

Red Flags in Relationships

There are unhealthy signs we can identify in relationships before things become abusive. It is important to spot the early signs of abusive behavior – the Red Flags – before things get worse. Remember: these behaviors often occur in patterns: the more red flags you see and the more often they happen, the surer you can be that the relationship is not in your best interest.

Emotional Red Flags

- Ignores what you say, talks over you as if you are not there, or pretends not to hear you
- Doesn't acknowledge you in public, seems embarrassed by you, acts differently toward you when different people are around
- Does things that hurt your feelings and expects you to just get over it, or makes you feel crazy: often says it was "just a joke," "you're overreacting," "not that big a deal" (gaslighting)
- Has a history of double standards: what is okay for one partner to do, is not okay for the other partner



Verbal Red Flags

- Makes you feel badly about yourself: calls you names, criticizes you often, or puts you down
- Humiliates you, or embarrasses you in public – makes you the butt of the joke

Controlling Red Flags

- Believes that one person should be "in control" in the relationship
- Refuses to discuss issues that may come up in the relationship (stonewalling)
- Is not willing to accept responsibility for negative actions or work on improving the relationship
- Decides things for you, is bossy – thinks they know what's better for you than you do
- Doesn't value your opinions



Isolating Red Flags

- Uses jealousy as a way to control who you spend time with – accuses you of cheating
- May insult, belittle, and discourage you from spending time with your friends & family
- Wants to control who you see, talk to, and where you go
- May discourage you from participating in work, school, or extracurricular activities – or make it difficult for you to do so



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Technological Red Flags

- Constantly calls or texts and expects you to be there right then – if you do not respond quickly enough, they get upset or angry with you
- Frequently checks up on you via cellphone when you are not with them, or when you are spending time with friends – may even locate you via GPS (find my friends, SnapMap, etc.)
- Wants to control what you share on social media, who you are “friends” with or “following,” and what apps you use – may discourage you from using certain platforms
- May want your password or to look through your phone, read your messages, etc. as a way to “prove” they can trust you



Threatening Red Flags

- Uses looks, actions, gestures, yelling, cursing, or throwing things to scare/intimidate you
- Makes and/or carries out threats to harm you, emotionally and physically
- Threatens to break up with you
- Threatens to share explicit photos/content you may have sent them – Extortion
- Threatens to hurt your friends/family members
- Threatens to commit suicide

Physical Red Flags

- Has a violent history: has gotten in numerous fights, loses their temper quickly/explosively, brags about fights they have gotten in/hurting others
- Breaking things – destroying your personal belongings (phones, pictures, letters, gifts, clothes, etc.), punches a hole in the wall, damages your car, locker, etc.
- Has hurt or threatened to hurt you in any way that makes you uncomfortable – even if it was masked as “playful”



Sexual Red Flags

- Wants to move at a quicker pace, sexually, than you are comfortable with
- Pressures you to share or send nude or explicit photos, messages, etc. via text or social media
- Violates your personal space – touches you more frequently than you are comfortable, or at times when you do not want to or feel uncomfortable (touching you inappropriately in public, etc.)
- Pressures you for sex, or attempts to manipulate/guilt trip you into sexual behaviors by saying things like “if you really loved me” and “but all of our friends...”



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