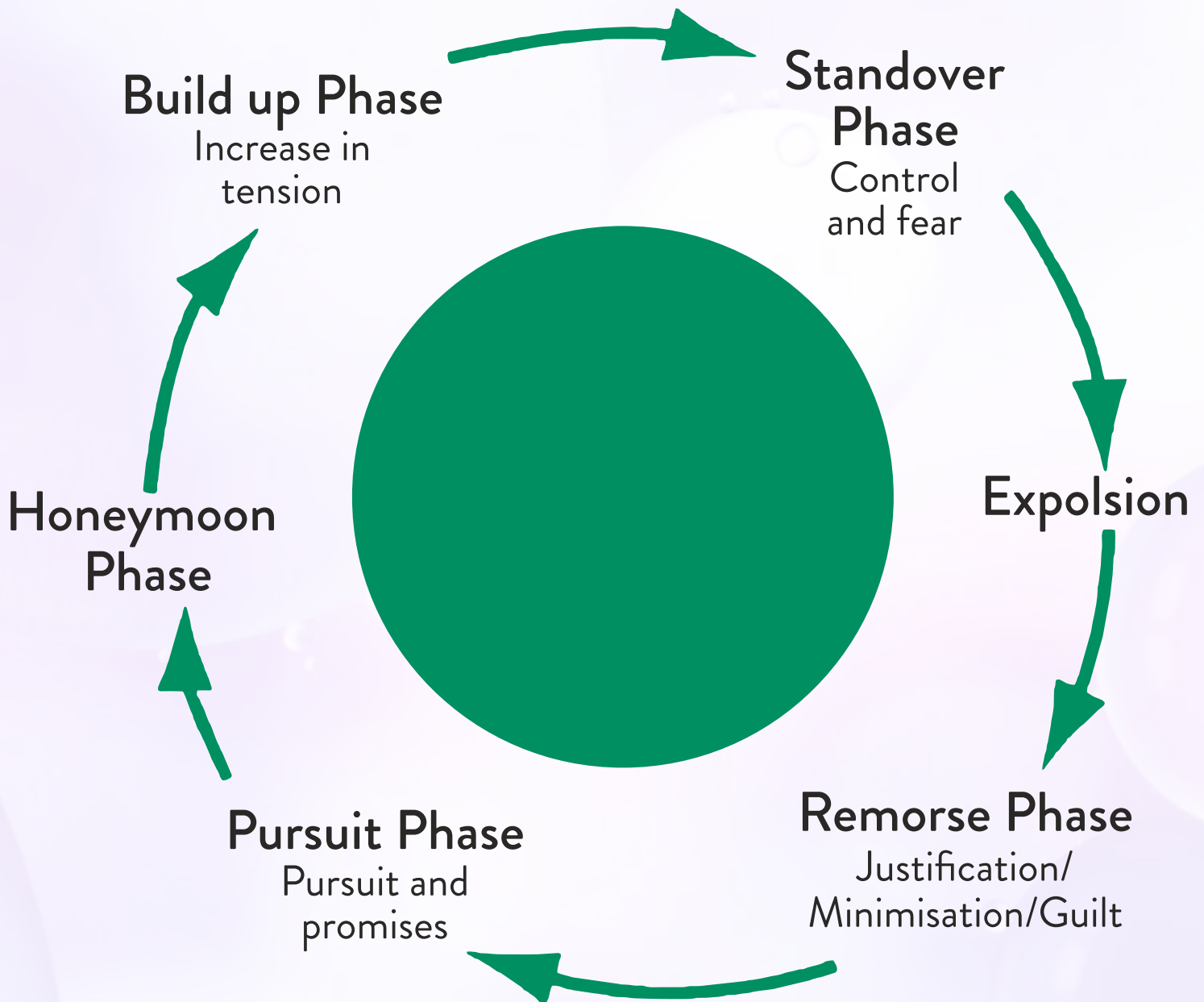
EXPLOSION:

- I deny my injuries
- I diminish the severity by saying "it's only a bruise or welt, or I only got hit once."
- I didn't need to call the police or go to the hospital.
- I blame it on the batterer's drug or alcohol use, "he didn't know what he was doing."
- I didn't think it was rape because we are lovers.
- The abuser blames it on the victim, "You had it coming." "You deserved it." "I had to teach you a lesson."

