

It's Not Just Black and Blue...It's More Like Shades of Gray

Abuse is more than physical. Listed below are examples of various forms of abuse. Domestic abuse is “conscious, intentional and premeditated acts used with the intent to control and dominate another person” (–*Alternatives to Domestic Aggression, Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County, Ann Arbor, MI*). Look for evidence of, or listen for reports of, patterns or frequency in the following:

Emotional Abuse

- Constant criticizing/belittling the victim
- Characterizing the victim as “useless” as a child, partner, parent, person, etc.
- Blowing victim’s mistakes out of proportion
- Bringing up past “wrongs” to subdue victim
- Deliberately starting/looking for arguments
- Often behaving surly or out-of-sorts
- Calling victim names
- Giving victim “The Silent Treatment”
- Often failing to keep promises
- Disregarding victim’s feelings and opinions
- Behaving in a jealous or possessive manner
- Refusing to allow victim to make decisions
- Yelling/shouting/swearing at victim
- Talking over or interrupting victim
- Humiliating victim in front of others
- Ridiculing victim’s family and friends
- Minimizing/denying victim’s hurt feelings
- Threatening to leave to keep victim “in line”
- Using guilt as a means to control victim
- Saying the victim provoked anger/abuse

Exploiting Privileged or Male Status

- Dictating much less restrictive rules for self than for victims (“Do as I say, not as I do”)
- Dictating family roles and duties
- Refusing to fulfill personal responsibilities
- Treating victim as a servant (“King of the Castle”)
- Using status in community/relationship to discredit victim’s account of abuse
- Demanding that all personal needs and desires be met first, despite needs/desires of adult or child victim
- Using knowledge of culture, institutions and systems to victim’s disadvantage
- Culling favor with public servants to avoid arrest or accountability for abusive behaviors
- Demanding “respect” as “head of the house”

Medical Neglect

- Refusing victim treatment for injuries, or routine care
- Ensuring the victim does not report abuse to providers
- Taking away victim’s medical devices (inhaler, wheelchair, walker, etc.)
- Over/under medicating victim
- Refusing to care for sick or injured victim
- Coercing victim to use alcohol or drugs
- Dropping victim’s medical insurance
- Filing an involuntary committal to retaliate against a victim’s efforts at independence

Deprivation & Isolation

- Depriving victim of basic necessities
- Sabotaging housing, schooling, transportation, job, activities, personal connections, etc.
- Cutting off utilities
- Restricting or ending outside/independent activities
- Refusing victim contact with friends/family
- Sabotaging victim’s relationships w/others
- Denying victim access to outside services
- Aggravating circumstances that force partner and children to become homeless
- Depriving victim of sleep

Economic Control

- Trying to make victim financially dependent
- Destroying victim’s credit rating
- Misusing victim’s social security to gain access to credit, utilities, etc.
- Refusing to contribute to household income
- Squandering household finances, to the detriment of the victim and/or children
- Withholding money, or access to money
- Making demands on how victim spends
- Making victim justify how money was spent
- Confiscate victim’s earnings
- Harassing the victim to endanger her/his employment
- Removing victim from accounts or deeds to assets, or demanding access to victim’s accounts or assets
- Emptying accounts in retaliation for restraining orders
- Hiding financial resources in preparation for divorce
- Failing to make timely court-ordered payments

Monitoring & Stalking

- Following victim for no reason, causing fear
- Tracking mileage on victim’s car
- Checking phone bills for unrecognized or “forbidden” phone numbers
- Monitoring victim’s computer usage
- Reading victim’s mail, e-mail, etc.
- Asking victim’s friends/family/co-workers for information about her/his daily routine
- Harassing/calling/texting victim constantly
- Deciding what partner should wear
- Demanding to know partner’s whereabouts
- Telling partner where s/he can/can’t go
- Deciding with whom partner has contact
- “Checking up” on partner all the time
- Making partner account for every minute away
- Using surveillance technology to track victim
- Leaving “messages” to scare or threaten victim

Spiritual Abuse

- Mocking victim’s moral values or faith
- Creating situations to “test” victim’s moral boundaries
- Misusing religious texts to justify abuse
- Sabotaging, limiting or deciding the victim’s religious practices
- Forcing victim to violate religious beliefs
- Forcing victim to participate in/witness ritual sacrifice
- Participating in religious activities to monitor or prevent the victim’s disclosures to clergy
- Enlisting clergy to be character witness for abuser
- Claiming to be all-powerful, all-knowing

Legal Harassment

- Coercing victim into doing illegal acts
- Threatening to call police or child protection
- Threatening costly or lengthy legal battles
- Threatening to press charges or otherwise compromise victim’s legal standing
- Threatening harm if victim cooperates with law enforcement or child protection
- Using children as pawns in legal battles; particularly seeking custody of children to eliminate child support
- Repeatedly filing costly and frivolous motions; particularly to reduce or stop court-ordered child support or alimony payments
- Ignoring court directives such as restraining orders, division of property, payment of household costs, etc.
- Refusing to allow an immigrant victim to gain citizenship, or threatening with deportation
- Filing false charges/reports; having the victim arrested
- Using superior legal resources to harass victim

