

WHY DO PEOPLE WHO CAUSE HARM *continue* TO HURT THEIR PARTNERS?

CONTROL

Domestic violence stems from a desire to gain and maintain power and control over an intimate partner. Abusive people believe they have the right to control and restrict their partner's lives. This is often because they believe their own feelings and needs should be prioritized in the relationship or because they enjoy exerting the power that such abuse gives them.

Tactics of abuse, in any form, are aimed at dismantling equality in the relationship in order to make their partners feel less valuable and undeserving of respect.

FINANCIAL DEPENDENCE

If the person who causes harm is the primary earner in the relationship, they may have expectations about how money is to be used and that their partner should be grateful to them for what they provide.

LEARNED BEHAVIOR

Abuse is often a learned behavior. Some witness it in their families growing up. Others learn it from friends, popular culture, or structural inequities throughout society.

FEAR

Though they will refuse to show it, and may not even be aware of the fear themselves, many people who use harm fear:

- They will lose control of their partner (which manifests in jealousy)
- Outsiders will find out about their abusive behavior
- Losing their status and/or image in the community
- Losing custody of their children
- Their children will be emotionally harmed by a separation or divorce
- Making changes

ISOLATION

The person who uses harm may lack knowledge of alternatives to violence. They turn to isolation to prevent someone discovering their abusive behavior out of shame. People who cause harm focus on controlling their partner, including not allowing them to develop outside relationships. They may feel the relationship will fulfill all needs and they should be in isolation together.

FALSE BELIEFS

Many people who use harm believe subjecting their partner to abuse is normal in relationships. They believe if they do not control their partner, they will be seen as weak. Some view their partner's submission to the violence as acceptance, or even contentment, in the relationship. Many people who cause harm view their partners (and children) as their property. Therefore, they are subject to any treatment deemed necessary.

LACK OF CONSEQUENCES

Many perpetrators do not face any negative repercussion for their abusive behaviors. If they are challenged, their excuses are accepted. This makes them feel their abusive behavior is justified.

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