



Recognizing Abuse

Warning signs of domestic abuse, coercive control, and unhealthy relationship patterns.

Safety note: If someone may be monitoring your phone, computer, accounts, or printer, consider using a safer device. Downloads, browser history, messages, and print activity may leave traces.

Abuse is not limited to physical violence. Domestic and dating abuse often involves a pattern of behaviors used to gain or maintain power and control. The behavior may begin subtly, change over time, or become more dangerous. Abuse is never the survivor's fault.

Common warning signs

- **Emotional:** insults, humiliation, blaming, intimidation, threats, or making you doubt your own memory or judgment.
- **Financial:** taking money, blocking access to accounts, preventing employment, creating debt, or controlling essential spending.
- **Technology:** demanding passwords, checking messages, tracking location, impersonating you, or controlling smart devices/accounts.
- **Isolation:** discouraging contact with family or friends, interfering with work/school, or controlling where you go.
- **Sexual:** pressuring or forcing sexual activity, ignoring consent, reproductive coercion, or using sex as punishment/control.
- **Threats and intimidation:** destroying property, threatening children or pets, using weapons, stalking, or threatening self-harm to control you.

Coercive control can look like...

- Rules about clothing, food, sleep, transportation, money, friendships, medical care, religion, work, or parenting.
- Monitoring your time and movements, demanding constant check-ins, or punishing you when you do not comply.
- Using immigration status, disability, medication, housing, finances, or access to children as leverage.

Healthy relationships leave room for...

- **Consent, privacy, independence, respect, and choice.** You can disagree without fear, maintain relationships outside the partnership, make decisions about your body, and have a meaningful voice in finances and daily life.

Trust what you are noticing

You do not have to wait for physical violence before asking for help. If a relationship makes you feel afraid, controlled, watched, trapped, or unsafe, C.A.R.A. can talk with you confidentially about what is happening and what options are available.

Guidance sources: National Domestic Violence Hotline - Warning Signs of Abuse (thehotline.org); Safety Net Project (techsafety.org). Reviewed July 2026.