



## Domestic Violence – What is It?

Domestic violence is a pattern of behaviors used by one person to get or maintain power or control over another person in a relationship. It is also sometimes called relationship abuse or intimate partner violence. There are different types of domestic violence. It can be physical, emotional, financial, or sexual. Often, more than one of these is happening at the same time. Examples of each of these are below.

Here are some examples of physical abuse. It is important to note that physical abuse may not always leave a mark. It may not always cause visible damage.

- Scratching
- Grabbing
- Pushing and shoving
- Slapping
- Punching
- Throwing objects to hurt or scare someone
- Destroying belongings or cherished objects
- Hurting or threatening to hurt someone's children or pets
- Disrupting sleep to make someone feel exhausted
- Burning
- Strangling
- Attacking or threatening to attack with a weapon
- Threatening or actually attempting to kill someone
- Spitting
- Biting

Here are some examples of emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is used to control a person or damage their self-worth. Emotional abuse can be verbal or nonverbal.

- Yelling in someone's face
- Name-calling
- Insulting or shaming
- Mocking
- Intimidating or humiliating
- Standing in a controlling way, such as blocking off a door
- Manipulating someone's children
- Threatening to harm or take away someone's children
- Telling someone what to do
- Telling someone where they can or cannot go
- Putting little to no value on what someone says or how someone feels
- Interrupting or changing topics
- Not responding to or listening to someone
- Twisting someone's words
- Putting someone down
- Embarrassing someone in front of others
- Saying mean or hurtful things about friends and family members

- Making it hard or preventing someone from seeing friends or relatives
- Cheating
- Acting jealous
- Accusing someone of something they did not do
- Blaming others for abusive behavior or saying someone else caused it
- Monitoring phone calls, texts, and computer use
- Making unwanted visits or sending unwanted messages
- Following someone or putting GPS tracking software on someone's car or cell phone
- Checking up on someone constantly
- Refusing to leave when asked
- Telling someone they can never do anything right
- Looking at someone or acting in ways that are meant to scare someone
- Preventing someone from making decisions
- Threatening to hurt or kill pets
- Intimidating someone with a weapon or threatening to use a weapon

Here are some examples of financial abuse. Financial abuse happens when a person makes someone dependent on them for all financial needs. It results in someone having no power or voice about finances in the relationship.

- Controlling all the money
- Taking someone's money
- Not allowing someone to work or attend school
- Sabotaging employment prospects or existing jobs or careers
- Jeopardizing employment
- Stalking or harassing someone at their place of work
- Not allowing someone to use a vehicle for their needs
- Damaging a vehicle to keep someone from getting to work
- Destroying class assignments or doing other things to harm someone's education
- Withholding money
- Giving a partner an allowance
- Denying access to bank accounts
- Hiding family assets
- Running up debt in someone's name
- Destroying property

Here are some examples of sexual abuse. Sexual abuse involves sexual contact or behavior that happens without consent. It is important to remember that sexual abuse can occur in relationships and marriages.

- Unwanted touching
- Rape
- Forcing or pressuring someone to do unwanted, painful, or degrading sexual acts
- Taking advantage of someone while they are drunk or unable to give consent
- Not allowing someone to use birth control or protection against sexually transmitted diseases
- Taking any kind of sexual pictures or film of someone without consent
- Forcing someone to perform sexual acts on film or in person for money
- Threatening to break up with someone if they refuse to do something sexual
- Pressuring someone to take drugs or use alcohol

Domestic violence often results from a desire to gain and keep power and control in a relationship. An abuser may enjoy the feeling they get from feeling like they have power over someone. They often believe that their own feelings and needs should be the top priority in their relationships. They use the abusive examples above to gain power and make their partners feel less valuable.

It is important to remember that abuse is not love. Abuse is one person in a relationship having power and control over another person. No matter why it happens, abuse is never okay. If you or someone you know is being abuse, there is support. The National Domestic Violence Hotline is open all the time. You can go to <https://www.thehotline.org>. You can also call 1-800-799-SAFE (7233). If you are scared an abuser will hear you, you can text the phrase LOVEIS to 22522.

**References:**

- National Domestic Violence Hotline (2020). What is Domestic Violence? Retrieved March 2020 from <https://www.thehotline.org/is-this-abuse/abuse-defined>.
- Center for Family Justice (2020). What is Domestic Violence? Retrieved March 2020 from <https://centerforfamilyjustice.org/faq/domestic-violence>.

**Source:**

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