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# Healthy vs. Abusive Relationships

**HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS**

**Non-Threatening Behavior**
- Talking and acting so that your partner feels safe and comfortable doing and saying things

**Respect**
- Listening to your partner non-judgmentally
- Being emotionally affirming and understanding
- Valuing opinions

**Trust and Support**
- Supporting your partner's goals in life
- Respecting your partner's right to her own feelings, friends, activities, and opinions

**Honesty and Accountability**
- Accepting responsibility for self
- Acknowledging past use of violence
- Admitting being wrong
- Communicating openly and truthfully

**Responsible Parenting**
- Sharing parental responsibilities
- Being a positive, non-violent role model for children

**Shared Responsibility**
- Mutually agreeing on a fair distribution of work
- Making family decisions together

*Adapted from Health Partners, Discover: “Here’s What Healthy and Abusive Relationships Look Like,” Summer 1996.*

**ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS**

**Using Intimidation**
- Making your partner afraid by using looks, actions, and gestures
- Smashing things
- Destroying property
- Abusing pets
- Displaying weapons

**Using Emotional Abuse**
- Putting your partner down
- Calling your partner names
- Making your partner think she is crazy
- Playing mind games
- Humiliating your partner
- Making your partner feel guilty

**Using Isolation**
- Controlling what your partner does and reads, who your partner sees and talks to, where your partner goes
- Limiting your partner's outside involvements
- Using jealousy to justify actions

**Minimizing, Denying, and Blaming**
- Making light of abuse and not taking your partner's concerns about it seriously
- Saying the abuse didn't happen
- Shifting responsibility for abusive behavior
- Saying your partner caused the abuse

**Using Children**
- Making your partner feel guilty about the children
- Using the children to relay messages
- Using visitation to harass your partner
- Threatening to take the children away

**Using Male Privilege**
- Treating your partner like a servant
- Making all the big decisions
- Acting like the "Master of the Castle"
- Being the one to define gender roles

**Using Economic Abuse**
- Preventing your partner from getting or keeping a job
- Making your partner ask for money
- Giving your partner an allowance
- Taking your partner's money
- Not letting your partner know about or have access to family income

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Is Your Relationship Abusive?

In the last two decades, relationship violence has emerged from the black hole of taboo subjects. Surveys show that 28% of high school and college-age students are in abusive relationships, about the same proportion as adults. Barrie Levy, a Santa Monica, CA, therapist and abuse prevention specialist, offers this checklist to see if your relationship is abusive:

**ABUSED**

☐ Does your partner’s temper scare you?
☐ Are you afraid to disagree with your partner?
☐ Do you apologize for your partner’s behavior when you are treated badly?
☐ Are you frightened by your partner’s violence?
☐ Have you been hit, kicked, shoved, or had things thrown at you?
☐ Do you not see friends or family or do things because of your partner’s jealousy?
☐ Have you been forced to have sex?
☐ Do you have to justify everything you do, every place you go, and every person you see to avoid your partner’s temper?
☐ Have you repeatedly been wrongly accused of flirting?

**ABUSER**

☐ Are you very jealous and possessive?
☐ Do you have an explosive temper?
☐ Do you constantly ridicule, criticize, or insult your partner?
☐ Are you violent when you drink or use drugs?
☐ Have you hit, pushed, kicked, or injured your partner when you were angry?
☐ Have you threatened to hurt your partner or kill your partner or someone close to your partner?
☐ Have you forced your partner to have sex or made your partner afraid to say no?
☐ Have you threatened to kill yourself if your partner leaves?
☐ Do you make your partner account for every moment that she is away from you?
☐ Do you spy on your partner?
☐ Do you call a lot to check up on your partner?
☐ Do you accuse your partner of seeing other people?
Early Warning Signs of Abuse

These are some behaviors and traits that you see in your partner. We list some typical traits of people who have the potential to become abusive. Add other traits that you observe and are concerned about.

