

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 Power and Control Wheel* and the ways that Isolation can be used as a tactic of power and control.

Isolation is a pivotal tactic used by controlling partners in order to weaken their victims, prevent them from getting others' perspectives, and to bring them into line with the abuser's own beliefs and requirements. Possessiveness and jealousy play a role in attempts to isolate. In relationship with ongoing abuse victims may seem to withdraw from friends and family on their own because they are embarrassed, feel judged, or not supported.

When friends and family cut off a victim because "she made her bed – now she has to sleep in it", this makes the victim extremely vulnerable. She becomes dependent on her controlling partner and it helps keep the violence hidden.

* 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 ISOLATION



What does it look like in abusive and controlling relationships?



Mending the Sacred Hoop
mshoop.org

Regina has had a rough life; she comes from a violent home with alcoholic parents. She was sexually assaulted as a teen, and has had a drinking problem since. At 22, she has an ongoing child protection case over her 2-year-old daughter. She left the father, David, when she was pregnant because of his violence. He has now filed for custody of their daughter.

Abusers will use isolation particularly against those who already feel they have been abandoned, because they know it will be effective in oppressing and controlling them.

Regina was court-ordered to complete inpatient chemical dependency treatment and sexual assault counseling was added to her aftercare. David used this as proof that she was mentally unstable and unfit to parent.

Abusers will use institutions like the courts and child protection against their partners to isolate them from their children.

When Regina and David first married he moved them far away, promising they would start a new life together. He was soon working all the time and kept her from working “because a man provides.” He said that if Regina worked it would shame him – people would think they needed money because he wasn’t providing.

An abuser moving you away from family and friends and limiting your access to the outside world is the most common type of isolation. They then control your ability to interact with people outside the home.

David often showed disinterest in Regina. Whether she was sharing something of interest or trying to solve relationship problems he would tune her out or disregard what she said.

Isolation can be more than physical. Many victims talk about feeling unappreciated and alone in the relationship.

Drinking was the main activity in David and Regina’s relationship. When she became pregnant she sobered up on her own and pressured David to cut down. That was when he became physically violent, as well as leaving her for days on end without money or the car.

Abusers will increase their use of power and control tactics or physical force to maintain their level of control. Many victims compare physical isolation to being a prisoner of war – your captor becomes your only contact and source of perspective on the world, so the mind games played by the abuser are that much more effective.

