



Harris County District Attorney
Family Criminal Law Division (FCLD): 713-274-0212

INCREASING SAFETY

***You can't stop your partner's violence and abuse - only your partner can do that.
But, you CAN be aware of your risk and learn to increase your safety.***

*Below are some general guidelines for reducing risk in domestic violence situations.
For more information, talk with your caseworker / social worker, contact a local shelter,
or call the National Domestic Violence Hotline – 1-800-799-SAFE.*

General Information

- Identify someone you trust and let that person know about the situation.
- Keep evidence (photos, recordings, notes) in a safe place or online.
- Keep a log of incidents in a safe place or online.
- Keep important documents for you and your children in a safe place or online:
 - Legal documents: restraining or protective order, family court papers
 - Birth certificate, social security card, passport
 - Immigration papers
 - Driver's license, ID card
 - Financial account numbers and information
 - Medication prescriptions / information
 - Insurance information
 - _____

- Keep a bag packed with things you and your children may need. Leave the bag at a safe place. Items to include:
 - Cell phone and charger
 - Money
 - Keys
 - Clothes
 - Medications
 - Special photos or other valuable items
 - _____

- If you leave an abusive relationship, have a plan before you go.
 - If you have to leave home/work, try to go to a place that is safe and unknown by your abuser.
 - Places to go: _____ and/or here _____.

- People in domestic violence relationships often become isolated. Establish or reestablish relationships with friends and family who can provide positive support for you and/or call in an emergency:

Name: _____ Phone #: _____

Name: _____ Phone #: _____

Name: _____ Phone #: _____

Emotional Safety and Well-Being

- Your abuser might make you feel bad by saying/doing this: _____
 - When he/she does this, you can think of these reasons why you know your abuser is wrong: _____
 - You can do things you enjoy, like: _____
 - You can join clubs or organizations that interest you, like: _____

*Abuse is not your fault.
You deserve a safe and healthy relationship.*

Safety During a Violent Incident

- If there is an argument, avoid rooms with no exits (i.e. bathroom) or rooms with weapons (i.e. kitchen).
- Practice how to get out of your home safely. Identify which doors, windows, elevator, or stairwell would be best.
- Keep your wallet, car keys, and cell phone accessible and put them in a designated safe place in order to leave quickly.
- Keep your car backed in the driveway or parking space and try to always have some gas.
- Consider hiding a prepaid cell phone for emergency use.
- Identify a neighbor you can tell about the violence. Ask that they call the police if they hear a disturbance coming from your home.
- Use your own instincts and judgment. If the situation is very dangerous, consider giving the abuser what he/she wants to calm him/her. You have the right to protect yourself until you are out of danger.
- Let your child/children know it is their job to stay safe, not to protect you.
- Teach your children how to get out of the home for safety.
- Teach your children how to call for help.

Safety after Separation

Home

- Alert local (apartment, neighborhood) security about what is happening in your relationship so that your abuser is not allowed in your area/building.
- Provide them with a picture of your abuser.
- Change your locks.
- Make sure doors and windows are secure.
- Get an alarm system.
- Change where you park your car.
- If you feel unsafe when you are alone, have people stay with you.
- Consider staying somewhere the abuser doesn't know.

Work

- Tell trusted co-workers, your boss, your HR Department, or security, etc. what is happening in your relationship so that your abuser is not allowed at your worksite.
- Provide them with a picture of your abuser.
- Change your work hours.
- Change where you park your car.
- Change the way you drive to/from work.

Socialize / Worship

- Let your religious leader and trusted members know about your situation.
- Provide them with a picture of your abuser.
- Use a code word to alert family, friends, or co-workers to call for help without your abuser knowing about it.
- If possible, go to different places from the ones your abuser goes to or knows (malls, bars, banks, parties, grocery stores, movie theaters, restaurants, etc.).
- Leave if you feel uncomfortable in a situation, no matter what your friends are doing.
- Spend time with people who make you feel safe, supported and good about you.

