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# **UNDERSTANDING DATING AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

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## Understanding Dating and Domestic Violence

Following are concrete tools to help you understand dating and domestic violence. Be aware that while many victims are female, some are male. There are abusive females, and they wreak the same havoc on the lives of their partners as male offenders, albeit with less incidence of murder. Additionally, there are batterers in same-sex relationships. The dynamics are the same. The only difference is that the victim in a same-sex relationship may feel even more isolated, more fearful, will be less likely to seek help, and possibly remain in the relationship longer if there is fear around exposure.

Please keep this information with you for as long as you are dating. Reread it periodically so it is fresh in your mind. Dating and domestic violence can happen to anyone. Do not let it happen to you.

One more thing. Many people fear that because they do not come from a perfect family, there is something wrong with them. This is nonsense. First of all, there are no perfect families. Secondly, you can be whomever you choose. If you witnessed or experienced violence in your family, you can be that much more determined to choose a healthy and nonviolent partner.

Do not let a tough childhood define you. Your future is up to you.

## Profile of an Abusive Partner

- *Low self-esteem.* At the same time this person may appear arrogant and boastful on occasion.
- *Trouble trusting others, particularly you.* In spite of this, they may say that they know you would never be unfaithful.
- *Jealous and possessive.* Initially, the abuser may say others were coming on to you. Eventually, though, you will be accused of being

attracted to other people, flirting, or being unfaithful.

- *Controlling.* Sometimes this can be subtle. You may be changing your behaviours without realizing why. For example, you may 'decide' not to see your friends too often because you do not want your partner to get mad.
- *Usually comes from a family where there was violence, although they may deny this reality.*
- *Passionate!* The abusive relationship can be intense and passionate. There may exist a Romeo and Juliet quality, which may be noticed by your friends. This intensity does NOT mean you are fated lovers. It means someone is holding on too tightly.
- *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde personality.* Loving and supportive at some times, cold and hostile, accusing or distant, at other times.
- *Mood swings or explosive temper.* You may think everything is going fine, and suddenly your partner is furious, agitated or seemingly out of control.
- *In some cases we see macho or super-masculine in the male form, feminine and sweet in the female form.* This is something which can be present in manipulative or controlling people. These partners may have strong opinions about how men and women should behave. They may be rigid. You may find yourself saying, "Well, yes, this happened, but there are reasons why." The abusive partner, male or female, will not accept reasons or explanations. Everything is viewed as black or white when they are in an abusive period. Viewing these periods as temper tantrums is helpful in accepting that the periods have little to do with the partner.
- *Isolating.* These partners may want to isolate you from your friends or family. They may often want to be alone with you. Often they will start trouble between you and your best friend, for example, or even your family members. They will be threatened by any relationships you have with members of the opposite sex and may attempt to destroy those friendships or work relationships by criticizing those close to you or pointing out ways in which they have wronged you.

- *Emotionally and verbally abusive.* Sometimes there is no physical abuse until something like a commitment is made, i.e., you have sex, get pregnant, get serious or cut off your friends and family. It could be as simple as your agreement not to date other people. You do not have to have bruises to be in a controlling and manipulative relationship.
- *Denial.* The partner will attempt to minimize any violence or behaviour saying:
  - “I barely touched you”
  - “I was just messing around”
  - “You cannot take a joke.”
- *Blamer.* Abusive partners will blame others for their mistakes or problems. Again, it may be subtle. They will blame others for fights if they can.
  - “You know how mad I get when you talk back.”
  - “You make me crazy.”
  - “I love you so much I can’t help being jealous!”
  - “If you weren’t so beautiful/handsome, I wouldn’t be so worried about losing you.”
  - “Your friends are trying to break us up.”
  - “That person was coming on to you.”
- *When you have a fight, they may try to blame outside stressors.*
  - “My parents are making me crazy!”
  - “My teachers are making me crazy!”
  - “My job is making me crazy!”
  - “I feel like I’m under so much pressure.”
  - “You don’t understand. Nobody does.”

These are pressures with which we must all cope  
They are not an excuse to be violent or *abusive*.
- *Alcohol or drug user.* This partner may abuse alcohol or drugs. If so, he or she has a built-in excuse. Remember that most people using alcohol, or even drugs do not become violent or abusive. It’s no excuse.

"I was totally wasted."

"I don't even remember this. Did I really do that?"

"I'll never touch that stuff again!"

"I'm such a jerk. Why do you stay with me?"

They may also say things like:

"Hey, you pushed me first."

"What do you expect when you say the things you said."

"You were just as violent as me."

- Uses technology to monitor, control and manipulate you.

"I saw that you were online. Why didn't you text me back?"

"You need this tracking App so if you get into trouble, I know where you are."

"If you're not lying to me, why do you have a problem with this?"

This can get confusing for you. Do not let it. One man fell asleep and woke up to 36 text messages. His girlfriend was furious because he was ignoring her. He said, "I was asleep with my phone off." Another woman said her boyfriend insisted that she keep her phone on all night so he would know that he could talk to her when he needed to. He called her throughout the night, often saying it was a pocket dial or asking her a small, irrelevant question. The result, of course, was sleeplessness for her before important work and school days. When she objected, saying that random sounds and alerts sounded, he said, 'I'll buy you a separate phone so that only I can reach you.'

When you are in an abusive or dysfunctional relationship you may begin to act in ways you normally would not. It is time to go when you start to lose your own moral compass or personality or temperament. Look at it this way. Is the relationship bringing out the best in you? Are you looking and feeling more like your best self? Or less? This type of wondering should be always in your mind.

### Reality Snaps...

*Jennifer: "After a while I always felt like I had to reassure him about how much I liked him. I felt sorry for him in some ways, but his jealousy got so bad I wouldn't even talk to other guys. It got like I was always thinking 'Can I tell him this? Will this make him mad?' I was always trying to prove that I was trustworthy or something. Like if he thought I was sleezy, then I was. In a way I didn't have a self-esteem separate from him. Whatever he thought I was, that was the truth. By the end I didn't care if I was the worst person on earth. I just wanted out."*

*James: "Her self-esteem didn't seem too low, but she was insecure and needed a lot of reassurance. It was all about her control over me. She didn't trust me. When she got mad she would call me a liar, no matter what I said. Like, for hours. It was OK for her to be around other guys but not for me to be around other girls. She wanted me to quit my job because she thought the waitresses were after me or something. She manipulated me with lies, but I didn't see it that way at the time. My friends knew, though. She always tried to come between us by saying they were talking about me. She even made up things that I said about them to get them mad at me. She was big into mind control."*

### Behaviours of an Abusive Partner

- They may keep track of your time.
- They may show up somewhere you have said you'll be. They will call this "surprising" you. If you get angry, they will act as though you were doing something you did not want them to see.
- They may stalk or follow you, or ask you to put a tracking App on your phone.
- They may buy you a separate phone so they can always reach you. This can start fights if you do not respond or call back right away.
- They may try to intimidate you by punching something close to

you, (a wall, car, window) or by driving dangerously, breaking your personal property, shouting in your face, pointing down at you, kicking walls or doors, or threatening to tell secrets to your family or friends.

- They may insist on scrolling through your messages, reading your emails or checking your travel times. They could be doing this without you knowing if they installed Apps on your phone. When you object, again, they may say, ‘Why does it bother you if you have nothing to hide?’ There are also tracking devices that could be placed in your car, with your car keys, or in other ways. Look out for him seeming to know where you were when you did not mention an errand or unexpected stop.
- They may criticise your clothes, hair, or mannerisms. They may try to take charge of whether or not you drink, use drugs, smoke, or use birth control.
- They may challenge your femininity/masculinity.
- They may act as if they are the boss or in charge. They may want you to talk to them before making decisions about your activities, friends or professional life.
- They may invade your privacy by insisting on calendar sharing, going through your purse or wallet, eavesdropping on telephone conversations, or playing your voice messages.
- They may push your boundaries by tickling you until you are uncomfortable. Another way is wrestling in an aggressive manner that they call playful but you find painful or upsetting.
- They may be pushy about sex or insist you watch pornography or re-enact pornography scenes. You may agree on a limit but find that they do not respect the limit. When confronted, they will say you are overreacting.
- They may pressure you to quit your job or outside activities.
- They will be overly jealous. Remember, JEALOUSY DOES NOT EQUAL LOVE! Excessive jealousy, beyond normal human attachment, is not normal.

- If you do not do what they want, they may threaten to break up with you or possibly they will end the relationship for a while.
- If you try to break up with them, they may threaten to hurt you or your family, to tell your friends or parents that you had sex or did drugs, or behaved badly (tell private matters about you) or even threaten to commit suicide.
- Remember that the violence progresses in a gradual way. If a new partner slapped you and called you names on your first date, you obviously would never go out with that person again. It usually starts with small elements of emotional abuse or insults and progresses to shoving, grabbing, or restraining. The next step could be slapping, then kicking. Punching or choking may follow after which the abuse usually escalates to beatings with repeated kicks, slaps, and punches.

