

Red Flags to Consider

The presence of these situations does not definitively indicate that your partner is abusive, but if many of these situations exist you are most likely being abused by your partner and may want to talk with someone and get support. On the other hand, if many of the situations listed are ways you act, you may be abusive to your partner and may want to talk with someone to learn other ways of dealing with your anger or emotions.

Your partner:

- Was abusive in a former relationship; may blame his/her ex for the problem.
- Is charming, enters your life during a crisis, and seems to take charge and make everything “better.”
- Refuses to talk with you or sulks when there is a problem.
- Slams doors, shouts, or calls you names during a disagreement.
- Displays his/her temper frequently and more easily (or more explosively) than seems appropriate.
- Makes frequent promises to change or improve his/her behavior, but never seems to do so.
- Seems to have very low self-esteem and may consider himself a failure despite others’ perceptions of his success.
- Will accept no responsibility for any mistakes at home or work, with family, etc.
- Uses intimate information or your insecurities to hurt you or humiliate you.
- Threatens to “out” you to family, work, or friends.
- Says you’re not really a lesbian, gay man, or bisexual person when that is your sexual identity.
- Says you’re not a “real” man or woman.
- Blames you for the times he or she yells at you, manipulates you, or hurts you.
- Is jealous of any other significant person in your life.
- Expects you to spend all of your free time with him/her, or to keep him/her informed of your whereabouts when you are not going to be together.
- Accuses you of lying about where you have been and whom you have been with.
- Accuses you of having affairs with other people
- Is demanding and uses non-consensual force during sex.
- Ignores “safe words.”
- Tries to punish you by refusing to have sex when you want to be intimate.
- Destroys your property or hurts your pets.
- Buys you flowers or gifts to show how sorry he/she is to have hurt you.
- Manipulates you by threatening to hurt or kill himself/herself.
- Uses drugs and/or alcohol excessively.
- Appears to have a dual personality; one moment he/she is charming and warm and the next, angry, violent, or cruel.
- Has oppressive beliefs and values: racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, etc., and puts you or others down for differences.
- Threatens to hit or slap you.
- Hits, kicks, beats, pushes, shoves, or slaps you.

One final note: if you feel a sense of fear when he/she gets angry or you spend most of your time trying to make sure your partner doesn’t get angry and remains happy, it is possible you are being controlled by your partner’s behavior. If you are unsure about what is happening in your relationship, please talk with a counselor who will help you make some sense of what may be going on.