HONEYMOON:

- I minimize the injuries ("It could have been worse.")
- I believe that it will stay this way (in the honeymoon stage)
- This is the person of my dreams, the person I first met
- I believe the promises
- The abuser also believes it won't happen again.

THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ASSESSMENT

Look over the following questions. Think about how you are being treated and how you treat your partner. Remember, when one person scares, hurts, or continually puts down the other person, it is abuse.

Does your partner ...

Embarrass or make fun of you in front of friends or family?

Put down your accomplishments or goals?

Make you feel like you are unable to make decisions?

Use intimidation or threats to gain compliance?

Tell you that you are nothing without them?

Treat you roughly -- grab, push, pinch, shove or hit you?

Threaten or abuse your pets?

Call you several times a night or show up to make sure you are where you said you would be?

Use drugs or alcohol as an excuse for saying hurtful things or abusing you?

Blame you for how they feel or act?

Pressure you sexually for things you aren't ready for?

Make you feel like there "is no way out" of the relationship?

Prevent you from doing things you want, like spending time with your friends or family?

Try to keep you from leaving after a fight, or leave you somewhere after a fight to "teach you a lesson?"

Do you ...

Sometimes feel scared of how your partner will act?

Constantly make excuses to other people for your partner's behavior?

Believe that you can help your partner change if only you changed something about yourself?

Try not to do anything that would cause conflict or make your partner angry?

Feel like no matter what you do, your partner is never happy with you?

Always do what your partner wants you to do instead of what you want?

Stay with your partner because you are afraid of what your partner would do if you broke up?

Without help, the abuse will continue.

DO YOU THINK YOUR PARTNER MIGHT BE ABUSIVE?

The following signs often occur before manifestation of full abuse and may serve clues to one person in a relationship becoming abusive of the other. Think about the following questions and apply them to your partner. If you can identify with one or more of the scenarios or answer "yes" to any of the questions below, you may be with an abusive partner.

- Did your partner grow up in a violent family?
- Does your partner tend to use force or violence to "solve" their problems?
- Does your partner have a quick temper? Do they over-react to little problems and frustration? Are they cruel to animals? Do they punch walls or throw things when they are upset?
- Do they abuse alcohol or other drugs?
- Do they have strong traditional ideas about "roles" in relationships? For example, do they think all women should stay at home, take care of their husbands, and follow their wishes and orders?
- Are they jealous of your other relationships -- anyone you may know? Do they keep tabs on you? Do they want to know where you are at all times? Do they want you with them all of the time?
- Do they have access to guns, knives or other lethal weapons? Do they talk of using them against people or threaten to use them to get even?
- Do they expect you to follow their orders or advice? Do they become angry if you do not fulfill their wishes or if you cannot anticipate what they want?
- Do they go through extreme highs and lows almost as though they are two different people? Are they extremely kind one time, and extremely cruel another?
- When your partner gets angry, do you fear them? Do you find that not making them angry has become a major part of your life? Do you do what they want you to do, rather than what you want to do?
- Do they treat you roughly? Do they physically force you to do what you do not want to do?
- Do they threaten or abuse your pets?

Threats and physical abuse are prevalent in relationship violence, often occurring in an escalating cycle.

SIGNS TO LOOK FOR IN A BATTERING PERSONALITY

Below is a list of behaviors that are seen in people who beat their partners. If the person has three or more of the following behaviors, there is a strong potential for physical violence. The more signs a person has, the more likely the person is a batterer. In some cases, a batterer may have only a couple of the behaviors, but they are very exaggerated (e.g., will try to explain the behavior as signs of their love and concern, and the partner will be flattered at first) but as time goes on, the behaviors become more severe and serve to dominate and control the relationship.

Jealousy - At the beginning of a relationship, an abuser will always say that jealousy is a sign of love. Jealousy has nothing to do with love; it's a sign of possessiveness and lack of trust. The abuser will question the partner about who they talk to, accuse them of flirting, or be jealous of the time they spend with their family, friends or children. As the jealousy progresses, the abuser may call frequently during the day or drop by unexpectedly. The abuser may refuse to let the partner work for fear they will meet someone else, or even do such strange behaviors such as checking the car mileage or asking friends to "watch" them.