**Once a partner is violent,  
he or she is usually violent again!**

### **Reality Snaps...**

*Jennifer: "He would call me a lot or say I had to call him at nine pm. If I didn't call right on time, he wouldn't answer the phone, and I would have to think about it all night. Like he would be mad at me, and it would bother me all the next day or until I talked to him and explained why I was late. I always had to justify why I did things. But it didn't start like that. In the beginning it was romantic, and I was so happy that he loved me so much. I loved him, too, at the start."*

*James: "She was always paging me and would get angry if I didn't call her right away. She used to check to see if my car was at work when I said I was working. I got paranoid. Like I was afraid of flying accidentally or something. And she would always try to make me jealous. She said it was because she loved me so much that she wanted to make sure I loved her, too. It got so I couldn't concentrate in school. My mind was fried from her."*

## **Types of Abuse**

### **EMOTIONAL ABUSE**

- Criticizing
- Calling you insulting names
- Ignoring or ridiculing your feelings
- Making fun of the way you speak or express yourself
- Manipulating you with lies or distortions of the truth
- Leaving you at a party or somewhere dangerous
- Putting you in situations where you get in trouble, for example, keeping you out late, up late before an important day, making you late for work, etc.
- Ignoring you or embarrassing you in front of others
- Criticizing or teasing you in front of your family or friends
- Telling friends or family things you have said (or allegedly said) about them
- Telling you things that family or friends have said (or allegedly said) about you
- Threatening to break up if they feel they need more control
- Mimicking you
- Teasing you
- Minimizing or ridiculing your accomplishments
- Challenging your femininity ('A real woman would not do this') or masculinity ('Only a wimp would act like this')
- Breaking items that are important to you
- Ridiculing your friends or family
- Calling you a liar or repeatedly demanding that you 'tell the truth'
- Ignoring your texts or messages for hours with no reason or leaving you on 'READ', meaning they've seen your texts but they're not responding. The difference between someone being unavailable at work or asleep is that you know when you are being deliberately manipulated because it is part of an overall pattern of behaviour that causes you to be upset.

## SEXUAL ABUSE

- Telling jokes that put women or men down
- Treating all women or men as sex objects
- Sending you unsolicited sexual images of themselves
- Insisting that you send naked or sexualised pictures of yourself to them
- Becoming aggressive if you refuse
- If or when you do send them a picture or pictures (not recommended, better to play it safe and send nothing) an abuser may screen shot the images and threaten to show them to others or actually show the images to others. Often, you will know nothing about this, but find out later.
- Acting pushy or aggressive about sex or sex acts that make you uncomfortable
- Forcing you to have sex (rape)
- Calling you names like slut, whore, lesbian, or frigid, fag, wimp, baby
- Publicly showing interest in members of the opposite sex (the flip side of this would be acting intensely loyal to you and showing no interest in other people at all)
- Acting as if you would have sex with other people
- Telling others about your sexual relationship
- Giving you excessive or unwanted “hickey” or bite marks (they may say they are marking their territory or want everyone to know you are taken)
- Watching or asking you to watch pornography (Do not date someone who is addicted to pornography.)

### Reality Snaps...

*Jennifer: “He would say he wanted to have sex because he loved me so much and knew that I was the only one he wanted to be with. I kind*

*of wanted to also, but he was pushy. When he got mad at me, he got pushy. He said once that he could tell I wanted to have sex with other people. How could he tell? I don't even think I did, but I started to wonder about myself. He said there were two types of girls. Nice girls and sluts. My friends were sluts and I was nice, but he treated me like I would turn into a slut if he didn't watch me. Like if I got the chance I would go off and have sex with somebody else.*

*James: "You may not believe a girl can be sexually abusive. Guys want it all the time, right? Well my girlfriend would scream in my face, calling me a liar for hours. Then she'd want to have sex. When I didn't want to, she would refuse to let out of my car. She would kind of force me to. Not so much physically, but she would do things like snatch my keys and hide them. One time I just left the car and walked. She constantly gave me big hickeys I didn't want. It only takes about three seconds and you're marked. She was bad news."*

## **PHYSICAL ABUSE**

- Pushing
- Shoving
- Slapping
- Kicking
- Biting
- Punching
- Pulling your hair
- Throwing things at you
- Excessive tickling
- Aggressive wrestling that makes you uncomfortable
- Restraining you by holding you by the shoulders or pinning you to the wall or car
- Keeping you in a car or home against your will
- Shoving food or liquid in your face, mouth, or hair

- Hitting you with a weapon or object
- Banging your head against the floor ground, or car
- Any forceful sex is considered physical abuse as well as sexual abuse

### Reality Snaps...

*Jennifer: "It started with him holding me by the shoulders and shaking me. Then he would pinch me sometimes. He also held me down, pretending like we were playing, but it hurt. When I tried to make it stop, he would say I was no fun or a baby. By the end he would slap me, pull my hair, choke me, and kick me. He would make fun of me if I cried. I was scared of him, but I still loved him for a while. I thought it was wrong, though. I knew he shouldn't be hitting me, but I figured it was kind of my fault. After every fight when we made up, I figured, 'That's over. It won't happen again.'"*

*James: I wasn't afraid she would kill me or hurt me or anything like that. But I did have bruises. It's tough because you're not supposed to hit a woman. As far as she was concerned, it was OK for her to hit me, but if I retaliated I was the bad guy. So what are you supposed to do when someone is choking you? I pushed her off me. Then she started breaking things in my car."*

### Teasing

Many people report teasing that is disturbing or humiliating. Others have wondered about an appropriate response. People sometimes fear being labelled a baby, brat, or someone who lacks a sense of humour.

For example, one woman's boyfriend repeatedly called her a wench. When she asked her boyfriend to stop, he said she had no sense of humour and was being a baby. He also suggested she "lighten up". She felt embarrassed and decided she was taking it too seriously. At the same time, her boyfriend continued to address her this way, to the point of never using her name. Eventually, the relationship ended.

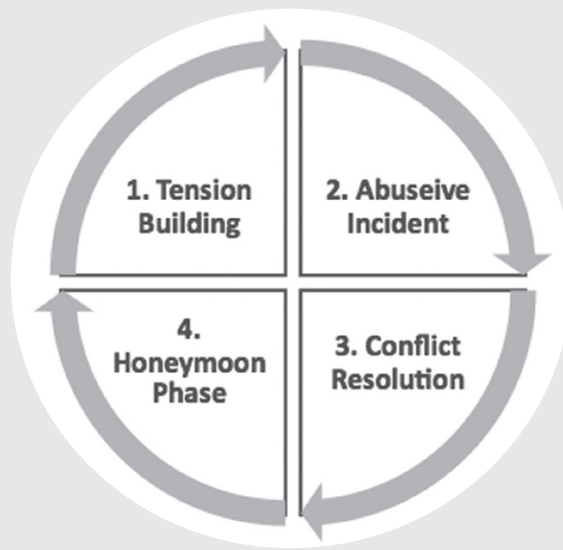
How do we know when teasing has crossed a line? Simple. When it stops being funny. If you find yourself going along with the joke but secretly feeling hurt or embarrassed, a line has been crossed. This teasing is not funny and must stop.

Another person asked, "But how can you make them stop?" This, too, is a simple answer. You tell them it is not funny, and you do not like it. If they continue, you have a bigger problem than teasing. They are not respecting your wishes. In this case you say you cannot stay in a relationship with someone who is intentionally hurting you. Overreacting? No. If you stay in this type of relationship, you will eventually observe your partner behaving disrespectfully in other areas.

Remember also that partners are not mind readers. It is possible your partner is just being playful. If you do not like whatever they are doing, tell them. Be clear and unequivocal. "Don't call me that. I don't like it."

Be aware that you must also be careful about teasing. Anything that might hurt or insult your partner is out of line. You should treat your partner with the same respect you expect and deserve from him or her.

## Cycles of Violence



### 1. TENSION BUILDING PHASE

*Characterized by:*

- Feeling of walking on eggshells
- Criticism

*"I'm trying to do everything right, but my partner keeps getting mad at me."*

Depending on how far advanced the cycle has become, this phase may include minor incidents such as insulting comments, 'accidental' pushing, tripping, inappropriate tickling, etc. More apparent may be criticism of the victim's behaviour. Batterer may get mad quite often and ignore the victim or leave him or her in social situations. (See Behaviours of an Abusive Partner for specific behaviours during this phase.)

Victims sometimes think they can diffuse the situation by doing what their partners want and keeping them calm. Victims will try hard during this phase to please their partner, attempting to see in advance

what might anger them.

This phase may be hard to see in the beginning of the cycle but later becomes more pronounced with the victim often being able to detect when the abuser is getting ready to “go off”.

### **Something to think about...**

*Jennifer: “You’re kind of always trying to do the right thing. And everything you’re doing you’re thinking, ‘Will he think this is ok?’”*

*James: “You’re nervous around them. You’re afraid they’re going to get mad. You never know what could start it.”*

## **2. ABUSIVE INCIDENT PHASE**

*Characterized by:*

- The big fight
- The explosion
- The break-up
- The violence

*“My partner’s totally crazy. He/she just exploded!”  
or “We had a big fight.”*

Depending on how far advanced the cycle has become, this phase may include violent behaviours such as pushing, shoving, choking, slapping, punching, etc. (See Types of Abuse for more specific acts of physical abuse.) The abusive incident is sometimes characterized by the abuser’s rejection of the victim, even breaking up with him or her. The abuser may appear out of control during this phase, and the victim may feel fear. The abuser may say someone was “coming on” to the victim or that the victim was flirting with another person. Victim may

be called names such as whore, slut, fag, loser. Sexual assault may occur during this time.

