



Dealing with unwanted or abusive behaviour

Difficult circumstances can arise during a separation, most can be dealt with using the communication, conflict resolution and boundary setting tools discussed during the course. This handout includes suggestions when situations are more extreme including intimidation, unwanted contact or abuse. If you aren't certain if they are appropriate for your situation, talk them through with a friend to decide what's the best approach for you. You can also speak to the Restored Lives Team or ring one of the contact numbers

Dealing with intimidating, unwanted contact

If you don't have children, and are experiencing intimidation or unwanted contact it's recommended by specialists to have **NO CONTACT** with your ex-partner. This means limiting your interaction to the bare minimum needed to end the relationship legally.

Tell your ex-partner that you are only willing to communicate via email. Create a new email address for this purpose and block them on all other communication channels (email, mobile, text, What'sApp, social media etc. including telling your friends that you will not accept 3rd party communication through them from your ex-partner.) You have control over when you look at this email and therefore control over your level of interaction with your ex-partner. This also allows all communication to be recorded. If you can afford to, you can also communicate only through a solicitor.

If your ex-partner persists with intimidating unwanted contact, keep a record and contact the police if necessary. Seek legal advice on next steps and get some emotional support from a trusted friend.

If you have children, communication will be necessary but you can still follow the same principles. Only communicate through email or texts (for child emergencies or last minute changes to child planning only). Parallel Parenting is recommended by domestic abuse specialists instead of Co-Parenting. A chapter on this topic can be found in Restored: A Handbook for Female Christian Survivors of Domestic Abuse.

Couple counselling and mediation are not recommended in cases of abuse (and are rarely successful) as the abusive person is not interested in taking responsibility for their behaviour, collaboration or compromise - they are only interested in dominating, getting their way and controlling their partner.

Tips for dealing with nuisance and malicious calls

Use caller ID to screen your calls. If you decide to take a call that may be a nuisance or malicious call here are some tips:

- Don't answer immediately. Take a deep breath, remember it's your phone you're in control.
- Consider using a speakerphone moving away from it. Don't revert to holding the phone to your ear even if they insist.
- Try not to show emotion. They're less likely to continue if you don't seem upset.
- Try doing something else at the same time like washing up or cooking.
- Wait for callers to identify themselves before you speak.
- Never react, argue or get involved in malicious conversations.
- If they're silent, don't try to persuade them to speak.
- If the caller says something you don't agree with, ask them to hold and mute the call. This gives you time to think.
- Don't answer questions the caller has right to know. e.g. Is there anyone else there? Ignore it and ask your own question e.g. "what do you want" or put them on hold while you think.
- Always be polite, never raise your voice and treat the call like a professional call.
- If necessary, warn them about their behaviour (e.g. "I can't have a conversation with you when you speak like that") then end the call if needed.
- Switch your phone off for a short while afterwards.
- Tell a friend, family and anyone you live with about the calls.
- Keep numbers, IDs, malicious messages, times, dates and any other noticeable features of the calls – what was said, any background noise etc.



Making a malicious or obscene call is a criminal offence. Don't suffer in silence. Report calls to the police. Prosecutions can be made under harassment laws.

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Recognising the signs of an abusive relationship

Domestic abuse can happen anywhere, across genders, ages, different religions, social and class divides – it can happen to anyone.

Everyone has arguments, and disagrees with their partners from time to time but how can you tell the difference between a difficult relationship and an abusive one?

If events begin to form a consistent pattern where one partner is attempting to maintain power and control over another and feels entitled to do so, it is an indication of abuse.

When it comes to separating normal or difficult relationships from abusive ones, the intent of the behaviour is an important distinction, especially when evaluating whether you have experienced emotional abuse.

