

Are you worried about your behaviour?

Victims of domestic abuse are not the only ones who need help. It takes strength to admit that you are abusing your partner and courage to change. Here's how you can get help to deal with your own abuse.

How do I know if my behaviour is a problem?

Ask yourself some questions:

1. Is your partner frightened of you?
2. Is your relationship suffering because of your behaviour?
3. Domestic abuse comes in many forms, but it is always about control. Are you forcing your partner to do what you want, when you want.

If the answer to any of these is yes or even sometimes, recognise that you are abusive in your relationship.

The next step is to recognise that your abusive behaviour affects your whole family. Violence and abuse have a devastating effect on children. You may think that your children do not know what is going on because you are not abusive in front of them, but they will hear the abuse and sense the tension in the family. There is much evidence to show that children are harmed by abuse even if they do not witness it. Alternatively they could be caught in the argument or may intervene to protect your partner.

The key step is to choose to stop.

How do I stop?

1. Decide that you no longer want to control and abuse someone else. Only you can take responsibility for your own behaviour and learn not to be violent and abusive whatever the situation.
2. Take responsibility for your behaviour and for the abuse. Stop blaming your actions on your partner or on anything else - drink, drugs, stress, unemployment.
3. Do not minimise your behaviour by thinking that it isn't too bad. How bad does it need to be before you do anything?
4. Most importantly, seek help. You can promise yourself over and over again that it won't happen again, but it probably will if you do nothing more. Do something before the next time.

How do I know when the next time will be?

SPOT THE WARNING SIGNS!

1. Be aware when things are heating up and when you are getting into a situation where you may be abusive towards your partner.
2. Make a note of your sore spots. These may be typical situations when you have been abusive before.
3. Think about what is happening to you physically as you begin to become violent and abusive - your physical warning signs.

4. Think about what you begin to do. Do you point your finger, close your fist, pace up and down, shout, glare, interrupt, go quiet, issue orders, get right up close?
5. Watch out for feelings that come just before you become abusive or violent. Do you feel resentment? Anger? Trapped? Guilty? Upset? Hurt? These are your emotional warning signs.
6. Think about the negative things that you are saying to yourself as you get closer to being abusive - these are your mental warning signs. These will be negative things about your partner, things to justify your actions such as 'he/she is doing this deliberately.'
7. Note also the things that you do not say to yourself such as how your partner is feeling, trying to understand or listen to what your partner is saying.
8. Remember - it is never too late to make another choice

So what can I do instead?

1. You can walk away.
2. Right up to the moment you are abusive or violent, you can choose to do otherwise.
3. Take time out. Time out is the most basic alternative to being violent - if you are not near to your partner you cannot hurt or abuse them. It gives you space to calm down and reflect on your behaviour.

How do I take a time out?

1. Once you spot warning signs, you should get away for exactly one hour and leave the situation before things build up and you are violent.
2. Calm yourself down. Walk, take some exercise, meditate or pray - or it may help to talk to a friend who is supporting you in being non abusive. Don't drink.
3. Examine your behaviour. Think about your behaviour and any negative thoughts that you were having. Think about alternatives to your behaviour and what you are going to do or say when you get back to your partner. Remember you will need to be able to return and be different, rather than try to make your partner different.
4. Return home. Before you return home, call your partner to let them know that you have calmed down and are returning. If your partner wants to discuss the situation with you, do so in a non abusive and non blaming way. Do not force someone to talk to you when you want, as that would be abusive. Respect your partner's wish not to discuss the situation and wait for a mutually convenient opportunity.
5. Talk to your partner about Time Outs so that your partner knows ahead of time what strategy you are using to manage your abusive behaviour.