

LIST OF KINDS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

Gathered by Linda J. MacDonald, M.S., LMFT

EMOTIONAL ABUSE:

- Acts “entitled” to use you, mistreat you
- Withholding love, affection
- Invalidating you
- Not taking care of self (misusing drugs, alcohol, engaging in high-risk behaviors)
- Refusing to help you when asked or in obvious need
- Excessive jealousy of you
- Trying to isolate you from family or friends
- Refusing to listen when you object to something that hurts you
- Disregarding reasonable requests by you
- Threatening to harm self (like suicide) if you don’t comply
- Threatening to harm you, your kids, or pets if you don’t comply
- Controlling you (monitoring where you go, who you hang out with, how you spend money, not giving you a “voice or a vote” over many decisions in your life, all for no good reason, such as an affair or broken trust)
- Trivializing your feelings, goals, hopes, dreams
- Ridiculing you or your abilities
- Destroying things that are precious to you
- Withholding financial support from you
- Raging at you
- Using anger, loudness or looks of disgust to get his/her way
- Intimidating you through threats, physical stature or gestures
- Treating you with disdain, sarcasm or disgust
- Dismissing your feelings, beliefs, values, experiences
- Rejecting you, abandoning you, or shunning you
- Walking away, not talking to you, refusing to engage with you when you bring up a topic of concern, or ignoring you as a means of punishment
- Significantly neglecting you and your relationship emotionally, physically, and financially
- Rolls eyes at your ideas or suggestions

- Acting as if you have no rights and he/she has all the “rights” in the relationship
- Deceiving you regarding his/her whereabouts, investments, relationships
- “Gaslighting” – purposely denying something in order to make you feel invalidated or mentally ill, delusional, or crazy. From the old movie, “Gaslight”
- Denying, distorting or rewriting the story of your marital history/relationship
- Doing harmful things behind your back (gambling, porn, affairs, secretly contacting persons of the opposite sex, over-spending, deceiving you, etc.)
- Not getting help for any kind of addiction
- Trying to “poison” others (including your children) against you
- Threatening to leave you (as a means to get you to capitulate)
- Threatening to leave you for someone else
- Actually leaving you for someone else

VERBAL ABUSE:

- Accusing you falsely (of an affair, stealing, or doing something that you didn’t do)
- Insulting you
- Belittling you
- Scorning you or using a snide tone
- Telling you that “no one” would ever want you
- Making unflattering or unfair comparisons of you
- Dominating the conversation by not allowing you to get a word in edge-wise
- Name-calling, labeling (“stupid” “dirt-bag” etc.)
- Using disgusting terms to describe you (like the c-word, whore, b-word, etc)
- Swearing at you (worst are the f-bomb or God’s name in vain)
- Threatening you with divorce just to get his/her way
- Criticizing you, your looks, your way of doing things
- Humiliating you, alone or in public
- Mocking you
- Putting you down
- Rejecting your opinions, ideas
- Sarcastic remarks “Yeah, right.” “Oh that was brilliant!”
- Disparaging your views – “That’s stupid!” “Where’d you get an idea like that??”
- Lying to you (esp. about something that impacts you or matters a lot to you)

- Blaming, attacking you for his/her hurtful behaviors or for something not going well
- Intimidating you
- Putting you down with statements like, “You’re crazy,” “What an idiot!”
- Saying anything that makes you feel “stupid” “dumb” or “less than”

PHYSICAL ABUSE:

- Towering over you
- Slamming fist on table, door, wall
- Threatening gestures
- Harming pets, implying you may be next
- Throwing or breaking objects (=implied abuse – “today the glass, tomorrow your arm.”)
- Throwing hard objects at you
- Trapping you in a room
- Restraining you
- Withholding medical treatment or food from you
- Following you around against your wishes
- Shoving you
- Dragging you by the leg, arm, or hair to force compliance or to get even
- Punching the wall, door (= “implied abuse”)
- Punching you
- Grabbing you
- Slapping you
- Hitting you
- Kicking you
- Choking you

SPIRITUAL ABUSE:

- Discrediting your values, beliefs
- Preventing you from observing your faith
- Trying to stop you from attending church
- Forcing you to attend his/her church and putting you down if you don’t
- Using religious language/terms to control you (“God told me...” or “The Bible says you’re not supposed to be angry” or any religious term used to one-up you)

- Trying to force you to “submit” to him; accusing you of being “unsubmissive” (submission is sometimes misused as a power play by men who are insecure, abusive, or who wish to dominate a spouse rather than love and cherish a wife)
- Misusing sacred texts [out of context] to justify any kind of mistreatment of you
- Insisting his/her beliefs are the only “right” beliefs (and yours, by implication, are all wrong)
- Saying that “God” told him/her to behave in any way that causes you to feel punished, abused, or emotionally harmed
- Threatening you with “hell” or “displeasing God” if you don’t do what he/she says
- Treating you as inferior if you don’t follow his/her particular religious ideology or interpretation

SEXUAL ABUSE:

- Touching or grabbing private areas of your body *against your will*
- Forcing sex upon you against your will (a.k.a. “marital rape”)
- Forcing you to watch pornography with him/her
- Refusing to use protection when it would be wise to do so
- Forcing you to do something sexually that you are uncomfortable with
- Causing you pain while engaging in sexual contact
- Refusing to listen or back off if you say, “No, not now,” or “That hurts.”
- Insults you by comparing you with other lovers
- Withholding sex from you as a spouse for an extended time (for no medical reason)
- Being unfaithful to you (flirting with others, emotional affair, physical affair to any degree, preferring pornography over you or against your knowledge or wishes)
- Giving you an STD

FINANCIAL ABUSE:

- Sabotages employment opportunities
- Forbids you from working
- Refuses to work, expecting you to keep up the household AND work full-time
- Controls how money is spent and berates you for your choices in spending
- Takes back/returns items that you have purchased without your permission
- Denies you direct access to bank accounts. And/or withholds passwords for those accounts

- Puts what should be shared assets into his/her name alone or his/her parents' names or in trusts that you don't have access to
- Gives you an inadequate "allowance" determined by him/her
- Forces you to write bad checks or sign fraudulent tax returns
- Steals from local stores and turns some into "gifts" for the children to keep you silent
- Runs up large debts on joint accounts without your permission
- Withdraws money from your joint accounts or retirement accounts without your permission
- Gambles or spends money on pornography, excessive alcohol, or illegal drugs
- Spends excessive amounts of money on hobbies or "collectibles" that your family can't afford
- Forces you to work in the family business without pay
- Refuses to pay bills for accounts that are in your name, which ruins your credit
- Forces you to turn over paychecks or public benefits checks to him/her
- Applies for credit card accounts using your name and personal information behind your back
- Monitors every penny you spend, insisting on seeing every receipt (unless you tend to be irresponsible with money)
- Withholds money for necessities like food, clothing, medication, and housing
- Spends money on himself or herself but does not allow you to do the same
- Gives you gifts or pays for things and then expects something in return (like sex, gifts, favors, etc.)
- Forces you to work while he or she does not contribute to the family needs and yet still controls most or all the money

The more boxes checked, the more abusive the relationship. The more frequent the behaviors, the more dangerous the person is to your physical, emotional, and spiritual health.