Controlling Behavior - At first, the batterer will say this behavior is because they are concerned for the partner's safety, the need to use their time well, or the need to make good decisions. They will be angry if the partner is "late" coming back from the store or an appointment, will question closely about where they went and who they talked to. As this behavior gets worse, the offender may not let the partner make personal decisions about the house, clothing, going to church, and may keep all the money or even ask the partner to ask permission to leave the house.

Quick Involvement - Many victims of domestic violence dated or knew their abusers for less than six months before they were married, engaged, or living together. The relationship starts like a whirlwind, with claims such as, "you're the only person I've ever been able to talk to" or "I've never felt loved like this by anyone." There will be pressure to commit to the relationship in such a way that the victim may feel very guilty or that they are "letting the other person down" by wanting to slow down or break off the relationship.

Unrealistic Expectations - Abusive people will expect their partners to meet all their needs: they expect the partner to be the perfect spouse, parent, lover, friend. They will say things like "If you love me, I'm all you need and you're all I need."

Isolation - The abusive person tries to cut the person off from all resources. If, for instance, the abusive person is a male and his partner has male friends, he might say that she's a "whore" and if she has female friends, she's a "lesbian." The abusive person accuses people who are supportive of the partner of "causing trouble." They may try to keep the partner from having a phone, car, or they may try to keep them from working or going to school.

Blames Others For Problems - They may feel that others are always doing them wrong or are out to get them. They may make mistakes and then blame the partner for upsetting them and keeping them from concentrating on the task. The abuser may tell the partner that they are at fault for almost anything that goes wrong.

Blames Others For Feelings - An abuser may tell the partner "You make me mad," "It's your fault that I hit you."

Hypersensitivity - An abuser is easily insulted. They claim their feelings are "hurt" when really they're very mad. They take the slightest setback as personal attacks. They will "rant and rave" about the injustices of things that have happened - things that are really just part of living, like being asked to work overtime, getting a traffic ticket, being told some behavior is annoying, or being asked to help with chores.

Cruelty to Animals or Children – The abuser is a person who punishes animals brutally or is insensitive to their pain or suffering, they may expect children to be capable of doing things beyond their ability (e.g. spanking a two-year-old for wetting a diaper) or he may tease children until they cry (60% of abusers also beat the children in the same home). They may not want children to eat at the same table or expect them to stay in their rooms all evening while he is home.

Verbal Abuse - In addition to saying things that are meant to be cruel and hurtful, the abuser can be degrading, vulgar and running down the partner's accomplishments.

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde – Many partners are confused by their abuser's "sudden" changes in mood – they may think the abuser has some special mental problem because one moment they are nice and the next they're exploding. Explosiveness and moodiness are typical of people who beat their partners, and these behaviors are related to other characteristics like hypersensitivity.

Applies mostly to male abusers:

Playful Use of Force in Sex – This type of abuser may like to throw the woman down and hold her down during sex, he may want to act out fantasies during sex where the woman is helpless, letting her know that the idea of rape is exciting. He may show little concern about whether the woman wants to have sex and uses sulking or anger to manipulate her into compliance. He may start having sex with the woman while she is sleeping, or demand sex when she is ill or tired.

Rigid Sex Roles – The abuser expects a woman to serve him; he may say the woman must stay at home, that she must obey in all things – even things that are criminal in nature. The abuser will see women as inferior to men, responsible for menial tasks, stupid, and unable to be a whole person without a relationship.

The following are red flags that victims often fail to identify as being the beginning of physical abuse:

Past Battering – This person may say that they have been involved in domestic violence in the past but that the victim "made them do it." The partner may hear from relatives or ex-spouses/partners that the person is abusive.

Threats of Violence – This could include any threat of physical force meant to control the other person such as, "I'll slap your mouth off," or "I'll kill you," etc. Most people do not threaten their mates, but an abuser will try to excuse threats by saying, "everybody talks like that."

Breaking or Throwing Objects – Breaking a loved one's possessions can be used as punishment, but mostly it is used to terrify the partner into doing what they want. This demonstrates a sign of extreme emotional immaturity, but there is also a great danger when someone thinks they have the "right" to punish or frighten their partner.

Any Force During an Argument – This may involve taking car keys, barring the person from leaving the room, physically restraining, or any pushing or shoving.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH EXPOSED TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



All children and youth who live with domestic violence are affected by the experience. The nature and extent of the effects vary greatly. Some children are severely traumatized while others are able to cope well, and go on to live healthy, productive lives.