In the beginning, this phase may seem romantic to the victim, particularly if the abuser is reacting in a jealous way and the violence is limited to shouting, punching walls, restraining, or grabbing. The victim may see it as a sign of the partner's deep love and attachment. It can be viewed as drama, such as that which is seen in unhealthy media portrayals of relationships.

Later, as the cycle progresses, the accusations will become more serious, more frequent, and be accompanied by more violence. This phase is typically short and explosive, but toward the end of the cycle it can become longer, with the abuser even holding the victim "hostage" somewhere for hours or even days while beating and berating the victim.

### **Reality Snaps...**

*Jennifer: "Sometimes you could see it coming. But sometimes we would leave a party, say goodbye to everyone, and then out of the blue he'd come at me for talking too long to one of his friends. It was crazy, and you never knew what was going to set him off. Then you'd think, 'OK, so now I know that makes him mad so it will be alright from now on.'"*

*James: "It's mostly emotional abuse. But again, if she hits you and you hit her back... you kind of can't do it. Even if you defend yourself, you're the bad guy. And when they get so jealous you kind of think it's about how much they love you. That part is confusing at first."*

## **3. CONFLICT RESOLUTION PHASE**

*Characterized by:*

- Apology and explanations

- Shared feelings
- Excuses and denial
- Spelling out the rules
- Forcing victim to admit he or she was partially to blame

*“My partner was under a lot of stress, and it didn’t help that I was talking to somebody else. He/she is just a little insecure. We worked it all out.”*

In the beginning of the cycle, the abuser may take full responsibility for his or her behaviour, apologizing profusely and offering a list of excuses and reasons for the ‘fight’. “I love you so much that I get crazy with jealousy. I was drunk. You made me furious. I misunderstood something. I don’t trust you because of the past.” (See Behaviours of an Abusive Partner for more on this.) Along with this there may be denial and sharing of feelings, along with explanations. “I barely touched you. You’re overreacting. It’s just that your friends make me crazy.”

As a rule, abusers can be uncommunicative, and the victim may stand on their heads trying to get feelings out of their partners. This phase can lead the victim to think the couple is making progress with intimacy because the partner is so open and responsive. As the cycle advances, though, this phase will be characterized by spelling out the rules. “If you don’t do these things, then I won’t be violent. It’s as much your fault as mine.” Initially, the victim may see this conversation as normal struggling to maintain a relationship.

This phase must happen before moving on to the next. Sometimes couples will simply break up. It can be a painful time for the victims while they desperately attempt to figure out why the violence happened and what they should do about it. Reality is shifted in that the victim may know the truth but partially accept the abuser’s explanations. Initially, it is a short period, maybe one long conversation, but later,

usually after marriage or commitment, is characterized by such things as vacations, counselling, and possibly restrictions in the abuser's alcohol or drug use.

### Reality Snaps...

*Jennifer: "I'd have these long conversations with him discussing why he got mad and what I should or should not do in the future so he wouldn't get mad. I should not 'talk back' when he was mad because I knew that made it worse. One time he told me he would never hit me again if I would never lie again. I said 'I don't lie.' He rolled his eyes and banged the steering wheel and said, 'You can't even admit you lied! How am I supposed to trust you?' I was totally confused, and it wasn't until I got out of it that I understood how badly he played with my head. Somehow, he always made it seem as if it was my fault and everything would be fine as long as I did or didn't do certain things. I can't believe I didn't break up with him sooner."*

*James: "Blaming is a big part of it. They'll take some of the blame but never all of it. She'd convince me it was my fault saying, 'You pissed me off. I shouldn't have to hit you, but you shouldn't have said that. I did it out of love, to get you jealous. I don't remember. I was really drunk.' Half the time I ended up apologizing to her! It's messed up!"*

## 4. HONEYMOON PHASE

*Characterized by:*

- Falling in love again
- Getting back together
- Passion

*"We were meant for each other. My partner loves me so much and every couple has problems, not just us."*

The abuser is kind, contrite, and in summary, doing everything needed to keep the partner happy. If you are a woman, expect things like flowers, candy, compliments, and kindness. If you are a man, you will receive affection, tenderness, and compliments. The relationship is now passionate, and the victim will feel cherished. This is very romantic, and it will not last.

In the beginning of the cycle, this wonderful phase assures victims that they did the right thing by reconciling. It can be so good to be back together, and the abuser could not be nicer. Later in the cycle, the victim will enjoy this phase but will know that it will not last. He or she will feel guilt, anxiety, and fear of the next incident.

With most abusive dating relationships, this phase is initially very long. Because of this, the victim thinks that this is the real partner and the other behaviours are isolated incidents. As the cycle progresses, this phase becomes shorter and shorter, eventually disappearing altogether, being replaced by blame, blame, and more blame.

### **Reality Snaps...**

*Jennifer: "Those were the best times. I would feel lucky to have him and we were so close. I mean, you felt like nobody in the world understood or loved you like this person. But toward the end, even the nice times weren't so nice. He stopped apologizing or explaining and said, 'See what you made me do. You just don't learn.'"*

*James: "It's the same thing over and over again. They're a lot nicer during this phase and they make you feel good about yourself. They complement you, and you think it's the right thing to do... going back with them. You kind of think it's a separate incident and that the person is not like this. You blame yourself. It's pretty passionate. You think, 'I'll try harder.' But*

*at the end she knew I didn't want to be with her. I was trapped. She just needed someone because she was so messed up. I think I could have been anyone, honestly."*

## **Risk Assessment**

### **Warning signals**

1. Does your partner call you names?
2. Does your partner say things that will hurt you, then act angry if you get upset?
3. Does your partner seem obsessed with you?
4. Do you feel humiliated or belittled by your partner?
5. Does your partner tell you things your friends or family have said about you?
6. Would you describe him or her as more jealous or possessive than most people or alternatively seemingly uninterested in you if the relationship has been long term?
7. Does your partner get mad if you have a good time without him or her?
8. Does your partner talk about breaking up when you do something he or she does not like?
9. Does he or she sometimes mimic you or ignore you when you are talking?
10. Does your partner have sudden mood swings or an explosive temper?
11. Is your partner secretive?
12. Have you ever wondered 'If I'm such a bad person, why is he or she so unwilling to break up?
13. Does your partner seem overly controlling of your time, attention, actions, words, activities or whereabouts?
14. Does your relationship feel unfair?

### **Something to think about...**

*Jennifer: "He would get silent. I would start to panic like 'What's wrong? Are you mad? What did I do?' If it happened to me again, which it won't because I know the signs, I would say, 'If you're going to ignore me, I'm going home.' I wouldn't go through it again."*

*James: "When you try to walk away, they follow you. If I raised my voice, she'd say I was making a scene. But it was okay for her to raise her voice, to scream in my face."*

### **ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR LOW RISK**

If you answered yes to any of these questions, your partner may be emotionally abusive.

Most abusive relationships begin with emotional abuse and escalate to physical abuse. If you do not feel you can break up, set some guidelines or boundaries and see how your partner reacts. Challenge them on the emotional abuse. For example, tell them you will not tolerate name calling. Then, the next time they call you a name, walk away. Ask for an apology. Remember, if this person restrains you when you try to walk away, that is unacceptable and physically abusive. Say that out loud. If the person threatens to break up with you because you ask for respect, it is best to let them. It may be difficult, but if you do not set limits now, the behaviours will almost certainly get worse.

### **Danger Signs**

1. Does your partner say he or she trusts you but still accuse you of flirting or being unfaithful?
2. Does your partner check up on you? Does he or she surprise you by showing up somewhere you have said you will be or check your

messages or Snapchats?

3. Does your partner track your time? For example, do they ask where you were for an hour if it only takes twenty minutes to get home from somewhere? Do they want you to install a tracking App on your phone?
4. Does your partner isolate you from your friends? Do they dislike your best friend or say that your best friend has talked about you or him?
5. Have you ever been pushed, shoved, slapped, kicked, or punched by your partner? Have they grabbed you by the shoulders to “make you listen”?
6. When you defend yourself, does your partner say things like “You’re talking back”?
7. Does your partner say he or she would not get so jealous if they did not love you so much? Do they say that you know what makes them mad and you do it anyway, so it is actually your fault?
8. Do you apologize to others for your partner’s actions? “He/she didn’t mean it; you don’t know them. He/she was just upset.”

### Reality Snaps...

*Jennifer: “He would say my friends were trying to hit on him. Or that they were talking about me. He wouldn’t say it right out at first. Just things like, ‘She’s not a good friend, you know.’ Then I would have to get it out of him. He talked about my friends, saying things like, ‘You have to admit she’s kind of sleazy.’ Or ‘I wouldn’t trust her. She was flirting with me.’”*

*James: “She would say my friends were trying to hit on her. She hated my friends. Sometimes she would be nice to them, though, because it gave her power over me. Also, she would accuse me of liking someone else.’ Not fooling around, just ‘liking’ them. How do you fight about that after you’ve denied it one hundred times? Plus, it’s impossible to defend against. I like a lot of people.”*

## **ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR MEDIUM RISK**

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you are in an abusive relationship.

