

Signs of a Violent Relationship: Are you In an abusive relationship and don't even know it?

Sometimes the hardest part about getting help when you're in an abusive relationship is recognizing that you're in one to begin with. "Many survivors don't realize they're in an abusive relationship. Domestic violence is not just physical or sexual abuse. It's any form of power and control," says Yvette Lozano, director of intervention and emergency services with the nonprofit [Peace Over Violence](#).

Lozano says noticing any of the following signs in your own relationship or the relationship of a loved one can indicate domestic violence:

- Feeling like you're being controlled. This could include your partner telling you how to dress, who you can see or talk to, whether or not you can have a job, or your partner is restricting your access to money.
- Feeling fearful of your partner, afraid that your partner might physically abuse them.
- Having a partner who constantly puts you down or calls you name.
- Having your partner who threatens to leave or take your children away from you.
- A general sense of not feeling safe.

Additionally, physical violence is a clear indicator of an abusive relationship. According to the [National Domestic Abuse Hotline](#), an abusive relationship can also be spotted if :

- Your partner hits, slaps, chokes or threatens you with weapons
- Your partner threatens to or does hurt your pets
- Your partner threatens to kill themselves or you

What do you do if you recognize any of these signs in a loved one's relationship? The most important thing to do is *not* tell the victim what to do, says Lozano. "By telling them what to do, we're transferring that power to ourselves. We need to build back up their self-esteem." Instead, offer up information to the victim about resources that are available to help them. Many victims feel like they're the only ones going through an abusive relationship, and that there's nowhere to turn, says Lozano. Give them information about shelters, counseling services and advocate agencies that can help them escape.

Most importantly, Lozano says, "Let them know they do not deserve to be in this unhealthy relationship."