

Red Flags for Abusive Relationships

The following is a list of warning signs for potentially abusive relationships. They are presented as guidelines and cues to pay attention to, not as judgments on the worth of the other person.

Question relationships with partners who:

- Abuse alcohol or other drugs.
- Have a history of trouble with the law, gets into fights, or break and destroy property.
- Don't work or go to school.
- Abuse siblings, other family members, children or pets.
- Put down people, including your family and friends, or call them names excessively.
- Are always angry at someone or something.
- Try to isolate you and control who you see or where you go.
- Nag you or force you to be sexual when you don't want to.
- Cheat on you or have lots of partners.
- Are physically rough with you (push, shove, pull, yank, squeeze, restrain).
- Take your money or take advantage of you in other ways.
- Accuse you of flirting or "coming on" to others or accuse you of cheating on them.
- Don't listen to you or show interest in your opinions or feelings...things always have to be done their way.
- Ignore you, give you the silent treatment, or hang up on you.
- Lie to you, don't show up for dates, maybe even disappear for days.
- "Check out" or make lewd comments about others in your presence.
- Blame all arguments and problems on you.
- Tell you how to dress or act.
- Threaten to kill themselves if you break up with them, or tell you that they cannot live without you.
- Experience extreme mood swings...tell you you're the greatest one minute and rip you apart the next minute.
- Tell you to shut up or tell you you're dumb, stupid, fat, or call you some other names (directly or indirectly).
- Compare you to former partners or excessively bad mouth former partners.

Some other cues that might indicate an abusive relationship might include:

- You feel afraid to break up with them.
- You feel tied down, feel like you have to check-in.
- You feel afraid to make decisions or bring up certain subjects so that the other person won't get mad.
- You tell yourself that if you just try harder and love your partner enough that everything will be just fine.
- You find yourself crying a lot, being depressed or unhappy.
- You find yourself worrying and obsessing about how to please your partner and keep them happy.
- You find the physical or emotional abuse getting worse over time.

Source: Virginians Against Domestic Violence.