

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**It's never this  
obvious.**



**GET ANSWERS. GET HELP.  
GET INVOLVED.**

**800-494-8100**

[www.stopdomesticviolence.info](http://www.stopdomesticviolence.info)

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# How do you know if someone is in an abusive relationship?

Whether you know it or not, some of the people in your life may be facing violence at home – maybe a friend, a co-worker, or even a family member. For many reasons, it is often hard for victims to acknowledge they are being abused by the persons who are supposed to love them.

This list identifies a series of behaviors typically demonstrated by batterers and abusive people. All of these forms of abuse – psychological, economic, and physical – come from the batterer’s desire for power and control. The list can help you recognize if you or someone you know is in a violent relationship.

## **Abusing Authority**

Always claiming to be right (insisting statements are “the truth”); telling them what to do; making big decisions; using “logic”.

## **Disrespect**

Interrupting; changing topics; not listening or responding; twisting their words; putting them down in front of other people; saying bad things about their friends or family.

## **Abusing Trust**

Lying, withholding information; cheating on them; being overly jealous.

## **Breaking Promises**

Not following through on agreements; not taking a fair share of responsibility; refusing to help with childcare or housework.

## **Economic Control**

Interfering with their work or not letting them work; refusing to give them money or taking their money; taking their car keys or otherwise preventing them from using the car; threatening to report them to welfare or other social service agencies.

## **Minimizing, Denying & Blaming**

Making light of abusive behavior and not taking the victims’ concerns about it seriously; saying the abuse didn’t happen; shifting responsibility for abusive behavior.

## **Emotional Withholding**

Not expressing feelings; not giving support, attention, or compliments; not respecting feelings, rights, or opinions.

## **Self-Destructive Behavior**

Abusing drugs or alcohol; threatening suicide or other forms of self-harm; deliberately saying or doing things that will have negative consequences (e.g., telling off the boss).

## **Isolation**

Preventing or making it difficult for them to see friends or relatives; monitoring phone calls; telling them where they can and cannot go.

## **Harassment**

Making uninvited visits or calls; following them; checking up on them; embarrassing them in public; refusing to leave when asked.

# What can I do to help victims?

- **Ask** direct questions about their situation, gently. Give them time to talk. Ask again a few days later. Don't rush into providing a solution.
- **Listen** without judging. Your friend, relative or co-worker may believe the abuser's negative messages. They may feel ashamed, inadequate, and afraid they will be judged by you.
- Let them know that you care about them and that it's **not their fault**. Explain that there's never an excuse for physical violence in a relationship – not alcohol or drugs, not financial pressure, not depression, not jealousy . . . not anything.
- If they remain in the relationship, continue to be their friend while firmly expressing your **concern** for their **safety**. Remember that, for many victims, leaving an abusive relationship can take time and may not happen right away.
- Explain that domestic violence is a crime – as much of a crime as robbery or rape – and that they can seek **protection** from the police or courts.

- Emphasize that when they are ready, they can make a choice to leave the relationship, and that **help is available**. Also emphasize that domestic violence tends to get worse and becomes more frequent with time, and that it does not go away on its own.

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- If they have a restraining order, let them know that by contacting them in any way the abuser has broken the law. If they choose, they can ask the police to arrest the abuser for doing so, especially if they have evidence. **Encourage them** to save letters or e-mail sent from the abuser, or messages left on their answering machine or voice mail, along with the date the contact was made.
- Many battered immigrant victims who have legal immigration status do not know that their batterer cannot take that status away. You should know that if immigrant victims are

U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents, or have a valid visa, they **cannot be deported** unless they have entered the U.S. on fraudulent documents, violated conditions of their visa, or have been convicted of certain crimes.

# How can I help in my community?

- Let the young people in your life know early on that **violence** in a relationship is **never acceptable**, under any circumstances. Make sure they know that if anyone they date ever hits or hurts them, there are places they can go for help.
- Invite community **leaders to speak out** against domestic violence at school assemblies, Boy and Girl Scout meetings, and other places where youth gather.
- Take **domestic violence seriously** at all times, and demand that your friends do the same. If you hear a friend joke about domestic violence, take a stand. Doing this sends the powerful message that domestic violence is not a laughing matter.
- Encourage your workplace, faith community, and local schools to contact the local domestic violence agency for speakers, educational materials, and **volunteer opportunities**.

- Make a personal commitment to **talk about** domestic violence whether it is with a friend you suspect is either a victim or perpetrator of abuse, or with co-workers who might be enlisted to get involved too.

*You are not alone in helping victims of domestic violence or raising awareness about domestic violence in your community.*

- Support your local domestic violence agency by becoming a **volunteer** or financial supporter.
- Make sure that the places in your **community** – gyms, supermarkets, laundromats, businesses, post offices, libraries etc. – have information about domestic violence and where to go for help.
- If you are a survivor and want to make a difference, contact SOAR (Sisters Overcoming Abusive Relationships) the only agency led by and for survivors.

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# Help is available.

The member agencies of the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence provide a strong network of emergency and support services to families affected by domestic violence in Rhode Island. Services provided include emergency shelter, 24-hour crisis intervention, support groups, children's programs, court advocacy, counseling, and prevention through education and public awareness.

## The Coalition's member agencies are:

- **Blackstone Valley Advocacy Center**  
(Blackstone Valley):  
723-3057.
- **Elizabeth Buffum Chace Center**  
(Kent County, Cranston, Johnston,  
North Providence, Scituate and Foster):  
738-1700 (24 hour hotline) or 738-9700.
- **Sojourner House**  
(Services for Providence and services/shelter  
for Northern Rhode Island): 861-6191 (office),  
658-4334, 765-3232 or 647-1514.
- **Women's Center of Rhode Island**  
(Providence and East Providence): 861-2760.
- **Domestic Violence Resource Center  
of South County** (Washington County):  
782-3990 or 1-866-782-3990.
- **Women's Resource Center of  
Newport & Bristol Counties**  
(Newport & Bristol Counties): 846-5263, 847-2533  
or 247-2070.
- **SOAR** (Sisters Overcoming Abusive Relationships)  
Statewide task force led by and for survivors:  
467-9940.