

Clues that tell you a man might be an abusive partner



WestCASA
Western Region Centre Against Sexual Assault

We are counsellors who have worked for many years with thousands of women who have experienced abuse by the men in their lives. A question we get asked a lot from women who are thinking about starting a new relationship is “How will I know if he is going to be abusive or not?”

Good question.

Being physically, emotionally or sexually abused by one man in your life is bad enough, but if it happens more than once, life and relationships can feel impossible and your self-esteem can hit rock bottom.

It can be really helpful to get some tips on what behaviours and attitudes to look out for in a man that will tell you how he feels about women. Does he respect them? Does he think they have less rights than men? Does he think a man should always be in charge?

You need to put your detective hat on and find out.

We’ve listed some clues that will warn you that a man might be controlling or abusive. If the man you’re interested in gets a tick for three of these clues you need to be very careful. If he gets a tick for more than three clues, seek support and consider stopping contact with him.

Collect this information over a period of at least 2-4 months and during this time try not to get too involved or make yourself too vulnerable. Before the results of your investigation are in, our recommendations would be:

- Don’t encourage him to ‘drop in’ to your home.
- Don’t lend him money.
- Don’t give him a key to your house.
- Don’t let him move in.
- Don’t give him the right to supervise or parent your children until he has earned your trust.
- Don’t have sex with him until you have had a chance to get to know him.

Setting these boundaries early will protect you and give you some control over when and where you see him. These boundaries will make it easier to get him out of your life if you discover you need to.

Remember, we all want to be loved and sometimes this can make us turn a blind eye to some of the clues. Try to resist this urge.

You deserve better.

The Clues...

Place a tick in the box if the answer is yes.

Add up the numbers of ticks when you finish.

Does he show intense emotion early on and overwhelm you with charm?

Does he want to move in with you soon after meeting/dating you?

Does he want to be with you all the time and get moody, sulky or angry if you have other plans or visit friends or family?

Does he check up on you during the day? Does he text and call constantly?

Is it all about him? Does he interrupt you or seem distracted or disinterested when you talk?

Does he talk about women in critical ways or as objects and body parts? Does he comment on their bodies and say disrespectful things? For example, “look at that fat arse”, “You look like a slut in that dress”.

Does he usually go out with women who are a lot younger than him?

How does he talk about his ex-partners? Does he describe them in disrespectful ways, call them names or paint them as people who have done him wrong?

Is everyone else to blame for his feelings or for things that go wrong in his life? Is everything always someone else’s fault? Does he never take responsibility? Does he show a lack of responsibility and care for his children from previous relationships? Does he have minimal contact or involvement with his children?

Ask about his mum and dad. Better still observe him with them. Is his father controlling and critical of his wife? Does the man you are with copy this behaviour and speak to his mum rudely?

Does he make all the decisions without asking you?
Does he decide what you should wear, where you will go out?

Is he critical of you? How you look and dress, what you say, what you believe?

Does he try to restrict your access to money or pressure you to hand your money over to him?

Does he talk about your body or sex life with his friends?

Does he pressure, trick or force you into sexual activities before you are ready or that you are not comfortable with? Does he sulk or keep asking after you have said no?

Does he try to get out of wearing condoms?

Does he have sudden changes in mood?

Does he drink a lot most days and/or go on drug binges?

Does he turn everything around so you always end up feeling to blame for things? Do things quickly escalate into a drama?

Does he accuse you of cheating on him?

Does he say his jealousy and intensity is a sign of his love for you?

Is he cruel to pets and animals?

Does he threaten suicide if you want to stop seeing him?

Does he think in some circumstances it is OK for a man to hit a woman?

Has he had an aggressive outburst where he has hit you or another person, thrown something or hit a wall?

Has anyone taken an intervention order (IO) out against him?

You will have to be clever and creative to try to get the answers to some of these questions. Some

questions you can't just come out and ask. Remember, you're a detective.

If you're not sure what to think about the information you have, talk it over with a counsellor or support worker.

Support services:

1800Respect

National sexual assault, domestic family violence counselling service

Ph: 1800 737 732

www.1800respect.org.au

Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria

Information on domestic violence, contact numbers of local services & a resource library

Ph: (03) 9486 9866

www.dvrc.org.au

Department of Human Services Disability and Family Violence Crisis Response

Family Violence Liaison Officer

Short term funds for disability related supports for women and children experiencing family violence

Telephone: (03) 9843 6304 / Mobile: 0437 741 920

www.dhs.vic.gov.au

InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence

Statewide service for those in CALD communities experiencing family violence

Ph: (03) 9413 6500 / Toll Free 1800 755 988

www.intouch.asn.au

Victoria Centres Against Sexual Assault (daytime) & Sexual Assault Crisis Line (after hours)

Counselling, telephone support and crisis response for people who have been sexually assaulted and their family & friends

Ph: 1800 806 292

www.casa.org.au

Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre

24 hour statewide support for women experiencing domestic violence including referrals to safe accommodation.

Ph: 1800 015 188

www.safesteps.org.au