

# Am I Experiencing Abuse?

**Resources to  
Help Answer This  
Important Question**

# When you're in the thick of things, it can be difficult to determine if what you're experiencing is abuse.

The common depiction of abuse is black eyes and bruises. But it's important to know domestic violence can take other forms that aren't physical like emotional, psychological, sexual, financial and/or spiritual abuse.

This toolkit is designed to help you understand the forms abuse can take so you can better assess your situation and make a plan for safety. Inside you'll find:

- Helpful Articles
- Recommended Books
- Danger Assessment Tools
- Lists
- In-Depth Videos
- Survey Results
- Support Communities
- How to Find Help

Remember, abuse happens to all types of people regardless of age, gender, race, economic or social status, or sexual orientation and that abuse is never the victim's fault and help is always available.



There are hundreds of articles on the many facets of domestic violence from DomesticShelters.org. Here are links to those that best answer “Am I Experiencing Abuse?”

### [What is Domestic Violence?](#)

A look at the five types of domestic violence.

### [What Abuse Looks Like](#)

With an abusive partner and don't even know it?

### [Normal Jealousy or Abuse?](#)

How to tell the difference in your relationship.

### [Abusive Red Flags](#)

10 signs your partner may be an abuser.

### [Profile of an Abuser](#)

Is it possible to spot an abusive partner before you get involved?

### [A Deadly Cycle](#)

There are four phases of an abusive relationship.

## [10 Patterns of Verbal Abuse](#)

This form of abuse can be harder to recognize than you may think.

## [What is Gaslighting?](#)

Abuse so subtle, you may not even realize it's happening.

## [Recognizing Emotional Abuse](#)

19 questions to help identify this type of domestic violence.

## [What is Coercive Control?](#)

Intimate partner abuse that is often disguised as love.

## [Victim of Financial Abuse?](#)

16 questions to help identify this type of domestic abuse.

## [Sexual Abuse to Control](#)

40% of survivors experience these types of sexual abuse.

## [Recognizing Religious Abuse](#)

Is your abuser using your spiritual beliefs to control you?

## [Power and Control Wheel](#)

Know the repeated pattern abusive partners follow.

### [How Abusers Speak](#)

Listen for these words that could spell control, or much worse.

### [Understanding Grooming](#)

Anyone can fall for the clever manipulations of an abuser.

### [The Dangers of Possessiveness](#)

Eight signs that jealousy could lead to abuse.

### [Control Disguised as Love](#)

Seeing through an abuser's performances of "love" gives victims renewed power.

### [Mental Illness Isn't an Excuse](#)

Why abusers are no more likely to be mentally ill than others.

### [Ways Narcissists Silence You](#)

Tactics toxic people use to silence and degrade you.

### [6 Signs to Lookout For](#)

Don't just look to the past—an abuser's current behavior may indicate danger ahead.

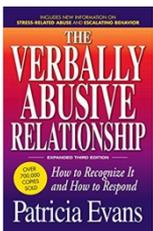


Reading books can be a helpful way to understand if you're a victim of abuse and understand the abuser's behavior.

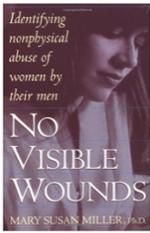
## Here are our recommended reads:



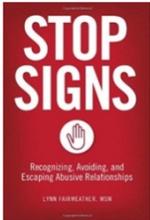
[\*When Love Goes Wrong: What to Do When You Can't Do Anything Right\*](#). Too many women find themselves with abusive partners and don't know what to do, or even what's wrong. They may feel anxious, inadequate and intimidated, like they are walking on eggshells, and find themselves trying harder without success. The authors bring their experience with survivors to offer an eye-opening analysis of controlling partners and empowering information for women seeking change.



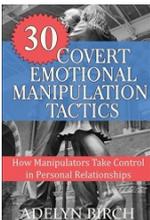
[\*The Verbally Abusive Relationship: How to Recognize It and How to Respond\*](#). Learn why verbal abuse is more widespread than ever, how to recognize and deal with it safely, and most important, how to lead a happier, healthier life.