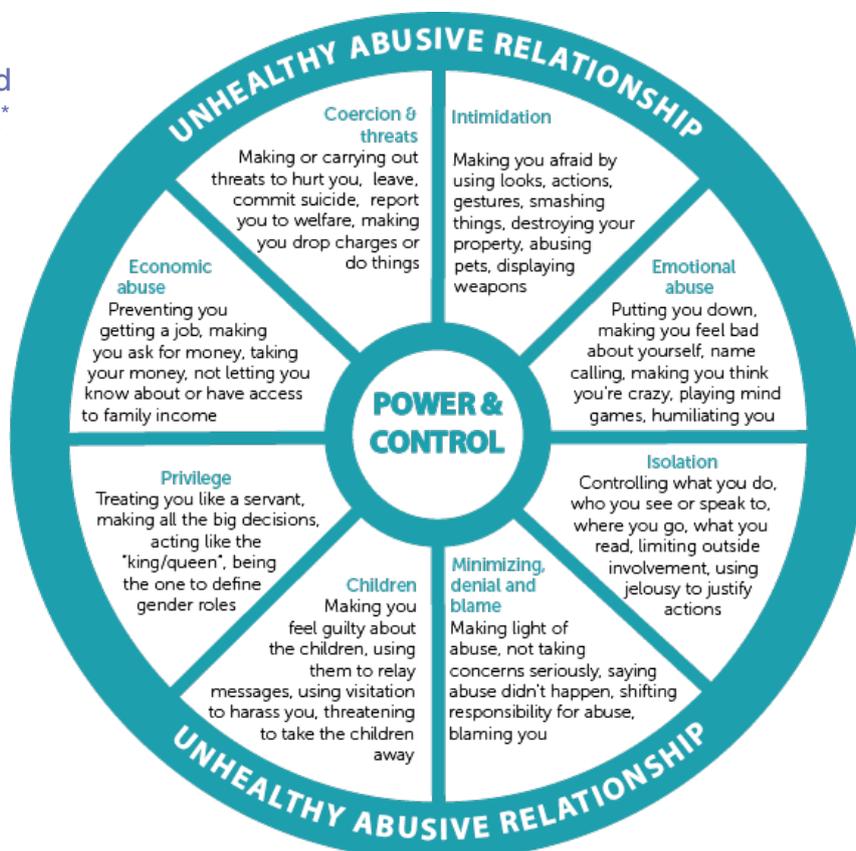
Normally the intent of each partner is to get

their way on a specific issue. In an abusive relationship, the abuser is trying to control their partner.

You may have found that you started to give in to demands on a regular basis, because you feared the consequences and rational discussions, which require collaboration, weren't possible. You may have found your partner tried to isolate, diminish or intimidate you to keep you in a subordinate position - equality and mutual respect were not an aspect of the relationship.

Abuse is a very serious matter and is not confined to physical assault. It can include emotional, verbal, sexual, financial and spiritual abuse. If you are in or have just left an abusive relationship it is important to acknowledge it was abusive. Making a safe exit plan from an abusive partner is very important. Information on how to do this is given at the end of this handout.

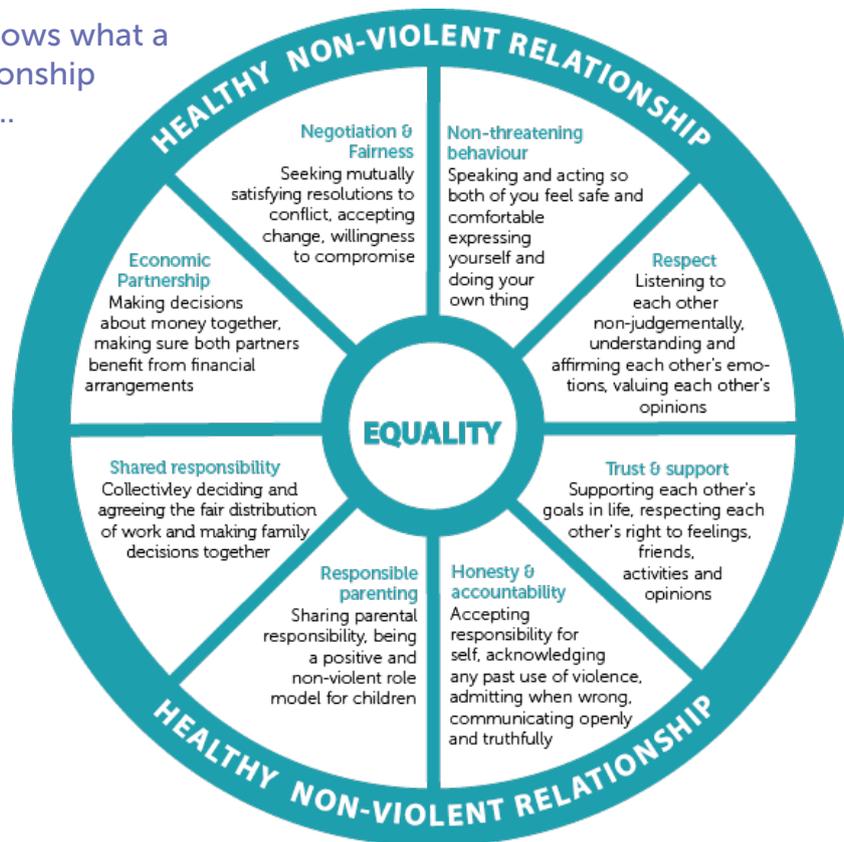
The Power and Control wheel* shows how abusers exert control in different ways...