School / Childcare Provider

- Let your children's school and/or childcare provider know about the situation.
- Provide the school or provider with any paperwork that limits or denies the abuser access.
- Provide them with a picture of your abuser.

*I am not
What happened to me.
I am what
I chose to become.*
- CG Jung

Cyber Safety

- Cyber devices, programs and apps change constantly. Be aware of security risks.
- Check your device (phone, iPad, Kindle, etc.) and online settings.
 - Erase and limit your cyber presence as much as possible.
 - Set all your online profiles to be as private as they can be.
 - Do not say or do anything online that provides information about your location or habits.
 - Check devices for GPS functions.
- Check your vehicle for GPS devices.
- Keep your passwords private.
- Save and keep track of any abusive, threatening or harassing comments, posts, or texts.
- Change your usernames, email addresses, and/or cell phone number.
- Screen calls from unknown, blocked or private numbers. If you don't recognize a number, don't answer. Let them leave a message and only call back if you determine it is safe.

Everyday Safety

- Carry your cell phone and important telephone numbers with you at all times.
- If you have a protective order, keep a copy with you.
- Keep in touch with someone you trust about where you are or what you are doing.
- Stay out of isolated places and try to never walk around alone.
- Avoid places where your abuser or his/her friends and family are likely to be.
- No matter where you go, be aware of how to leave safely in case of an emergency.
- Avoid speaking to your abuser. If it is unavoidable, make sure there are people around in case the situation becomes dangerous.
- Call 911 if you feel your safety is at risk.
- Look into getting a protective order so that you'll have legal support in keeping your abuser away.
- See where self-defense classes are available (such as RAD offered through the local police department).
- Teach your children about safety.

The National Domestic Violence
HOTLINE

We're here to listen.

Reach our trained advocates 24/7 to get the support you deserve. There are no fees, no names, no judgement. **Just help.**

1.800.799.SAFE (7233) • 1.800.787.3224 (TTY)

INFORMATION FOR YOU

Domestic Violence is generally when one person in a relationship uses violence to gain and maintain power and control over their partner. It is not just physical abuse (i.e. pushing, hitting, pulling hair). It can include threats to hurt you, your children, or your pets. Some other forms of abuse include verbal abuse (i.e. calling you names), financial abuse (i.e. not allowing you to work or taking your paycheck), sexual abuse (pressuring or forcing you to have sex) and emotional abuse (saying you are ugly, fat, or stupid).

The Abuser: This person may rush into relationships, be excessively jealous and controlling, be verbally abusive, damage things when angry, blame others for their actions, have the "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" personality, be easily insulted, expect you to meet all of their needs, be cruel to children and animals, isolate you, or pressure/force you to have sex with them. This person's goal is to control you.

The Victim: ANYONE CAN BE A VICTIM! Victims can be of any age, race, culture, religion, education, gender, employment, or marital status.

Are you at risk of being abused? You *may* be if ...your partner is insecure, has low self-esteem, has a prior history of abuse, abuses alcohol/drugs, has anger problems, threatens you, has a belief in strict gender roles, and is jealous and controlling.

High Risk Factors include:
Threats to use or use of a weapon; threats to kill; violence during pregnancy; strangulation; extreme control/jealousy; substance abuse with domestic violence; violence has increased in frequency and/or severity; sexual violence or force; stalking.

