

## Signs to Look For In a Battering Personality

Many women are interested in ways they can predict whether they are about to become involved with someone who will be physically abusive. Usually battering occurs between a man and a woman, but battering also takes place in same-sex relationships. Below is a list of behaviors seen in people who beat their partners; the last four signs listed are battering, but many women do not realize that this is the beginning of physical abuse. If a person exhibits several of the other behaviors, say, three or more, there is strong potential for physical violence. The more signs a person has, the more likely the person is a batterer. In some cases, a batterer may have only a few behaviors that the woman can recognize, but they are very exaggerated (for example, will try to explain the behavior as a sign of love and concern); a woman may be flattered at first. As time goes on, the behaviors become more severe and serve to dominate and control the woman.

1. **JEALOUSY.** At the beginning of a relationship, an abuser may say that jealousy is a sign of love. Jealousy has nothing to do with love. It is a sign of possessiveness and lack of trust. The abuser may question his partner about who she talks to, accuse her of flirting, or be jealous of time she spends with family, friends, or children. As the jealousy progresses, he may call her frequently during the day or drop by unexpectedly. He may refuse to let her work for fear she'll meet someone else, or even engage in behaviors such as checking her car mileage or asking friends to watch her.
2. **CONTROLLING BEHAVIOR.** At first the batterer will say this behavior is due to his concern for her safety, her need to use her time well, or her need to make good decisions. He will be angry if the woman is "late" coming back from the store or an appointment; he will question her closely about where she went and who she talked with. As this behavior progresses, he may not let the woman make personal decisions about the house, her clothing, or even going to church. He may keep all the money or even make her ask permission to leave the house or room.
3. **QUICK INVOLVEMENT.** Many battered women dated or knew their abuser for less than six months before they were married, engaged, or living together. He comes on like a whirlwind, claiming, "you're the only person I could ever talk to", or "I've never been loved like this by anyone." He will pressure the woman to commit to the relationship in such a way that later the woman may feel very guilty or that she's "letting him down" if she wants to slow down involvement or break off the relationship.
4. **UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS.** Abusive people will expect their partner to meet all their needs. He expects a perfect wife, mother, lover, friend. He will say things such as "if you love me, I'm all you need, and you're all I need." His partner is expected to take care of everything for him emotionally and in the home.
5. **ISOLATION.** The abusive person tries to cut his partner off from all resources. If she has male friends, she's a "whore." If she has women friends, she's a lesbian. If she's close to family, she's "tied to the apron strings." He accuses people who are the woman's supports of "causing trouble." He may want to live in the country, without a telephone, or refuse to let her drive the car, or he may try to keep her from working or going to school.
6. **BLAMES OTHERS FOR PROBLEMS.** If he is chronically unemployed, someone is always doing him wrong or out to get him. He may make mistakes and then blame the women for upsetting him and keeping him from concentrating on the task at hand. He may tell the woman she is at fault for virtually anything that goes wrong in his life.
7. **BLAMES OTHERS FOR FEELINGS.** The abuser may tell his partner "you make me mad," "you're hurting me by not doing what I want you to do," or "I can't help being angry." He is the one who makes the decision about what he thinks or feels, but he will use these feelings to manipulate his partner. Harder to catch are claims, "you make me happy," or "you control how I feel."
8. **HYPERSENSITIVITY.** An abuser is easily insulted, claiming his feelings are "hurt," when in actuality he is angry or taking the slightest setback as a personal attack. He will "rant and rave" about the injustice of things that have happened, things that are just a part of living (for example, being asked to work late, getting a traffic ticket, being asked to help with chores, or being told some behavior is annoying).
9. **CRUELTY TO ANIMALS OR CHILDREN.** Abusers may punish animals brutally or be insensitive to their pain or suffering. An abuser may expect children to be capable of things beyond their abilities (punishes a 2-year old for wetting a diaper). He may tease children or young brothers and sisters until they cry. He may not want children to eat at the table or may expect them to be kept in their rooms when he is home. Studies indicate that about 60% of men who physically abuse their partners also abuse their children.
10. **"PLAYFUL" USE OF FORCE IN SEX.** An abuser may enjoy throwing the woman down or holding her down during sex. He may want to act out fantasies during sex where the woman is helpless. He is letting his partner know that the idea of rape is exciting. He may show little concern about whether the woman wants to have sex and uses sulking or anger to manipulate her

into compliance. He may begin having sex with the woman while she is sleeping or demand sex when she is ill or tired.

11. **VERBAL ABUSE.** In addition to saying things that are intentionally meant to be cruel and hurtful, verbal abuse is also apparent in the abuser's degrading of his partner, cursing her, and belittling her accomplishments. The abuser tells her she is stupid and unable to function without him. This may involve waking her up to verbally abuse her or not letting her go to sleep.
12. **RIGID SEX ROLES.** The abuser expects his partner to serve him. He may even say the woman must stay at home and obey in all things—even acts that are criminal in nature. The abuser sees women as inferior to men, responsible for menial tasks, and unable to be a whole person without a relationship.
13. **DR. JEKYLL/MR. HYDE PERSONALITY.** Many women are confused by the abuser's sudden changes in mood. She may think he has some sort of mental problem because one minute he's agreeable, the next he's exploding. Explosiveness and moodiness are typical of men who beat their partners. These behaviors are related to other characteristics, such as hypersensitivity.
14. **PAST BATTERING.** The abuser may say he has hit women in the past, but blame them for the abuse ("~hey made me do it"). The women may hear from relatives or ex-partners that he is abusive. A batterer will abuse any woman he is with if the relationship lasts long enough for the violence to begin~ situational circumstances do not make one's personality abusive.
15. **THREATS OF VIOLENCE.** This includes any threat of physical force meant to control the partner: "I'll slap your mouth off," "I'll kill you," "I'll break your neck." Most people do not threaten their partners~ abusers will try to excuse their threats by saying "everybody talks like that."
16. **BREAKING OR STRIKING OBJECTS.** Breaking loved possessions is used as a punishment, but mostly to terrorize the woman into submission. The abuser may beat on the table with his fist, or throw objects around or near his partner. Again, this is remarkable behavior. Not only is this a sign of extreme immaturity, but there is great danger when someone thinks he has the right to punish or frighten his partner.
17. **ANY FORCE DURING AN ARGUMENT.** This may involve the abuser's holding the woman down, physically restraining her from leaving the room, or any pushing or shoving. He may hold his partner against the wall, telling her "You're going to listen to me!"