It is not normal for someone to feel the need to check up on you. A classic sign of an abuser is dislike of the people closest to you. Typically, an abuser will try to separate you from your best friends by pointing out their faults. It starts with emotional abuse and moves to physical abuse. After a fight during which they are abusive, abusers may become apologetic and contrite. They may be extremely loving and promise all kinds of things. At the same time, they may subtly blame you for the violence by saying you are making them jealous or that they love you so much they cannot help themselves.

If your partner is behaving like this, you need to get out. It will only get worse. Chances are your self-esteem has already been affected, and you are beginning to feel bad about yourself. Being in an abusive relationship is confusing. You are never really sure if it is your fault or theirs. You may be thinking, "He or she does have a point about some of their arguments." That is probably true. You are not perfect. Nobody is. But often an abuser will take the truth and twist it to confuse you. You will find yourself trying harder and harder to please them and being less and less able to. This relationship is bad for you.

### **Red Alert**

1. Has your partner become so jealous that you could describe him or her as paranoid?
2. Do you often find yourself trying to convince this person that you did nothing wrong?
3. Has this person ever kept you somewhere against your will (car or house)?

4. Has this person ever repeatedly demanded that you 'tell the truth' even when you were not lying?
5. Does this person say they will die if you leave or that they cannot live without you?
6. Has this person ever talked about killing himself or herself?
7. Has he or she ever threatened to kill you? Has he or she said how they would kill you?
8. Has this person forced you to have sex when you did not want to (sexual assault)?
9. Do you have to justify your actions, activities, and time with friends?
10. Have you ever noticed that this person seems to have no respect for you at times but, conversely, will not allow you to break up and will not break up themselves?
11. Do you want to break up at times but feel afraid of what the person might do (hurt you, hurt themselves or harm your family, or tell others private matters or lies about you)?

### Reality Snaps...

*Jennifer: "He started following me. Then he told everyone we knew things about me or that I always wanted to have sex. He called and hung up all the time and said that I used to egg him on by saying, 'Hit me, you big fag.' I never did that. Then he would mail me a letter saying how much he loved me. He told me that if I would just learn to tell the truth everything would be fine. I would have said anything to make it stop. It was awful. Then one time, right in front of my dad, he said, 'Should I tell him what you did? Don't you think he should know?' For a long time he followed me and stood outside my job, just looking at me. Eventually, finally, he started dating someone else. That's when he stopped bothering me. But it hurt more than anything. It took me a long time before I figured him out. I wish I'd known more about it then because I would have broken up with him sooner."*

*James: "She was paranoid. She was always telling me to tell the truth. She said she couldn't live without me and that she would kill herself if I broke up with her. She never threatened to kill me, but she threatened to tell my friends and parents things I had done. Things about sex and drugs. She even threatened to make things up. I always feel like I had to justify my actions. Like... I would change my behaviour even when she wasn't around. I would lie about stupid things just so she wouldn't get mad. At the end of it I didn't care what she said about me to anyone. I just wanted out. So I broke up with her. First, she threatened to kill herself. Then she said she realized what she was doing and that she would stop. When that didn't work, she said she was pregnant. That got to me, but I didn't care. I said I would support the baby, but I still wanted nothing to do with her. So she called my mother and told her all of this. I didn't care. I was through with her. She wasn't pregnant."*

## **ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR HIGH RISK**

If you answered yes to any of the questions above, you are in danger!

These behaviours are extremely abusive and you could be seriously injured or killed. If your partner is behaving like this, it is no longer safe to date this person. It is time to get help and end the relationship. You will never convince him or her that you are innocent of their accusations. Until you break up. Then they will say they realize that you are the best thing that has ever happened to them and they are sorry. But that means nothing. As soon as you go back to them, it will all start again.

Many abusers will threaten to kill themselves when you try to break up. Will they? Usually not, but it is possible. They need professional help, and you need to tell someone you trust. (See Safety Plans.) **YOU CANNOT HELP THEM.** In cases of dating/domestic violence in which

a woman is murdered, the abuser often kills his partner and then himself. This also happens with men, though very rarely. This is why it is so risky when your partner is suicidal. The most dangerous time for a female ending an abusive relationship is when she tries to leave.

Show your friends, parents or family this Risk Assessment and make a Safety Plan. Then call the nearest domestic violence hotline. They can advise you about protective orders, barring orders and safety strategies. Do not play down the danger in this situation. It could mean your life!

## Red Flag List

Check all that apply:

- Your partner has followed you, spied on you, or kept you under surveillance. (This is stalking.)
- Your partner seems extremely upset, agitated, or paranoid, accusing you of being sexually active or unfaithful with someone else or seems to be psychologically spiralling.
- Your partner has access to weapons.
- Your partner has told you how he or she will kill you, your family members, or someone else.
- Your partner is very depressed.
- Your partner is obsessed with you.
- Your partner has been physically abusive in the past.
- Your partner has sexually assaulted you or forced you or others into sexual activity against your will.
- Your partner is addicted to violent pornography
- Your partner has injured or killed a pet.
- Your partner abuses alcohol or drugs.
- You are pregnant. (70% of pregnant teens are abused.)
- Your partner has threatened to kill you and/or said how he or she

commit the murder.

- Your partner is suicidal.
- You are afraid to disagree with your partner on any topic.
- You are afraid of your partner or of what he or she might do.
- You are attempting to break up with an abusive partner who is not taking it well.

The more items you checked, the more dangerous your situation.

These are serious danger signals, and you should get professional help. Also reread the *Red Alert* section of the Risk Assessment lists.

### **Reality Snaps...**

*Jennifer: "When he told me he was going to kill me if I left him, I should have told my parents. They found out anyways after he started stalking me. He said he wanted us to be together forever and the only way to make sure I would never be with another man was to kill me. He said he couldn't stand that though. He threatened to kill himself if I left him, and he said it would be my fault.*

*James: "I don't know about the pet thing. I'd watch out for the pregnancy thing. Guys should always use their own birth control. My girlfriend said she was on the pill. It turned out she was, but she could have gotten pregnant if she wasn't because I never used anything. And the suicide threats? They really tear you up. But you can't help her. If you go back, it's all going to happen again."*

**“But I was violent, too...”**

## **IDENTIFYING THE PRIMARY AGGRESSOR**

When police officers respond to a domestic violence call, they often must determine who is problem or the primary aggressor in what can look like a fight. In relationship violence, often both parties get violent. This can confuse victims, (as well as police officers) who may think that both people are equally violent because someone fights back or defends them self. Following are some points to keep the issues clear:

- People have the right to defend themselves. Often when someone is attacked, he or she instinctively strikes back or must to protect them self.
- When a victim becomes involved with a violent person, his or her behaviour may change. For example, when someone is yelling, it is tempting to yell back. When someone is violent, it is tempting to respond with violence. These behaviours are learned and can become habits. With a well-adjusted partner, an emotionally healthy person is likely to respond in kind.
- Every relationship has problems and conflicts. Getting angry is not an excuse to assault.
- Nobody is perfect. Many abusers will try to persuade their partner that the abuse is caused by the victim's behaviour or faults. This is simply not true.
- Abusers encourage their partner to feel insecure and inadequate. This is manipulation and can cause feelings of jealousy. Unless the other behaviours are present, a victim is not abusive merely because he or she, too, feels feelings of jealousy. Jealousy is a normal human feeling. But when someone uses their feelings to accuse another or hurt another, that is not normal.
- Who is usually the abuser or aggressor? The fact that someone hits back during a violent incident does not make that person abusive. The person who is usually violent is normally the abusive person.

**The most telling factor to consider is really very simple. Who is afraid of whom? Are you afraid of your partner? If the answer is yes, then he or she is probably abusive. If your partner is not afraid of you, then you probably are not abusive.**

*Don't get confused!  
If you are afraid, get out now!*

### **Reality Snaps...**

*Jennifer: "There is nothing anyone can do to make someone beat them up. People get mad. That's life. They have to deal with it. It wasn't my fault. I was just doing the same things everyone else does in relationships. And when I punched his arm during a fight, he said for the longest time, 'You punched me. You're the violent one. But he hit me first, hard. Ugh. Whatever. I'm glad it's over.'"*

*James: "I think the only time it's OK to hit her is if she has a weapon. Then you're stuck. You have to protect yourself. But I always pushed her off me. One time I kind of pulled her out of my car and left. You'll know if it's getting out of control and you have to get out! I could have been accused of abusing her that night for pulling her out of my car."*

## **Safety Plans**

### **WHAT IS IT?**

A safety plan is a series of actions you can take when you feel threatened or afraid. If you are not ready to end the relationship, you can prepare for the next violent episode. If you are breaking up, you can prepare for any situations of stalking that may follow.

### **WHY BOTHER?**

If a plan is prepared in advance, it can prevent panic and increase

safety. Because every relationship is different, safety plans will vary. For this reason it is important that each safety plan be designed by you, hopefully with another person, to suit your circumstance.

## HOW IS IT DONE?

After identifying your resources and potential danger signals, you can devise your own individual safety plans, including one for breaking up.

