

## Seven Red Flags of Abuse

### Helplessness

Helplessness often results when one partner assumes full control over the relationship and attacks the other partner's competence. One person makes all the decision. That person does not hesitate to ridicule or criticize the other in public and in private. Words like "stupid," "ignorant," or "incompetent" are common.

### Anxiety

The abusing partner offers no reassurance, stability, or commitment. It is impossible to predict either the behavior or the feelings of the abusing partner or of the relationship. It may be characterized by the "off-again, on-again" pattern or by the abusing partner being frequently unavailable. Actions that produce pleasure one day may provoke verbal or even physical abuse the next.

### Hostility

Hostility typically takes the form of aggression, anger, rage and irritability." The abused person responds in kind to the partner's behavior, either openly or privately. The open hostility would be characterized by a raised voice, hurtful or angry words, or accusations against the partner. Private hostility includes such things as hidden

resentment, plotted revenge, and private negative fantasies. The hostility may also be internalized as guilt or anger.

### Frustration

Frustration results when the abusing partner fails to satisfy needs for affection, intimacy, attention, acceptance, approval, reassurance, praise, or any other emotional need. No matter how hard the partner tries to please the other, it never is enough. They will praise others but never mention your own achievements. They "work the room" but leave you standing alone in the corner.

### Cynicism

Any action which constitutes a betrayal or abuse of trust is likely to result in cynicism. Obviously having an affair with another person fits into this category. Additionally, patterns of borrowing money which is never repaid, making promises which are seldom kept, or sharing information given in confidence will likely produce cynicism.

### Loss of Self-esteem

This sign includes feelings of diminished self-worth, inadequacy, negative self-image, reduced self-confidence, and deterioration of self-respect, with associated depression." Choosing to remain in a relationship in which a

person feels devalued inevitably leads to increased loss of self-esteem.

Loss of self-esteem happens through a cycle of faulty logic: First, you recognize that you are in a relationship in which you feel unloved, unworthy, and mistreated. That you would choose such a relationship causes you to doubt your judgment. You try to "fix" it by changing yourself or your partner, but when that doesn't work you conclude that you not only have poor judgment, you also are inept at relationship skills. Thus, you reason that "people get what they deserve," and since you are being treated badly, you must deserve it. Obviously, then, the only thing for you to do is to accept the treatment since you "don't deserve nor could hope for a better relationship.

### Hopelessness

Hopelessness usually results after numerous vain attempts to communicate the need for a change, with the partner ignoring all approaches. A person who recognizes a lack of responsiveness is their partner can be warned from the beginning that the relationship is developing in an unhealthy manner and there is likely trouble ahead.

**It doesn't matter who you are, abuse is never okay!  
Call us...  
(515) 554-1604**