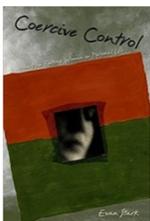
[No Visible Wounds: Identifying Non-Physical Abuse of Women by Their Men](#). Does your partner become jealous, prevent you from seeing friends, deny you access to bank accounts, credit cards or the car, call you derogatory names, humiliate you in front of the kids or turn minor incidents into major arguments? If you answer “yes” to any of these questions, chances are you are suffering from nonphysical battering, controlling, tyrannical behavior that is domestic violence.



[Stop Signs: Recognizing, Avoiding, and Escaping Abusive Relationships](#). This book familiarizes readers with intimate partner violence and explains how to develop self-esteem, preparation and assertive awareness that can protect them from involvement with abusive individuals. It explores the minds of abusers, explains visible signs of danger in their attitudes and actions, and provides effective strategies for safe extraction when involved with an abuser.



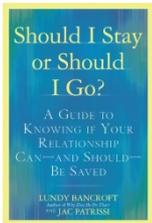
[30 Covert Manipulation Tactics: How Manipulators Take Control in Personal Relationships](#). Learn the manipulator's game so they can't play it with you. Identifying covert manipulation is tricky. This short, but powerful, 33-page book will teach you how to identify the 30 tactics manipulators use to get what they want. You'll also learn to spot that warning signs within yourself that expose covert manipulation is taking place, even if you can't identify the specific tactics being used.



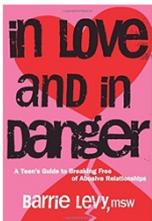
[Coercive Control: How Men Entrap Women In Personal Life](#). Studies show that most abused women seek help because their rights and liberties have been jeopardized, not because they have been injured. The coercive control model resolves three perplexing challenges posed by abuse: why these relationships endure, why abused women develop a profile of problems seen among no other group of assault victims and why the legal system has failed to win them justice.



[\*Too Good to Leave, Too Bad to Stay: A Step-by-Step Guide to Help You Decide Whether to Stay In or Get Out of Your Relationship.\*](#) The author draws on years of counseling experience to lead readers through relationship ambivalence. A careful list of 36 questions and self-analysis techniques designed to get to the heart of relationship and marriage problems is included. Straightforward advice designed for newer and older relationships. The book presents a plethora of information and experience in a clear, concise manner.



[\*Should I Stay or Should I Go? A Guide to Knowing if Your Relationship Can—and Should—Be Saved.\*](#) Women involved in frustrating relationships will learn to tell the difference between a healthy-yet-difficult relationship and one that is really not working, recognize the signs their partner has a serious problem, stop waiting to see what happens and make their own growth the top priority, and prepare for life without their partner even as they keep trying to make the relationship work.



[\*In Love and In Danger: A Teen's Guide to Breaking Free of Abusive Relationships.\*](#) With one out of 11 high school students experiencing physical abuse, this book helps teenagers who have questions better understand the causes and consequences of the abusive relationship they are in, learn what they can do about it, find help from parents and other adults, and discover how to build healthier relationships.



There are two well-known, free online assessment tools available that can help you understand the level of danger that may be present, but not always obvious.

### [The Danger Assessment](#)

The free tool helps determine the level of danger an abused person has of being killed by an intimate partner. There are two parts to the tool 1) a calendar and 2) a 20-item scoring instrument that uses a weighted system to score yes/no responses to risk factors associated with intimate partner homicide.

### [MOSAIC](#)

Using a series of questions, this tool assesses how similar a situation is to other situations that have gotten worse. After creating a confidential account and answering the questions, a detailed report is compiled immediately and tells you how a situation compares to others like it, rating it on a scale of 1 to 10.



Sometimes lists are easier on the mind because they are uncluttered and to-the-point. If you'd rather read a few items vs. articles or books, these lists are for you.

- [25 Relationship Red Flags](#)
- [20 Things Abusers Say](#)
- [27 Characteristics of Unsafe People](#)
- [24 Teen Dating Abuse Warning Signs](#)
- [16 Signs of Financial Abuse](#)
- [35 Ways to Recognize Emotional Abuse](#)
- [19 Stalking Signs](#)

To view all list items at once, click the SEE ALL button located below the list text.

