

When people talk about Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), or domestic violence, they are referring to coercive and controlling actions used by one person to gain power and maintain control over the other in a relationship. In this brochure we explore the “Using Coercion and Threats” segment of the Power and Control Wheel. *

The use of coercion and threats is probably the first tool we learn to gain power over another; it is used so often we are numb to using it ourselves or experiencing it. Parents use it to get kids to do chores or homework: “If you don’t clean your room you will be grounded!” Teachers use it to get compliance: “If you keep disrupting the class you will go to the principal’s office!” Employers use it: “If you can’t do the job then I will find someone who can!”

In abusive relationships you feel like you are “talked into” doing things you don’t want to do, and if you outright disagree you may be threatened. Sometimes a threat can be there without anything being said – a tone of voice, a look, a gesture – and because of a past assault you know you cannot object.

* The Power and Control Wheel was developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project Duluth, MN

FACTS ABOUT ABUSIVE AND CONTROLLING RELATIONSHIPS:

Many people don’t recognize controlling behavior as abusive – because of socialization, we might think it’s normal. It also can be difficult to recognize because it escalates over time, making it hard to see how bad things have become.

It’s a pattern of behaviors that makes you feel crazy or trapped. Many people state that they walk on egg shells, or sense trouble coming, or have changed their whole way of being in reaction to their abusive partner.

Conflict in relationships is normal, but when the belief is that someone has to win, be in charge, or “wear the pants” then it may be an abusive relationship.

For more information or help call:

[Insert your local contact info]

Supported by grant 2015-TA-AX-K028 awarded by the USDQJ, Office on Violence Against Women. oopinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are MSH-TA’s and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the USDQJ, Office on Violence Against Women.

USING COERCION AND THREATS



What does it look like in abusive and controlling relationships?



Mending the Sacred Hoop
mshoop.org

Jennifer is 40 years old and has been with Dennis for 16 years. Dennis is controlling, but Jennifer has thought of this as a just “a guy thing”, though there have been several assaults over the last five years.

It's very common to view certain behaviors as “what men do” or “what women do.” In controlling relationships, what starts out as minor conflict can escalate into abuse when tactics like coercion and threats are not getting the results the abuser wants.

Jennifer is being called to testify in court against Dennis. He tells her that if he gets convicted he'll lose his job and they will lose everything.

In dealing with controlling relationships, choosing what to prioritize is a challenge. Survival needs tend to trump safety needs, and while someone looking in may see it as obvious to hold the batterer accountable, the priority for her and her children may be different.

