

Warning Signals of an Abusive Mate or Date

Ann Landers, Advice Columnist

Dear Ann Landers: Please print this list of warning signals to help women determine if a mate or date is a potential (or actual) batterer:

1. Jealousy of your time with coworkers, friends and family.
2. Controlling behavior. Controls your comings and goings and your money and insists on helping you make personal decisions.
4. Blames others for his problems. (Unemployment, family quarrels --everything is your fault.)
5. Hypersensitivity. (Easily upset by annoyances that are a part of daily life, such as being asked to work overtime, criticism of any kind, being asked to help with chores or child care.)
6. Cruelty to animals or children. (Insensitive to their pain and suffering, may tease and/or hurt children and animals.
7. "Playful" use of force in sex. (May throw you down and hold you during sex. May start having sex with you when you are sleeping or demand sex when you are ill or tired.)
8. Verbal abuse. (Says cruel and hurtful things, degrades and humiliates you, wakes you up to verbally abuse you or doesn't let you go to sleep.)
9. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde personality. (Sudden mood swings and unpredictable behavior - one minute loving, the next minute angry and punitive.)
10. Past history of battering. (Has hit others but has a list of excuses for "having been pushed over the edge.")
11. Threats of violence. (Says, "I'll slap you or I'll break your neck.")
12. Breaking or striking objects. (Breaks your possessions, beats on the table with fists, throws objects near or at you or your children.)

13. Uses force during an argument. (Holds you down or against the wall, pushes, shoves, slaps or kicks you. This type of behavior can easily escalate to choking, stabbing or shooting.)

Ann, please tell your readers they don't have to accept violent behavior from anyone --mates, dates, parents or friends. Because nearly half of all American women will be battered at some time in their lives, they need to know how to read the warning signs. Tell them help is as close as the telephone. Any woman who sees herself in the column today should call the nearest women's crisis line and tell someone what is happening. She will be provided with support and safety options.

There are several ways to break the cycle of violence, and identifying the warning signs is the first step. Portland, Ore.

Dear Oregon: Thank you for an extremely important letter. This may be difficult to believe, but some women do not realize that they are being abused until someone points it out to them.