



# BEFORE THE HEARTBREAK

## IDENTIFYING THE RED FLAGS IN MEN

By

kINGSLEY AKONWIE





[Kingsleyakonwie.com](http://Kingsleyakonwie.com)

EDUCATE – EMPOWER - ENTERTAIN

*Impacting Lives, Transforming Mindsets with Excellence, Integrity and Compassion*

For additional resources on domestic violence, visit: [analahlife.com](http://analahlife.com)

**© Enrich Publishing Company, a subsidiary of Akonwie Equities International Inc.**

*This product is protected by international copyright and intellectual property laws.*

*Unauthorized duplication, reproduction, distribution, transmission, or adaptation of any part of this product, in any form or by any means, without the prior written consent of Enrich Publishing Company, is strictly prohibited and may result in civil and criminal penalties under applicable laws in all jurisdictions. All rights reserved.*



## CONTROLLING BEHAVIOR

Controlling behavior in men is a significant red flag in relationships, signaling a desire to dominate and limit the partner's autonomy. This behavior undermines the principles of mutual respect and trust, often leading to a toxic and abusive environment. Understanding the various manifestations of controlling behavior is crucial for recognizing and addressing it early in a relationship.

One of the most apparent signs of controlling behavior is dictating a partner's choices and actions. A controlling man might insist on deciding what you wear, how you style your hair, and even how you conduct yourself in public. These actions are often framed as caring or protective gestures, but they aim to suppress your individuality and independence. By making decisions for you, the controlling partner reinforces their dominance, making you feel incapable of managing your life. This behavior gradually erodes your confidence and self-esteem, making you more dependent on the controlling partner for validation and support.

That said, it's equally important to recognize that healthy relationships thrive on shared values and mutual respect. A couple with vastly opposing principles, such as one partner being deeply conservative and the other highly liberal, will likely struggle to find harmony.

In marriage or a committed relationship, your partner is, in many ways, a reflection of you. Whether we like it or not, there are consequences to every action, and the way each partner presents themselves impacts the other's image and reputation. For instance, if a woman dresses in a way that could be perceived as promiscuous at an event, it can affect how others view her partner, just as a man's conduct or appearance can impact the woman's reputation. The goal is not to control but to agree on boundaries that protect each other's dignity while honoring the identity and values you share.

Monitoring and surveillance are other common tactics. This can include checking your phone, reading your emails, and demanding constant updates on your whereabouts. Such behavior stems from deep-seated insecurity and mistrust, leading the controlling partner to scrutinize your activities constantly to ensure you are not acting against their wishes. This invasion of privacy is a severe breach of trust and creates an atmosphere of constant anxiety and fear. You may find yourself altering your behavior to avoid confrontations, which only serves to deepen the control the partner has over you.

Isolation is another critical component of controlling behavior. A controlling partner may systematically distance you from your friends and family, making negative comments about them, creating conflicts, or outright forbidding contact. The goal is to sever your support network, making you more reliant on the controlling partner for emotional and social support. This isolation can make it difficult to seek help or even recognize the extent of the control being exerted over you. You may feel increasingly isolated and alone, with your world shrinking to revolve solely around the controlling partner.



Emotional manipulation is a subtler, yet equally damaging, form of control. Controlling men often use guilt, shame, and fear to influence your behavior. Phrases like "If you loved me, you would..." or "You're making me do this" are manipulative tools designed to make you question your actions and feel responsible for the partner's negative emotions. This manipulation erodes your self-esteem and autonomy, making you more susceptible to further control. You might find yourself constantly trying to please the controlling partner, sacrificing your own needs and desires in the process.

Financial control is another dimension of this behavior. A controlling partner might restrict your access to money, monitor your spending, or prevent you from working. This financial dependence makes it exceedingly difficult to leave the relationship, as you may feel trapped by economic necessity. Controlling finances is a way to limit your options and ensure you remain dependent on the controlling partner. Without financial independence, your ability to make decisions and take actions for your well-being is severely restricted.

Over time, controlling behavior can escalate into more severe forms of abuse. Verbal abuse, including insults, belittling comments, and constant criticism, can be used to undermine your confidence and self-worth. Physical abuse may follow, with the controlling partner using violence or threats to maintain control. The cycle of abuse often includes periods of remorse and promises of change, which can make it difficult to break free. The abusive partner might apologize profusely and promise to change, only to revert to controlling and abusive behaviors once they feel secure in the relationship again.

Recognizing controlling behavior is the first step toward addressing it. It is essential to set and enforce boundaries, seek support from trusted friends, family, or professionals, and consider leaving the relationship if the behavior does not change.