### *A. Available Resources*

The first step is to identify your resources. What might you possibly need? Who can help and how? Look at the following list and add anything or anyone that might be helpful to you.

1. **Code word or phrase.** A code word or phrase is chosen by a person to convey a message to family or friends. It can be as simple as “I’m kind of tired tonight.” The meaning is decided on in advance and can mean “Don’t leave us alone.” There can be varying degrees. For example, “I’m exhausted” can mean either “Come over right away” or “Call the police.” You may be with the abuser or in the same room. The code word will help you indicate danger without tipping him or her off.
2. **Your Phone.** Your phone can help you but it is a well-known fact that victims of dating and domestic violence go through a lot of phones. The reason for this is that the abuser is not likely to wait patiently while you call your parents, the police or friends. One abuser put his girlfriend’s phone in a sink full of water, for example. Put important numbers, such as parents, friends, police, on speed dial. Give yourself a couple of options in case of a busy signal. On the flip side, an abuser can use your cell phone or pager to harass you. Part of your Break Up Plan should be to get a new phone number.
3. **New Phone Number.** Consider getting a new phone number and

blocking the abuser on all social media.

4. **Friends.** Let them know your situation and give them the code word or phrase. They can also ensure that you are not left alone with your partner when the situation seems likely to escalate. Friends can run for help and should be told to call police if an assault is occurring. It is a good idea to let them know just how violent your abuser gets so they will take the situation seriously.
5. **Parents.** I know. You're thinking, "No way and I going to tell my parents." But if your partner is really dangerous, you'll have to. If you are under 18, your parents have the power to do things that you cannot. Like change your phone number, pick you up wherever you call from, contact the abuser's family, help you to get chargers filed. (Last on your list, I'm sure. But it may come to that, and it is better they be somewhat prepared. Also, the abuser may threaten other family members, and they must be made aware of those threats.)
6. **Teachers, counsellors, school officials.** This is important because the abuser may come to your school or work colleagues looking for you. If he or she attends the same school, he or she may be violent there, and you have the absolute right to attend school without being afraid. Also, if school personnel are informed of the problem, they will be more likely to react positively and quickly in a dangerous situation. If you get an order of protection, make sure your school or work place has a copy. This will enable them to understand the seriousness and also get immediate action if they call the police.
7. **Crisis lines or women's shelters.** These organizations provide a wealth of information and give you a place to talk. You can call a crisis line anonymously and bounce your situation off someone

who is knowledgeable about the problem. Many people call and say, “These are things that my partner is doing. Do you think that is abusive?” Shelters can provide you with legal information about your area and will even go with you to court if you end up there. Call them for help or just to chat.

8. **Police Department.** This may be a hard step, but if you are being assaulted or see someone else being assaulted, you need to call the police. Police officers are experienced in dealing with domestic violence and have seen everything. Your situation will neither shock, nor surprise them. They have powers and authority where you do not. Also, a run-in with police will indicate that the situation is serious and convey a message to the offender: violence is against the law, and the abuser is going to suffer the consequences.

#### *B. Warning Signals*

The next step is to identify when you may be in danger. Let’s review your abuser’s warning signals. What are signs that he or she is in the tension building phase? What does your abuser do when angry? Does he or she:

- Raise his or her voice?
- Go silent?
- Stamp around?
- Throw things?
- Punch walls?
- Drive aggressively or dangerously?
- Behave in a sexual manner that is pushy or embarrassing?
- Get jealous?
- Call you names?
- Bang on the steering wheel?
- Stare at you?

#### **Reality Snaps...**

*Jennifer: "He would stare at me, really hatefully. I cannot describe it. That was how I would know he was mad and about to explode."*

*James: "She would go silent and ignore everything I said. She wouldn't look back at me. Then she would kind of stare at the ground. Every once in a while she would give me a mad or sad look. I'd say, 'What's wrong?' And she'd say, 'Nothing.' If this happens, don't ask what's wrong. Stay with your friends if you're at a party."*

At this point anything can trigger a violent episode, and you need to be one step ahead. Put yourself in a different situation and decide which courses of action you can take, what kinds of safety plans you can make. For example if you are:

*At a party*

1. You can use your code word or phrase to indicate to your friends that it is not safe to leave you alone.
2. You can go to the bathroom and call your parents. Ask them to pick you up.
3. You can pretend to have a stomach-ache and ask to be taken home, making sure that you do not go alone with your abuser.
4. If you cannot get away for even a minute, you can tell them you have to call home for some reason and use your code word to let your parents know you're in danger.
5. You can sneak away and ask a friend, or better yet a few friends, to walk or drive you home.
6. You can approach adults at the party, or the host if you are an adult, and either tell them you're sick and would like to be taken home or tell them the truth, that you're afraid.

The nice thing about parties or public places is that there are other people there. Make the most of that and do not leave with your partner

to “talk it out.” Chances are they are going to say they want to talk to you privately. Stand your ground and do not get into a car alone with someone who seems to be heightening! Also, try to avoid getting trapped in a room, away from everyone else. Tell them that if they want to talk privately, they can go home and call you or even call you the next day. As soon as you see you partner escalating, get away and refuse to talk, even if he or she persuades you he or she is now calm. You know the person. If you saw signals, you’re probably right. A violent episode may be coming. Trust your instincts!

*In the car*

1. Say you are sick and ask to be taken home. Pretend to throw up if you have to. One pregnant woman pretended to be in labour and insisted on strangers calling an ambulance. It worked. She got the help she needed in the hospital, after they determined that she was not in labour, but rather in danger.
2. You can act as though you are going along with your partner and wait until you are at a light. Then get out if you can. Run to the nearest public place like a restaurant, hospital, or even a busy intersection and call the police, your parents, a friend, or maybe a taxi to take you home.
3. If he or she is dropping off friends, get out at one of their houses and refuse to get back in. Then use their phone to call for an alternate ride home. Or try to insist you be taken home first. Chances are he or she won’t do this, saying, ‘Get back in the car. I want to talk to you.’ Refuse. Better a scene at a friend’s house than in a deserted parking lot where there is nobody to help you.
4. Think back to what has helped you in the past. Is it better to cry, beg, reassure, stay silent? If you fight back, do you have a chance? If not, you may be in the unfortunate position of going along with this person or trying to get through it without getting hurt. Try to get out. Do what you can. Whatever you have to do to stay alive is what you should do. The car is a bad place. Try hard to stay out of

the car.

5. Think of an excuse to call your parents or friends and use the code word or phrase.
6. Scream for help. Wave for help. Act hysterical. Distract however you can.

The best way to avoid being trapped in a car with an abusive partner is to stay out of the car in the first place. This cannot be stressed enough. Cars are dangerous places to be because you can be taken anywhere and be kept in there. He or she can also get you killed by driving dangerously and this happens. This type of person often drives in rage to intimidate others in the car. It makes them feel powerful. It makes you feel helpless. It is dangerous.

### **Reality Snaps...**

*Jennifer: "I wouldn't get into a car with someone like that again. I used to be stuck in there for hours. Even if he knew I was going to be late and get grounded, he wouldn't let me out."*

*James: "Don't give them what they want. If you're late explain it to your parents. Don't even act mad at your girlfriend. Turn off the music and don't talk. Ignore her. The most important thing is to hang on to your keys. If the girl has the car, then get out and walk. If you have the car, wait until she has to go to the bathroom and leave. Say you're feeling sick or you have to go to the bathroom. Just leave somehow."*

#### *In your house*

1. Stay out of the kitchen. This advice is offered because there are many items that can be used as weapons. But clearly, anything can be used as a weapon in the wrong hands.
2. Move the fight to a safer place like the living room.
3. Call a friend and use the code word or phrase.

4. If anyone else is in the house, call for help, loudly and repeatedly.
5. If the situation is still at a low level, for instance, this person is not violent but you feel it is escalating, move the fight to a room within easy hearing of anyone else in the home. This should force the person to quiet down and give you easy access to help if they get violent.
6. If you are alone there, try to move the fight out on the porch, particularly if there are neighbours around. This may also give you a chance to run to a more public place.
7. Say you have to go to the bathroom and call the police with the cell phone.
8. Try to call 911.

#### *At school*

1. Move to hallway or other public place.
2. Call for help.
3. If you leave school and your partner is waiting outside, go back in and inform a teacher or administrator that you need help. You can leave by another exit if you're sure you will be unseen.
4. Stay with a friend so your partner cannot get you alone.
5. Refuse to go to a secluded spot. Insist on talking in a public place or tell your partner you'll only speak to him or her if your friend stands close by.

#### *C. Personal Safety Plan*

There are unlimited situations you may find yourself in. Think of them and write safety plans for each one. Following are a few good ground rules.

1. Don't get in a car alone with an abusive partner.
2. Insist on talking in a public place. If you have things to discuss, do it at a restaurant or other public space.
3. Keep your phone.
4. Do not go anywhere alone if you're afraid.  
(One young man secretly taped a conversation in a restaurant to prove he was being threatened).