Your Partner’s Cues

Anger/Blaming:
- ☐ Gets angry a lot, complains, or blames others.
- ☐ Puts down other people.
- ☐ ____________________________________

Sexist Attitudes/Beliefs:
- ☐ Makes demeaning comments about women (especially about women who are assertive).
- ☐ Makes sexist statements like: “That’s women’s work.”
- ☐ ____________________________________

Controlling Behaviors:
- ☐ Fights or disagrees with me and then indulges me (gets nice or buys me something).
- ☐ Has rigid like/dislikes and ideas on the way things should be done.
- ☐ Doesn’t hear me, discounts me, minimizes my concerns, or changes the subject.
- ☐ ____________________________________

Lifestyle/Family Background
- ☐ Has few or no friends or interests outside me.
- ☐ Drinks or uses other chemicals to excess.
- ☐ Has trouble keeping a job and blames it on someone else.
- ☐ ____________________________________

Violent Behavior
- ☐ Flies off the handle a lot. Gets mad at little things.
- ☐ Breaks or damages property when upset.
- ☐ Physically disciplines children or pets.
- ☐ ____________________________________

Your Cues

Self-Esteem:
- ☐ I feel put down, insulted, or dumb.
- ☐ I feel unattractive or not good enough.
- ☐ I question my judgment.
- ☐ ____________________________________

Health/Mental Health
- ☐ I feel vaguely “blue,” anxious, or unsettled after being together.
- ☐ I overlook my own preferences and needs.
- ☐ ____________________________________

Lifestyle Changes:
- ☐ I have experienced changes in eating, sleeping, drinking, work, etc.
- ☐ I don’t have time to get things done that I need to get done.
- ☐ ____________________________________

Attending to Partner:
- ☐ I think a lot about how to comfort my partner.
- ☐ I tell myself that I can succeed where others have failed. (No one loved or understood him the way I do.)
- ☐ ____________________________________

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National Relationship Violence Statistics

- According to a 2000 UNICEF study, 20-50% of the female population of the world will become the victims of domestic violence.

- Within the United States, 1 out of every 4 American women will experience violence by an intimate partner sometime during her lifetime.

- Women age 16 to 24 are most likely to be victimized by an intimate partner.

- While women are less likely than men to be victims of violent crimes overall, 85% of women are victimized by a violent intimate partner.

- 67% of women who killed their spouse did so to protect themselves and their children at the moment of the murder.

- About 4 in 10 female survivors of intimate partner violence live in households with children under age 12.

- Men who batter their spouses or partners physically abuse their children at a seven times higher rate than non-battering men and she sexually abuse their children at a six times higher rate than non-battering men.

- Only 32% of survivors of relationship violence with physical injuries seek professional medical treatment.
Safety Plan

The following is a safety plan designed to assist you in an abusive relationships. This safety plan contains elements and questions that will not be applicable to all relationships. Please complete the portions you find most useful and relevant for your circumstance.

Safety planning for the survivor is an essential tool whether leaving the abusive partner is temporary or permanent. We may not be able to stop someone's violence, but we can get ourselves out of danger as well as support others to get themselves out of danger.

**Safety During an Argument or Fight**

**Safety at Home:** If a fight seems unavoidable, try to move to a room that has access to an exit or a phone. Avoid the bathroom, kitchen, or anywhere near weapons.

**Neighbor:** Identify a neighbor you can tell about the violence and ask them to call the police if they hear a disturbance coming from your home.

**Code Word:** Devise a code word to use with your children, family, and neighbors when you need the police to be called.

**Place to Stay:** Decide and plan where to go and who will help if you have to leave home (even if you don’t think you will need to).

**Trust Yourself:** Use your instincts and judgment. If the situation is dangerous, consider giving the abuser what they want to calm down. You have the right to protect yourself until you are out of danger.

**Get Away Bag:** Have a packed bag ready and keep it in an undisclosed but accessible place in order to leave quickly.

**Practice:** Practice how to get out of your home safely. Identify which doors, windows, elevator, or stairwell would be best.

