

Before It Has a Name

How to recognize emotional abuse and domestic violence — and what to do next

If something in your relationship doesn't feel right, you don't need proof to trust that. You don't need to call yourself a victim. You don't need a crisis before you deserve help. This is a starting point.

Signs worth paying attention to

Abuse is not only physical. Most of it isn't. These patterns often appear long before anyone gets hurt, and they tend to build slowly enough that you adjust to them.

Control

- Monitoring your phone, messages, location, spending or whereabouts
- Controlling the money, or making you account for what you spend
- Deciding who you can see, where you can go, or what you can wear
- Making it difficult for you to work, study, drive or hold your own income

Pressure on your sense of reality

- Telling you that you're too sensitive, imagining things, or remembering it wrong
- Denying things you know happened
- Turning others against you, or making you look unstable to family and friends
- Making you feel you have to manage their mood to keep the peace

Isolation and fear

- Distance growing between you and the people who love you
- Walking on eggshells, or rehearsing conversations before you have them
- Hiding parts of your life from people you used to tell everything
- Feeling relief when they leave the house

Escalation

- Threats aimed at you, your children, your pets, your job or your reputation
- Damaging property, blocking doorways, driving dangerously to frighten you
- Any pressure or force around sex
- Any physical harm, including grabbing, shoving, restraining or strangling

If any of this sounds familiar

You are not overreacting, and you are not alone in this. More than 10 million people in the United States experience abuse by a partner every year. It happens in every income bracket, every neighborhood, every kind of relationship. It is not your fault, and there is nothing to be ashamed of.

What to do next

You do not have to decide anything today. These are the doors that are open to you.

If this might be you

- **Talk to someone trained.** The National Domestic Violence Hotline is free, confidential and 24/7, whether or not you are in immediate danger. Call 1-800-799-7233 or text START to 88788.
- **Ask about an advocate.** Most local organizations have advocates who help with safety planning, court, housing, children and pets. You do not need shelter to use one.
- **Counseling is available** whether you stay, leave, or haven't decided.
- **Write down what happens**, with dates, and keep it somewhere the other person cannot reach.
- **Plan the leaving carefully.** That period is the most dangerous stretch of an abusive relationship. Do it with someone experienced rather than alone.

If this might be someone you know

- **Believe them**, and say so out loud.
- **Don't tell them to leave.** Pressure to go, like pressure to stay, takes the decision out of their hands and can put them in danger.
- **Don't tell them to stay**, for the children, the marriage, or anyone else's sake.
- **Offer something concrete:** a ride, a couch, a place to keep documents, the use of your phone while they are with you.
- **Don't send them home with a device.** A second phone discovered can escalate the danger.
- **Stay in their life** even if nothing changes for a long time. Isolation is the point of the pattern.

Where to get help

The Hotline — 24/7, free, confidential

Call **1-800-799-7233** | Text **START** to **88788** | Chat at thehotline.org | TTY 1-800-787-3224

The National Domestic Violence Hotline. Available in more than 200 languages, for anyone living through it and for anyone worried about someone else. You do not have to be in danger right now to call.

Hope & Healing Survivor Resource Center, Akron, Ohio — Founding Partner

24/7 hotline: **330-374-1111** | hopeandhealingresources.org

Serving Summit and Medina counties, Ohio, with crisis support, advocacy, counseling and safety planning, for survivors and for the people who care about them. They also help callers outside their service area find support close to home.

Anywhere in the U.S. Every state has a domestic violence coalition with a current directory of local programs. Find yours through thehotline.org, or ask the hotline to connect you directly. **If you are in immediate danger, call 911.**

Stay connected

Occasional notes on recognizing the patterns, stories from women who have come through, and news about our events. No pressure, and you can leave any time.

Join at recognizetorise.com | Write to us at hello@recognizetorise.com

If your phone is shared, use an address the other person cannot reach.

Before you save this

If someone has access to your phone or computer, this file, your downloads and your browser history can be seen. Consider deleting it after reading, or using a device the other person cannot reach.

Library computers are free, and staff will not ask why.

Recognize to Rise · Love doesn't hurt. You matter. And you don't have to suffer in silence.

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Educational only. Recognize to Rise is an awareness and advocacy initiative, not a crisis line.