2003: NIJ: *Danger Assessment Risk Factors*

Psychological Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence

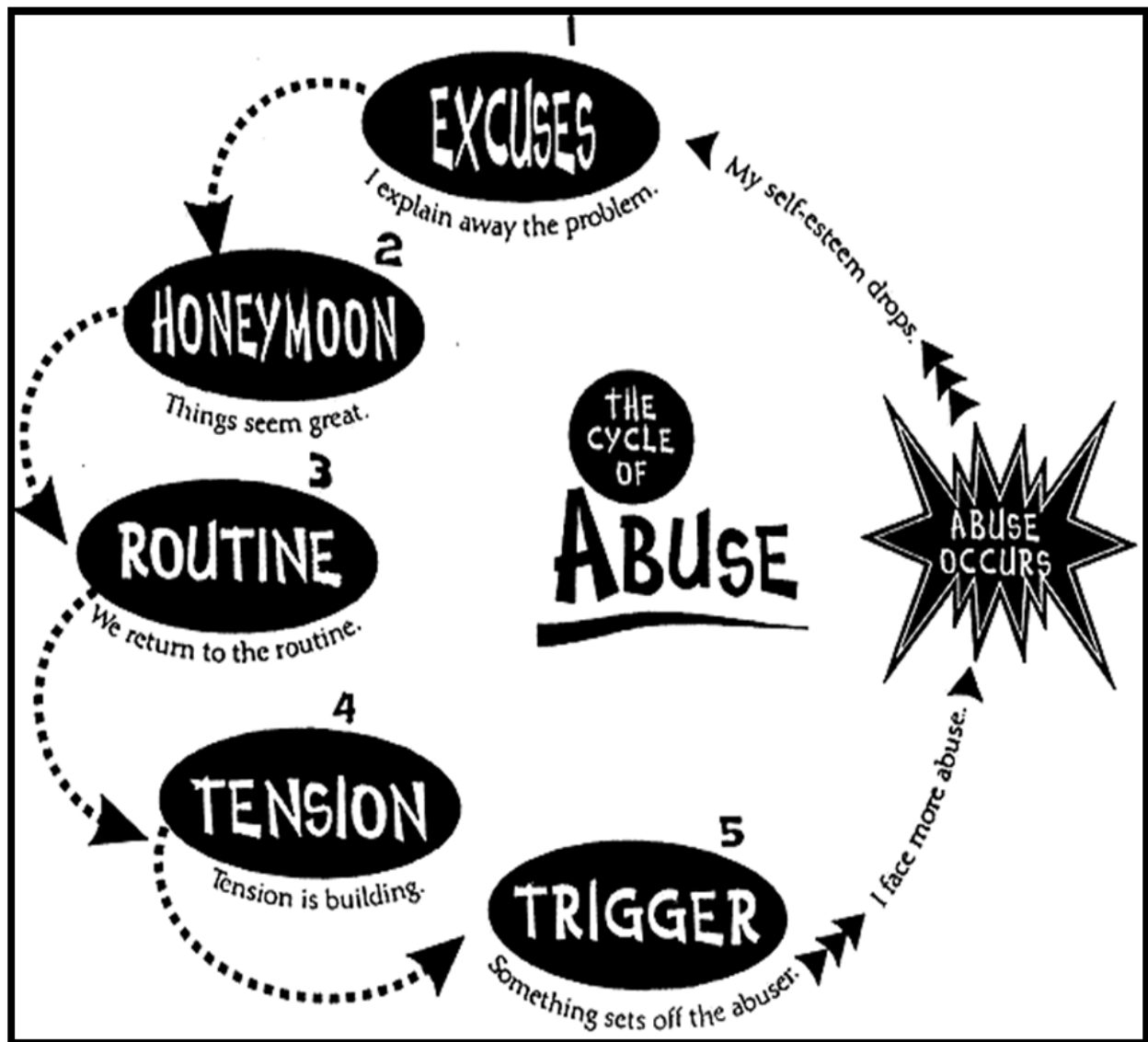
<i>Depression</i>	<i>Fear of Closeness</i>
<i>Loss of Connection</i>	<i>Suicidal Thoughts</i>
<i>Emotional Detachment</i>	<i>Reliance on Alcohol or Drugs</i>
<i>Anxiety</i>	<i>Inability to Sleep / Sleep too Much</i>
<i>Low Self-Esteem</i>	<i>Inability to Trust Others</i>
<i>Trouble Concentrating</i>	

Cycle of Violence

Many people in domestic violence situations describe a “cycle of violence” in which the pattern of abuse occurs the same way, over and over. The illustration below describes the cycle.

