



Recovering from domestic abuse & dealing with a high conflict ex

Difficult circumstances can arise during separation. Most can be dealt with using the communication, conflict resolution and boundary setting tools discussed during the course. This handout provides suggestions for 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 the best approach. You can also speak to the Restored Lives Team or use the useful contacts numbers given towards the end of the handout.

Recognising the signs of an abusive relationship

Every couple has arguments and disagreements from time to time - so how can you tell the difference between a difficult relationship and an abusive one?

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

If you aren't sure if you have experienced abuse the intent of the behaviour is the key distinction.

Normally, during an argument, the intent of each partner can be to get their way on a specific issue. In an abusive relationship, the intent of the abuser is to try to control their partner using various methods. These methods are not confined to physical assault, they can

include emotional, verbal, sexual, financial and spiritual abuse - all abuse is a very serious matter.

If conflicts 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.

You may have found that you started to give in to demands on a regular basis because you feared the consequences if you didn't. Rational discussions, which require collaboration and compromise, weren't possible. You may have found your partner tried to isolate, diminish or intimidate you to keep you in a

Created in partnership with

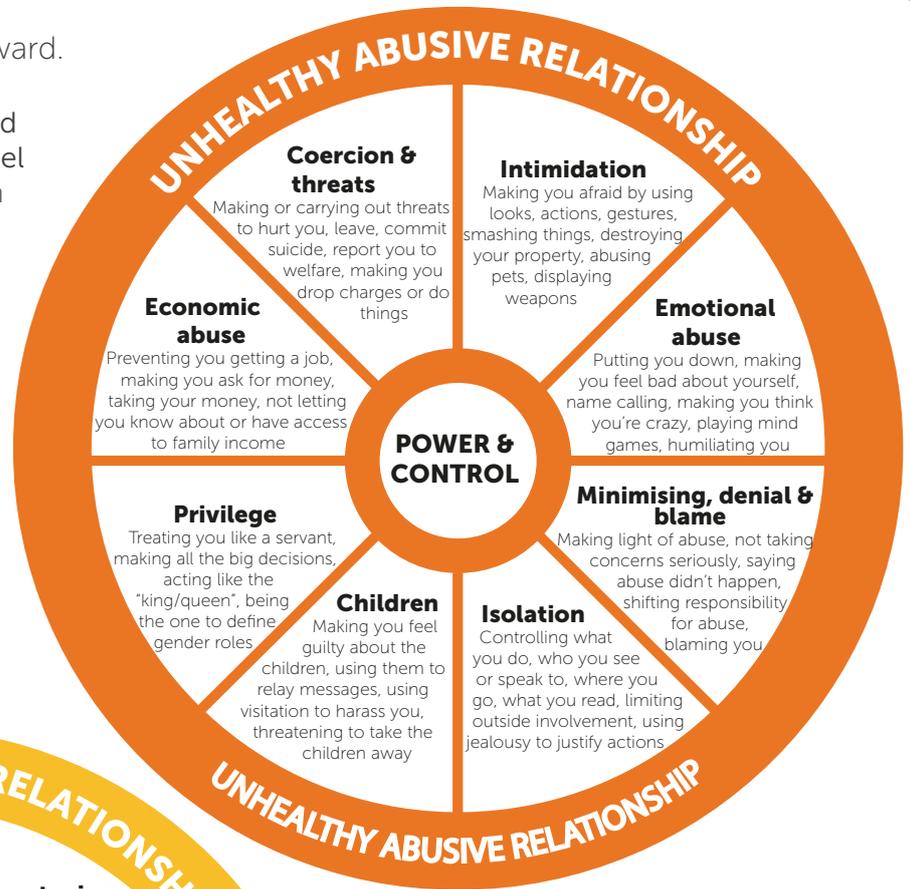
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subordinate position - equality and mutual respect were not an aspect of the relationship.