Healthy relationships are built on mutual respect, trust, and equality, where both partners feel valued and free to make their own choices without fear of retribution or control. Prioritizing your well-being and safety is paramount in any relationship, and understanding the signs of controlling behavior can help you protect yourself from its harmful effects. Taking proactive steps to ensure your safety and well-being is crucial, including creating a safety plan and reaching out to support networks or professionals specializing in domestic abuse.

### *Some Biblical references*

#### 1. Mutual Respect & Equality in Relationships

*"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."*

##### **Ephesians 5:21 (NIV)**

This verse emphasizes mutual submission, not domination, showing that both partners are called to honor and serve each other in love.

#### 2. God's Call to Love, Not Control

*"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs."*

##### **1 Corinthians 13:4–5 (NIV)**

True love builds up rather than tears down. Controlling behavior directly contradicts the love described here.

## LACK OF RESPECT

A lack of respect in a relationship is a significant red flag, indicating deep-seated issues that can undermine the health and longevity of the partnership. Respect is foundational to any successful relationship, as it involves recognizing and valuing the other person's thoughts, feelings, and autonomy. When a man exhibits a lack of respect, it can manifest in various harmful behaviors that degrade the partner's sense of self-worth and create an unhealthy dynamic.

One of the most direct forms of disrespect is dismissive behavior. This can occur when a man belittles or ignores his partner's opinions, feelings, or experiences. For example, if a woman shares a concern or emotion, and her partner responds with statements like, "You're overreacting," or "That's not important," it invalidates her feelings and suggests that her perspective is not valuable. This dismissal can make her feel insignificant and unheard, eroding her confidence and trust in the relationship.

Another manifestation of disrespect is through criticism and judgment. A man who constantly criticizes his partner, pointing out flaws and failures without offering constructive feedback, is not showing respect. This behavior can include making negative comments about her appearance, intelligence, or abilities, which can significantly damage her self-esteem. Respectful partners offer support and encouragement, focusing on uplifting each other rather than tearing each other down.



Contempt is another severe form of disrespect. Contemptuous behavior includes sarcasm, mocking, eye-rolling, and name-calling. It is often a sign of deeper relational issues and can be incredibly damaging. When a partner expresses contempt, it communicates a sense of superiority and disdain, making the other person feel worthless and humiliated. This type of behavior is toxic and often indicative of an abusive relationship.

Ignoring boundaries is another key indicator of disrespect. Boundaries are essential in maintaining individual autonomy and ensuring that both partners feel safe and respected. A man who disregards his partner's boundaries, whether they are physical, emotional, or digital, is showing a blatant lack of respect. This can include anything from pressuring her into unwanted physical intimacy, intruding on her personal space, or not respecting her need for alone time. Healthy relationships require both partners to recognize and honor each other's limits.

Disrespect can also appear in the form of unequal power dynamics. If a man consistently makes decisions without consulting his partner or dismisses her input, it creates an imbalance in the relationship. This lack of collaboration and consideration undermines the concept of partnership and mutual respect. In a respectful relationship, both partners have an equal say in decisions and work together to find solutions that benefit both parties.

Another subtle but impactful form of disrespect is taking the partner for granted. This can involve failing to acknowledge or appreciate her contributions, whether in daily chores, emotional support, or financial assistance. When a man does not show gratitude or recognition for his partner's efforts, it can lead to feelings of resentment and undervaluation. Respect involves appreciating and valuing each other's roles and contributions in the relationship.

Public disrespect is another critical red flag. This occurs when a man belittles or humiliates his partner in front of others. Public disrespect can include making derogatory jokes, sharing private information without consent, or undermining her in social or professional settings. This behavior is particularly damaging as it not only hurts the partner's self-esteem but also affects how she is perceived by others. It's crucial for partners to support and uplift each other publicly and privately.

A lack of respect often leads to a breakdown in communication. When a partner feels disrespected, she may become less willing to share her thoughts and feelings, leading to misunderstandings and unresolved conflicts. Effective communication is built on a foundation of respect, where both partners feel safe and valued in expressing themselves.

Recognizing and addressing a lack of respect early in a relationship is crucial. It's essential to have open and honest conversations about how certain behaviors make you feel and to set clear boundaries. If the disrespectful behavior continues despite these efforts, it may be necessary to re-evaluate the relationship. Respect is non-negotiable in a healthy relationship, and without it, true partnership and intimacy cannot thrive.

### *Some Biblical references*

#### 1. Mutual Honor in Relationships

*"Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves."*

##### **Romans 12:10 (NIV)**

This verse speaks directly to the heart of respect, honoring your partner means valuing their thoughts, feelings, and presence.