Some people report that they rarely or never experience a “calm” or “honeymoon” period.

Some people report that violence is isolated or sporadic, that it doesn’t follow a pattern at all.



SIGNS TO LOOK FOR IN A BATTERING PERSONALITY

Many people are interested in signs that may indicate that a person they are involved with may become physically abusive. Below is a list of behaviors that are seen in people who beat their partners; the last four signs listed are almost always seen only if the person is a batterer---if the person has several of the other behaviors (say three or more) there is a strong potential for physical violence. The more signs the person has, the more likely the person is a batterer. In some cases, a batterer may have only a couple of behaviors that others can recognize, but they are much exaggerated (e.g., extreme jealousy over ridiculous things). Initially the batterer will try to explain the behavior as signs of love and concern, and the other person may be flattered at first; as time goes on, the behaviors become more severe and serve to dominate the other person.

1. Jealousy: At the beginning of a relationship, an abuser will always say that his or her jealousy is a sign of love; jealousy has nothing to do with love, it is a sign of insecurity and possessiveness. The batterer will question his or her partner about who that person talks to, accuse that person of flirting, or be jealous of time spent with family, friends, or children. As the jealousy progresses, the batterer may call or text frequently during the day or drop by unexpectedly. The batterer may refuse to let the other person work for fear someone else will be met, or even act out strange behaviors such as checking car mileage or asking friends to watch the partner.

2. Controlling Behavior: At first, the batterer will say that this behavior is because he or she is concerned for the victim's safety, the need to use time well, or the need to make good decisions. The batterer will be angry if the victim is "late" coming back from the store or an appointment; he or she will question the other person closely about where that person went, and who he or she talked to. The batterer will want to read the other person's text messages or have access to online accounts. As this behavior gets worse, the batterer may not let the victim make personal decisions about the house, clothing, or going to church; the batterer may keep all the money or even make the other person ask permission to leave the house or room.

3. Quick Involvement: Many battered people dated or knew their abuser for less than six months before they were engaged or living together. The abuser comes on like a whirlwind (i.e. "You're the only person I could ever talk to...I've never felt loved like this by anyone."). The batterer needs someone desperately, and will pressure the other person to commit to him or her.

4. Unrealistic Expectations: The batterer is very dependent on the victim for all of his or her needs; the batterer expects the other person to be the perfect spouse, parent, lover, and friend. The abuser will say things like "If you love me, I'm all you need---you're all I need." The victim is supposed to take care of everything for the other person emotionally and in the home.

5. Isolation: The batterer tries to cut the victim off from all resources. If the victim has friends, he or she is accused of cheating or being loose. If the victim is close to family, then they are "tied to the apron strings." People who are supports for them are accused of "causing trouble." The batterer may want to live in the country without a phone; may not let the other person use the car; or may try to keep the other person from working or going to school.

6. Blames Others for His or Her Problems: The abuser is chronically unemployed and someone is always doing him or her wrong or out to get them. The abuser may make mistakes and then blames the partner for getting upset and for keeping him or her from concentrating on doing his or her job. The batterer will tell the victim that person is at fault for almost anything that goes wrong.

7. Blames Others For His or Her Feelings: The batterer will tell the victim "you make me mad", "you're hurting me by not doing what I ask" or "I can't help being angry." The abuser really makes the decision about what he or she thinks and feels, but will use feelings to manipulate the victim.

8. Hypersensitivity: The batterer is easily insulted, claiming that his or her feelings are "hurt" when he or she is actually mad. They take the slightest set-backs as personal attacks, ranting and raving about the injustice of things that have happened to him or her--things that are really just part of everyday life like being asked to work overtime, getting a traffic ticket, being told that something he or she does is annoying, or being asked to help with chores.

9. Cruelty to Animals or Children: This is a person who punishes animals brutally or is insensitive to their pain or suffering. This person may expect children to be capable of doing things far beyond their ability (i.e. whips a two-year old for wetting his or her diaper or may tease children or young brothers and sisters until they cry). The batterer may not want children to eat at the table or expect them to stay in their room all evening while he or she is home. Many people who beat their partner will also beat children.

