

Signs to Look for in a Battering Personality

Many women are interested in ways that they can predict whether they are about to become involved with someone that will be physically abusive. Usually battering occurs between a man and a woman, but lesbians can be battered too. Below is a list of behaviors that are seen in people who beat their girlfriends & wives; the last four signs listed are battering, but many women don't realize this is the beginning of physical abuse. If the person has several of the other behaviors (three or more) 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 behaviors that the woman can recognize, but they are very exaggerated (e.g., the abuser will try to explain his/her behavior as signs of his/her love and concern, and a woman may be flattered at first; but as time goes on, the behaviors become more severe and serve to dominate and control the woman).

1. 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. He/she 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/she may call her frequently during the day or drop by unexpectedly. He/she may refuse to let her work for fear she'll meet someone else, or even do strange behaviors such as checking her car mileage or asking friends to watch her.

2. CONTROLLING BEHAVIOR

At the first, the batterer will say this behavior is because he/she's concerned for the woman's safety, her need to use her time well, or her need to make good decisions. He/she will be angry if the woman is "late" coming back from the store or an appointment, he/she will question her closely about where she went, who she talked to. As this behavior gets worse, he/she may not let the woman make personal decisions about the house, her clothing, going to church; he/she may keep all the money or even make her ask permission to leave the house or room.

3. QUICK INVOLVEMENT

Many battered women dated or knew their abuser for less than six months before they were married, engaged, or living together. He/she comes on like a whirlwind, claiming "You're the only person I could ever talk to," "I've never felt loved like this by anyone." He/she will pressure the woman to commit to the relationship in such a way that later a woman may feel very guilty or that she's "letting them down" if she wants to slow down involvement or break it off.

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4. UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Abusive people will expect their partner to meet all their needs; he/she will expect the woman to be the perfect wife, mother, lover, and friend. He/she will say things like “If you love me, I’m all you need - you’re all I need.” She is supposed to take care of everything for him/her emotionally and in the home.

5. ISOLATION

The abusive person tries to cut the person off from all resources. If she has men friends, she’s a “whore,” if she has women friends, she’s a lesbian, if she’s close to family; she’s “tied to the apron strings.” He/she accuses people who are the woman’s supports of “causing trouble,” he/she may want live in the country without a phone, he/she may not let her use a car (or have one that is reliable), or he/she may try to keep the woman from working or going to school.

6. BLAMES OTHERS FOR PROBLEMS

If he/she is chronically unemployed, someone is always doing him/her wrong, or out to get him/her. He/she may make mistakes and then blame the woman for upsetting him/her and keeping him/her from concentrating on the work. He/she will tell the woman she is at fault for anything that goes wrong.

7. BLAMES OTHERS FOR FEELINGS

He/she will tell the woman “You make me mad,” “you’re hurting me by doing what I want you to do,” “I can’t help being angry.” He/she really makes the decision about what he/she thinks or feels, but will use feelings to manipulate the woman. Harder to catch are claims like “you make me happy,” or “you control how I feel.”

8. HYPERSENSITIVITY

An abuser is easily insulted, he/she claims their feelings are “hurt” when really he/she’s very mad or he/she takes the slightest setbacks as personal attacks. He/she will “rant and rave” about the injustice 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.

9. CRUELTY TO ANIMALS OR CHILDREN

This is a person who punishes animals brutally or is insensitive to their pain or suffering, he/she may expect children to be capable of doing things beyond their ability (whips a two year old for wetting a diaper) or he/she may tease children or young brothers and sisters until they cry (60% of men who beat the women they are with also beat their children). He/she may not want children to eat at the table or expect to keep them in their room all evening while he/she is home.

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10. “PLAYFUL” USE OF FORCE IN SEX

This kind of person may like to throw the woman down and hold her down during sex; he/she may want to act out fantasies during sex where the woman is helpless. He/she’s letting her know that the idea of rape is exciting. He/she may show little concern about whether the woman wants to have sex and uses sulking or anger to manipulate her into compliance. He/she may start having 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, this can be seen when the abuser degrades the woman, cursing her, and running down any of her accomplishments. The abuser will tell the woman that she’s stupid and unable to function without him/her. This may involve waking the woman up to verbally abuse her or not letting her go to sleep.

12. RIGID SEX ROLES

The abuser expects a woman to serve them; he/she 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.

13. DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE

Many women are confused by their abuser’s “sudden” changes in mood - they may think the abuser has some special mental problem because one minute he/she’s nice and the next he/she’s exploding. Explosiveness and moodiness are typical of people who beat their partners, and these behaviors are related to other characteristics like hypersensitivity.

14. PAST BATTERING

This person may say he/she has hit women in the past, but they made him/her do it. The woman may hear from relatives or ex-spouses and girlfriends that the person is abusive. A batterer will beat any woman they’re with if the woman is with him/her long enough for the violence to begin; situational circumstances do not make a person an abusive personality.

15. THREATS OF VIOLENCE

This could include any threat of physical force meant to control the woman: “I’ll slap your mouth off,” “I’ll kill you,” “I’ll break your neck...” Most people do not threaten their mates, but a batterer will try to excuse threats by saying “everybody talks like that.”

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16. BREAKING OR STRIKING OBJECTS

This behavior is used as a punishment (breaking loved possessions), but is mostly used to terrorize the woman into submission. The abuser may beat on the table with his/her fist or throw objects around or near the woman. Again, this is very remarkable behavior -not only is this a sign of extreme emotional immaturity, but there's great danger when someone thinks they have the "right" to punish or frighten their wife/girlfriend.

17. ANY FORCE DURING AN ARGUMENT

This may involve a batterer holding a woman down, physically restraining her from leaving the room, or any pushing or shoving. They may hold the woman against the wall and say "you're going to listen to me!"

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