Children are not just eye witnesses to domestic violence. They are actively involved in trying to understand the abuse, predict when it will happen, protect themselves, their mother or their siblings and worrying about the consequences. Fear and secrecy dominate family relationships, and survival becomes the primary goal of non-abusing family members. The focus on making it through each day may leave little room for fun and relaxation, meeting basic needs or planning for the future.

Children are exposed to domestic violence in many different ways:

- Seeing mother threatened, demeaned or battered
- Being in the middle of an assault by accident, because the abuser intends it, or because the child tries to intervene
- Overhearing conflict and battering
- Seeing the aftermath, such as mother's injuries and trauma reactions
- Living in a household dominated by tension and fear
- Being raised by parents whose ability to care for them is compromised by domestic violence
- Being used and manipulated by the abuser to hurt the battered parent
- Suffering the consequences of economic abuse

Effects of exposure to domestic violence can include:

- Believing the abuse is their fault
- Turning against mother or father or having ambivalent feelings about both parents
- Feeling that they are alone, that there is no one who understands them
- Being afraid to talk about the abuse or express their feelings
- Developing negative core beliefs about themselves and others
- Developing unhealthy coping and survival reactions, such as mental health or behavior problems
- Believing that the world is a dangerous and unpredictable place
- Being isolated from people who might find out about the abuse or offer help

• ***Children and youth also learn lessons such as:***

- Violence and coercion are normal and justifiable.
- Abusive tactics are effective ways of getting what you want.
- There are two ways to solve problems: aggression and passivity.
- Victims are responsible for what happens to them.
- People who hurt others don't face consequences for their actions.
- It's OK to blame problems on someone else.
- People who are supposed to take care of you cannot always be trusted.
- Women are not worthy of respect.

Teenagers (13–18 years)

Older children may exhibit the most behavioral changes as a result of exposure to violence. Depending on their circumstances, teenagers may:

- Talk about the event all the time or deny that it happened
- Refuse to follow rules or talk back with greater frequency
- Complain of being tired all the time
- Engage in risky behaviors
- Sleep more or less than usual
- Increase aggressive behaviors
- Want to be alone, not even wanting to spend time with friends
- Experience frequent nightmares
- Use drugs or alcohol, run away from home, or get into trouble with the law

Witnessing domestic violence can have negative effects on children's development. Exposure to domestic violence, like other toxic stressors, can interfere with a child's healthy brain development. This can lead to altered stress response, difficulty paying attention, hyper-startle response, and other problems. The potential symptoms childhood exposure to domestic violence can be characterized as externalized or internalized symptoms. Externalized symptoms are more visible and often manifest as behavioral problems. Internalized symptoms are less visible and more likely to be characterized as mental health problems.

Externalized symptoms of children's exposure to domestic violence include:

- Aggression
- Lower social competence, including less empathy with others
- Lower verbal, cognitive and motor abilities
- Restlessness, impulsivity and difficulty concentrating
- Behavioral and academic difficulties in school
- Immaturity, delays in development and regression to earlier developmental stages

Internalized symptoms of children's exposure to domestic violence include:

- Depression, anxiety and hyper-vigilance
- Fearful, withdrawn and inhibited behavior

- Lower self esteem
- Shame and feeling responsible for the abuse
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Long term effects of exposure to domestic violence include a higher risk for alcohol and drug abuse, sexual acting out, running away, and suicide. Boys who grow up with domestic abuse are more likely to abuse their intimate partners, and girls are less likely to seek help if they become victims in their adult relationships.

STEPS FOR DECISION MAKING

Step 1: Identify the decision

You realize that you need to make a decision. Try to clearly define the nature of the decision you must make. This first step is very important.

Step 2: Gather relevant information

Collect some pertinent information before you make your decision: what information is needed, the best sources of information, and how to get it. This step involves both internal and external "work." Some information is internal: you'll seek it through a process of self-assessment. Other information is external: you'll find it online, in books, from other people, and from other sources.

Step 3: Identify the alternatives

As you collect information, you will probably identify several possible paths of action, or alternatives. You can also use your imagination and additional information to construct new alternatives. In this step, you will list all possible and desirable alternatives.

