

Profile of an Abuser: Is it possible to spot an abusive partner before you get involved?

No one ever plans to grow up and become an abusive partner. The transition from love to control to violence can be slow and inconspicuous. It can be attributed, in part, to a number of factors, like childhood trauma or mental illness. An abuser may not even be aware, at first, that what he or she is doing is abuse.

Regardless, domestic violence is a choice abusers make, and no one thing can alone cause a person to abuse. However, there are contributing issues that can help set the path of violence in motion.

According to Amy Borst, MFT, clinical director of [Laura's House](#), a domestic violence shelter in Orange County, Calif., some abusers grow up in households where domestic violence against a family member, such as their mother, was commonplace. Some abusers may have experienced abuse themselves, including child abuse or sexual assault. Other factors that can shape abusers include:

- A lack of appropriate coping skills
- Low self-esteem
- Codependent behavior
- Untreated mental health issues
- Socioeconomic pressures

Statistics show that most abusers are men. An estimated 95 percent of reported domestic violence cases are men abusing women, while 5 percent of reported cases are women abusing men. Though, this doesn't take into account abuse in same-sex relationships, which can also occur.

In a 2013 *Psychology Today* article titled "Behind the Veil: Inside the Mind of Men That Abuse," author John G. Taylor's writes that men who abuse are "very clever, smart and extremely charming. Most of these men have a personality that draws people in because of their level of charm. This is part of their art to deceive and manipulate."

[The National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) identifies behaviors that denote abuse is occurring. An abuser may not even recognize these traits in themselves. Realizing that abuse is happening is the first step in getting help.

What is Abuse?

- Calling someone names or putting someone down
- Shouting and cursing
- Hitting, slapping or pushing
- Making threats
- Extreme jealousy and suspicion
- Keeping someone away from their family and friends
- Throwing things around the house or at another person in a violent manner

Whether you're being abused or recognizing abusive behavior in yourself, getting help is as close as a phone call away. Contact your local domestic violence shelter or advocacy group, or call The Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE.