

Domestic Abuse: Know the Signs



The upsurge in violence against women and girls in Jamaica has been a topic of much discussion in social and professional circles in recent months. In 2016, close to 30 women were murdered in Jamaica, almost twice as many as the previous year. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Violence against women – particularly intimate partner violence and sexual violence against women – are major public health problems and violations of women’s human rights. Based on police statistics, domestic disputes make up a third of the murders committed in Jamaica.

It’s almost impossible to predict what one’s partner will do in any given situation. However, experts have provided a number of tell-tale signs that women can look for or use to identify abusive men. Here are 10, provided by [Safe Horizon](#), one of the United State’s leading victim assistance organizations.

So, does he...

1. Try to control what you do and who you see?

Controlling who you see and what you do gives an abuser the sense of complete control that they seek. Restricting your access to people and organizations that could influence you to speak up or leave an abusive situation allows an abuser to tighten their reigns and maintain control.

2. Accuse you of cheating and being disloyal?

If he constantly accuses you of cheating, experts say, this could be a sign that he has severe trust issues that could manifest into various forms of abuse. A constant feeling that his partner is cheating on him could exacerbate an already festering jealousy and controlling mentality.

3. Make you feel worthless?

One of the early signs of abuse is an attempt by your partner to make you feel worthless. An attack on your self esteem is one of the first attempts to ensure that you depend on him in every possible way. If he constantly tries to make you feel less than worthy, stupid, unattractive etc, he is ensuring that you will never leave. Really, where would you go? Who would want you? This is how many abusers ensure that their victims never leaves.

4. Hurt you by hitting, choking or kicking you?

Physical abuse is probably the most identifiable form of intimate partner abuse. Acts of physical violence meted out to a partner is usually a means to encourage fear and gain complete control over one's partner. Fear can be a very debilitating emotion, one that could stop you from seeking help, leaving the situation or even fighting back. The more fearful you are of him, the more he is able to control you.

5. Intimidate and threaten to hurt you or someone you love?

Another way to instigate fear is to threaten to hurt you or someone who is close to you such as your parents or children. Out of fear that they might actually carry out their threat, many women never try to leave or speak out about their abuse. The threat of physical harm to you or your loved ones is equally as crippling as if he would just come out and physically harm you as not knowing when or how he will carry out his threat goes a far way to "keep women in line".

6. Threaten to hurt themselves if they don't get what they want?

Nobody wants the burden of knowing that they are the cause of someone's self harm, particularly suicide. This is why many women do not leave a man who threatens to harm to themselves if she leave or does not do as she is told.

7. Isolate you?

Abusers work very hard to isolate their victims from persons who could possibly encourage and/or assist them to leave the situations such as families, friends and support groups. Allowing the victim to keep a strong support system not only reduces the level of control an abuser could have but gives abused victims an escape.

8. Pressure or force you into unwanted sex?

This is an example of how sex can be used as a weapon of control. Forced penetration occurs through the perpetrator's use of physical force against the victim or threats to physically harm the victim. Forcing you to participate in any sexual act without your consent is not only rape, but also a means of control.

9. Control your access to money?

Many women remain in abusive situations simply because they have no way of leaving. Controlling and eventually blocking your access to money is a form of psychological abuse that ensures that victims remain trapped in a situation. Not being able to financially provide for yourself is a very big deterrent to women leaving abusive situations.

10. Stalk you, including calling you constantly or following you?

Stalking is a pattern of repeated, unwanted, attention and contact that causes fear or concern for one's own safety or the safety of someone else. Some examples include repeated, unwanted phone calls, emails, or texts; leaving cards, letters, flowers, or other items when the victim does not want them, watching or following from a distance and approaching or showing up in places when the victim does not want to see them.

If you or someone you know are victims of domestic abuse, there is help out there for you. Woman Incorporated (Crisis Centre) is a charitable non - governmental organization that provides crisis counseling, referral services, 24 hour hot line and short term shelter to battered women. The issues addressed by Women Inc. include rape, incest, domestic violence, domestic crisis and sexual harassment. They can be contacted at (876) 929-9038.



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