

Recognising the Signs of an Abusive Relationship

Abuse in relationships can take many forms—including **physical, emotional, psychological, financial, and sexual abuse**. Recognising the warning signs is a crucial first step in seeking help, support, and safety.

Below are some of the most common indicators of an abusive relationship:

1. EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

- Constant criticism, belittling, or humiliation—often disguised as “jokes”
- Gaslighting: manipulating you into doubting your memory, perception, or sense of reality
- Extreme jealousy or possessiveness, including false accusations of cheating
- Controlling behaviour (e.g. monitoring your movements, limiting contact with friends or family, dictating what you wear or do)
- Threats to harm you, themselves, or others if you leave
- Silent treatment or emotional withdrawal used as punishment
- Making you feel guilty or responsible for their emotions and actions
- Dismissing your feelings, calling you “too sensitive” or saying you’re “overreacting”

2. PHYSICAL ABUSE

- Hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, choking, or using any form of physical force
- Throwing or breaking objects to frighten or intimidate
- Blocking your exit from a room or location
- Forcing you into unwanted physical situations
- Preventing or discouraging you from seeking medical help
- Using physical force during arguments or disagreements
- Threatening you with weapons or dangerous objects

3. FINANCIAL ABUSE

- Controlling access to money or taking your earnings
- Monitoring or questioning all your spending
- Preventing you from working, studying, or gaining financial independence
- Accumulating debt in your name without consent
- Making all financial decisions without your knowledge or input

4. SEXUAL ABUSE

- Forcing or pressuring you into sexual activity without consent
- Ignoring your boundaries or refusing to take “no” for an answer
- Using sex as a form of control, punishment, or manipulation
- Coercing you into sex through threats, guilt, or emotional pressure
- Sharing or recording sexual content without your consent
- Withholding affection or intimacy as a means of control
- Forcing pregnancy, sabotaging contraception, or denying access to reproductive healthcare

RECOGNISING THE SIGNS OF AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

5. ISOLATION

- Discouraging or preventing you from seeing friends or family
- Creating emotional or physical dependence by making you feel unsupported
- Controlling your communication (social media, phone, email)
- Spreading rumours or lies to turn others against you
- Making you feel guilty for spending time with loved ones

6. INTIMIDATION AND THREATS

- Using fear to control you—through verbal threats, breaking property, or harming pets
- Stalking, excessive surveillance, or monitoring your movements
- Making you feel unsafe to leave the relationship due to threats
- Threatening to reveal personal or private information as a form of control

7. DIGITAL ABUSE

- Checking your phone, messages, emails, or social media without permission
- Using tracking devices or apps to monitor your location
- Demanding your passwords or access to private accounts
- Sending excessive texts or calls to monitor and control you

8. VERBAL ABUSE

- Yelling, name-calling, or shouting to belittle and intimidate
- Using sarcasm or insults disguised as humour
- Making cruel jokes at your expense and dismissing your discomfort
- Blaming you for everything that goes wrong in the relationship

REMEMBER: ABUSE IS NEVER YOUR FAULT

A **healthy relationship** is built on:

- Respect
- Trust
- Equality
- Open and honest communication
- Physical and emotional safety

If you recognise these signs in your relationship—or someone else's—know that **you are not alone**, and support is available. Reaching out is a brave and important step toward healing and safety.