

What to Expect When You Leave an Abusive Relationship

1. You will likely miss your partner.

It is normal to miss your partner. As much as you may want to, and the other people in your life may want you to, it is not realistic to simply stop loving someone. Your relationship probably wasn't bad all the time, and those good memories can be powerful.

HELPFUL TIP: MISSING THEM DOESN'T MEAN YOU MADE A MISTAKE LEAVING THEM. TRY KEEPING A LIST OF THE REASONS YOU LEFT.

2. They will talk about you.

When your partner can no longer control you, they will try to control how other people see you. This includes telling people it was your fault, that you're abusive, sharing embarrassing secrets, or telling other lies about you. This happens with family, friends, law enforcement, courts, and even strangers.

HELPFUL TIP: FOCUS ON CONTROLLING WHAT YOU HAVE CONTROL OVER. THE TRUTH IS THE TRUTH.

3. They will try to manipulate you.

Abusers often apologize, say nice things, and beg you to come back. They may even say they can't live without you and threaten to hurt themselves if you don't. This is manipulation. They are not going to change that fast.

HELPFUL TIP: THINK ABOUT A CHANGE YOU HAVE TRIED TO MAKE, AND HOW DIFFICULT IT WAS. THEN THINK ABOUT HOW MUCH TIME AND EFFORT IT WILL TAKE FOR YOUR PARTNER TO CHANGE.

4. Expect a range of emotions.

You may feel relief and joy one day and regret and sadness the next. You may feel anger and want justice, or you may not want them to get in any trouble. You may have hope they will change or you may feel ready to end the relationship. All of this is normal and okay.

HELPFUL TIP: REMEMBER THAT ALL EMOTIONS ARE OKAY AND WORK ON HEALTHY COPING SKILLS. IF YOU FEEL LIKE HURTING YOURSELF, SEEK HELP.

5. You may be unsafe.

Leaving an abusive partner can be very dangerous because you are taking back the control they have gained over you. Even partners that have never been physically violent can escalate to violence during this time. Personal Protection Orders are available.

HELPFUL TIP: LEARN THE WARNING SIGNS AND SEEK LEGAL PROTECTION IF NEEDED.

6. Parenting can be challenging.

Children may lack respect for you because at home your partner did not respect you, or maybe even undermined you. Try not to take this personally, and always respond with respect and kindness. Praise the positive behaviors and gently correct the negative behaviors.

HELPFUL TIP: REMEMBER THAT YOUR CHILDREN ARE ALSO STRUGGLING WITH THIS CHANGE.

Talk to your advocate if you are struggling with any of these common issues.

