

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE


Unnatural Power and Control Descriptions



**NATIONAL
INDIGENOUS**
WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER


Intimate Partner Violence/Battering is an institutionalized system of overlapping, continuous, purposeful, violent tactics used to maintain power and control.

Intimate partner violence (IPV)/battering include many tactics that are used to maintain power and control without the exertion that physical and sexual violence require – and often with less threat of law enforcement involvement because, though potentially lethal, many tactics are not necessarily against the law. Many (not all) of the tactics are described below.



NOTE: Be clear that IPV/battering is different from “dysfunctional” or “unhealthy relationships.” Unlike IPV/battering, in dysfunctional or unhealthy relationships there is equal power and control, both can act on their decisions, and though hurtful things are said and done, neither person is in fear for their life. Couples counseling and other similar mental health interventions may be helpful and appropriate. A key distinction is that in IPV/battering at some point, one person – the victim – is in constant fear for their life.

Physical and sexual violence are the “enforcers” of IPV/battering. Physical and sexual violence only has to happen once to understand that a certain look or gesture means: “I beat you and/or raped you once. I will do it again.” Individually, batterers may use tactics differently. Often many tactics are being used all at once. Please remember to be very careful if you are leaving. Do not warn the aggressor you are leaving because batterers will often increase their violence to maintain control. Get help from a domestic violence program, law enforcement and/or trusted family and friends to stay safe and get the support you deserve.



NOTE: IPV/battering is more than a mental health issue. Though battering of males by females happens, IPV is primarily gender based. In approximately 95% of IPV/battering, the victims are female, the offenders/abusers are male (U.S. Dept. of Justice, BJS, National Crime Victimization Survey). IPV/battering also happens within Two Spirit/LGBTQ relationships. It is serial, violent crime. Violence against women and domestic violence is rooted in mainstream culture. It is not natural. Before colonization, violence against women and domestic violence were extremely rare within Indigenous cultures.

TACTICS

Male Privilege

It is the permission-giver for all violence against women and general disrespect of ALL women.

- Is trusted and is seen as more credible than women.
- Experiences fewer barriers. More access to money, jobs, etc.
- Gets to do what he wants, when he wants.
- Allows for the expectation that women should be accommodating.
- Feeling of entitlement to make big decisions alone expecting women to “make it happen.”
- His/men’s ways is the right way and more valuable than women’s.
- Makes men roles superior and women roles inferior.
- No consequences for bad behavior.
- Feeling of entitlement to monopolize conversations and discussions.
- Feeling of entitlement to interrupt and/or ignore women.



Coercion and Threats

- Makes/carries out threats to do harm to the victim, the children or family and friends.
- Threatens to kill the victim, the children, family or friends.
- Threatens to take the children, either legally or by kidnapping.
- Threatens to commit suicide.
- Threatens to report the non-offending parent to welfare.
- Makes the victim do illegal things in order to blackmail.

Intimidation

- Causes fear by using aggressive looks, actions or gestures.
- Smashes things, put holes in walls, and destroys property.
- Kills or threatens to kill the pets.
- Displays weapons.
- Reminds her/him how they have or can hurt the victim.
- Verbal threats.
- Stalking, including sitting at the victim’s place of work, school, etc.

Isolation

- Controls what the person does, sees, talk to and/or read.
- Limits outside involvement by taking away the car, ensuring the children are always with the non-offending parent, limiting access to money, etc.
- Destroys personal belongings (clothing, etc.).
- Public humiliation.
- Constantly questions (interrogation).
- Takes the phone.
- Constant surveillance.
- Forces her/him to give up supportive relationships and outside connections.

Minimizes, Lies and Blames

- Minimizes the violence.
- Ignores and belittles victim's concerns.
- Says the violence didn't happen.
- Says the victim caused/deserved/provoked the abuse. Shifts responsibility for the violence:
 - "She made me do it."
 - "I didn't hit her hard."
 - "She should have just shut up."
 - "It was her own fault."
 - "I had to teach her a lesson."
 - "I was drunk."
 - "I was abused as a child; I can't help it."

Emotional Abuse

- Put downs and name calling.
- Makes the victim feel crazy, always wrong or stupid.
- Belittles feelings, opinions, and reactions.
- Plays mind games.
- Humiliates and criticizes. Example: A male batterer may tell the victim she is a bad mother, wife, or woman.
- Makes the victim feel guilty for the batterer's feelings and behavior.
- Blames the victim for their violence.
- Stops the individual from doing what she/he needs to or wants to do.
- Tells the victim how to dress, look or act.
- Ignores and neglects the victim.

Abusing Children

- Convinces the children that the violence is the non-offending parents' fault, that parent is stupid/sick/bad and that the children need a father even if he's violent.
- Uses the children to relay "mind game" messages.

- Uses visitation and custody to harass or do violence.
- Threatens to take the children far away.
- Believes that children are property.
- Convinces the victim they will lose custody of the child(ren) if she/he leaves. Does not pay child support (if living in separate households); children may live in poverty.

Economic Abuse

- Prevents the victim from working or takes the victim's money if they do work.
- Makes the victim ask for money or gives an allowance.
- Doesn't let her/him know about or have access to family income.
- Makes her/him prove how she/he spent money.
- Doesn't pay child support.
- Spends money on his/her non-necessities.
- Makes her/him work; he/she doesn't.

Ritual Abuse

- Makes prayers against her.
- Defines spirituality as masculine. Stops her from practicing her ways.
- Uses spiritual ways as a threat.
- Says "God doesn't allow divorce."
- Says menstruation time makes her "dirty."
- Says "Native women don't sweat with men, don't sit at drums" or women's participation in ceremony is only to support men.
- Misinterprets Traditions or the Bible to justify violence/abuse.

Cultural Abuse

- Competes over "Indianness."
- Misinterprets culture to prove male superiority and female submission.
- Uses relatives to execute violence.
- Says "real" Native women don't wear make-up, wear slacks, talk or be independent.
- Denies the spiritual power and role of women.
- Distorting the old-time practice of having more than one wife to justify having affairs, or multiple, simultaneous relationships.
- Participates in ceremonies, then batters the partner, abuses the children.

Collusion

- Any act that discounts/condones/supports/ignores any of the tactics that batterers use to maintain power and control over their partner.
- Makes the abuser/batterer more powerful by reinforcing use of abusive and violent tactics.
- Increases violence against the victim, their children, family and friends.

VIEW MORE ADVOCACY RESOURCES

NIWRC'S Resource Library is an online clearinghouse of culturally appropriate resources to support Tribes, Tribal programs and grassroots advocates working on issues of violence against Native women.

The Resource Library include advocacy materials such as:

- Advocacy Information Packet
- Shelter and Other Safe Space Information Packet
- It's About Trauma Brochure
- Relationships: Healthy, Unhealthy, When There is Danger Youth Magazine
- Traumatic Brain Injury and Battering

View all resources: niwrc.org/resources

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