## **Breakup Plan**

Suggestions:

1. Use the buddy system. Have friends with you everywhere so the abuser cannot get you alone.
2. Keep your phone charged.
3. Inform school and work personnel if the situation is dangerous.
4. Obviously, screen your calls. Do not pick up a number you do not recognise. Also, since telephone harassment is a crime, save threatening or abusive messages. For verbal conversations, write down the time, date, and whatever the abuser says (in quotes). It is also helpful to record your responses to him or her such as "Don't call me again" or "I've asked you not to call here. You're harassing me." Put the statements in quotes such as "You've got to talk to me." Or "If you don't see me, I'm going to kill myself." Or "I'll kill you if you don't do as I say." It is extremely important to record threats and not just on your phone. Make sure they are written down and in a safe place. Make physical copies of screen shot threats and keep them with any other records. Evidence collection is crucial because most of what we are trying to show are the patterns that escalate. When a court can see the escalation, it normally acts appropriately. Email these documents to a friend so that someone else has access to them, should they be destroyed.
5. Lock your doors and make sure your family is aware that your former partner may approach you.
6. If you get an Order of Protection, Barring Order or any court document, keep a copy in your purse or wallet and on the refrigerator. Make sure that your family knows to call you the police if they see the abuser. Insure there is a copy at work or

at the school or security office.

7. Consider changing your SIM card, as stated, and changing your phone number.
8. If you feel this person could kill you, you may have to leave for a period of time. Stay at a relative's or friend's house. Some people in heightened violent situations will need to be completely away from any place where they can be found.
9. Either you or your parents may contact your partner's family if you think it might be helpful in exerting influence over him or her.
10. Make sure your partner knows, via friends or family, that any further violence or harassment will be dealt with legally.
11. Stalking is against the law (check your state's or country's laws). Generally it consists of two separate followings or surveillances, along with a threat or physical assault.
12. Try to avoid giving your former partner any reason to think you might reconcile. Because the relationships are so confusing, sometimes you may feel guilty because you feel sorry for the person who is hurting you. Sometimes people agree to meet an abusive person in an attempt to "make things better." You cannot do this with a person who is violent or manipulative. It sends the idea that you are not determined and that you can be persuaded. It sends a mixed message. Be strong and do not see or talk to him or her. Try not get drawn back in.

### **Personal Breakup Safety Plan**

Now it's your turn. Sit down with a piece of paper and do your own personalized Safety Plan. Do it with someone else if possible because he or she may have ideas that can help you. Following a rough guide:

1. List your resources.

.....  
UNDERSTANDING DATING  
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.....

2. List the possible situations or places where you may be threatened.
3. List your responses to those situations.
4. Have an alternate place to go if it's not safe to go home and tell the person in advance you may be showing up.
5. List the things you have to do to make your Safety Plan work (get an extra phone, get Order of Protection, inform school or work, talk to friends, parents or family members, etc.)

Remember that anything you have to do to stay safe is okay. Never feel guilty for anything you do to get out of a bad situation, including acting crazy. Some victims end up having sex with an offender to stop an assault. If you find yourself in a situation like that, trust your instincts. You know best how to take care of yourself. Also, in spite of all your precautions, you may get hurt. This is not your fault. Hopefully, an assertive response will protect you.

### **Reality Snaps...**

*Jennifer: "Don't believe anything he says about how he'll change. Call the police on him if he follows you. You have to stay away from him, because it will all happen again. I would tell everyone, including his family, what he was doing. I would say to him, 'Go ahead. Tell my friends and family anything you want. They all know you're lying.' Even if he told them things that were true. If they were personal things that were none of their business, I would say they were lies. After some time went by, I would get so mad, thinking about what he had done. I wished so much that I had called the police, told him off, or got him in trouble somehow. I would lie in bed and think about what had happened on a certain night and think, 'I should have said this, or I should have said that.' But it was too late then. The main thing was that it was all over."*

*James: "A phone can be used against you. If it happened to me now I would get a new phone number right away. I wouldn't give the number out to anyone I didn't trust because she called all of my friends looking for my new number. I was actually glad when she called my parents to tell them she was pregnant. Once they knew, I told them everything and they helped me. They handled the pregnancy issue by saying they would raise the baby if she wanted to give the baby up for adoption. But she was never pregnant. She told a friend who told me that she was going to let me sweat for a couple of months. Nice, huh? I stayed away from anywhere I thought she might be. I also stayed away from places I usually went because I didn't want to run into her. I told my boss. He understood. He actually made me feel better. He said most people date someone crazy at some time or another. This is the most important part. Don't talk to her or see her. You need a full on break in contact because once they get you on the phone? They 'grab' you again. Just talking to her would confuse me. She would start talking about the future or something, and it would get to me. No matter what happens, don't go see her. It will only mess up your head."*

## **Victim Blaming**

### **MYTHS ABOUT DATING VIOLENCE**

- Violence in dating relationship rarely happens. Not true. Statistics show that one in every three dating relationships is violent (Levy, B., Ed., Dating Violence: Young Women in Danger. Seattle: Seal Press, 1991).
- Dating violence occurs only with drug users or poor people who come from "bad" families. Not true. Dating violence can occur whether or not a partner uses alcohol or drugs. It can happen if a partner is poor, rich, respectable, an athlete, or a good student.
- Dating violence means a couple having a "fight." Not true. Dating violence is not about a couple having a fight. It is about one partner

.....  
UNDERSTANDING DATING  
AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
.....

threatening, abusing, controlling, intimidating, manipulating and/or assaulting another.

- Young women are just as violent as men. Not true. While young women can be violent, statistics show that young men are more violent.
- Dating and domestic violence is usually an isolated incident. Not true. Dating and domestic violence is a pattern of abuse and control. Once it starts, it almost never stops.
- Stress causes dating violence. Not true. Many people are very stressed and never assault, threaten or manipulate their partners.
- Drinking causes dating violence. Not true. Abusers will use alcohol as an excuse for violent behaviour but will eventually also be violent when not drinking. Additionally, the manipulation and controlling behaviour are normally present even when an abuser is sober. Many people drink. Most do not assault their partners.
- People who batter cannot help it. They lose control. Not true. Usually people who batter do not assault anyone else. They get mad at others but control themselves. They assault their partners because they believe they can get away with it.
- If a victim wanted to leave, he or she could just break up. Not true. Often abusers will threaten to kill the partners if they break up and will later stalk them. Also, victims feel sorry for their partners and sometimes feel guilty, thinking the abuse is somehow their fault.
- If you love someone enough, you can make him or her change. Not true. It is simply not that easy. The decision to change must be made by the abuser. It rarely happens.
- If the victim did not make the partner angry, he or she would not assault the victim. Not true. Victims are assaulted regardless of their behaviour. If not for one reason, then for another.

**In summary, anyone can be a victim of dating  
or domestic violence.**

## Why Someone Stays

Why does a person stay in a violent relationship? Below are some possible reasons.

1. The offender has threatened to kill their partner if they leave.
2. A person is afraid of what will happen if they leave.
3. A person believes their partner will get better.
4. The abuser or manipulative person has promised to change.
5. A person allows themselves to believe that the abuse is partially their own fault.
6. A person feels strong feelings of loyalty and/or love for the other and believes that means they should stay. (It actually does not mean that anyone should tolerate abuse).
7. People can be afraid of being alone.
8. When the abuser is nice, the person is wonderful.
9. A person believes that they can help their partner to change.
10. Possibly, the person saw this behaviour growing up and thus believes it is normal or inevitable in relationships.
11. A person might be confused and think that extreme jealousy is a sign of love.
12. A person believes that a few small bruises are no big deal.
13. A person feels sorry for the other.
14. A person suffers such low self-esteem from the abuse and manipulation that they do not feel good enough about them self to insist on a relationship of respect.
15. A person has a child or children with the abuser and feels conflicted about either separating the other parent from the child or leaving a child or children with an abusive parent. (Men, in particular, remain in troubling relationships for this reason).

## Reality Snaps...

*Jennifer: "I loved him for a while. And he was going through a bad time and saying it was my fault. He said my leaving him was the cruellest thing anyone had ever done to him. I felt sorry for him, and I was also afraid he would kill himself or both of us. I believed him when he said he wouldn't do it again. I believed him every time except the last time."*

*James: "I thought I loved her, and she was nice sometimes. In the beginning she was great, and when things started to mess up I thought it was my fault. I figured she'd get better, and I thought I could help her change. I felt sorry for her, and I didn't want to be alone. I figured her jealousy was a sign that she loved me, and I thought she loved me more than anyone else would. My friends and family didn't like her, but I thought that was because they didn't understand her or know her like I did. Plus, we were together a long time, and I kind of thought we had a future."*

## **Helping Friends**

What can you do when your friend tells you they are experiencing dating violence?

- Listen. Let them talk.
- Do not judge. Use helpful statements and avoid unhelpful statements.
- Do not give a list of solutions right away. Mostly, listen compassionately.
- Do a Safety Plan with them, even if it is an informal one (for example, what will they do if the abuser follows them to school or work? Home? Jumps in your car)?
- Stress that your friend has the right to break up when they are ready.
- Convey that the violence is not their fault, regardless of what your friend said, wore, or did.
- Give them information about the Cycle of Violence, Risk Assessments, and the Profile.

- Give them the phone number of a local shelter or a hotline. They can remain anonymous or say they are working on a research paper, if they chose.
- Continue to be their friend if they go back.
- Call the police if you witness an assault. Then honk a horn or scream for help until the police arrive.

