

# TIP SHEET: WARNING SIGNS OF RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE

It can be hard to know if your relationship is headed down the wrong path. While it's not always easy to spot the warning signs of relationship violence, there are things you can do to recognize unhealthy relationships and get help before they become violent.

If you think your partner might be controlling or abusive, it's important to:

- Trust your feelings. If something doesn't seem right, take it seriously.
- Learn the warning signs of someone who might become controlling or violent.
- Get help. Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (1-800-799-7233 or TTY 1-800-787-3224) to connect with local resources in your area.

If your partner is controlling or abusive, it's better to get help right away. Controlling or violent relationships usually get worse over time.

Remember: if your partner hurts you, it's not your fault.

## WHAT IS RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE?

Relationship violence is when one person in a relationship is abusive or controlling toward the other person. In some relationships, both partners act in abusive or controlling ways.

Relationship violence is also called dating violence, domestic violence or intimate partner violence. It can include:

- Physical violence; such as pushing, hitting or throwing things
- Sexual violence; such as forcing or trying to force someone to have sex
- Threats of physical or sexual violence, which may include threatening to hurt another person or a pet
- Emotional abuse; such as embarrassing a partner or keeping that person away from family and friends
- Stalking; such as watching or following a partner, or sending repeated, unwanted phone calls or texts

If you feel controlled by or afraid of your partner – even if you haven't been hurt physically – get help. There are experts who can help you figure out what to do next.

## WHAT DOES A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP LOOK LIKE?

In healthy relationships, both partners take responsibility for their actions and work together to sort out problems. In a healthy relationship:

- Both individuals feel respected, supported and valued
- Both individuals make decisions together
- Both individuals have friends and interests outside of the relationship
- Both individuals settle disagreements with open and honest communication
- Both individuals respect each other's privacy and space

Relationship violence can start slowly and be hard to recognize. For example, when people first start dating, it's common to want to spend a lot of time together. But your partner asking

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you to spend less time with other people can also be a sign that your partner is trying to control your time.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Does my partner respect me?
- Does my partner blame me for problems, including my partner's own behavior toward me?
- Does my partner make most of the decisions in our relationship?
- Am I ever afraid to tell my partner something?
- Do I ever feel forced to do things that I don't want to do?
- Have I ever been forced or pressured to do anything sexual with my partner when I didn't want to?
- Does my partner promise to change and then keep doing the same things?

## EFFECTS OF RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE

While physical violence can cause physical injuries, the stress of any kind of relationship violence or abuse can also lead to other serious problems. These include:

- Eating disorders
- Depression, anxiety or other mental health problems – such as panic attacks, trouble sleeping or thinking about suicide
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) – a type of anxiety disorder
- Trouble trusting people and building relationships
- Drinking too much alcohol or using drugs

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

If you believe you are in a violent relationship, it is important to be prepared. If you're in a relationship with someone who is violent or might become violent, make a safety plan that includes things such as individuals you trust that you can stay with as well as having essential items readily available to pack. This is important whether you are planning to leave your partner or not.

If you are unsure if you are in a violent relationship -that's okay! If you have questions about your relationship, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (1-800-799-7233 or TTY 1-800-787-3224). The hotline is free and available 24/7. You don't even have to give your name.

If you are in danger right now, call 911.