

The Dynamics of Domestic Violence

What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence (relationship abuse) is a **systematic and progressive pattern** of abusive behaviors that occur gradually, increase in frequency and severity over time, and are perpetrated intentionally by the abuser with the goal of gaining and maintaining **power and coercive control over the victim**.

Typically, the abusive behaviors take the form of varying levels and degrees of **emotional, psychological, economic, sexual, and physical abuse**.

Additionally, abusive relationships tend to be characterized by the batterer's **obsessive jealousy** and attempts to **isolate** the victim from all outside sources of support and connection.

A Progressive Developmental Pattern

In the Beginning

The "Dream Relationship"

Abusers tend to be very attentive, very focused on the "relationship," very interested in getting to know the other person (needs, likes, dislikes), on spending more and more time with them, and on becoming closer and becoming a couple.

Isolation

In the midst of **FALLING IN LOVE** and becoming a couple, the abuser slowly and progressively isolates the other person from family, friends, and all other social supports.

Examples: Uses guilt, bribes, excuses, or other manipulative techniques to keep them from their supports, and pays for everything so the victim becomes dependant on the abuser.

Emotional Abuse

Once some form of commitment occurs that indicates significant emotional investment, attachment, and permanence, the abuser begins to perpetrate various forms of emotional abuse.

Examples: Name calling, criticizing, degrading comments intended to tear away at the victim's self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-worth. **Crazy-making**

Psychological Abuse

The abuser will engage in threatening and destructive behaviors so as **to generate a sense of danger** to make the victim fearful of ever leaving the relationship.

Examples: Breaking things, throwing things, punching walls, driving recklessly, hurting or attacking pets, making threats to harm the victim or children if that person tries to leave or end the relationship.

PURPOSE: TO INSTILL FEAR