## 2. Speaking with Kindness and Grace

*"Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."*

**Colossians 4:6 (NIV)**

Respect is expressed through the words we choose. Harsh, belittling, or mocking speech violates God's standard for how we should speak to one another.

## 3. God's Standard for Love

*"Do to others as you would have them do to you."*

**Luke 6:31 (NIV)**

The "Golden Rule" applies powerfully in relationships, respect flows naturally when both partners treat each other as they themselves wish to be treated.

## UNHEALTHY JEALOUSY

Jealousy in men can be a complex and multifaceted force in relationships, at times a toxic red flag that corrodes trust, and at other times a natural human response that, when expressed in moderation, can deepen connection. Understanding the difference between **healthy, momentary jealousy** and **persistent, controlling jealousy** is crucial for protecting emotional well-being and fostering a secure relationship.

### ➤ When Jealousy Becomes a Red Flag

Excessive jealousy often stems from deep insecurities, low self-esteem, and a lack of trust. A man who is chronically jealous may constantly question his partner's loyalty, demand reassurance, or interpret innocent interactions as threats. Over time, this behavior can manifest in several destructive ways:

**Possessiveness** – Viewing his partner as property rather than as an autonomous individual, restricting her freedom to choose her friends, activities, or even how she dresses.

**Control Through Isolation** – Limiting or forbidding certain friendships, especially with the opposite sex, effectively cutting her off from her support system and making her more dependent. Though there is a line and a clear understanding of having friends especially friends of the opposite sex, a respectful, healthy and considerate partner will willingly terminate certain relationships if there are signs that it's a threat to that relationship.

**Surveillance and Monitoring** – Constantly checking her phone, reading private messages, or tracking her location and online activity is an invasion of privacy that erodes trust and creates an atmosphere of fear.

That said, healthy relationships also thrive on *mutual* transparency and accountability. A partner should feel free to share information openly, including access to their phone or clarity about their whereabouts, not out of fear, but because there is nothing to hide. If you feel the need to conceal your location, delete messages, or keep multiple passwords from your partner, it usually signals that you're engaging in behavior that could harm the relationship.

**Baseless Accusations** – Frequently accusing her of infidelity or inappropriate behavior without evidence, leading to emotional exhaustion and constant conflict.

**Escalation to Abuse** – In extreme cases, jealousy can fuel verbal, emotional, or even physical abuse, as the man uses aggression to maintain control.

Such behavior shifts the relationship from partnership to power struggle, making the environment unsafe, suffocating, and emotionally draining. Over time, it can dismantle self-esteem, autonomy, and trust.

### ➤ When Jealousy Can Be Healthy

While the destructive side of jealousy is clear, **a small, well-managed amount of jealousy** can serve as a relational checkpoint rather than a red flag. The key lies in moderation, transparency, and self-awareness:

**A Sign of Value** – Mild jealousy can be an unspoken reminder that your partner matters deeply to you. It's an emotional nudge that says, *"You're important to me, and I don't want to lose you."*

**Proof of Ongoing Desire** – Feeling a momentary twinge when your partner is admired by others can be a sign of attraction still alive in the relationship. It affirms that your partner's attention and affection still hold weight in your heart.

**Prompt for Appreciation** – Small flashes of jealousy can awaken gratitude, prompting you to treat your partner with renewed attentiveness and care.

**Catalyst for Communication** – When approached calmly, minor jealousy can open honest discussions about boundaries, insecurities, and needs, leading to deeper understanding and trust.

**Protective Instinct** – A healthy degree of jealousy may serve as a natural safeguard, motivating you to protect and invest in your relationship rather than take it for granted.

### The Crucial Distinction

The difference between healthy and unhealthy jealousy lies in **origin and outcome**.

**Healthy jealousy** is momentary, based on care, and soothed by reassurance and trust.

**Unhealthy jealousy** is chronic, rooted in insecurity, and fuels control, suspicion, and emotional harm.

A relationship can survive, and even grow from, moments of healthy jealousy, but unchecked, excessive jealousy is a corrosive force. The difference depends on whether it inspires connection or demands control.

### *Some Biblical references*

#### 1. Love Does Not Envy or Control

*"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud."*

#### **1 Corinthians 13:4 (NIV)**

God's definition of love excludes envy, possessiveness, and insecurity, it is grounded in trust, kindness, and freedom.



## 2. Trust is the Foundation of Love

*"Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife."*

**Proverbs 21:9 (NIV)**

While this proverb addresses women, the principle applies to both genders, constant suspicion and conflict erode peace in the home.

## 3. Avoiding the Trap of Jealousy

*"A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones."*

**Proverbs 14:30 (NIV)**

Jealousy doesn't just hurt relationships, it slowly eats away at the person harboring it, destroying peace and joy.