



RED FLAGS of abusive relationships

Domestic violence encompasses a spectrum of behaviors that abusers use to control victims. The following list includes warning signs that someone may be abusive. If you or a friend experience these behaviors from a partner, remember it is not your fault and there are advocates waiting to help – Safe Space is one of these advocates.

“Red flags” include someone who:

- Wants to move too quickly into the relationship. Often resulting is making hasty plans for the relationship.
- Early in the relationship flatters you constantly and seems “too good to be true.” When something seems too good to be true, it often is.
- Wants you all to him- or herself; insists that you stop spending time with your friends or family. This is the alienation process abusers employ to have control over their victim- the less support he/she has, the easier they will be to manipulate.
- Insists that you stop participating in hobbies or activities, quit school, or quit your job. This is an important bid for control for the abuser- if you become dependent on him/her- you are less likely to leave.
- Does not honor your boundaries- these can be boundaries that are of a physical, emotional or psychological nature.
- Is excessively jealous and accuses you of being unfaithful.
- Wants to know where you are all the time and frequently calls, emails, and texts you throughout the day. This trait has been wrongfully romanticized and must be recognized as the toxic trait it is.
- Criticizes or puts you down; says you are crazy, stupid, and/or fat/unattractive, or that no one else would ever want or love you. When abusers cannot control the way others see you, they will attempt to control the way you see yourself – Their goal is to break down the victim's self-esteem- making them believe that they will not be good enough for anyone else, and therefore lessen the chance of the victim leaving.
- Takes no responsibility for his or her behavior and blames others.
- Has a history of abusing others. Abusers will always be the hero in their own stories, and usually have a long list of people who have wronged them.

- Blames the entire failure of previous relationships on his or her former partner; for example, “My ex was totally crazy.” This is a form of gaslighting- manipulating the truth to make others to seem unstable, unreliable, or insane.
- Takes your money or runs up your credit card debt.
- Rages out of control with you but can maintain composure around others. This is another form of gaslighting – ensuring that the victim seems “crazy” when she / he tells people about the abuse that seems non-existent to others.
- Gaslights- Gaslighting is a form of emotional abuse that’s seen in abusive relationships. It’s the act of manipulating a person by forcing them to question their thoughts, memories, and the events occurring around them. A victim of gaslighting can be pushed so far that they question their own sanity. Gaslighting, whether intentional or not, is a form of manipulation. Gaslighting can happen in many types of relationships, including those with bosses, friends, and parents. But one of the most devastating forms of gaslighting is when it occurs in a relationship between a couple.

People who gaslight become expert at pushing your buttons, and they know your sensitivities and vulnerabilities and use that knowledge against you. They make you doubt yourself, your judgment, your memory, and even your sanity.

Here are some pertinent examples to help identify when your partner gaslights you:

- **Trivializing how you feel:** “Oh yeah, now you’re going to feel really sorry for yourself.”
- **Telling you that people are talking behind your back:** “Don’t you know? The whole family talks about you. They think you’re losing it.”
- **Saying things to you that they later deny having said:** “I didn’t say I’d take the deposit to the bank. What are you talking about? Thanks a lot for the insufficient funds fee we’re going to get.”
- **Hiding objects from you, and then deny knowing anything about it:** “You seriously can’t find your sunglasses again? That’s alarming.”
- **Insisting you were or were not at a certain place, even though it’s not true:** “You’re crazy. You never went to that show with me. I should know.”

Abuse is never the fault of the victim and it can be hard for many reasons, including safety, to end the relationship. If you experience these “red flags,” you can confide in a friend or reach out for support from a domestic violence advocate. If you believe a friend or relative is being abused, offer your non-judgmental support and help.