PARTNER ABUSE: Looking Beyond Physical Assault to Coercive Control¹



DEFINITION: Coercive control is a **deliberate and systematic** pattern of behavior designed to **limit a person's freedom and ability** to act on their own needs, values, and desires and to **create a threat of harm** to compel compliance.

in 4 women

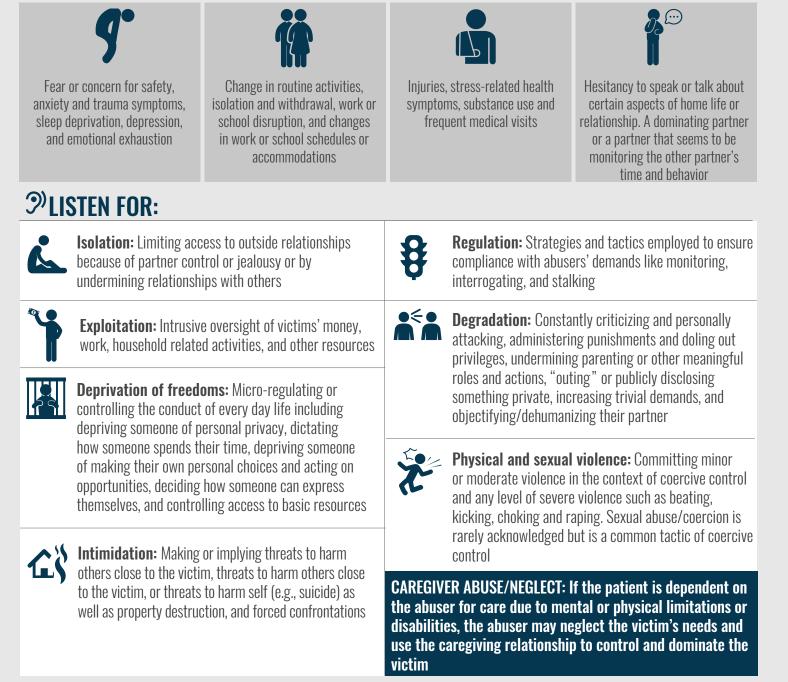


in 20

men

experienced physical assault, stalking or rape by a partner and were afraid

Many victims do not use the terms "partner abuse" or "domestic violence" and many victims will not have marks from physical assault. Look for clues for further screening such as:



WHEN ASKING:

- Frame question in a non-threatening way
 - Example: "We have started talking to everyone about safe and healthy relationships because it can have such a large impact on on health."

• Be direct, kind, non-judgmental and private

- Questions can be direct or indirect depending on the situation:
 - How are things at home?
 - What happens when your partner gets angry?
 - What happens at home when you tell your partner no or change your mind about something you agreed to?
 - Do you often feel like you are "walking on eggshells" at home?
 - Have you ever felt afraid or concerned about your safety because of your partner (or expartner)?
 - Have you felt humiliated or emotionally hurt by your partner?
 - Sometimes partners use physical force. Is this happening to you?
 - Has your partner ever physically threatened to hurt you?
 - In the past year have you been forced to have any kind of sexual activity by your partner?

Avoid minimizing or

downplaying safety

concerns and threats

🔆 I'VE ASKED, NOW WHAT?



DO say:

- This is not your fault
- No one deserves to be hit, hurt, or put down constantly, turned into a servant or humiliated
- You are not to blame. Abuse is widespread and happens in all kinds of relationships. Once it starts, it tends to continue
- I am concerned about your safety and your wellbeing
- Abuse can affect your health and that of your children in many ways

DON'T:

- Ignore the disclosure.
 - Make blaming comments like: Why don't (can't) you just leave? What did you do to make him/her so angry? Why do you go back?
- Tell them what to do like suggesting she/he leave the relationship or try couples counseling. Leaving an abusive relationship and/or joint counseling may place the victim in greater danger

• KEY QUESTION

Is it safe for you to go home? Are the children safe? Do you have a place to go if the abuse escalates?



Document injuries and responses to your questions

Assess victim's safety



Review options and provide referrals

ENCOURAGE THE VICTIM TO:



Preserve evidence and document the abusive behaviors in a safe way



Plan for safety by thinking through specific threats and vulnerabilities



Seek support through trusted friends, family, or victim advocates



CHECK OUT

See it/acknowledge

it as abusive behavior

(coercive control) and/

or stalking

The National Domestic Violence Hotline at www.TheHotline.org (1-800-799-7233); the National Health Resource Center on Domestic Violence at www.NRCDV.org/dvrn; the Stalking Prevention, Awareness, and Resource Center at www.stalkingawareness. org; the Stalking and Harassment Assessment and Risk Profile (SHARP) at www.StalkingRisk.com; Other Resources (www. CoerciveControl.org and www.OutrageUs.org).