10. "Playful" Use of Force in Sex: This person may like to throw the victim down and hold him or her during sex, wanting to act out fantasies during sex where the victim is helpless. The idea of "rape" excites this person. The abuser may show little concern about whether the victim wants to have sex and use sulking or anger to manipulate his or her partner into compliance. This person may start having sex with the victim while he or she is sleeping, or demand sex when the partner is ill or tired.

11. Verbal Abuse: In addition to saying things that are meant to be cruel and hurtful, verbal abuse involves the abuser degrading the victim, cursing the victim, or running down any of his or her accomplishments. The abuser will tell the victim that he or she is stupid and unable to function without the abuser. This may involve waking up the victim to verbally abuse him or her or not letting the other person sleep.

12. Rigid Sex Roles: The abuser expects the partner to serve him or her, saying that the victim must stay at home, must obey the abuser in all things, even things that are cruel in nature. The abuser will see the victim as inferior, stupid, or unable to be a whole person without a relationship.

13. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde: Many people are confused by their abuser's "sudden" changes in mood; they will describe that one minute he or she is nice and the next minute explodes with some special "mental problem" or saying that "he/she is crazy." Explosions and mood swings are typical of people who beat their partners, and these behaviors are related to other characteristics such as hypersensitivity.

14. Past Battering: The abuser may say he or she has hit their partners in the past, but they made him/her do it. The victim may hear from relatives or ex-spouses that this person is abusive.

15. Threats of Violence: This would include any threat of physical force meant to control the victim. "I'll slap your mouth off," "I'll kill you," or "I'll break your neck."

16. Breaking or Striking Objects: This behavior is used as a punishment (breaking loved possessions), but is mostly used to terrorize the victim into submission. The abuser may beat on tables with his or her fist, or throw objects around or near the victim.

17. Any Force During an Argument: This may involve the abuser holding the victim down, physically restraining that person from leaving the room. It also includes any pushing or shoving. The abuser may hold the victim against a wall saying, "You're going to listen to me".

Adapted by Harris County District Attorney's Office, Family Criminal Law Division (713-755-5888) from: PROJECT FOR VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE, INC. Fayetteville, AR

Domestic Violence and Children

Family violence affects children. They do not have to actually see or hear episodes of violence to know what is happening. Witnessing can mean **SEEING** actual incidents of physical and/or sexual abuse. It can mean **HEARING** threats or fighting noises from another room. Children may also **OBSERVE** the aftermath of physical abuse such as blood, bruises, tears, torn clothing, and broken items. Finally children may be **AWARE** of the tension in the home such as their mother's fearfulness when the abuser's car pulls into the driveway.

From: www.domesticviolenceroundtable.org

Mom and Dad,

You think I'm asleep when you are fighting. But I'm not. I'm hiding under the covers and I can hear everything. When I hear this stuff, I feel scared. And I worry. I worry about you and about our family.

What is love supposed to be? Look what you are teaching me:

That girls are supposed to get hurt and suffer in silence as they grow up.

That boys are supposed to grow up to be violent.

Mom and Dad, I love you. Please get help!

