

How to spot a batterer before the relationship begins

The following red flags are characteristics of an abuser. This does *not* mean that everyone who demonstrates one or two of these qualities will end up abusing or battering their partners.

However, these red flags should be taken seriously. If someone you know demonstrates one or two of these patterns on a consistent basis, he has the potential to become a batterer.

Superior attitude toward women. Does he think men are superior to women? Does he feel he "owns" you and has the right to control your thoughts and actions? Does he talk about women in a demeaning way?

Does not take responsibility for his own actions. Does he justify, minimize, or deny his actions? Does he blame you or someone else for his failures or lack of achievement? Does he deny his actions and try to make you think you are crazy?

Jekyll/Hyde personality. Does he change from a loving, caring person into a hateful, sarcastic jerk with little or no warning? Do you walk on eggshells because you never know what might set him off? Does he fly into a rage for no apparent reason? Are you constantly afraid that he will become violent? Does he blame you for his violent behavior? Does he act charming and compassionate in public, but changes into a controlling bully when you're alone?

Emotionally unhealthy or immature. Is he able to express and discuss his emotions? How does he deal with stress and frustration? Can he discuss problems calmly or does he fly into a rage verbally (swearing, demeaning, accusing) and physically (throwing things, kicking furniture, punching his fist

through walls or doors).

Childhood trauma. Did he grow up in an abusive home? Did he see and hear his father verbally or physically batter his mother? Was he battered as a child? Was he sexually abused as a child? Does he have low self-esteem? Does he demean his mother and have an irrational desire to please his father?

Critical attitude. Is he constantly critical of you and others? Does he enjoy making fun of other people? Does he belittle the things you say and do? Does he try to make you feel stupid or incompetent? Does he make you think you cannot survive with him? Does he tell you no one else would have you? Does he make jokes about you in front of others? Does he make fun of your hopes and dreams? Does he try to keep you from furthering your education or improving yourself? Does he say negative things about your family and friends?

Isolation technique. Does he insist that you do everything together? When you spend time with family or friends, does he become moody or irritable? Does he forbid you from spending time with others? Does he make you feel guilty when you leave him home alone? Does he want to know every detail of your phone calls and personal conversations? Does he read your personal mail?

Jealousy. Is he suspicious of everyone you talk to? Does he accuse you of cheating on him every time you look at or talk to another man? Does he accuse you of trying to attract other men by the choice of your clothing or makeup? Does he pick out your clothes and dictate your every move? Is he jealous of the time you spend with family or friends?

Need for control. Do you have to ask his permission before you can visit your family or friends? Does he have to approve of your appearance before you leave home? Do you have to account for every second of your time while he is away? Does he call several times a day to see what you are doing? Do you have to ask permission to take a nap or read a book? Do you have to do everything he says or fear being punished later? Does he always have to be right?

Threats and physical abuse. Does he threaten you with a beating if you do not do what he says? Does he threaten to harm family or friends if they try to help you? Has he threatened you with a weapon or said he will kill you? Has he grabbed you around the neck or tried to choke you? Has he pushed you into a wall and held you against your will? Has he left bruises on your arms or other parts of your body? Has he grabbed your face and demanded that you look at him when he is talking to you? Has he driven the car recklessly in an attempt to scare you? Has he used his voice or other body language to intimidate you? Has he raped you or attacked you sexually?

Spiritual superiority. Does he feel superior to you spiritually and use the scriptures as justification for his actions? Does he feel he has the God-given right to exert control over you and punish you if you fail to meet his standards? When he hits you, does he tell you it is for your own good so you will become a better person? Does he make fun of your relationship to God? Does he constantly compare himself to other Christians to criticize them and make himself look better?

You can't always spot these red flags until much later in the relationship, but if you do see these characteristics early on, *run like the wind and don't look back!*