

SIGNS TO LOOK FOR IN AN ABUSIVE PERSONALITY

Women often ask us what to look for or how they can predict if a man they are interested in is likely to be abusive or controlling.

- 1. JEALOUSY:** At the beginning of a relationship, an abuser will often say his jealousy is a sign of love; jealousy has nothing to do with love, it's a sign of insecurity and possessiveness. He will question the woman about who she talks to, accuse her of flirting, or be jealous of time she spends with family, friends or children. As the jealousy progresses, he may call her frequently during the day or drop by unexpectedly. He may even do strange behaviours such as checking her car mileage, ask friends to watch her or check her emails and phone.
- 2. CONTROLLING BEHAVIOUR:** At first, the abuser might say that this behaviour is because he is concerned for the woman's safety, her need to use time well, or her need to make good decisions. He will be angry if the woman is "late" coming back from shopping or an appointment, he will question her closely about where she went, who she talked to. As this behaviour get worse, he may not let the woman make personal decisions about the house, her clothing, religious beliefs; he may keep money or make her ask permission to leave the house.
- 3. QUICK INVOLVEMENT:** The abusive man may have only dated the woman for a very short period of time before needing to live together or become engaged. He comes on like a whirl-wind claiming "love at first sight", and he will tell the woman flattering things such as "you're the only person I could ever talk to"; "I've never felt loved like this by anyone". He needs someone desperately, and will pressure the woman to commit to him.
- 4. UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS:** He is very dependent on the woman for all his needs; he expects her to be the perfect partner, mother, lover and friend. He will say things like "if you love me, I'm all you need and you're all I need". As a partner she is expected to take care of everything for him emotionally and in the home.
- 5. ISOLATION:** The man tries to cut the woman off from all resources. If she has men friends, she is a "whore", if she has close women friends, she is a lesbian, if she is close to family she is "tied to the apron strings" or has not grown up. He accuses people who are her supports of

“causing trouble”, he may want to live in the country without access to transport – he may not let her use the car, or be involved in any community life.

6. **BLAMES OTHERS FOR HIS PROBLEMS:** If he is chronically unemployed, someone is always doing him wrong, out to get him. If he has financial problems it is because of someone else. He may make mistakes and then blame the woman for upsetting him and keeping him from concentrating or doing his job. He will tell the woman she is at fault for anything that goes wrong.
7. **BLAMES OTHERS FOR HIS FEELINGS:** He will tell the woman “you make me mad”, “you’re hurting me by not doing what I ask”, “I can’t help being angry”. He is free to make his own decisions and feel the way he does but will use his feelings to manipulate and blame his partner for whatever does not suit him e.g. “It’s your fault I’m feeling this way”.
8. **HYPERSENSITIVITY:** The man is easily insulted, he claims his feelings are “hurt” when he’s really very mad, or he takes the slightest setbacks as personal attacks. He will “rant and rave” about the injustice of things that have happened to him – things that are really just part of living like being asked to work over-time, getting a traffic ticket, being asked to help with chores.
9. **CRUELTY TO ANIMALS OR CHILDREN:** This is a man who punishes animals brutally or is insensitive to their pain or suffering; he may expect children to be capable of doing things far beyond their ability, be harsh and verbally abusive or he may tease children until they cry. (60% of men who physically assault their partners also beat their children).
10. **“PLAYFUL” USE OF FORCE IN SEX:** This man may like to throw a woman down and hold her down during sex; he may want to act out fantasies during sex where the woman is helpless. He’s letting her know that the idea of “rape” excites him. He may show little concern about whether the woman wants to have sex and use sulking or anger to manipulate her into compliance. He may start have sex with the woman while she is sleeping, or demand sex when she is ill or tired.
11. **VERBAL ABUSE:** In addition to saying things that are meant to be cruel and hurtful, he can also degrade the woman, curse her, run down her accomplishments. The man will tell her she is stupid and unable to function without him. This may involve waking her up to verbally abuse her or not letting her go to sleep.
12. **RIGID SEX ROLES:** The man expects a woman to serve him; will say she must stay at home, that she must obey him in all things – even things

that are criminal in nature. The abuser will see women as inferior to men, more stupid, unable to be a whole person without a relationship.

13. **PAST ABUSE:** The man may say he has abused women in the past, but they made him do it. The woman may hear from relatives or ex-partners that the man is abusive. The abuser will beat any woman he is with; situational circumstances do not make a person have an abusive personality.
14. **DR. JECKYLL AND MR. HYDE:** Many women are confused by their abuser's "sudden changes in mood – they will describe that one minute he's happy and the next minute he's sad. This does not indicate he has some special "mental health problem" or that he's "crazy". Explosiveness and mood swings are typical of men who beat their partners, and these behaviors are related to other characteristics such as hypersensitivity.
15. **THREATS OF VIOLENCE:** This would include any threat of physical force meant to control the woman. "I'll smack you in the mouth", "I'll kill you", "I'll break your neck". Most men do not threaten their partners, but an abuser will try to excuse this behaviour by saying "everybody talks that".
16. **BREAKING OR STRIKING OBJECTS:** This behaviour is used as a punishment (breaking loved possessions), but is mostly used to terrorize the woman into submission. The man may beat on tables, walls with his fist; throw objects around or near the woman. Again, this is a very remarkable behaviour; only very immature people beat on objects in the presence of others in order to threaten them.
17. **ANY FORCE DURING AN ARGUMENT:** This may involve a man holding a woman down, physically restraining her from leaving the room, any pushing or shoving. The man may even hold the woman against the wall and say "you're going to listen to me."