From: www.womenaresafe.org

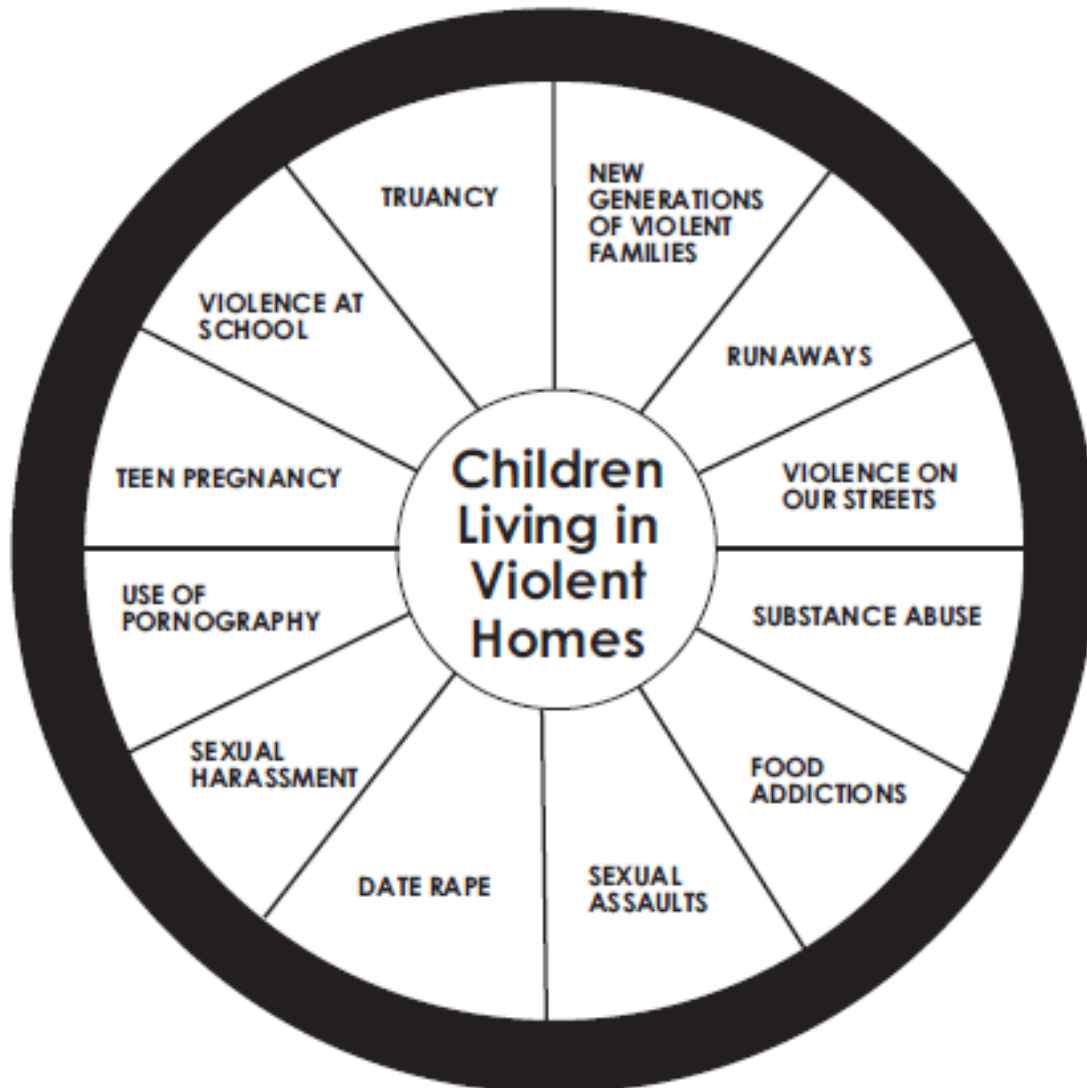
Survivor's Tips for Raising Healthy Children

1. **Self-care.** Do the work to become an example of what it means to be a whole, healthy, non-violent person.
2. **Set healthy boundaries for yourself and your children.** Teach them to do the same.
3. **Provide your children with healthy, non-violent role models and surround them with healthy relationships.**

Adapted from: www.seethetriumph.org



CHILDREN COPING WITH FAMILY VIOLENCE





Healthy Boundaries / Relationships

Communication is a key part to building a healthy relationship. The first step is making sure you both want and expect the same things -- being on the same page is very important. The following tips can help you create and maintain a healthy relationship:

- Speak Up.* If something is bothering you, it's best to talk about it instead of holding it in.
- Respect Your Partner.* Your partner's wishes and feelings have value. *Mutual* respect is essential in maintaining healthy relationships.
- Compromise.* Disagreements are a natural part of healthy relationships. Try to solve conflicts in a fair and rational way.
- Be Supportive.* Healthy relationships are about building each other up, not putting each other down.
- Respect Each Other's Privacy.* Just because you're in a relationship, doesn't mean you have to share everything and constantly be together. Healthy relationships require space.

