

If It Walks Like a Duck...

© 2015 Kathy Jones/DVSur5r
Reprint with permission dvsur5r@yahoo.com

We need not be shy about identifying likely abusers. **Successful interventions** for families living with perpetrators begins with our ability to **1) IDENTIFY** them, **2) DOCUMENT** their tactics and traits, and then **3) HOLD THEM ACCOUNTABLE** for their harmful behaviors towards their adult and child victims. It's important! Failure to do so has life-long consequences for everyone in the home*...and even the community. (* For more information on life-long consequences, research "A.C.E. Studies" about Adverse Childhood Experiences.)

It's a Prickly Issue: Domestic Violence* Defined

ACTS (or inactions) of one person in an intimate relationship that are:

- **P**remeditated: planned
- **R**epetitive: patterned, regular or cyclical
- **I**ntentional: purposeful
- **C**onscious: with perception or awareness
- **K**nowing the victim's:
 - Trauma triggers
 - Personal barriers and boundaries

For the purpose of establishing or maintaining dominance over intimate partner (and/or children)

—Adapted from *Alternatives to Domestic Aggression, Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw City, Ann Arbor, MI.*

ACTS may include any combination of:

- Luring and Grooming
- Emotional Abuse
- Exploiting Male or Privileged Status
- Economic Control
- Medical Neglect
- Spiritual Conflict
- Legal Harassment
- Monitoring and Stalking
- Deprivation and Isolation

Punctuated or Reinforced with:

- Psychological Torment
- Sexual Assault, Coercion or Force
- Physical Violence

—See "Many Faces of Abuse" handout for examples of each.



CLUE #1: "Mr. Nice Guy"

It is *COMMON* for perpetrators of domestic violence to be perceived as "Nice Guys" in their communities. They clean up well. Expect to like them. A lot. Go ahead and like them, just don't fall for their balderdash. Remember, this carefully cultivated image has one main purpose: separating the victim from help.

DO NOT LOOK FOR THIS... but rather, THIS...



EARLY WARNING SIGNS:

- **CHARM!!!** (single most common descriptor from victims about their abusive partners)
- Quick involvement
- Unrealistic expectations of partner or children
- Blaming others for problems and feelings
- Cruelty to animals and/or children
- Rigid gender roles
- Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde personality
- Threats, precursors or actual use of force during arguments
- Striking or breaking the partner's belongings

—Adapted from Lydia Walker's "Signs to Look for in a Battering Personality"



CLUE #2: The Perpetrator's Practically Predictable Priorities

- Perpetrator **FIRST, ALWAYS** (image, needs, desires, feelings, etc.)
- HIS money
- HIS house, car, toys, etc.
- HIS "Peeps" (family, friends, etc.)
- HIS pets
- HIS children*
- Adult victim
- Adult victim's children*

(*—If children move up on the abuser's priority list, **WATCH OUT** for ulterior motives!)

The POWER DIFFERENTIAL

- ◆ Abusers believe relationships are about POWER OVER, or WIN/LOSE (not mutual)
- ◆ Abusers hoard/cultivate more personal power
 - ◆ Hide/exploit family resources
 - ◆ Collect social allies/connections, while isolating victims from theirs
- ◆ Abusers strategically use escalating intimidation, legal harassment or force as necessary to DOMINATE or RETALIATE against the victim
- ◆ “Scorched earth” policy—for abusers, children are acceptable collateral damage in war of revenge against their adult victims
- ◆ Abusers actively seek ways to sabotage and undermine the adult victim’s efforts to change or seek safety

CLUE #3:

The Eager “Victim” vs The Reluctant “Perp”



TYPICAL PERPETRATORS...“I’m the victim here!”

Can’t wait to tell you how they’re the REAL victims

Want to stigmatize partners to isolate victims from help or intervention

...WHILE TYPICAL VICTIMS...“It’s all MY fault...”

Explain how they contribute to their partner’s abuse

Want nothing to do with “victim” label; understand the social stigma around victim/perp labels



CLUE #4: How the Abuser Talks about Partner



As a PARTNER, Abusers are prone to be:

Staunch SUPRE-MEN-ISTS:

- Entitled (“When I say jump...”)
- Self-Centered (“King of the Castle”)
- Superior (“Anything you can do, I can do better”)

Master MANIPULATORS:

- Confuses (“Do as I say, not as I do”)
- Controls (“Resistance is futile”)
- Consumes (“What’s mine is mine, and what’s yours is mine”)
- Charms (“Wolf in sheep’s clothing”)

Savvy SMOKE SCREENERS:

- Minimizes (“Not EXACTLY...”)
- Denies (“I would NEVER...”)
- Blames (“If SHE hadn’t...”)
- Justifies (“It was for her own good”)
- Deflects (“Would you believe SHE...”)

Superior SABOTEURS:

- Change tactics as necessary to thwart victims’ efforts at safety or change

As a PARENT, Abusers are prone to be:

Authoritarian:

- Uncompromising, rigid
- Expect unquestioned obedience/deference
- Intolerant of resistance
- “Power-assertive” in conflicts with children
- Retaliates against children for “slights”

Under-involved, Irresponsible and Neglectful:

- Avoid the hard work of parenting (children are abuser’s “domain,” but victim’s “job”)
- Children are hindrance or annoyance to desired lifestyle
- Unwilling to sacrifice for children
- Fail to keep promises or meet obligations (except during litigation, or if social equity will increase)

Reversing Roles:

- Know little about the children, their needs or realistic expectations (birthdates, likes/dislikes, IEPs, routines, etc.)
- Expect children to adjust to meet the abuser’s needs
- Blind to children’s feelings/experiences
- Place responsibility for well-being on kids

Undermining Co-Parents:

- Mock adult victims in front of children
- Abuses adult victims in front of children
- Contradicts co-parents’ house rules
- Prevent adult victims from meeting children’s needs
- Blame partners for child support obligation

—Adapted from “The Batterer as Parent,” by Jay Silverman and Lundy Bancroft