Psychological Torment

- Playing mind games
- Causing intense emotional pain
- Making gestures or movements that are meant to frighten or intimidate victim
- Threatening to harm or kidnap victim or loved ones
- Describing detailed plans to kill self/victim/family
- Abusing or killing family pets
- Destroying victim’s personal belongings
- Driving recklessly with victim or children in the car
- Punching walls, or throwing things at victim
- Making victim feel like s/he’s going crazy
- Minimizing or denying victim’s injuries
- Referring to victim by title or nicknames, rather than given name; objectifying victim
- Causing the victim to believe her life or children’s lives are in mortal danger

Sexual Coercion & Force

- Refusing to take “no” for an answer
- Manipulating victim into unwanted sex
- Hurting or mutilating victim’s genitals
- Coercing victim to have unprotected sex
- Demanding or forcing sex acts that victim finds painful or humiliating
- Exposing unwilling victim to pornography
- Exposing unknowing victim to STDs
- Forcing “make up” sex
- Degrading victim sexually or using sexual names (“cunt,” “whore,” “frigid,” “impotent,” etc.)
- Accusing victim of infidelity
- Threatening to “out” the victim
- Having sex with victim while s/he’s sleeping
- Refusing to take responsibility for birth control methods, or forbidding birth control
- Using dangerous and inappropriate objects (guns, bottles, knives, etc.) as “sex toys”

Physical Assault

- Spitting on victim
- Grabbing or pinching
- Shoving or pulling
- Slapping or hitting (w/ or w/o objects)
- Elbowing or kneeing
- Head-butting or hair-pulling
- Biting or burning
- Twisting victim’s arms, fingers, etc.
- Kicking or punching
- Strangling or smothering; restricting breathing
- Restraining victim from leaving or preventing victim from calling for help
- Menacing the victim with a weapon
- Stabbing victim or objects near victim
- Shooting at or near victim

Luring & Grooming

- Promising to change abusive behaviors
- Temporarily changing abusive behaviors
- Offering gifts, special favors or privileges
- Keeping old or making new promises
- Bribing to maintain victim’s silence
- Complying with victim requests for counseling, help with household duties, etc.
- Temporarily allowing contact with family or friends
- Threatening suicide if the victim doesn’t go back or otherwise comply
- Following through on past threats to punctuate or legitimize new threats

Common Victim Disclosures: Does S/he...

- Report walking on eggshells all the time?
- Feel tired or sick frequently?
- Report that her/his efforts are never good enough?
- Have difficulty following through with plans, directives or instructions?
- Report having to read the other person's mind?
- Describe the partner as Dr. Jeckyl/Mr. Hyde?
- Constantly make excuses for the other person?
- Frequently voice feeling sad, ashamed, worthless, or deserving of abuse?
- Report feeling afraid or abused?

Common Perpetrator Accusations:

- SHE'S A VIOLENT, LYIN', LAZY, CRAZY, DRUNKIN', DRUGGIN', MONEY-GRUBBING SLUT!**
(Pick any combination or all of the above...)

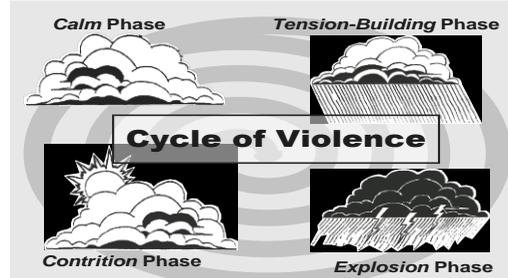
The Stakes Are Higher for Victim if Abuser:

- Threatens/plans injury, suicide or homicide
- Has access to weapons, and has used them in threatening/menacing manner
- Abuser has assaulted victim in the past
 - In public
 - Caused injuries
 - Strangled/attempted strangulation
- Is violent towards children or pets/animals
- Shows extreme jealousy/possessiveness
- Exhibits past or present stalking
- Uses/abuses substances
- Is unemployed
- Recently has escalated violent behaviors
- Police intervention has been required
- Sexually assaults partner (NOTE: Women who are raped by their partners are 7.6 times more likely to die at the hands of their partner. **Has he forced you to have sex against your will?**)

Other possible risk factors include:

- Abuser has victimized previous partners, or was physically/sexually abused as child
- Abuser has held family members hostage
- Abuser suffers from/has been treated for depression

The above behaviors are indicators of increased risk of harm for the victim. Safety planning should be done immediately, and updated regularly, if the victim discloses these indicators.