**Safety with a Restraining Order**

**Extra Copies:** Keep your protective order on you at all times. Make extra copies to keep in your car, at work, in your school bag, briefcase, or purse.

**Breaking Protective Order:** Call the police if your abuser breaks the protective order.

**Alternatives:** Think of alternative ways to keep safe if the police do not respond right away.

**Family & Friends:** Inform trusted family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and/or employer that you have a restraining order in effect.

**Safety on the Job and in Public**

**Telling:** Decide whom at work to inform of your situation. This should include office security or supervisor. Provide a picture of your abuser if possible.

**Phone & Email:** Arrange to have someone screen your telephone calls if possible. If the abuser attempts to contact you at work, save the voice mail, email, and/or written message.

**Leaving Work:** Devise a safety plan to leave work. Have someone escort you to your car or bus. If possible, vary your route home. Think about what you would do if something happens while going home (i.e. in your car, on the bus, etc.).

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Personalized Safety Plan

Name ____________________________

Date ____________________________ Review Dates ____________________________

The following steps represent my plan for increasing my safety and preparing in advance for the possibility of further violence. Although I do not have control over my abuser’s violence, I do have a choice about how to respond and how to best get myself (and my children) to safety.

**Step 1: Safety During a Violent Incident**

A. If we are having an argument, I can try to move to a space that is lowest risk, such as __________________________. (Try to avoid arguments in the bathroom, garage, kitchen, near weapons, or in rooms without access to an outside door).

B. If my abuser frequently threatens to “out” me, I can ____________________________.

C. If it is not safe to stay, I can ____________________________. (Practice how to get out safely). What doors, windows, elevators, stairwells, or fire escapes would I use? ____________________________.

D. I can keep important papers, keys, and clothing ready in the ____________________________ so that I can leave quickly.

E. I can tell ____________________________ and ____________________________ about the violence and ask them to call the police if they hear suspicious noises from my home or room.

F. I can use ____________________________ as my code word with my children/family/friends, so they can call for help.

G. I can teach my children how to use the telephone to contact the police and the fire department.

H. If I have to leave my home or room, I can go to ____________________________ or ____________________________ or _____________________________. (Decide this even if you don’t think there will be a next time).

*Use your judgment. If the situation is very serious, give the perpetrator what he wants. You have the right to protect yourself until you (and your children) are out of danger.*

**Step 2: Safety when Preparing to Leave**

Survivors of domestic violence frequently leave the residence they share with the abuser. Leaving must be done strategically in order to increase safety. Abusers often strike back when they believe their partner is leaving the relationship.

A. I can leave money and an extra set of keys with ____________________________ so that I can leave quickly.

B. I can keep copies of important documents or keys and some extra clothes with ____________________________.

C. I can open a savings account to increase my independence. (Preferably opened in a separate bank than the one you and your partner use jointly).

D. Other things I can do to increase my independence include ____________________________.

E. The domestic violence program’s hotline number is ____________________________. I can keep change for phone calls with me at all times. I understand that if I use my telephone credit card, the following month’s telephone bill could tell my abuser those numbers that I called after I left. To keep my telephone communications confidential, I can either use coins, or I might get a friend to permit me to use their telephone or get a phone card for a limited time when I first leave.

F. I can check with ____________________________ and ____________________________ to see who would be able to let me stay with them or lend me money.

G. I can rehearse my escape plan and, as appropriate, practice it (with my children).

*Remember: If you tell your partner that you’ll leave if they ever hit you again, think about whether you’re giving the abuser permission to hit you “just one more time.”*

*Continued...*
Step 3: Safety in my Own Residence

A. If my abuser takes away or threatens to deprive me of essential medication or medical care, I can ____________________________.

B. If my abuser no longer lives with me, I can act to increase my safety (and my children’s safety) at home.
   1. I can change the locks on my doors and windows as soon as possible.
   2. I can get an unlisted phone number.
   3. I can install security systems including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic system, etc.
   4. I can install smoke detectors and purchase fire extinguishers for each floor in my home.
   5. I can install outside sensor lighting that lights up when a person comes close to my home.