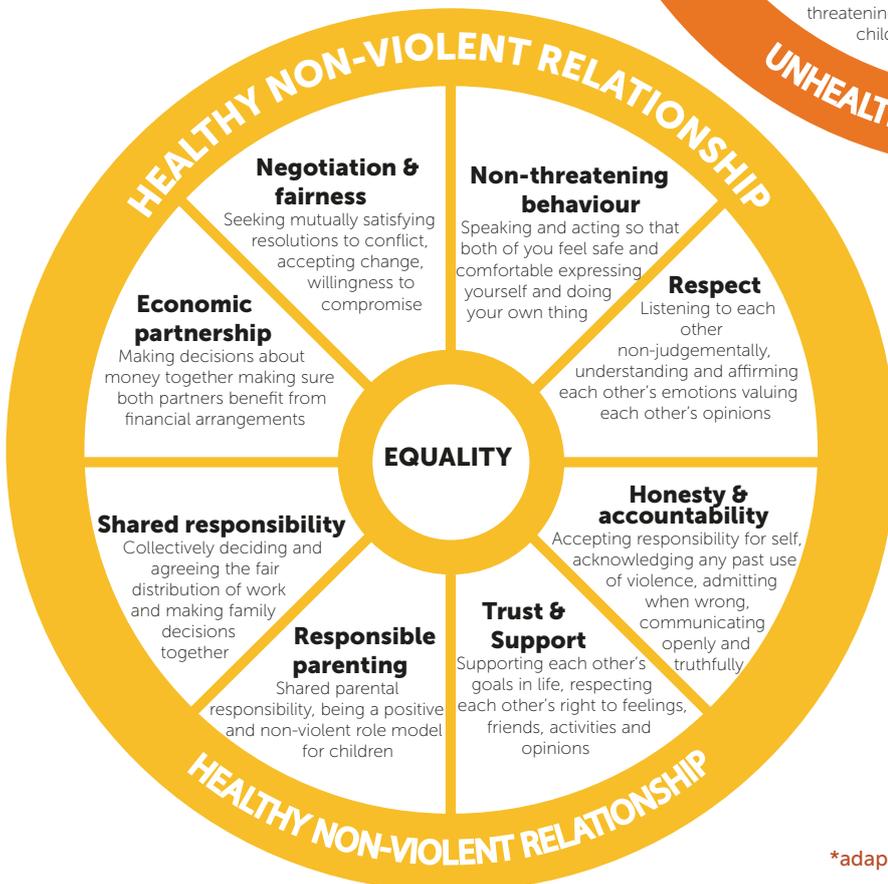
If you have just left an abusive partner it is important to acknowledge your experience as this will help you in your recovery and enable you to get specialised support and move forward.

Below are two wheels, The Power and Control Wheel and The Equality Wheel which explain the difference between abusive and healthy partnerships.

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



The Equality wheel shows what a healthy relationship should be like



*adapted from the Duluth Power and Control Wheel

Dealing with intimidating, unwanted contact from your ex

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. **NO CONTACT** is a method of setting strict boundaries around communication with the purpose of keeping you physically and emotionally safe. 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 only and block them on all other communication channels (email, mobile, text, WhatsApp, social media etc.). Tell your friends that you will not accept 3rd party communication through them from your ex-partner. You now have control over when you look at this new email address 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 or 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. Communicate primarily through email and only use texts or phone calls for child emergencies or last

minute changes to child planning.

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**. (See useful contacts section for details.)

Couples 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.

If you are getting nuisance or malicious calls refuse to take them and indicate that you will only communicate via email and block them on your phone.



Recovery and healing after domestic abuse

You have found the strength and courage to leave but you may be reeling from the many challenges you are facing during the separation or divorce process. Now is the time to find appropriate and specialised support to help you with the practical steps you must take (e.g. legal, children, finances, housing) and in processing the emotional trauma you have experienced.

Healing from domestic abuse is a process and the time line is different for every person. Here are some important steps to take on your road to recovery.

- 1) Secure physical and emotional safety - create strong appropriate boundaries.
- 2) Sort out practical needs - housing, finances, employment, child residence/maintenance etc.
- 3) Acknowledge what has happened to you - put words to and make meaning out of your experience.
- 4) Don't minimize the trauma you have experienced. Engage in self care and self compassion - seek professional help, exercise, treat yourself, reach out to supportive friends and family.
- 5) Move forward - build new dreams and hopes - don't let this experience define you.
- 6) Get involved with new hobbies and interests - seek out new opportunities for growth and development.
- 7) Foster worthy connections with friends and family - don't entertain relationships that diminish or discourage you in any way.
- 8) Choose happiness!



Useful contacts for practical and emotional support

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

Crisis

Women's Aid

24 hr domestic violence helpline
www.womensaid.org.uk **0808 2000 247**

Rape Crisis

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

Men's Charities

The Mankind Initiative

Helpline for male victims of domestic abuse
www.mankind.org.uk **01823334244**

Respect

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

Survivors UK

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

Children

Gingerbread

Domestic Abuse/Single Parenting/Child Maintenance advice
www.gingerbread.org.uk
0207 428 5400

Child Law Advice

Free legal advice during divorce
www.childlawadvice.org.uk
0300 330 5480

Support and Recovery

Galop

LGBT domestic violence charity
www.galop.org.uk **0300 999 5428**

The Freedom Programme

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

The Haven Network

Counselling for sexual assault and domestic abuse
www.havennetwork.org.uk **020 8520 0755**

Legal

Citizen's Advice Bureau

Free Legal Advice
www.citizensadvice.org.uk/law-and-courts/legal-system/finding-free-or-affordable-legal-help/
03444 111 444

Rights of Women

Free legal advice
0207251 6577

Court Confidence

Supporting survivors through the family court system
www.courtconfidence.com



Restored

Christian resources for female survivors of domestic abuse
www.restored-uk.org
020 3906 3922

Copies of the book - Restored: A Handbook For Female Survivors of Domestic Abuse from a Christian Perspective are available from the website www.restored-uk.org/i-need-help/survivors-area/

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. 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**