

- **Push for quick involvement:** Comes on very strong, claiming “I’ve never been in love like this before.” An abuser usually pressures someone for an exclusive commitment almost immediately.
- **Jealousy:** Excessively possessive; calls constantly or visits unexpectedly; prevents you from going to work because you “might meet someone”; checks the mileage on your car.
- **Controlling:** Interrogates you intensely (especially if you’re late) about whom you talked to and where you were; keeps all the money; insists you ask permission to go anywhere or do anything.
- **Unrealistic expectations:** Expects you to be the perfect partner, as *they* define it, and meet their every need.
- **Isolation:** Tries to cut you off from family and friends; accuses people who are your supporters of “causing trouble”; abuser may deprive you of a phone or car or try to prevent you from holding a job.
- **Blames others for problems/mistakes:** It’s always someone else’s fault when anything goes wrong.
- **Makes everyone else responsible for their feelings:** “You make me angry” instead of “I am angry” or “you’re hurting me by not doing what I tell you.” Less obvious is: “You make me happy.”
- **Hypersensitivity:** Is easily insulted claiming that their feelings are hurt when they’re actually angry. They’ll rant about the injustice of things that are just part of life.
- **Cruelty to animals & children:** Kills or punishes animals brutally; also may expect children to do things that are far beyond their ability (whips a 2-year-old for wetting a diaper) or may tease them until they cry. Sixty-five percent of abusers who beat their partner will also abuse children.
- **“Playful” use of force during sex:** Enjoys throwing you down or holding you down against your will during sex; says they find the idea of rape or brutality exciting and may even try pressuring you into agreeing to try it or ‘roleplay’ it.
- **Verbal abuse:** Constantly criticizes or says blatantly cruel, hurtful things, degrades, curses, calls you ugly names. This may also involve sleep deprivation, waking you up and keeping you up with relentless verbal abuse.
- **Rigid Gender Roles:** Expects you to serve, obey, and remain at home, or they may try holding you to strict expectations based on your gender identity.
- **Sudden mood swings:** Switches from loving to explosively violent in a matter of minutes.
- **Has a history of abuse:** Admits to hitting partners in the past but says it was the partners’ fault.
- **Threats of violence:** Makes statements like, “I’ll break your neck” or “I’ll kill you,” then dismisses them with, “Everybody talks that way” or “I didn’t really mean it.” If there is a threat to kill, it is time to get help or get out.

*Adapted from “Signs to Look for in a Battering Personality,”
Project for Victims of Family Violence, Fayetteville Arkansas.*