

we have to bring to light the actions of those powerful, well-trained professionals who choose to join the abuser in his goals and tactics. If we can erode the ability of abusers to gain allies, they will stand alone, and alone they are easier to stop.

It often falls to the abused woman herself, unfortunately, to try to educate the people around her whose help and support she needs, so that they will understand the dynamics of abuse and stop supporting the abusive man. Much of why an abuser is so able to recruit allies, besides his own manipulateness and charm, is his skill in playing on people's ignorance and misconceptions and often on their negative attitudes toward women. As difficult as it is to take on, you will often find yourself having to be your own best advocate, arguing forcefully against the range of ways in which your society's values may buy into the abusive man's outlook, in order to gain the kind of strong backing that you deserve from all those around you.

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

- When people take a neutral stand between you and your abusive partner, they are in effect supporting him and abandoning you, no matter how much they may claim otherwise.
- People cannot claim to be opposed to partner abuse while assisting their own son, brother, friend, or partner in his abusiveness toward a woman.
- Everyone should be very, very cautious in accepting a man's claim that he has been wrongly accused of abuse or violence. The great majority of allegations of abuse—though not all—are substantially accurate. And an abuser almost never "seems like the type."
- The argument that "he is a human being, too, and he deserves emotional support" should not be used as an excuse to support a man's *abusiveness*. Our society should not buy into the abusive man's claim that holding him accountable is an act of cruelty.

Distinguishing Victim/Survivor from Abuser

Determining who the abuser is and who is being abused can be a challenge, especially in same sex relationships. Abusers can isolate their partners by seeking out potential services and securing them as a resource for themselves so the service won't be available for their partner. In addition, a batterer can present as a victim because s/he feels victimized though s/he is in fact controlling his/her partner, and a victim can feel like an abuser because s/he has used physical violence to defend herself. Most abuse victims do not draw distinctions between fighting back and acting in self-defense.

Indicators of a Victim/Survivor:

The survivor will...

- Recall the chronology of events in detail
- Blame Self
- Feel ashamed about being victimized
- Fear the partner
- Feel remorse for fighting back
- Protect the partner
- Describe how life has narrowed during the relationship
- Have stories of unsuccessful attempts to leave or repair the relationship
- Feel confused

Indicators of an Abuser:

An abuser will...

- Remain vague about events & omit details
- Blame partner & minimize personal role
- Feel victimized
- Exaggerate own injuries & minimize partner's
- Claim the violence was "a two-way street" or "just a fight"
- Assertively claim to be a victim
- Mention receiving abuse in prior relationships & claim not to understand why these relationships ended
- Act persuasive and logical

How to Screen for Perpetrators

Abusers try to get those working with them to back off, either by being constantly angry and challenging or extremely agreeable. Their goal is to wear you down or enlist you as an ally to get the system to do as little monitoring as possible.

Assessments

To assess whether someone is a perpetrator, go over abusive incidents and examine the context, the intent of actions, and the effect of those actions. Consider the following questions:

- Context
 - What is/was happening in the relationship before & after the behavior occurred?
 - What meaning or history does the behavior have given the context?
- Intent
 - What are the reasons for the behavior?
 - What is the goal of the behavior? Control?
- Effect
 - Whose life is smaller as a result of the behavior? Who is being controlled, etc.?

In general, try to "slow down" the story. Ask about what happened in the abusive incident, starting with even an hour before the event—what the client was feeling, doing, and thinking, and then what happened, and who said what. Obtain details and keep the discussion chronological.

Note: This method should be used carefully, and only in those cases where there is real ambiguity. To apply this method to all clients could promote victim-blaming because to ask a victim questions about what s/he was doing prior to an abusive incident could imply mutual responsibility.