*adapted from the Duluth Power and Control Wheel



This version shows what a healthy relationship should be like...



Useful contacts

If you've ended an abusive relationship you may experience greater challenges during your separation or divorce and may benefit from specialised support or counselling.

REMEMBER: If it's an emergency don't be scared to call: 999

Women's Aid 24 hr domestic violence helpline
www.womensaid.org.uk **0808 2000 247**

Respect Men's advice line
www.mensadvice.org.uk **0808 801 0327**

Broken Rainbow
LGBT domestic violence charity
www.broken-rainbow.org.uk **0300 999 5428**

Rape Crisis
www.rapecrisis.org.uk **0808 802 9999**

Male rape and sexual abuse
www.survivorsuk.org **0845 122 1201**

The Haven Network support for sexual assault and domestic abuse
www.havennetwork.org.uk **020 8520 0755**

Citizen's Advice Bureau Free Legal Advice
www.citizensadvice.org.uk/law-and-courts/legal-system/find-free-or-affordable-legal-help/
03444 111 444

Restored
Christian resources for female survivors of domestic abuse
www.restoredrelationships.org
020 3906 3922

The Freedom Programme
Female Domestic Abuse Survivor Recovery Programme
www.freedomprogramme.co.uk
01942 262 270

Safe exit planning

If you are still with your abusive partner and are in fear of leaving, the following information may help you feel more in control and prepared when you are ready to leave. Plan in advance how you might respond in different situations, including a crisis.

- Think about the different options that may be available to you.
- Keep important and emergency telephone numbers with you (e.g. local domestic violence service; police domestic violence unit; GP; social worker, your children's school; your solicitor).
- Teach your children to call 999 in an emergency, and what they would need to say (e.g. their full name, address and telephone number).
- Are there neighbours you could trust, that you could go to in an emergency? If so, tell them what is going on, and ask them to call the police if they hear sounds of a violent attack.
- Pack an emergency bag for yourself and your children, and hide it somewhere safe (e.g. at a neighbour or friend's house). Try to avoid mutual friends or family.
- Rehearse an escape plan.
- Make sure that you can take all your benefit books, medical cards, legal or injunction documents, banking and personal papers with you. If you cannot remove the originals keep a photocopy of them in a safe place.
- Try to keep a small amount of money on you at all times including change for a public telephone or emergency travel.
- Know where the nearest public telephone is, and if you have a mobile phone, try to keep it with you.
- If you suspect that your partner is about to attack you, try to go to a lower risk area of the house – e.g. where there is a way out and access to a telephone. Avoid the kitchen or garage where there are likely to be knives or other weapons and avoid rooms where you might be trapped, such as the bathroom, or where you might be shut into a cupboard or other small space.
- Be prepared to leave the house in an emergency.



**DON'T
GIVE UP**

**YOU ARE
NOT ALONE**

**YOU
MATTER**