

Common Traits of Batterers

Abused women are victims; they are NOT responsible for provoking – or correcting the behavior of their abusers.

Batterers are someone an individual knows and loves. Initially, the batterer may seem charming, attentive, and supportive. They present in a non-violent manner in the early stages of relationships. Their behavior changes over time to become more controlling, demeaning and demanding. Their abusive behavior is learned and socially reinforced.

Batterer Characteristics

Excessive Jealousy – Has jealous reactions to many things in your life, including casual, minor contacts with such people as store clerks or neighbors. Often very jealous of friends, family, children, and pets.

Verbal Abusiveness – Uses putdowns such as “You’re stupid” or “You’re not a good mother” to destroy your self-esteem. The abusive language may escalate into rage or physical attacks.

Controlling Behavior – Demands rigid accounts of your every move and will often make follow-up calls to confirm your whereabouts. A batterer is unwilling to distinguish between caring and controlling behavior. Will text/call frequently and expect an immediate response.

Attempts to Isolate You – Tries to destroy your relationships with your family and friends so that you can be broken and “molded” into an ideal victim. Isolation keeps you from getting reality checks or support from others beside the batterer. Forces you to choose “them or me.”

Unwillingness to Control Anger – Has frequent violent outbursts such as ramming fists through walls; often gets into brawls, often with little warning. A batterer often throws things, kicks things, and goes into verbal rage.

Use of Violence – Uses force or intimidation to “win” arguments; destroys physical objects; may have a history of cruelty to children as well as animals; may use force during sex.

Alcohol and Drug Abuse – Abuses substances, but not all batterers are addicts or alcoholics. Drugs and alcohol may make a batterer more violent – but they do not explain the violence. Batterers continue to batter even after they quit using drugs and alcohol.

Rigid Gender Roles – Believes that women are possessions and that they should cater to and unquestioningly obey men. Often has uncompromising ideas about what women's and men's roles, rights, and "duties" are.

Witness Domestic Violence in Childhood – Of batterers who are currently battering, 73% grew up in an abusive household or witnessed domestic violence as a child. This does not excuse their behavior. It gives them responsibility to learn to do something different from what they learned.

Lack of Sensitivity – Unwilling to appreciate other people's feelings. Batterers believe that people who think or feel differently than themselves are wrong. It is the batterer's way – or no way! May use the survivors past behavior/experiences against them during a fight. Or bring up the survivors' insecurities against them.

Insecurity and Low Self-Esteem – Has overwhelming feelings of inadequacy regarding several areas of their life. Batterers work hard to hide their feelings. As such, they often appear confident, charming, and in control.

Denial of Responsibility – Blames violent episodes on the victims. Common statements include, "They made me do it," and "If you hadn't done —, I wouldn't have had to be violent." Batterers believe they should not have to face consequences for their behavior. They think there are acceptable excuses for the violence and give themselves permission to batter.

Lack of Communication – Refuses to take responsibility to share honest feelings and thoughts. Does not talk through conflicts to an equally negotiated resolution. Batterers often "pick" on the survivor but when the survivor attempts to "pick" on the batterer, they blow up and accuse the survivor of being disrespectful. Double standards.

Lack of Intimacy – Typically thinks that sex = intimacy. Often does not show affection without sex. Batterers usually do not communicate about what would be equally pleasurable during sex.

Dependency – Wants to be taken care of without asking for it directly or sharing. Batterers think it is others' responsibility to make sure their needs are met, and they are the victim if someone is not taking care of them.

Self-Centered – Believe that the only things that are important are the things that pertain to them. They think everything should happen the way they want, and they have the right to

push as hard as necessary to get things their way. Batterers do not respect boundaries or other people's opinions, thoughts, or feelings. They act as if they are the "Center of the Universe."