C. I can inform ________________ and ________________ and ________________ that my abuser no longer resides with me and they should call the police if they observe the abuser near my home.

D. I can teach my children to ____________________________ when I am not available.

E. I can inform ________________ and ________________ and ________________ about who has permission to pick up my children.

F. I can teach my children how to use the telephone to make a collect call to me and to ________________ in the event that my abuser abducts them.

Step 4: Safety with an Order for Protection

A. I can keep my Order for Protection ____________________________. (Always keep it on or near your person. If you change clothes, purses, briefcases, etc., that is the first thing that should go in).

B. If my abuser breaks the order, I can ____________________________.

C. If the police are not responsive, I can ____________________________.

D. I can inform ________________ and ________________ that I have an Order for Protection.

E. If my partner destroys my Order for Protection, I can get another copy from the County Court.

Step 5: Safety on the Job and in Public

A. If my abuser threatens to “out” me at work or other important places, I can ____________________________.

B. I can inform ________________ and ________________ and ________________ at work of my situation.

C. I can use voice mail, the receptionist, or a co-worker to help screen my telephone calls at work.

D. When leaving work, I can ____________________________.

E. If problems occur when I am driving home, I can ____________________________.

F. If I use public transportation, I can ____________________________.

Continued...
Step 6: Safety and Drug or Alcohol Consumption

The use of any alcohol or other drugs can reduce a survivor’s awareness and ability. Furthermore, the abuser’s use of alcohol or other drugs may give them an excuse to use violence.

A. If I am going to consume alcohol or other drugs, I can do so in a safe place with people who understand the risk of violence and are committed to my safety.

B. If my abuser is consuming, I can _________________.

*The legal outcomes of using illegal drugs can be very hard on victim/survivors, may hurt the relationship with children and put the victim/survivor at a disadvantage in other legal actions with the battering partner. Therefore, victim/survivors should carefully consider the potential cost of the use of illegal drugs.*

Step 7: Safety and Emotional Health

A. If I feel down, lonely, and ready to return to a potentially abusive situation, I can ________________________.

B. When I have to communicate with my abuser in person or by telephone I can ________________________.

C. I can use positive self-talk with myself and be assertive with others. I can tell myself that I don’t deserve to be beaten or abused whenever others are trying to control or abuse me.

D. I can call _______________ and _______________ and _______________ as additional resources to support me.

E. I can read _______________, _______________, _______________ to help me be more educated about domestic violence and to feel stronger.

Checklist
What I Need to Take When I Leave:

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___Driver’s license ___Medical reports for all family members
___Student ID ___Medications for me and any children
___My birth certificate ___Insurance cards/papers
___Social Security cards ___Power of Attorney documents
___Passport(s) ___Divorce papers
___Green card ___School records
___Children’s birth certificates Documents ___Immunization records
___Welfare identification ___Protective Orders

___Money - Cash ___Keys – house/car/office
___Check books ___Address book
___Credit cards ___Clothes/Toiletries
___Income tax records/Pay stubs ___Children’s favorite toys, books, and/or blank ets
___Bank books/Charge account records ___Items of special sentimental value
___Mortgage payment book permits ___Small saleable objects
___Lease, rental agreement, house deed/car title ___Jewelry
___Work Permits ___Pictures
___Uniforms ___Other: ____________________________________________

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*I CAN KEEP THE ITEMS CONCERNING ME IN ONE LOCATION. IF I HAVE TO LEAVE IN A HURRY, I CAN GRAB THOSE ITEMS QUICKLY.*
IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS/CONTACTS/WEBSITES: Always call 911 in case of an emergency.

Police/Sheriff's department: _________________________________________________________________

Shelter Programs, 24–hour help/crisis lines: _____________________________________________________

Outreach Domestic Violence Programs: __________________________________________________________

Friend/Family/Support: _________________________________________________________________

Other: ________________________________________________________________________________