

Is My Relationship Abusive?

Because many survivors grew up in homes where abuse was the norm, they often have a hard time identifying and acknowledging abuse in their adult lives. In *Getting Free*, Ginny NiCarthy gives some guidelines for recognizing abusive relationships. Has your partner done any of these things to you?

Physical Abuse

- Pushed or shoved you
- Slapped, bit, kicked or choked you
- Hit or punched you
- Abandoned you in a dangerous place
- Subjected you to reckless driving or kept you from driving
- Threatened to hurt you with a weapon
- Held you to keep you from leaving or locked you out of the house
- Thrown objects at you
- Refused to help when you were sick, injured, or pregnant
- Raped you

Sexual Abuse

- Made demeaning remarks about women
- Been jealously angry
- Minimized the importance of your feelings about sex
- Insisted on unwanted touching
- Called you names like "whore" or "frigid"
- Had affairs with other women after agreeing to monogamy
- Forced particular unwanted sex acts
- Committed sadistic sexual acts
- Treated women as sex objects
- Insisted you dress in a more sexual way than you would like
- Criticized you sexually
- Withheld sex and affection
- Forced you to strip when you didn't want to
- Publicly shown interest in other women
- Forced sex
- Forced sex after beating

Emotional Abuse

- Ignored your feelings
- Insulted your valued beliefs, religion, race, heritage, or class
- Insulted your family or friends
- Humiliated you
- Kept you from working, controlled your money, made all the decisions
- Regularly threatened to leave or told you to leave
- Manipulated you with lies and contradictions

- Ridiculed or insulted women as a group
- Withheld approval or affection as a punishment
- Criticized you, called you names, shouted at you
- Refused to socialize with you
- Refused to work or share money
- Taken car keys or money away
- Threatened to hurt you or your family
- Threatened to kidnap the children if you left him
- Abused pets to hurt you

Although some items are clearly more dangerous than others, almost all of them are potentially dangerous, and all show a lack of respect and an effort to intimidate and control you. One problem with accepting a certain level of abuse is that there's a tendency for the abusive person to interpret it as permission to escalate the assaults into more dangerous and frequent acts. You're the only one who can decide how much is too much and what you're ready to do about it, but it's important to recognize what's being done to you and to know that you **don't have to take it.**