



RED FLAGS FOR POTENTIAL BATTERERS

Any woman can become a battered woman. It is very difficult to recognize a potential batterer, especially in the beginning. It is so easy to be “seduced” by their charm and to ignore the nagging feeling you have that something is wrong. At first he is Prince Charming, at first he is the best man you have ever met, at first he is a dream come true. Then he turns into your worst nightmare.

Here are the signs to look for:

- ◆ **Jealousy.** This is often initially experienced by a woman as “love.” But jealousy is about possession and disrespect. As the relationship becomes more committed, the abusive male becomes more committed, the abusive male becomes more and more obsessed with thoughts of this partner’s imagined betrayal.
- ◆ **Pressure for fast involvement.** The abusive male wants to very quickly move the relationship to a more committed level and will often pressure his partner to go along with this. As commitment grows, so does the level of abusive behavior.
- ◆ **Overly dependent.** The abusive male expects his partner to meet all of his unmet emotional needs, in a relationship similar to a child and his mother. It is this quality of the relationship that often creates a maternal feeling in the woman and she often worries about how he will survive without her. IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT HE IS AN ADULT, NOT A CHILD.
- ◆ **Restricts your life.** Wants to be with you every moment and starts to subtly discourage you from engaging in outside activities and friendships.
- ◆ **Excessive.** The abusive male is extreme, both in his romantic generosity, and in his abusive behaviors. In the beginning, the abusive male often overwhelms a woman with romantic gestures. However, there may be signs of poor boundaries present. For example, one woman’s abusive partner had all new kitchen appliances installed in her home while she was at work. This was done without her permission or knowledge. And they had only been dating 3 weeks! This same man eventually beat and strangled her until she sought a battered women’s shelter.



- ◆ **Controlling.** The abusive male wants total control, although in the beginning the signs may be subtle. He will try to get his way through manipulation; such as pouting and sulking, a ceaseless argument intended to wear her down, or trying to create guilt.
- ◆ **Blames others.** The abusive male does not accept responsibility for his behavior or have empathy for how his behavior impacts his partner. His lack of empathy is related to his sense of complete justification in his abusive behavior. If his partner reacts with anger towards his abuse, he feels victimized.
- ◆ **Hitting a previous partner.** History is the best way to predict the future. If your partner admits to ever hitting a previous partner, even if he blames her ("I was only defending myself, SHE abused me.") there is a high likelihood he will abuse you.
- ◆ **Emotionally abusive.** Emotionally abuse usually precedes physical abuse. Again, it starts slowly in the beginning and increases over time and commitment to the relationship. He may be critical; treat you like a servant; accuse you unjustly; undermine your self-confidence; flirt openly or have affairs; and deny the reality that you experience as abusive.
- ◆ **Passivity.** His feeling of powerlessness will result in periods in which the abuser is quite passive. He will experience this as YOU exerting power over him and he will react with anger and abuse to gain a sense of mastery. His sense of powerlessness is within him and is not related to you or your actions, but if he can make you feel weak and afraid, he will get the results he wants.
- ◆ **Panic that you will leave him.** After an abusive episode, a woman may take actions to leave or discuss leaving. This will generally panic the abuser and he may beg and plead with you to stay. He is likely to promise anything including the promise to change. He may also state that he will commit suicide if you ever leave him. It is important to remember that this is an extremely abusive form of manipulation and that you are not responsible for his happiness or keeping him alive – HE IS.