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*Live an Empowered life!*

### Red flags of a potentially controlling & abusive partner

Typically people who seek to have power & control in romantic relationships will show signs of their unhealthy behaviors early on. However, these red flags are not always easy to see. Many red flags are brushed off by second guessing ourselves & are often hidden behind what appears to be care & concern. Learning the red flags of an abusive partner will help you identify a toxic relationship before you get too far involved.

#### **Jealous behaviors:**

At the beginning of a relationship, an abuser may say that jealous behaviors are a sign of really liking you/loving you. Jealous behaviors have nothing to do with love. They are a sign of insecurity and possessiveness.

#### **Examples of jealous behaviors:**

Wanting to know who you're texting/talking to & badgering you with questions. Getting upset when you spend time with friends, family, children, or even when you want to spend time alone. Making accusations that you are flirting when you aren't. Texting/calling repeatedly to see what you're doing. Dropping by unexpectedly to see what you're up to. Expressing unrealistic concerns that you'll meet somebody else if you were to start a job, go on a trip with friends, ect. Wanting to look at your phone and eavesdrop on conversations.

#### **Controlling behaviors:**

At first the abuser will say that these behaviors are out of concern. They may even feel that way at first. However controlling behaviors that continue to show up are signs of an insecure person who seeks power & control in relationships.

#### **Examples of controlling behaviors:**

Acting like they are concerned about your well-being, safety, or productivity. Insisting on driving/walking you to work/school & stating things like, "I want to make sure you get there safe." Wanting you to dress, talk, act a certain way. Acting as though you don't have good judgement & not able to make good decisions, so they are "just looking after you." Constantly asking you how you spend your time & with whom. Being angry when you are late (including not responding to their texts right away).

#### **Quick involvement:**

Wanting to always be around you, in your space, & wanting to know very personal information (your deep emotional wounds and past trauma). Over sharing their own very personal information and talking about their own past traumas. In healthy relationships these are things people talk about only after much time has past & trust has been gained. Quick involvement also means they want you to quickly commit to a relationship.



**Examples of quick involvement:**

Claiming love at first sight. Saying only you can make them feel this way. Many people who've experienced an abusive partner knew the abuser less than six months before they became married, engaged, or living together. Early on this could look like a person wanting to become exclusive after only a few dates, or wanting a key to your home after a few weeks or months of dating. Wanting to talk about deep personal information that you'd typically share with a trusted best friend or therapist.

**Unrealistic expectations:**

Over complements you, putting you up on a pedestal, acting as though you're the most wonderful person to ever come into their life. Being dependent on you for their needs. Acting as though you can mind read & expecting you to know each emotional and physical need they have, and that you'll fulfill them.

**Examples of unrealistic expectations:**

Expecting you to be the perfect partner. Saying things like, "You're all I'll ever need & I'm all you'll ever need." Acting as though you are perfect and becoming distraught or angry when they see that you're human with flaws like anyone else. Expectations around making them your priority over your responsibilities and other important relationships.

**Isolation:**

An abusive person will aim to isolate their partner, for the purpose of increasing their sense of power & control. Isolation starts with attempts to weakening your support system & to get you to rely more heavily upon them.

**Examples of isolation:**

Puts down your friends & family and does things to put a wedge between you and your friends/family. Puts down things that you enjoy or believe in and tries to influence you to sway from those things. Stating opinions about how your friends/family don't have your best interest in mind, or they are not a good influence on you. Making it difficult for you to get to work/school. Wanting to move far away from your support system.

**Blames other for their problems and feelings:**

An abusive person typically does not take accountability for their actions, or their feelings. Instead they act as though their partner is responsible for how they feel (both positively and negatively).

**Examples of blaming others for their problems and feelings:**

You'll notice a pattern of problems in their life. Situations that don't ever work out for them; or that their feelings are always because of someone's else actions, or other circumstances other than themselves. You'll be the one blamed for any problems between the two of you.