Remember to be aware of your own safety at all times. Because these situations can be dangerous, you should be acutely aware of your surroundings. Do not put yourself at risk!

## HELPFUL STATEMENTS

1. You don't deserve to be treated this way.
2. It sounds like he/she is getting worse and worse.
3. I know how much you like him or her. It must be hard for you to break this off.
4. It sounds scary.
5. This behaviour is not just bad. It's abusive.
6. Have you thought about breaking up?
7. Jealousy is a normal feeling but this is too much and the person's feelings are not your fault or your problem.
8. Nobody should be pushing or shoving you.
9. Can I help? Is there anything I can do?
10. This sounds familiar. Let me give you some information about this.
11. You're right to be upset. I would be, too.
12. You cannot resolve problems with this person if they behave like this. It's not fair or even possible.
13. You should be able to feel upset, too, without getting hurt.
14. I'm worried about you. I think this might be dangerous.
15. You are too good of a person to be treated like this.
16. There are plenty of people out there who do not act like this.

17. I'm afraid he/she is going to get worse.
18. I do not think you can help him or her.
19. This must feel confusing and awful.
20. If you do not feel as if you can break up now, make sure to say that if he or she hurts you again it is over.
21. Let's call someone who knows about this issue.

## UNHELPFUL STATEMENTS

1. At least he or she cares enough to get jealous.
2. You're lucky to have somebody, even if the person is not perfect.
3. So... wear what he or she wants. Who cares?
4. You should break up. I keep telling you this.
5. Don't talk back. Stop making him or her mad.
6. All people are like this when you get to know them.
7. Look, he/she is good looking.
8. If you don't do something, you're as bad as him or her.
9. If not like they punched you or anything.
10. I think it's kind of romantic. If he or she said they were sorry, you have to give them another chance. (Wrong answer. You don't.)
11. I wish somebody loved me like that.
12. Focus on their good qualities.
13. Stop making him/her mad.
14. He/she wouldn't get so jealous if they didn't care so much.

## Reality Snaps...

*Jennifer: "I would give the victim all of this information. I would tell her repeatedly that it wasn't her fault. I wouldn't blame her because I know how confusing it is. I would point out the things he was doing that were wrong, and I would keep showing her how she was getting mixed up. I would also remind her that there are nice guys who are not messed up. An important thing is that when they made up I wouldn't say anything to*

*make her feel stupid. I would just wait for the next time and do the same stuff over again."*

*James: "If I saw another guy in my situation I would tell him to break up and get away. I would explain what I saw and that it might be hard for him to see it clearly. It would have helped me to see this information because it blew me away when I first read it. It all fit her. I would stress that he doesn't owe her anything because that was hard for me. I would tell him he doesn't HAVE to stay with her, and I would get involved if I saw her ripping into him. I would back up the victim for sure. I would NOT make him feel like a fool if he went back with her because that can happen, too. One more thing I would do is warn him that she might get crazy when he breaks up with her. I would tell him to do a Breakup Plan and think it through. If she threatened to kill herself, I would tell her to talk to a counsellor. They usually don't, and you can't help them. It just gives them control if you try."*

## **Healthy Relationships**

The following are characteristics of a healthy relationship:

- Respect
- Dignity
- Trust
- Consideration
- Communication
- Good conflict resolution skills
- Emotional safety
- Consistency
- Honesty
- No physical violence

In a good relationship you will be able to:

.....  
UNDERSTANDING DATING  
AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
.....

- Say no to physical closeness or sexual activity without feeling guilty.
- Change your mind.
- Go out without your partner.
- Have your own goals and interests.
- Maintain your friendships.
- Express your opinions.
- Have control over your life.
- Be equal.
- Be safe.
- Text back when you have had to think and/or it is a convenient time for you.
- Be comfortable that if your phone dies, you can decide not to charge it until you feel like charging it.
- Be respected.
- Break up without feeling afraid or share feelings of upset without fearing retaliation.
- Be comfortable making a relationship mistake periodically and knowing that when you apologise and your partner accepts the apology, the issue is over. They do not bring it up in every fight.
- Disagree.

A good relationship does not mean a conflict-free relationship. Conflict is healthy and inevitable. Disagreements should be resolved without violence, though, and each partner should feel safe and respected enough to voice any concerns or complaints.

Often, people who have been involved with abusive partners think that a healthy relationship sounds boring. There should be chemistry. But a good relationship is constant. It should not have wild swings of emotion or roller coaster ups and downs usually seen in an abusive relationship. A relationship should be generally calm, not highly dramatic.

### Reality Snaps...

*Jennifer: "I have a healthy relationship now. It's not as dramatic, but now I see that it's not supposed to be. This guy is my best friend. I can tell him anything. When we first had fights, it was a little confusing. I would start yelling and he would just kind of look at me. Then I figured out I didn't have to yell. He wasn't yelling at me. I can't describe how much better this is. I just can't. You'd have to go through it to know. He's funny and romantic, and he makes me feel like I'm great. He doesn't freak out if I talk to other guys. Things that I would have been afraid to tell my other boyfriend, I can say in this relationship without even thinking or worrying about it."*

*James: "There has to be trust. You should be able to be with your friends and not have to spend every minute with her. She shouldn't want to be with you every second of the day. She shouldn't have to know where you are all the time. There should be communication. They need to respect your decisions, especially when you say no to something. They shouldn't try to get you in trouble with either your friends or your parents or embarrass you in front of your friends. It sounds pretty basic and it is. It's only confusing when you're with someone who is unstable like this."*

### Unhealthy Relationships

The following are characteristics of unhealthy relationships:

- Suspicion
- Mistrust
- Lack of consideration
- Emotionally unsafe
- Inconsistent
- Poor conflict resolution skills
- Poor communication

- Lack of respect
- Dishonest
- Verbal, sexual, or physical abuse
- Uncertainty

Think in terms of fair. If you find yourself thinking your relationship is unfair, you're may be right.

In a poor relationship, you'll often begin to feel unsure. Your partner will keep you guessing and may encourage you to feel insecure. **A good rule of thumb is that your partner should make you feel better about yourself, not worse.** You should not feel as though you have to try to please your partner. You should not always have to wonder about whether or not your partner will be in a good mood. You should never be afraid during an argument, and your partner should not do things to humiliate or embarrass you. Physical intimacy should never be forced, uncomfortable, or beyond limits you have set.

## **Questions to Ask About the New Person in Your Life**

Following are some guidelines for determining which people are potentially dangerous. While you probably will not quiz your dates, be aware of the following problem indicators:

1. Do your new partner's parents argue a lot? Are they divorced? If so, generally, what happened?
2. Does your new partner have a violent father or mother? An overly critical father or mother? Does your partner have 'weird' strong positive feelings or seem to be unable to separate from their parents control? While they may not come right out and tell you this, you can usually get a sense of whether or not anyone in the family is afraid of one of their parents. You should try to spend some time with your partner's family, certainly before a serious commitment is made.

3. How was your new partner disciplined? Are there scary silences in the family where people are very tense or on edge?
4. Does your new partner talk about how his ex-boyfriends or girlfriends were untrustworthy, cheated, or could not be trusted? For example, if you have met a young man who talks about how his ex-girlfriend or girlfriends were sluts, or who betrayed them in a dramatic fashion or totally victimised them, this may be cause for concern. One young manipulative woman told her boyfriend, for example, that her ex-boyfriend 'gave' her issues with trust because he did not respond quickly enough to her texts and 'cheated' on her. She had no evidence of this. She just 'knew' it. When pressed, they will either exaggerate the betrayal or maybe it did happen. Either way, what comes across is that you better not do the same.
5. Did your new partner get in physical fights with siblings?
6. Does your new partner get into physical disagreements with others?
7. Was your partner violent in other relationships, even if he or she contends it was not his or her fault?
8. How did your new partner's former relationships end and why?
9. Is your new partner disrespectful or demeaning toward all women or all men?
10. Are they overly interested or addicted to pornography?
11. Are they ever pushy about sex?
12. Do they abuse alcohol or drugs?
13. Do they try to intimidate you to get their way? Emotionally, physically, or sexually?
14. Is your partner sometimes rigid about how women and men should behave? For example, the way one gender dresses or whether or not mothers should work or fathers should do things?
15. Do they experience mood swings or mental health issues?
16. Is your new partner extremely possessive or jealous?
17. Do you find yourself surprised by the seemingly innocent things

that make your new partner angry or upset?

18. Does your new partner have strong negative feelings about his or her mother or father and if so why?
19. Have you been startled or surprised by a sudden explosive response of your new partner in traffic, with a stranger or even with a friend or family member?

## **Questions for You to Answer at the Beginning of a New Relationship**

Often young people spend a great deal of time wondering what other people are thinking. Do he or she like me? How much? Will they want to see me often? Do they still want to date other people?

Take some control! When starting a new relationship, spend some time to think about the following questions. Decide what you want before you get into it.