❖ *Healthy Boundaries*

Creating boundaries is a good way to keep your relationship healthy and secure. Boundaries are not meant to make you feel trapped or like you're "walking on eggshells." It's an expression of what makes you feel comfortable and what you would like or not like to happen within the relationship.



Remember, healthy boundaries shouldn't restrict your ability to:

- Go out with your friends without your partner.
- Participate in activities and hobbies you like.
- Keep your passwords private, such as your email, social media accounts or phone.
- Respect each other's individual likes and needs.

❖ *Healthy Relationship Boosters*

Even healthy relationships can use a boost now and then. You may need a boost if you feel:

- Disconnected from your partner.
- The relationship has gotten stale.

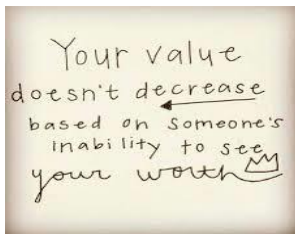
If so, find a fun, simple activity you both enjoy and talk about the reasons why you want to be in the relationship.

If you're single (and especially if you're a single parent), don't worry if you need a boost too! Try going out with the people you love and care about the most (your parents, siblings, friends, children, other family members, etc.)-- watch movies together, go out to eat, take a day off from your busy life and just enjoy being you! And don't forget, the relationship you can always boost up is the one you have with yourself!



❖ *What Isn't a Healthy Relationship?*

Relationships that are not healthy are based on power and control, not equality and respect. In the early stages of an abusive relationship, you may not think the unhealthy behaviors are a big deal. However, possessiveness, insults, jealous accusations, yelling, humiliation, pulling hair, pushing or other negative, abusive behaviors, are -- at their root -- exertions of power and control. Remember that abuse is always a choice and you deserve to be respected. There is no excuse for abuse of any kind.



If you think your relationship is unhealthy, it's important to think about your safety now. Consider these points as you move forward:

- *Understand that a person can only change if they want to.* You can't force your partner to alter their behavior if they don't believe they're wrong.
- *Focus on your own needs.* Are you taking care of yourself? Your wellness is always important. Watch your stress levels, take time to be with friends, get enough sleep. If you find that your relationship is draining you, consider ending it.
- *Connect with your support systems.* Often, abusers try to isolate their partners. Talk to your friends, family members, teachers and others to make sure you're getting the emotional support you need.
- *Think about breaking up.* Remember that you deserve to feel safe and accepted in your relationship.

Even though you cannot change your partner, you can make changes in your own life to stay safe. Consider leaving your partner before the abuse gets worse. Whether you decide to leave or stay, make sure to use safety planning tips to stay safe.

From: www.loveisrespect.org

Are you in a healthy relationship?

HEALTHY	UNHEALTHY
Feeling like your own person	Feeling incomplete without your partner
Feeling responsible for your own happiness	Relying on your partner for all your happiness
Togetherness and separateness are balanced	Too much or too little togetherness
Friendships exist outside of the relationship	Inability to establish and maintain friendships with others
Focuses on the best qualities of both people	Focuses on the worst qualities of the partners
Achieving intimacy without chemicals	Using alcohol/drugs to reduce inhibitions and achieve a false sense of intimacy
Open, honest and assertive communication	Game-playing, unwillingness to listen, manipulation
Commitment to the partner	Jealousy, relationship addiction or lack of commitment
Respecting the differences in the partner	Blaming the partner for his or her own unique qualities
Accepting changes in the relationship	Feeling that the relationship should always be the same
Asking honestly for what is wanted	Feeling unable to express what is wanted
Accepting endings	Unable to let go

From: www.lifeesteem.org