

The Red Flags of Controlling Behavior

Abusive relationships often feel like a whirlwind and progress very quickly. This is a huge red flag. Abusers often ask their partner to move in early in the relationship and often propose marriage prematurely. The abuser has more access and more control when you're cohabiting because they can watch you more closely. Feeling like you're walking on eggshells trying not to upset your partner is yet another red flag. Never knowing when the next outburst will happen, survivors adapt their behaviors to appease the abuser. Somehow, this never seems to work. The abuser still finds irrational things to get angry about, which leaves you feeling like nothing you do is right. Truthfully, nothing you did was wrong. You tried your hardest to make someone you love happy.

An abusive partner will find something to get angry about, no matter how you change your behavior. Finding someone who accepts you for who you are is possible. Take a moment to go over this checklist. Each behavior listed is a controlling behavior. In the abusive relationship, what abusive behaviors did you notice early on but ignore or rationalize away?

Emotional

- Denying responsibility for anything
- Turning blame around on you
- Waking you up to pick a fight
- Manipulating you
- Lying
- Exhibiting extreme jealousy
- Demanding perfection
- Calling the police on you and saying you are the abuser
- Telling you that you are the abusive one
- Refusing to speak to you
- Acting like you aren't present in the room
- Making threats to scare you
- Saying things and denying them later
- Telling you something didn't happen when it did, or vice versa
- Intimidating you
- Restricting access to emergency services/police
- Telling you no will believe you
- Refusing you access to your home
- Threatening suicide
- Limiting access to your basic needs (food, housing, water, clothing, etc.)
- Minimizing their abusive actions
- Not letting you speak during conversations/arguments
- Minimizing your career/education
- Refusing to use your preferred gender pronouns
- Telling you what to wear

Verbal

- Belittling you
- Calling you names, like stupid/fat/ugly or similar
- Screaming at you
- Body-shaming
- Shushing you in public places
- Teasing you
- Mocking you
- Talking over you

Social

- Restricting your access to friends/family/coworkers
- Dictating who you can hang out with
- Monitoring your activities
- Dictating where you can go
- Dictating when you can go somewhere
- Not letting you go places alone
- Not letting you leave the house
- Asking you for details about where you have been
- Denying access to transportation

Sexual

- Denying affection
- Waking you up from sleep for intimacy
- Pressuring you for sex after you said no
- Forcing sex
- Threatening to cheat
- Cheating
- Accusing you of cheating
- Being rough during intimacy without consent
- Using strangulation during sex without consent
- Demanding sex as heir right
- Withholding sex

Physical

- Hitting/kicking/punching/slapping/biting/pinching/strangling
- Pulling your hair
- Restraining you
- Physically stopping you from leaving
- Spitting on you
- Blocking the door
- Throwing things at you
- Using a weapon
- Drugging you

Cultural

- Isolating you from your culture or the mainstream culture
- Belittling your culture
- Mocking your difficulty with language
- Using language to isolate you
- Threatening to report you to police/have you deported
- Refusing to speak in a language you understand
- Threatening to “out” you to others
- Using religion to excuse abusive behaviors
- Denying access to your religious community

Financial

- Limiting access to money
- Not allowing you access to the bank account
- Refusing to let you work
- Limiting the type of work you’re allowed to do
- Refusing your right to education
- Controlling the money you spend
- Making you ask for money
- Closing your financial accounts
- Refusing to pay child support
- Racking up debt in your name
- Hiding assets from you
- Dragging out legal battles to drain your finances

Technology

- Monitoring your email/text communications
- Requiring you to turn on location sharing
- Installing spy applications on your devices
- Sending harassing texts/emails/phone calls
- Planting recording devices in your home/car
- Stalking you on social media
- Monitoring your computer/web searches
- Limiting your access to computers/phone
- Taking your phone from you
- Contacting friends/family to gain access to you
- Posting embarrassing images of you on social media
- Tracking car mileage
- Demanding that you respond to texts/emails/phone calls in a specific amount of time
- Demanding that you check in at regular intervals

Children/Pets

- Threatening to hurt the children
- Threatening to hurt your pet
- Harming a pet
- Harming a child
- Threatening to take the children away from you
- Threatening to take the pets away from you
- Belittling you in front of your children
- Telling you that you're an incapable parent
- Telling you that you're too crazy to take care of the kids
- Kidnapping the children
- Requiring you to get rid of a pet
- Threatening to call child welfare