Step 4: Weigh the evidence

Draw on your information and emotions to imagine what it would be like if you carried out each of the alternatives to the end. Evaluate whether the need identified in Step 1 would be met or resolved through the use of each alternative. As you go through this difficult internal process, you'll begin to favor certain alternatives: those that seem to have a higher potential for reaching your goal. Finally, place the alternatives in a priority order, based upon your own value system.

Step 5: Choose among alternatives

Once you have weighed all the evidence, you are ready to select the alternative that seems to be best one for you. You may even choose a combination of alternatives. Your choice in Step 5 may very likely be the same or similar to the alternative you placed at the top of your list at the end of Step 4.

Step 6: Take action

You're now ready to take some positive action by beginning to implement the alternative you chose in Step 5.

Step 7: Review your decision & its consequences

In this final step, consider the results of your decision and evaluate whether or not it has resolved the need you identified in Step 1. If the decision has *not* met the identified need, you may want to repeat certain steps of the process to make a new decision. For example, you might want to gather more detailed or somewhat different information or explore additional alternatives.

PERSONAL BILL OF RIGHTS

1. I have the right to ask for what I want.
2. I have the right to say no to requests or demands I cannot meet.
3. I have the right to express all of my feelings, positive or negative.
4. I have the right to change my mind.
5. I have the right to make mistakes and not have to be perfect.
6. I have the right to follow my own values and standards.
7. I have the right to say no to anything when I feel I am not ready, it is unsafe, or it violates my values.
8. I have the right to determine my own priorities.
9. I have the right not to be responsible for others' behaviors, actions, feelings, or problems.
10. I have the right to expect honesty from others.
11. I have the right to be angry at someone I love.
12. I have the right to be uniquely myself.
13. I have the right to feel scared and say, "I'm afraid."
14. I have the right to say, "I don't know."
15. I have the right not to give excuses or reasons for my behavior.
16. I have the right to make decisions based on my feelings.
17. I have the right to my own needs for personal space and time.
18. I have the right to be playful and frivolous.
19. I have the right to be healthier than those around me.
20. I have the right to be in a non-abusive environment.
21. I have the right to make friends and be comfortable around people.
22. I have the right to change and grow.
23. I have the right to have my needs and wants respected by others.
24. I have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.
25. I have the right to be happy.

HUMAN RIGHTS FOR PEOPLE IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

In a romantic and sexual dyad, not only does familiarity breed contempt, it can also lead to abuse.

What rights do people have in intimate relationships? All social institutions - the family, the community, the church, the government, and the workplace - have witnessed human rights abuses between and among people. Staunch feminists attribute these situations to a culture beset with patriarchal beliefs and practices. Even artificial technology is used to perpetuate human rights abuse. Worst, abuses on a broader scale start with the basic social unit the dyad.

Sociologically, the dyad pertains to two people in different levels of social relationship, ranging from best-friends-forever (BFF) pair to impersonal employer-employee interaction. But when it comes to abuses, a romantic and sexual dyad serves as a haven. What drives a lover to become abusive?

Studies show that many abusers feel insecure about themselves and could have been previously abused as well. Sadly, they see a blurred border between loving and controlling their partner. More sadly, they refuse to admit that they have a problem and reject any advice about seeking professional help to address personal issues. Human rights abuses in intimate relationships can be in the form of physical violence and sexual attacks such as wife/husband battery and marital rape. Emotional and verbal slaps contribute to psychological or mental abuse. This can happen when a man or a woman publicly humiliates his/her lover, or deliberately gives her/him deafening silent treatment. Economic abuse is also devoid of human compassion, especially when either of the two parties controls household resources. The income-earner can consciously withhold any financial support to the family as a way of imposing that power and further punishing the abused.

To help curb human rights abuses, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was issued by the United Nations (UN) in 1948. The UDHR states that: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights...Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person...No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."



