Learn to recognize the signs of domestic violence

Domestic violence has different forms. The abuse can be physical, sexual, psychological and/or economic. The first step in helping a friend or family member who is in trouble is recognizing what domestic violence looks like.

People who abuse their partners may:
• Have trouble expressing emotions verbally
• Blame others for problems or feelings
• Be very jealous
• Criticize or put down their partner, especially in front of others
• Use verbal violence such as name-calling, cursing and yelling
• Use non-verbal threats, such as “the look”
• Control all the money in a relationship
• Downplay or deny their partner’s feelings or concerns
• Abuse alcohol or drugs
• “Blow up” over things that seem minor
• Break objects
• Abuse pets
• Use “the silent treatment” to control
• Use their partner’s past against him/her
• Use physical violence, such as hitting, shoving and choking
• Force or demand sex

People who are being abused may:
• Have injuries and give explanations that don’t make sense
• Wear inappropriate clothing to hide bruises or scars (ex: long sleeves in the summer)
• Not be allowed to visit with friends or family
• Not have access to the car keys
• Rarely be seen in public without their partner
• Often be absent from work, school or social events
• “Check in” often with their partner
• Go along with anything their partner says or does
• Be afraid of their partner’s temper
• Be afraid of making their partner jealous
• Abuse alcohol or drugs
• Have low self-esteem, even if they were once very confident people
• Be depressed or even suicidal

Not all of these signs are present in every abusive relationship. If you notice even one or two, there may be a problem. You may be the first person to see the signs.

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¹ Source: Virginia Sexual And Domestic Violence Action Alliance