- How often do I want to see this person?
- How much time do I want to spend texting, snapchatting, or messaging this person each day?
- How much time do I need for myself to keep moving toward my goals?
- Do I feel like I have to constantly check my phone to make sure they do not get mad if I fail to respond quickly enough?
- Am I willing or ready to date this person exclusively?
- What are comfortable ways to resolve conflict?
- What actions will cause me to end the relationship? Have I articulated them? (Disrespectful behaviour, violence, forced intimacy, or simply a change in your feelings are a few.)
- Obsession or consistent use of pornography, especially that which highlights violence. Some might say 'everyone uses pornography'. That is untrue. Set your standards high and be confident that there are people who either share your standards or who are willing to

rise to your standards.

- How far am I willing to go sexually? (Important tip here. Make a decision about this and stick to it. If you're feeling ready to extend your limit, decide well in advance. Trying to decide while you're in the situation is like deciding whether or not to swim after you've jumped off the diving board!)

## Questions for Your Partner

If you fear your partner may be struggling with these issues, copy this questionnaire for him or her.

1. Do you have trouble controlling your temper?
2. Do you get into fights?
3. Are you violent when you use alcohol or drugs?
4. Do you believe you are only violent when you are provoked?
5. Are you afraid that if you don't control another person, they will control you?
6. Do you sometimes throw or break things to get someone's attention?
7. Are you often afraid your partner will be unfaithful?
8. Do you spend a lot of time worrying about where your partner is and with whom?
9. Have you ever grabbed a romantic partner by the shoulders or arms to make them listen?
10. Do you feel that you would not get so angry if others would do what you tell them?
11. Have you ever followed or spied on your partner?
12. Have you ever pushed, shoved, slapped, hit, kicked, or choked your partner?
13. Have you ever said you might kill yourself if your partner broke up with you?
14. Do you sometimes call people names or say things you know will hurt them?

15. Do you ever pretend that you're going to break up with a romantic partner if they make you angry?
16. Are you more jealous than most people?
17. Do you ever get angry when your partner does things without telling you?
18. Have you ever forced your partner to do more sexually than the individual desired?
19. Do you believe you are supposed to be in control?
20. Do you believe all women or men are manipulative?

If you found yourself having to think about these questions, you may have a problem with relationship violence. It doesn't have to be this tough. Talk to someone who is experienced in the field like a counsellor or therapist. Violence is a learned behaviour that can be unlearned. One person struggling with this problem said the best thing that ever happened was learning that they did not have to be in control and that they could not possibly control another person. You can learn that, too.

## **Date Rape**

### **Author's Note**

This topic has been directed primarily to women as they are more likely to be raped than are men. In spite of that, men can also be victimized in this way and should familiarize themselves with the information. Pay special attention to Date Rape Drugs and If It Happens to You.

Men should also be aware that a woman has the right to say no at any time! Women should know it is the very same for a man. Men, if you feel that a woman is 'a tease', maybe you should be with a different woman. Rape and chemically assisted rape (using date rape drugs) are crimes that can put you in jail.

## DATE RAPE FACTS

- 25% of college women were found to have been victims of rape or attempted rape.
- 90% of these victims knew their assailants.
- 47% of rapes were committed by first dates, casual dates, or romantic acquaintances.
- 90% of the victims did not report the rape.  
(1985 study by Dr. Mary Koss of Kent State University. Students were polled at 35 college campuses)

Men and women should be sure that they have a conversation about sexual activity early in the relationship. Consent should be verbally given and secured. It should be clear. It should be stated. "Do you want to do this?" It has to be clear in order to protect men from false allegations and protect women from feeling taken advantage of by a man who is either aggressive or improperly attuned to the feelings of his partner.

With so many people exhibiting problematic behaviours relating to violent pornography use and addiction, everyone needs to step up communication skills around this issue.

Sexual assault can happen to anyone! Remember that you have the right to say no at any time. Practice following safe behaviours:

1. Group dating is best, at least until you are comfortable with a new boyfriend.
2. Limit your use of alcohol and drugs so that you can remain in control.
3. State your limits CLEARLY, even if you feel a little silly.
4. Say NO at any time you are uncomfortable or feel a situation is moving too quickly. Do not try to be nice. Say NO loudly and unequivocally so that another person is not confused.

5. Beware of date rape drugs (see Date Rape Drugs).
6. Trust your instincts!!! If you're feeling uncomfortable, there is a reason. Get out of the situation.
7. Keep moving in the direction of other people.

### **Beware of a man who:**

- Takes everything sexually, even if it is not intended that way
- Is overly aggressive or violent
- Is disrespectful of women
- Tries to get you drunk
- Won't take no for an answer
- Consistently tries to talk you into sex
- Feels women ask for rape by being provocative

### **IF IT HAPPENS TO YOU...**

If you said no and sex was forced upon you, you were raped. You may want to report the assault to the police. If you are not sure about reporting but want to keep the option open for later, the following will help you preserve the evidence:

- Do not eat or drink
- Do not wash your clothes
- Try not to go to the bathroom
- Do not douche
- Do not take a shower or bath

You should get medical attention as soon as possible to check for injuries and to test for pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STD). Being seen by a doctor or at an emergency room does not mean you have to make a police report, but if you tell medical personnel that you were sexually assaulted, they may be required to contact the police. Even then, you do not have to make a report or file charges. You can refuse to talk to the police or simply tell the doctor you had unprotected sex and want to be checked for STD and pregnancy. If you

decide to file criminal charges, you have the right to drop them at any time. The decision to proceed legally is yours and yours alone.

Call a rape crisis line. It can only help you. Women experienced in sexual assaults will answer your questions and assist you in identifying your options. In most areas, someone will accompany you to court if you choose to go that route.

Victims of sexual assault feel many different emotions afterward. This is normal and should not alarm you. Following are some common reactions: fear, anger, guilt, shock, denial, depression, anxiety, embarrassment, shame, helplessness, confusion, and betrayal.

Additionally, many victims also experience trouble sleeping, nausea, nightmares, the need to shower or bathe repeatedly, difficulty in concentrating, bedwetting, loss of appetite or overeating, and difficulty with touching or being touched.

**Do not blame yourself. It is not your fault!**

## **IF YOUR FRIEND TELLS YOU SHE HAS BEEN RAPED....**

- Advise her to get medical attention
- Let her talk about the experience as much as she needs to, but do not press for specific details if she does not want to share them.
- Tell her that her emotions are a normal reaction to the experience.
- Advise her to get professional help and give her the number of a rape crisis line, even if the assault happened years ago.
- Do not judge her actions before, during, or after the incident. (Don't tell her she was foolish to go home with him or that she should have fought harder, etc.)
- Advise her about the importance of preserving evidence if she wants to proceed legally.
- Be patient while she recovers.

## **DATE RAPE DRUGS**

Be aware that people can be sexually assaulted with the assistance of various 'date rape drugs'. Sometimes called chemically assisted rapes, these assaults leave their victims with little or no recollection of the attack.

Rophynol and gamma-hydroxy-butyramine (GHB) are two of the most common drugs to be misused in this way. Similar to Valium, Rophynol is ten times stronger. It is known to cause temporary amnesia, muscle relaxation, sleep, and impaired motor skills. Additionally, alcohol will intensify the effect. These drugs were extremely popular in the Rave scene. People under the influence of these drugs can also become agitated, excited, uninhibited, dizzy, confused, have slurred speech, and lose their judgement. Also possible are breathing problems, unconsciousness, and even comas. Fast-acting, Rophynol can take effect in as little as ten minutes. If Rophynol and GHB are combined and alcohol is also present, death can occur. Following are some tips to avoid being attacked in this way:

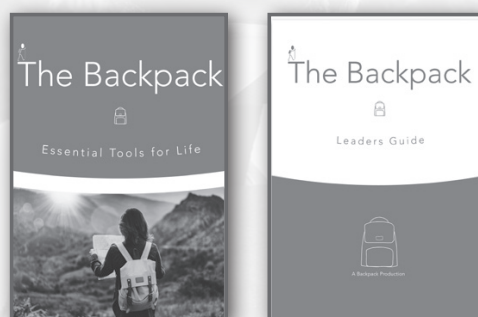
- Do not take an open drink, especially one offered from a stranger
- Drink only from tamper-proof bottles or cans. Insist on opening them yourself.
- Never ask someone to watch you drink. Take it with you everywhere, even to the bathroom.
- If a friend asks you to watch his or her drink, hold it or watch is closely.
- Try to avoid mixed drinks or any drinks from wide-mouthed glasses.
- Use a buddy system. NEVER leave a friend who seems suddenly wasted. The bigger your group of friends, the safer you are but keep an eye on others. Stay with at least one other friend at parties or bars and agree that you leave together. Period. Do not let the plans change later in the evening.



# The Backpack

The Backpack Program consists of 26 lessons which assist individuals in building healthier relationships with themselves, with others and with God. Attuned carefully to our contemporary climate, with its challenges and opportunities, The Backpack takes participants on a journey to concretise skills such as physical, emotional, spiritual, and sexual boundaries.

This program is available in hardcopy but also in an online format, which means anyone can start today!



*“A toolkit for life”* (The Irish Catholic).

*“It doesn’t matter what age you are. The Backpack changes you. The shame and guilt teaching helped me to be less hard on myself... the fact that we are all imperfect, striving for excellence... it’s so liberating”* (Geraldine age 56).

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