In the context of intimate relationships, this is a list of rights:

- The right to share equally with your partner all decisions and responsibilities related to your relationship, children, home and finances.
- The right to share equally with your mate in all financial decisions.
- The right to have friendships outside of your relationship as long as you do not violate the privacy of your relationship with your partner.
- The right to express your opinion and then be given the same respect and consideration as those of your mate.
- The right to have and express your sexual needs and desires without feeling like you are selfish, demanding, or aggressive.
- The right to have your emotional, physical and intellectual needs be as important as the needs of your mate.
- The right to expect your mate to do his/her part to resolve difficulties to your relationship.
- The right to hold your mate responsible for her/his behavior rather than assuming that responsibility yourself.
- The right to seek professional help with your relationship.
- The right never to be physically attacked or emotionally degraded by your mate and the right to end the relationship (and to seek safety), if either occurs.
- The right to expect significant behavioral changes rather than apologies and promises from your partner if a single battering incident occurs.
- The right to not blame yourself if the relationship in which you have invested so much love and effort ends.

Moreover, everyone has the right to love and be loved well, to seek and experience happiness, and to have a meaningful life and live it without fear.



BOUNDARIES

Establishing healthy boundaries is an integral part to a domestic violence survivor's healing and recovery journey. But after experiencing abuse, many survivors have a difficult time knowing what constitutes a boundary and what makes a healthy boundary.

Why is that? It's because survivors have been conditioned to believe that their wants and needs don't matter—that they have no rights and that their voice should not be heard. It stands to reason that survivors have difficulty in creating boundaries and asking for what they want or need because many just don't know!

So what are healthy boundaries? Healthy boundaries refer to ways survivors can take care of themselves. The boundaries can be physical, emotional, verbal, or all three. It is a line you can create that others cannot cross. It's what you will and won't allow. It's creating a healthy life for yourself by knowing and understanding your limits.

Only you can decide when you are ready to set those boundaries. It is your personal space, your emotions, and your life. No one can tell you how to go about setting boundaries. You can, however, seek guidance from a therapist in setting proper boundaries that coincide with your healing process.

So how can you go about setting healthy boundaries? Below are some tips to help you get started.

Learn your comfort level

Knowing what you are and are not comfortable with is an essential part to speaking up about a boundary. When someone says or does something that makes you feel uncomfortable, that is an indication that the person is likely crossing a boundary. Speak up and let the person know that it makes you uncomfortable.

Maintain open communication

This kind of goes hand-in-hand with the above tip. Being vocal about your wants and needs is essential to maintaining a healthy relationship, whether it is with a significant other, with family members, with coworkers, or even with friends. It can be difficult opening up and verbalizing your thoughts. After all, the abusers never cared to know and conditioned you to keep quiet.

Stay calm

When you verbalize your boundaries, keep a calm tone to your voice. Be firm, but be respectful. Abusers are never respectful of you, so you might be under the impression that you don't need to be respectful back. On the contrary, the calmer you remain, the better it'll be in the long run. Staying calm when voicing your boundaries will work for anyone in your life – significant others, friends, coworkers, family members, etc.

