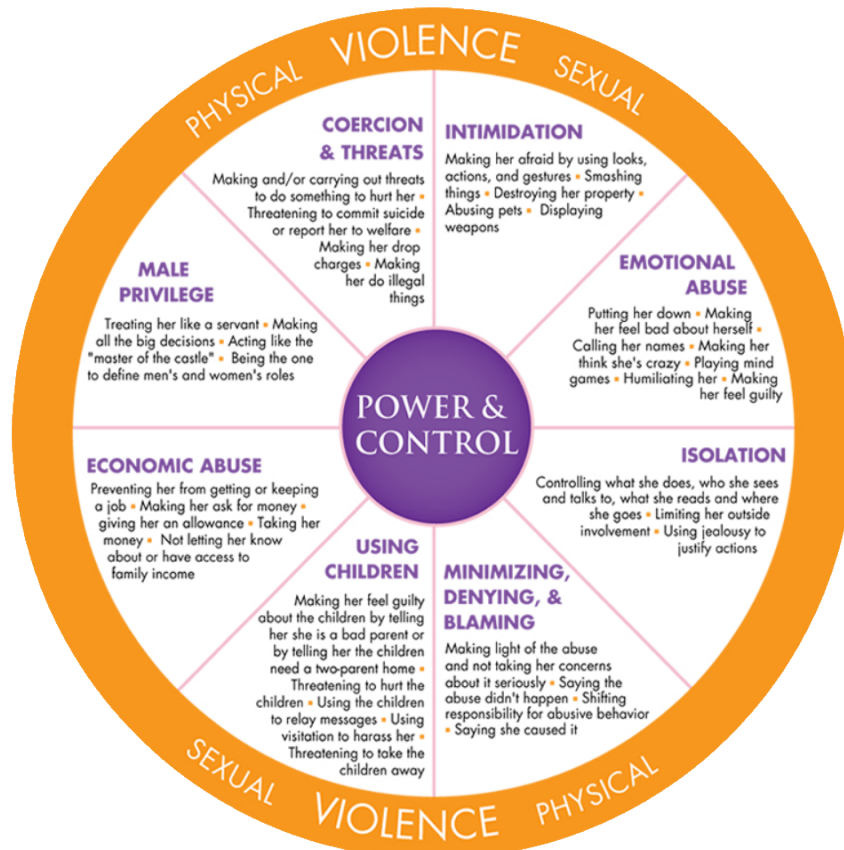


Understanding Abuse in Intimate Partner Relationships

1. The Power & Control Wheel

The Power and Control Wheel was developed to illustrate the various tactics an abusive partner may use to maintain dominance in an intimate relationship. It highlights how abuse is not only physical but can take many forms designed to create fear, isolation, and dependency.



2. Types of Abuse

- **Emotional Abuse:** Name-calling, constant criticism, humiliation, controlling access to friends/family, isolation.
- **Physical Abuse:** Hitting, slapping, choking, restraining, destroying property, or use of weapons.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Unwanted sexual contact, coercion, threats, or using intimacy as a tool of control.
- **Neglect:** Withholding basic needs like food, shelter, medical care, or ignoring emotional needs.
- **Using Children:** Making the child relay messages, threatening to take custody, using visitation to harass, or making children feel responsible for the conflict.

3. Gaslighting

Gaslighting is a psychological tactic in which an abusive partner manipulates another person into questioning their own reality, memory, or perceptions. It is designed to create confusion, self-doubt, and dependency on the abusive partner's version of events. Over time, gaslighting can cause deep erosion of self-esteem and increase reliance on the abuser for a sense of 'truth.'

Examples of Gaslighting:

- Denying events that clearly happened ("That never occurred, you're imagining it.").
- Telling the partner they are "too sensitive" or "overreacting."
- Shifting blame so the victim feels responsible for the abuser's actions.
- Twisting facts or retelling events to make the victim feel at fault.
- Hiding objects and then accusing the victim of being forgetful.
- Rewriting history—changing past agreements or promises and insisting the victim is mistaken.
- Mocking the partner's memory lapses or emotions, reinforcing the idea they cannot be trusted with their own reality.

4. General Safety Plan

- Keep emergency contacts (trusted friends/family, hotline numbers) accessible.
- Identify safe spaces in your home—avoid kitchens or bathrooms where weapons may be present.
- Prepare an exit strategy: spare keys, cash, medications, and important documents stored safely.
- Establish a code word with trusted people that signals you need help.
- Protect technology: update passwords, use private browsing, and check for monitoring apps.
- Know local resources: domestic violence shelters, counseling, legal aid, and the National Domestic Violence Hotline (800-799-7233).

Remember: Safety planning can look different for each person. Personalize this with a therapist or advocate you trust.

5. Personal Reflection Worksheet

Use this space to reflect on your own experiences and safety planning. This worksheet is for you—there are no right or wrong answers. If it feels overwhelming, complete one section at a time or bring it to a trusted professional for support.

- What behaviors have I noticed that made me feel uncomfortable, unsafe, or controlled?

- How have I experienced emotional, physical, sexual, or financial/neglectful abuse in this relationship?

- Have I noticed gaslighting tactics being used against me? If so, what are some examples?

- How have my children (if applicable) been affected by the dynamics in this relationship?

- What warning signs tell me that a situation with my partner may be escalating?

- Who are three people or resources I can reach out to if I feel unsafe?

- What items/documents do I need to keep in a safe, accessible place?

- What steps can I take this week to increase my safety and well-being?