By Lenore Walker, *The Battered Woman Syndrome*

Calm: the abuser acts like abuse never happened, blames the victim for provoking the abuse, or denies and minimizes the abuse. The abusive person may keep some of the promises made during the Contrition phase.

Tension-building: the abuser begins using monitoring, coercive and controlling tactics, under the guise of anger. Communication breaks down, and the abuser often lashes out randomly, making the victim feel as if she's "walking on eggshells."

Explosion: the abuser assaults the victim (sexual, physical, intense emotional or psychological assault).

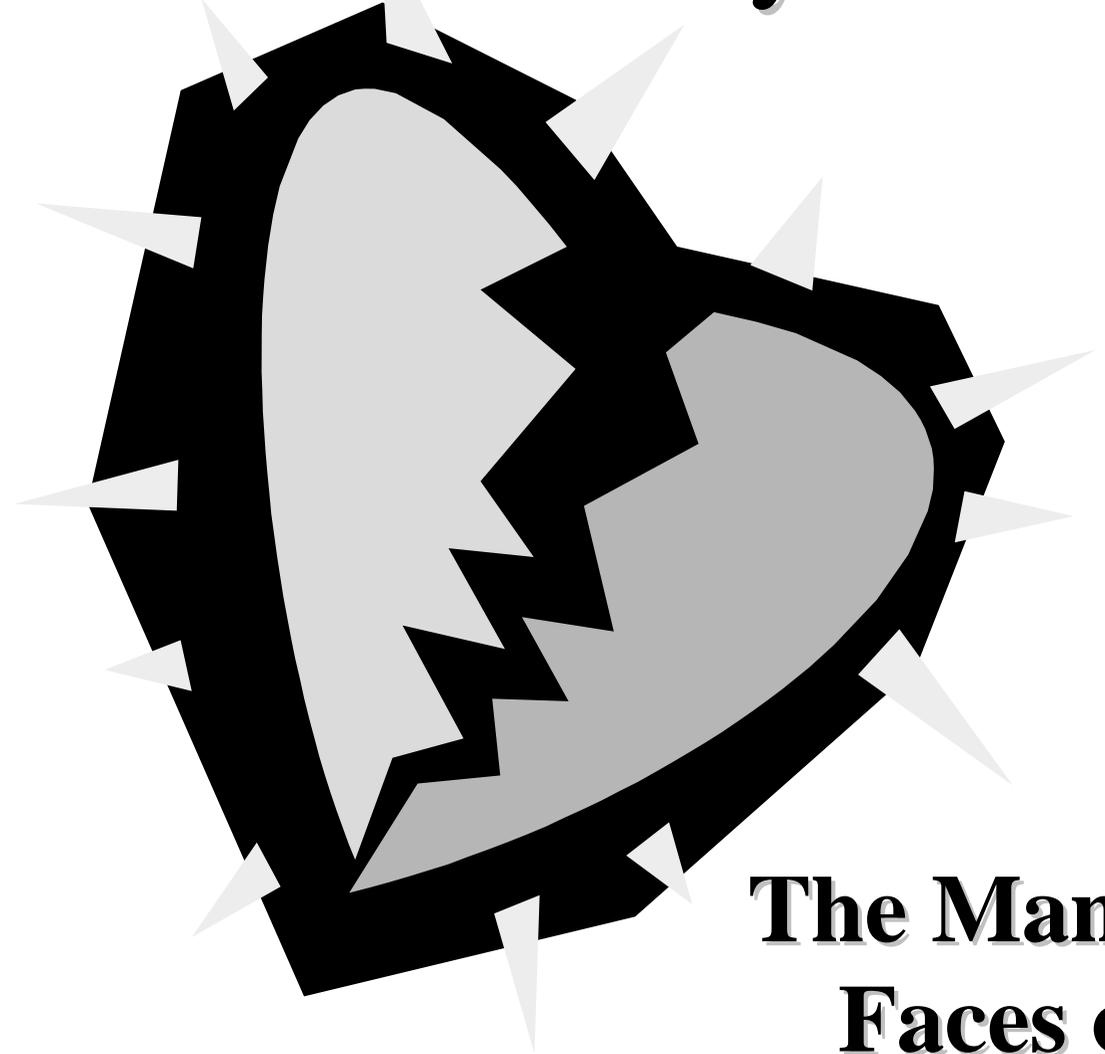
Contrition: the abuser apologizes for the assault, and promises it won't happen again. He will often give gifts, or makes promises to change to "lure" the victim back.

Indicators of Healthy Relationships

- Patience, kindness, gentleness, sharing, supportive
- Respect
- Recognizing partner's "inalienable human rights"
- Openness and honesty
- Trust and trustworthiness
- Caring and compassion
- Taking responsibility for own behaviors
- Two-way communication
- Working together for each other's best interests, and accommodating each other
- Collaborative resolution of conflict
- Encouraging outside relationships, interests and independent goals

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Shades of Gray



The Many Faces of Abuse