**Breaking or hitting objects:**

When standing up for yourself, or going against what the abusive person wants they may resort to this behavior. Striking objects, slamming their fist on a table, or breaking belongings is a form of intimidation for the purpose of scaring and threatening their partner into submission.

**Examples of breaking or hitting objects:**

Pounding their fist on a table to make their point or get your attention. Breaking something that has sentimental value to you. Using force to give you the non-verbal message that they have power and/or can do harm if you don't go along with what they want from you.

**Hypersensativity:**

Taking everything personally in a negative way and views any criticism as a personal attack. Blows situations out of proportion and seems to look for trouble or ways to pick a fight.

**Examples of hypersensativity:**

Throwing adult version of temper tantrums. Venting about perceived injustices (not taking accountability for their part). Not able to make or accept even light hearted jokes about themselves. Getting upset over any feedback about themselves that is not positive.

**Being forceful during disagreements:**

Restraining you or not allowing you to leave during an argument.

**Examples of being forceful during disagreements:**

During an argument or disagreement they will block you from leaving, try to take away your phone/keys, or physical hold you down.

**Sexual coercion:**

Tries to convince you to engage in a sexual act that you are not comfortable doing, or does it during sex knowing you're not comfortable with it.

**Examples of sexual coercion:**

Complaints or sulking when you decline to engage in sex, or a certain type of sexual act. Comparing you to other partners to get you to think you're a prude or sexually deficient in an attempt for you to prove yourself and do the act. Pushing your boundaries around sex, badgering you about doing certain sex acts. Being forceful or rough during sex without prior consent & making you feel guilty for not enjoying it.

**Rigid gender roles:**

This is typically seen in men, but can also be present in women. Believing patriarchal, religious, and or cultural ideals that men are in some way superior over women; and that men and women each have their own place.



**Examples of rigid gender roles:**

Beliefs that housework and raising children is women's work and that women should be the primary caretaker. Beliefs that men have the say so and makes the rules for the home. Negative opinions of women who are in a position of leadership. Character traits historically associated in men such as; being outspoken, decisive, and assertive, as something negative in women.

**Referring to ex-partners as crazy and stories of prior abuse:**

You'll notice a pattern of them talking badly about their ex-partners and not taking accountability for their part of the relationship. Stories about abuse occurring in their past relationships. Referring to exes as being crazy or a bitch and painting themselves as the one who was victimized.

**Examples of referring to ex-partners as crazy and stories of prior abuse:**

Hearing all about how their ex did them wrong, over reacted, but never taking accountability for their part in the relationship. Referring to past partners as crazy or a raging bitch. Stories about how they "had to" raise their voice, push, restrain, threaten, or harm their ex. Painting themselves as the victim and how the ex was "out of control."

**The Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde syndrome:**

Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde comes from an old story about a doctor who was a kind man who had a dual personality who was evil. Abusive people know how to put on a good front in the beginning of a relationship you'll see this good side of them. As time goes on, and especially when you are alone, their abusive traits will show. It is common for an abusive person to be seen as charming and kind by others (well liked at work or in their community for example). This is because the abusive behavior is targeted towards their partner and they know that they can get away with more if they have an appearance of being a kind person towards others.

**Examples Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde syndrome:**

Mood swings when you're not going along with what they want from you. Getting along in public, but on the drive home getting a lecture about your behavior or being yelled at. Yelling but able to quickly compose themselves when someone else is around. **If I see a red flag in the person I'm dating should I break up with them?**

Usually an abusive person will show multiple red flags. When you see multiple red flags that is a good indicator that this person is not capable of having a healthy relationship at this time. Research, and my experience working in this field, shows that an abusive person doesn't abuse just one partner, but will continue to abuse future partners. **If you see 1 red flag then consider the following?**



Keep a look out for other red flags. If the person has abusive tendencies they will show more red flags. How does the person respond when you talk about the behavior you're concerned about? When you talk about the behavior you're concerned about are they able to engage in a discussion and take accountability? If not this is when you may see more red flags.