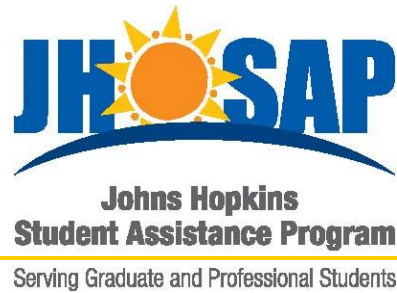


# Intimate Partner Violence: Recognizing Harmful Relationships



## What is Intimate Partner Violence?

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), also called domestic violence, battering or spouse abuse, is violence of a physical, sexual, or psychological nature, including stalking by a current or former intimate partner or spouse. Victims of IPV include both women and men and it can occur among heterosexual or same-sex couples.

IPV can happen to anyone, yet it is often overlooked, excused, or denied. This is especially true when the abuse is emotional, rather than physical. Emotional abuse is often minimized, yet it can leave deep and lasting scars and may result in serious health problems such as eating disorders, depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and insomnia. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention<sup>1</sup> (CDC), IPV often begins with emotional abuse and progresses to physical or sexual assault.

## IPV may include one or more of the following types of behavior<sup>2</sup>:

*Physical Violence* – the intentional use of physical force (e.g., shoving, choking, shaking, slapping, punching, burning, or use of a weapon, restraints, or one's size and strength against another person) with the potential for causing death, disability, injury, or physical harm.

*Sexual Violence* – use of physical force to attempt to engage someone in a sexual act when he or she does not or cannot consent, whether or not the act is completed; an attempted or completed sexual act involving a person who, because of illness, disability, or the influence of alcohol or other drugs, or because of intimidation or pressure, is unable to understand the nature or condition of the act, decline participation, or communicate unwillingness to engage in the act; or any other abusive sexual contact.

*Threats of physical or sexual violence* – communicates the intent to cause death, disability, injury, or physical harm through the use of words, gestures, or weapons.

*Emotional Violence* – traumatizes the victim by acts, threats of acts, or coercive tactics (e.g., humiliating the victim, controlling what the victim can and cannot do, withholding information, isolating the victim from friends and family, denying access to money or other basic resources).

*Stalking* – stalking generally refers to harassing or threatening behavior that an individual engages in repeatedly, such as sending the victim unwanted presents, following or laying in wait for the victim, damaging or threatening to damage the victim's property, appearing at a victim's home or place of business, defaming the victim's character or spreading rumors, or harassing the victim via the Internet by posting personal information.

<sup>1</sup> Understanding Intimate Partner Violence Factsheet, [http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/ipv\\_factsheet.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/ipv_factsheet.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Intimate Partner Violence, <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/topics/crime/intimate-partner-violence/welcome.htm>

## Warning signs of IPV

The following questions may help you determine if you are at risk of Intimate Partner Violence:

### Do you:

- Feel afraid of your partner much of the time?
- Avoid certain topics out of fear of angering your partner?
- Feel that you can't do anything right?
- Believe that you deserve to be hurt or mistreated?
- Wonder if you are, or are becoming crazy?
- Feel emotionally numb or helpless?

### Does your partner:

- Humiliate or yell at you?
- Criticize you and put you down?
- Ignore or put down your opinions or accomplishments?
- Have a bad and unpredictable temper?
- Hurt you, or threaten to hurt or kill you?
- Threaten to take your children away or harm them?
- Threaten to commit suicide if you leave?
- Force you to have sex?
- Destroy your belongings?
- Blame you for his/her own abusive behavior?
- See you as property or a sex object, rather than as a person?
- Keep you from seeing your friends or family?
- Act excessively jealous and possessive?
- Control where you go or what you do?
- Limit your access to money, the phone, or the car?
- Constantly check up on you?

## Common myths about IPV

1. **I asked for it.** No one asks to be hurt. It doesn't matter what you do, if your partner abuses you, it is wrong.
2. **This is normal in relationships.** Even if you grew up in a home with violence and abuse, these are not normal or acceptable behaviors.
3. **If I love him/her enough the abuse will stop.** It is true that the abuser needs love. But without outside help, he/she will not change, even with your love. Violence is the abuser's pattern of behavior, not something you can control.
4. **Things will get better.** If abuse is occurring in a relationship, it usually gets worse over time. Things will not get better without some type of intervention.
5. **No one can help me.** If you can take the initial step of deciding there is a problem there are many resources available to assist you.

## Seek assistance

The Johns Hopkins Student Assistance Program (JHSAP) is committed to assisting students in managing the challenges they face during their academic careers. JHSAP provides support to students in dealing with substance abuse/dependency, personal, academic, and relationship problems.

If you believe you may be a victim of IPV, you may benefit from more individualized services. Contact the Johns Hopkins Student Assistance Program at 443-287-7000 or visit our website for more information: [www.jhsap.org](http://www.jhsap.org). JHSAP services are free, confidential, and there is no limit to the number of times a student may access services.

**National Domestic Abuse Hotline (24 hours): 1-800-799-SAFE**  
**Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence: 1-800-MD-HELPS or 301-352-4574**