Violence often starts with little things that can be denied, ignored or forgiven. But, from there, a pattern of violence can grow quickly.

It’s not just about hitting

Dating violence usually begins with verbal and emotional abuse. These are often the first steps before physical and/or sexual violence.

- **Verbal or emotional violence.** One partner makes fun of, insults, bosses, controls and/or threatens the other.
- **Physical violence.** One partner grabs, shoves, slaps, pinches or hits the other.
- **Sexual violence.** One partner forces the other to have sex.

It’s not unusual for 2 or more types of violence to go on in an abusive relationship.

The sooner you notice potential dating violence, the easier it is to get help.

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Are you in an abusive relationship?

**What to watch for**

It’s not always easy to see that someone is likely to be violent. But, if you know what to watch for, you can often pick up hints before abuse gets physical.

A person is more likely to become violent who:

- Seeks jealous when you talk to or spend time with other friends.
- Gets angry over small things.
- Throws or breaks things when angry.
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs.

The person may also:

- Want to control how you dress or where you go.
- Tell you you’re wrong, stupid, crazy or inadequate when you disagree.
- Always plan what you’ll do together.

**What to do**

- **Notice how you feel.** Are you depressed? Do you feel more free to be yourself when your partner isn’t around?
- **Notice what you do.** Do you find yourself making excuses for your partner? Do you spend less time with friends and family? Do you change how you act to avoid making your partner angry?
- **Talk to friends.** Often a friend or family member can see things more clearly. Do they see abuse in your relationship?

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It can be confusing

If someone were mean and violent all the time, it would be easy to avoid him or her. But sometimes things that suggest a person might become violent are qualities you admire at first.

**Here are some things to think about.**

- **Is this person:**
  - A take-charge kind of person OR Someone who tries to control every detail?
  - Loving and attentive? OR Demanding and jealous?
  - Charming and fun? OR Has to always be the center of attention?
  - Smart and sophisticated? OR Someone who ignores or makes fun of your ideas?

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What about conflict?

It’s normal to have conflict in a relationship. Working it out together can bring you closer.

**When you disagree, does your partner:**

- Respect your ideas and views?
- Listen to what you’re saying?
- Help find solutions that work for both of you?

**Be careful if your partner:**

- Has to have things go his or her way.
- Isn’t willing to meet you halfway.
- Insults you or puts you down.

Think about what whether you want this person in your life.