## Click video thumbnail to watch



WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?



AM I BEING ABUSED?



10 Relationship Red  
Flags You May  
Be Missing



Profile of an  
Abuser



A lot of lessons can be taken away from people who have been through it before. Check out the following survey results to learn from the experiences of others.

- What type of abuse did you experience first?
- At what age did you first experience abuse?
- What was the biggest financial hurdle you had to overcome?
- How did you document the abuse you experienced?
- What did others do to help you when experiencing abuse?
- Where did you find the most support while going through abuse?
- What barrier did you come up against when leaving your abuser?
- Did you find verbal abuse more or less damaging?
- Did your abuser use strangulation as an abuse tactic?
- How has domestic violence impacted you at work?
- Did an abuser ever use sleep deprivation?
- Did you contemplate the decision to leave for a while?
- Did you have time to do any of the following before leaving?
- What did your instincts tell you when you met your abuser?



**Online forums and chats can help you connect with others who are in or have faced similar situations and find support and ideas from the survivor community.**

[AfterSilence.org](https://www.AfterSilence.org) aims to help victims become survivors and to communicate in the recovery of domestic and sexual violence. It offers an active message board and chat room for rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse, incest and molestation survivors. There are over 31,000 members and about 1,000,000 posts, including recent posts and many useful posts from days and months past.

[Pathways to Safety International](https://www.PathwaysToSafety.org) If you're an American overseas, your situation is different than 99% of your fellow countryman, and this site will be a wonderful resource for you. Among the services is a 24-hour response to emails, as well as international phone options.

[DomesticShelters.org Facebook Page](#) offers one of the most active places where domestic violence survivors. You'll find conversation, past experiences and unvarnished stories, and occasionally advice from professionals who have joined in on a topic.

[DomesticShelters.org Facebook Group](#) is a private group designed to be a safe space for domestic abuse victims, survivors, advocates and others affected by abuse to support one another through meaningful dialogue and helpful insight.

[Fort Refuge](#) is a clever, grassroots site run by survivors for fellow survivors as a safe place to come together and discuss their struggles and victories in healing from various types of abuse. Though the forum and chat do not boast the same numbers as some of the larger organizations, they are one of the more active conversation places on the internet currently. They also add new content to their site regularly.

[Love is Respect - National Teen Dating Helpline](#) focuses on teen relationships and can be accessed by phone, text or live chat. It offers real-time, one-on-one support by trained peer advocates who offer information and advocacy to those involved in dating abuse. They also offer support to parents, teachers, clergy, law enforcement, and service providers.

[National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) offers confidential, private, one-on-one chats with advocates every day 24/7.

[OnYourMind.net](#) is a safe and anonymous place for teens to get information and support from other teens in an online chat room, covering topics such as relationships, school, depression, stress, suicide, parents, cutting, identity and health.

[Pandora's Aquarium](#) is an online forum with around 2 million posts and over 70,000 members, and is run by Pandora's Project, which provides information, support and resources to rape and sexual abuse survivors and their friends and family.

When accessing hotlines, chats or forums from a computer, tablet, or smartphone, please remember to take the necessary precautions to keep your activities confidential from your abuser. Learn more about how to stay safe online [here](#).

Also, keep in mind that local shelters may offer in-person or virtual support groups. You can find shelters in your area at [DomesticShelters.org](https://www.DomesticShelters.org).



## Another way to determine if you're experiencing abuse is to contact a trained domestic violence advocate near you or through a national service.

To search for domestic violence program staffed with trained advocates, visit [DomesticShelters.org](https://www.DomesticShelters.org) and type either your city and state, or ZIP code, into the search bar at the top of the page. A list of organizations and contact numbers near you will be displayed. To reach an advocate, reach out directly by calling the phone number listed. Most are open 24/7.

To speak to an advocate at the National Domestic Violence Hotline, also 24 hours a day, seven days a week, call 800-799-SAFE (7233) or visit [thehotline.org](https://www.thehotline.org) to chat online.

It's important to know that your call is confidential and you can choose to remain anonymous when speaking with an advocate. To know what to expect when calling, read [this article](#).