

Clues that tell you someone might be an abusive partner



An information brochure for The LGBTQI* community

*Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer & Intersex

Domestic violence happens in all kinds of relationships but we mainly hear about this in terms of straight relationships where a man is abusive towards a woman. However many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) individuals experience abuse in relationships. The types of relationships in which LGBTQI people may experience abuse are wide ranging and include same or opposite sex relationships, monogamous, open, polyamorous, short or long term relationships. "Research indicates that one in three LGBTI people experience domestic or family violence, which is similar to levels experienced by non-LGBTI women"¹. Many tactics used in abusive relationships in the LGBTQI community are similar to those used in heterosexual relationships. There are also some tactics and experiences that are unique to this community.

If you are LGBTQI and have experienced abuse in the past, you may look back on your relationship/s and think; "but they were so nice in the beginning", "they used to treat me so well", "I just can't believe they could do that to me". You may feel nervous about future relationships, believing you can't trust your own judgement and asking yourself:

"How will I know if this person is going to be abusive?"

Being physically, emotionally or sexually abused by one person 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. You may experience a great deal of shame and feel isolated from your community as a result.

It can be really helpful to get some tips on what behaviours and attitudes to look out for when getting to know someone. This will make it easier to understand how the other person feels about potential partners - do they see them as equal or do they see them as a thing to be owned and controlled?

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

We've listed a range of clues that can help warn you that a person might be controlling or abusive. If the person you're interested in gets a tick for three of these clues you need to be very careful. If they get a tick for more than three clues, seek support and consider stopping contact with them.

Gather this information over a period of at least 8-12 weeks 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 them to 'drop in' to your house.
- Don't lend them money.
- Don't give them a key to your house.
- Don't let them move in.
- Don't give them the right to supervise or parent your children until they have earned your trust.
- Don't have sex with them until you have had a chance to get to know them.

Setting these boundaries early on will protect you and give you some control over when and where you see this person. These boundaries will make it easier to stop contact with them 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 warning signs. 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.

Do they show intense emotion early on and overwhelm you with charm?

Do they want to move in with you soon after meeting/dating you?

Do they want to be with you all the time and get moody, sulky or angry if you have other plans?

Do they check up on you during the day or read your messages and social media? Do they text and call constantly?

Is it all about them? Do they interrupt you or seem distracted or disinterested when you talk?

How do they talk about other people? Do they objectify them by commenting on their body parts in front of you? For example "She's got great tits", "look at his ass", "check out that slut".

Do they have a history of dating much younger partners?

How do they talk about their ex-partner/s? Do they describe them in disrespectful ways, call them names or paint them as people who have done them wrong?

Is everyone else to blame for their feelings or for things that go wrong in their life? Is everything always someone else's fault? Do they never take responsibility?

Do they show a lack of responsibility or care for their children from previous relationships? Do they have minimal contact or involvement with their children?

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

Do they criticise you and make comments to put you down? How you look and dress, what you say, what you believe?

Do they try to restrict your access to money or pressure you to hand your money over to them?

Do they take away or prevent you from taking your medication eg. Testosterone, HRT, HIV medication?

Do they threaten to 'out' you regarding your gender identity or sexual identity to your family/friends/work colleagues?

Do they threaten to tell others about your sexual health status eg. HIV?

Do they talk about your body or sex life with their mates?

Do they refuse to use protection during sex?

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

Do they attempt to define for you what your sexuality or gender is? Do they ridicule you for your sexual or gender identity or refuse to believe it?

Do they try to stop you from seeing or talking to friends/family/ex-partners or the LGBTQI community?

Do they have sudden changes in mood?

Do they drink a lot most days and/or go on drug binges?

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

Do they accuse you of cheating on them?

Do they try to say their jealousy and intensity is a sign of their love for you?

Are they cruel to pets and animals?

Do they threaten suicide if you want to stop seeing them?

Do they believe in some circumstances it is OK to hit partners?

Have they had an aggressive or angry outburst where they have hit you or another person, thrown something or hit a wall?

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

¹ <http://ssdv.acon.org.au/stand-up/>

You will have to be clever and creative 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.

And remember domestic violence does occur in the LGBTQI community.

If it is happening to you, it is not your fault.

You have a right to feel safe and happy in your relationships.

Support is available.

Support services:

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

Gay and lesbian Switchboard

Telephone counselling, information and referrals for the LGBTQI communities of Victoria & Tasmania.

Melbourne Ph: (03) 9663 2939 / Regional Victoria & Tasmania Ph: 1800 184 527

Mon – Thurs 6pm – 10pm; Wed 2pm-10pm; Fri, Sat, Sun & Public holidays 6pm-9pm

www.switchboard.org.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

Police Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officers (GLLO's are not a 24 hour service)

Supporting better relationships between the police and the LGBTQI community

Ph: (03) 9247 6944

Email: melbourne.gllo@police.vic.gov.au

Vic AIDS council and Gay Men's Health Centre

Counselling, support & groups for those affected by or at risk of HIV and for the GLBT community.

Duty Worker 10am-4pm Monday-Friday Ph: (03) 9865 6700 or 1800 134 840 (free call for country callers).

<http://www.vac.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