

Week 4: Handout A **Warning Signs of Abuse**

If a person shows signs of three or more of the following behaviors, there is a strong potential for physical violence. In some cases, an abusive partner may only show one or two of the signs, perhaps to an extreme degree.

Jealousy: Partners who abuse often say that jealousy is a sign of love but it is actually a sign of insecurity and possessiveness. The abuser may monitor the survivor's time closely, check mileage on the survivor's car, drop by unexpectedly to "check" on the survivor or refuse to let the survivor work or go places alone.

Blame: The abusive partner blames others for their problems; the survivor is blamed for almost everything that goes wrong. This can be part of a narcissistic personality: someone who always blames others for any negative aspect of or feelings in their life.

Controlling Behavior: At first it may appear that the abusive partner is concerned for the other's safety but eventually the abusive person will not allow the survivor to make any personal decisions.

Hypersensitivity: The abusive partner is easily insulted and takes normal parts of life as personal attacks (being asked to help, getting a ticket, etc.).

Quick Involvement: Many survivors of Domestic Violence dated or knew their batterers for less than 6 months before they were engaged or living together. Abusive persons often move quickly into a new relationship when an old relationship fails.

Unrealistic Expectations: The abusive partner is dependent on the survivor for all of their needs; the abusive partner expects the survivor to be "perfect" in every way (again, because the abusive partner is concerned about how they are perceived).

Cruelty to Animals or Children: Abusive partners can be insensitive to the suffering and pain of children and may expect them to do things beyond their abilities. Abusive partners may punish children for "mistakes," and will often be abusive toward pets as a way of controlling both the children and the survivor.

Isolation: The abusive partner isolates the survivor off from all personal relationships—family, long-time friends, church communities. People who support the survivor may be labeled as "trouble."

"Playful" Use of Force in Sex: Shows little concern for the survivor.

Rigid Sex and Gender Roles: The abusive partner expects the survivor to fulfill sex and gender roles as the abuser defines them. Abusive partner may view survivor as inferior.

Jekyll and Hyde: Abusive partner may have sudden changes in mood – from being nice one minute to exploding the next. Survivors and their children may be the only ones who see these sudden changes in the abusive partner's moods. ("Family-only" abusive partners)

Past Battering: Abusive partner may disclose past abuse of a former partner, but then blame that partner for the abuse... "He/she made me do it."

Threats of Violence: Any threat of physical force meant to control the survivor, whether the threat is against the survivor, the children or family members of the survivor.

Breaking or Striking Objects: Breaking items of personal value to the survivor is often used as a punishment or to terrorize the survivor into submission. Throwing, breaking and striking objects in the home is a violent behavior.