Don't worry about what others will think of your boundaries

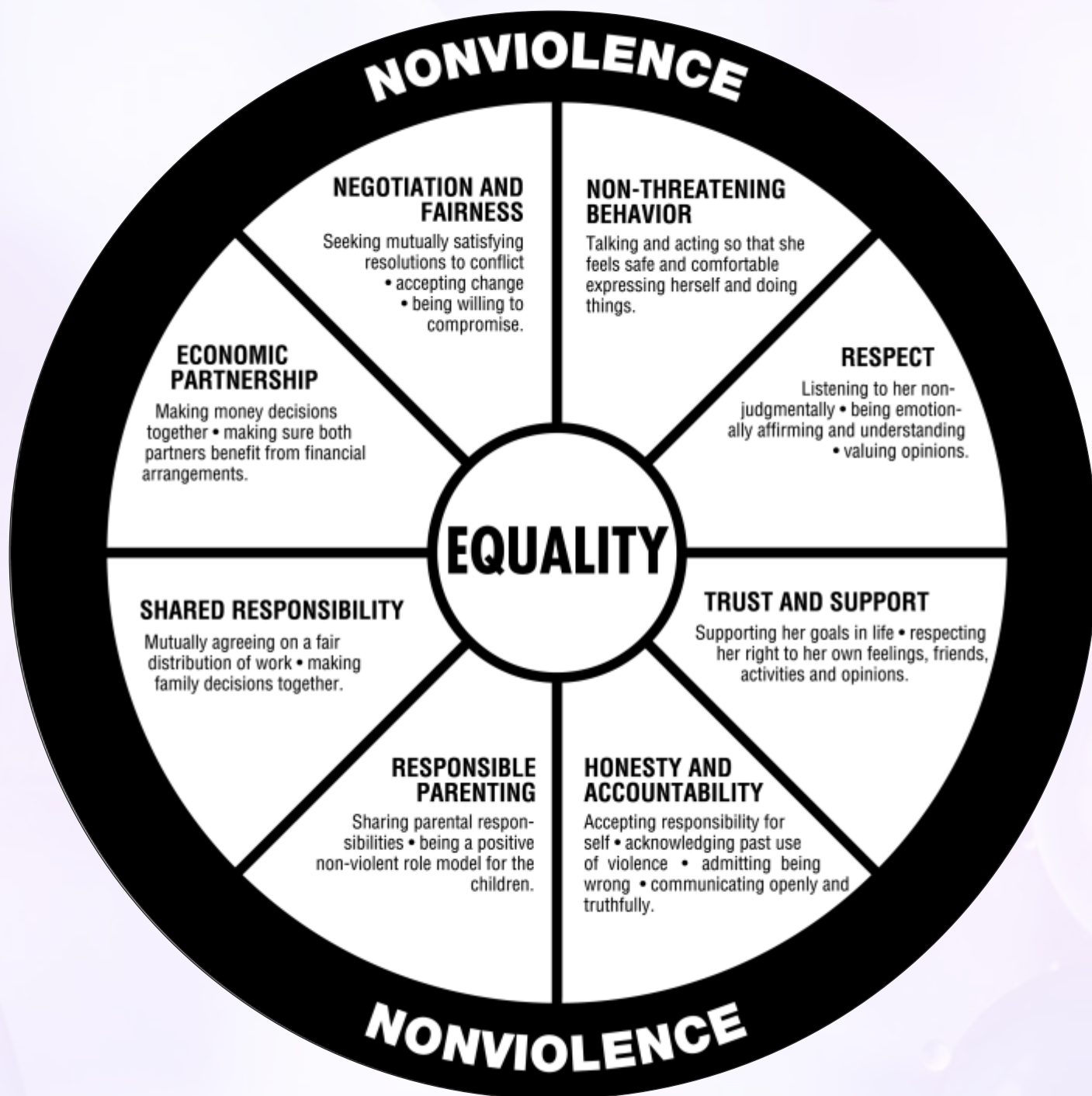
I was always concerned with how people would react to the boundaries that I set. You are only responsible for your own emotions and actions. Those who react negatively to your boundaries are people who you can keep at arm's length. You are on a path to healing and recovery, so you only need to be concerned with your own wants and needs.

Practice self-care

Your first priority is to take care of yourself. Regaining your sense of self is of the utmost importance while you recover. You can't do that while the abuser or others are constantly harping on you. So a healthy boundary to have here could be going No Contact with them. Another healthy boundary could be getting the proper amount of sleep each night. Self-care is not selfish. It is necessary.

No matter what type of relationship you have with someone, setting healthy boundaries is a must in order for you to move forward in your healing journey. These boundaries will allow you to be your best self and help maintain your personal integrity. With practice, you can set and maintain the boundaries that will best work for you.





JOURNAL WRITING

Journaling can be a really helpful tool for those who have gotten out of an abusive relationship and are struggling to move on or find closure. Taking the time to acknowledge your feelings and explore them in a journal can help you figure out where you're at in your healing process and decide what kind of life you want to create for yourself moving forward. Some helpful topics to explore might be:

- How are you feeling about everything now?
- Are there any ways you still feel unsafe or controlled by your partner?
- What will it take for you to feel totally safe?
- What does your support system look like?
- What kinds of things are you doing to take care of yourself as you're healing?
- What are some things you definitely want to watch out for or will not tolerate?
- What do you want your future to look like?
- What steps will it require to make that vision a reality?

Not only can exploring those topics in a journal help you understand how you're doing now, but reading back on old entries can help you see how far you've come.

Independent, strong and happy. You are important to us!



HEALING

Safe Harbour provides support groups for victims who have been or are now in abusive relationships looking to make changes in their lives. We provide several different options for attending one of our groups. Please ask us for details. Because we understand abuse we can help you on your journey of healing. By staying connected with Safe Harbour we can help you become strong and independent.

