Signs of Abuse and How to Find Help

Darla Colinet | God's Transforming Grace



I remember waking up with knots in my stomach. I was trying to protect my children and get through each day. For years, I read book after book, looking for a way to ease the pain in my marriage.

When the violence became life-threatening, I went to a safe house for help. A counselor gave me a list of warning signs. Within a few lines, I recognized what I had been living through. I finally had words for it.

Jesus met me in that part of my life, and support helped me take steps toward safety and healing. If you recognize something from your own life in these pages, I want you to know that you are loved. You deserve to be safe, and you can ask for help even if you're still unsure what to call what's happening.

In immediate danger in the U.S.? Call 911.
National Domestic Violence Hotline • 800-799-7233

Recognizing the Signs of Abuse

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If you find yourself walking on eggshells, pay attention to what happens when you speak honestly, disagree, or make a choice for yourself. Abuse involves fear and control, and it can happen without physical injury. Even one warning sign is enough reason to reach out.

EMOTIONAL AND VERBAL ABUSE

They belittle or humiliate you, blame you for their actions, or threaten to harm you, themselves, your children, or your pets.

ISOLATION AND MONITORING

They limit contact with family or friends, check your messages or location without permission, or follow you.

FINANCIAL CONTROL

They keep you from working, take your money, or withhold access to money for basic needs.

PHYSICAL ABUSE AND INTIMIDATION

They block exits, break belongings, threaten you with a weapon, or push, hit, restrain, or put pressure on your neck.

SEXUAL ABUSE

They pressure or force sexual activity or interfere with birth control. You have the right to say no, including in marriage.

SPIRITUAL ABUSE

They use Scripture or their role in the church to shame you, demand obedience, excuse harm, or keep you from getting help.

If keeping this guide could put you at risk, you can read it without marking or saving it. What you're experiencing matters.

How to Find Help

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In immediate danger in the U.S.? Call 911.

National Domestic Violence Hotline • U.S. • 24/7

Call 800-799-7233 (SAFE) | Text START to 88788
Chat or find local support at TheHotline.org/get-help

If you think your phone or computer is monitored, use a device the person harming you cannot access, if possible.

TAKE ONE STEP THAT FEELS SAFE

You can reach out even if you're unsure what's happening or aren't ready to leave. A domestic violence advocate can listen, talk through your options, and help you make a safety plan for your situation. They can also help you find local services, including shelter and counseling.

For Native American and Alaska Native survivors, StrongHearts Native Helpline offers culturally rooted support at 844-762-8483 or StrongHeartsHelpline.org.

A WORD FROM DARLA

If someone has used Scripture to make you feel responsible for their actions, I want you to hear this. The person who chose to harm you is responsible for that harm. Jesus cares about your safety. Asking for help can be part of how you care for the life God has given you.

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