



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 potentially physically abusive. Below are lists of behaviors that are seen in people who beat their partners. If a person has several of the following behaviors there is a strong potential for physical violence in the relationship. The more signs the person has, the more likely the person has a battering personality. Initially the batterer will try to explain his behavior as signs of his love and concern, which may be flattering at first. However, as time goes on, the abusive behaviors become more severe and serve to dominate the woman.

- 1. Jealousy.** At the beginning of a relationship, an abuser will always say that his jealousy is a sign of love. Jealousy has nothing to do with love. It's a sign of insecurity and possessiveness. He will question the woman about who she talks to and accuse her of flirting. He may be jealous of time spent 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. He may engage in unpredictable behaviors. For example, checking her car mileage or asking friends to watch her.
- 2. Controlling Behavior.** At the onset of the relationship, the batterer will say that this behavior is because he's concerned for the woman's safety, her need to use her time well, or her need to make good decisions. He will get angry if the woman is "late" coming back from the store or an appointment. He will question her closely about where she went and whom she talked to. As this behavior gets worse, he may not let the woman make personal decisions about the house, her clothing and/or going to church. He may keep all the money and/or make her ask permission to leave the house or room.
- 3. Quick Movement.** Many battered women dated or knew their abuser for less than six months before they were engaged or started living together. He will come on like a whirlwind claiming "love at first sight". He will tell the woman flattering things such as "you're the only person I can talk to" and "I love you more than anyone in the world". He may say he needs someone desperately then pressure the woman to commit to him.
- 4. Unrealistic Expectations.** He is very dependent on the woman for all of his needs; he expects her to be the perfect wife, mother, lover, or friend. He will say thing like "if you love me, I'm all you need, you're all I need". She is supposed to take care of everything for him emotionally and in the home.
- 5. Isolation.** The tries to cut the woman off from all resources. If she has male friends she is a "whore", if she has female friends she is a "lesbian", if she is close to her family she is "tied to the apron strings". He accuses people who are her supports of "causing trouble", he may want to live in the country without a phone, he may not let her use the care, or he may try to keep her from working or going to school.
- 6. Blames Others for His 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 woman for upsetting him or keeping him from concentration or doing his job. He will tell the woman she is at fault for practically anything and everything that goes wrong.

7. **Blames Others for His Feelings.** He will tell the woman “you make me mad”, “you’re hurting me by not doing what I ask”, “I can’t help being angry”. He rarely makes the decision about what he thinks and feels but will use feelings to manipulate the woman.
8. **Hypersensitivity.** The man is easily insulted. He claims his feelings are “hurt” when he is really very mad. He takes the slightest set back as personal attacks. He will “rant and rave” about the injustice of things that have happened to him, things that are really just part of living, like being asked to help with chores.
9. **Cruelty to Animals or Children.** This is a man who punishes animals brutally or is insensitive to their pain or suffering. He may expect children to be capable of doing things far beyond their ability (whips a two year old for wetting their diaper) or he may tease children until they cry. He may not want children to eat at the table or expects them to stay in their room all evening while he is home.
10. **Playful use of Force in Sex.** This man may like to throw the woman down and hold her down during sex. He may want to act out fantasies during sex where the woman is helpless. He’s letting her know that an idea of “rape” excites him. He may show little concern about whether the woman wants to have sex and use sulking or anger to manipulate her into compliance. He may start 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 meant to be cruel and hurtful, the man may constantly degrade the woman by cursing her and/or belittling her accomplishments. The man will tell her that she’s stupid and incapable of functioning without him.
12. **Rigid Sex Roles.** The man expects a woman to serve him and obey him in all things, even things that are criminal in nature. Abusers see women as inferior to men, less intelligent, and unable to be a whole person without them.
13. **Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.** Many women are confused by their abuser’s “sudden” changes in mood. They will describe that one-minute he’s nice and the next minute he explodes. One minute he’s happy and the next minute he’s sad. These mood swings do not indicate some special “mental problem” or that he’s “crazy”. Explosiveness and mood swings are typical of men who beat their partners. These behaviors are related to other characteristics such as hypersensitivity.
14. **Past Battering.** The man may say he has hit women in the past, but the woman made hit do it. The woman may hear from relatives or ex-spouses that the man has been abusive. A batterer will beat any woman he is with; situational circumstances do not make a person have an abusive personality.
15. **Threats of Violence.** This would include any threat of physical force meant to control the woman, “I’ll slap your moth off”, “I’ll kill you”, or “ I’ll break your neck”. Most men do not threaten their mates, but a batterer will try to excuse this behavior by saying, “everybody talks like that”.
16. **Breaking or Striking Objects.** This behavior is used as a punishment. It is used to terrorize the woman into submission. The man may beat on tables with his fists, throw objects around or near the woman or break possessions special to the woman. This is very remarkable behavior, only very immature people beat on objects in the presence of other people in order to threaten them.
17. **Any Force during an Argument.** This may involve a man holding a woman down, physically restraining her from leaving the room, and/or pushing or shoving. For example, the man holding the woman against a wall and saying “you’re going to listen to me”.