

## If someone turns to you for help...

**Educate Yourself:** Educate yourself about domestic abuse and Catholic teaching. Good starting places are [www.CatholicsForFamilyPeace.org](http://www.CatholicsForFamilyPeace.org) and the [www.ndvh.org](http://www.ndvh.org)

**Listen:** This is the most important thing you can do. Remember, the person confiding in you has kept the problem a secret from others. Find a quiet place where you can talk safely and without interruption.

**Believe:** Do not deny the abuse is happening. Do not pass judgment or blame. Show your support no matter what decision is made about the abusive relationship.

**Validate Feelings:** Do not ignore the abuse as this will only serve to hide feelings and to worsen the problem, which is dangerous and destructive.

**Show Respect:** Show that you respect the person's ability to handle the situation and to cope with it. This will help with empowerment and developing confidence to deal with the abuse.

**Do Not Give Advice:** As difficult as it is, it is necessary to refrain from giving advice especially when your friend first confides in you. Allow the person in the situation to make decisions about what to do, and when to do it. Empower the person with information and the ability to make decisions by spelling out the options available.

**Encourage Seeking Help:** Provide support in facing the problem and dealing with it for the sake of each member of the family.

**Discuss Safety:** Talk to your friend about shelters and other safe places, how to access services and to help create a safety plan. The National Domestic Violence Hotline can suggest local resources. **For help: 800-799-SAFE (7233).**

**Offer to pray** with the person and assure them you will keep them in your prayers.

## How do I know if I am being abused?

Persons experiencing abuse often don't think of themselves as "abused." But they can suffer physical injuries that endanger their health and may result in life-long disabilities.

The emotional effects of domestic abuse can be as devastating as the physical harm. The abuse can also interfere with a person's job and result in loss of promotion or even the job itself.

In your intimate relationship, you may be experiencing:

- constant insults and belittling
- threats against you or your children
- intimidation and harassment
- social isolation and deprivation
- pushing, shoving or holding down
- punching, slapping, kicking or choking
- forced or unwanted sex or sexual acts

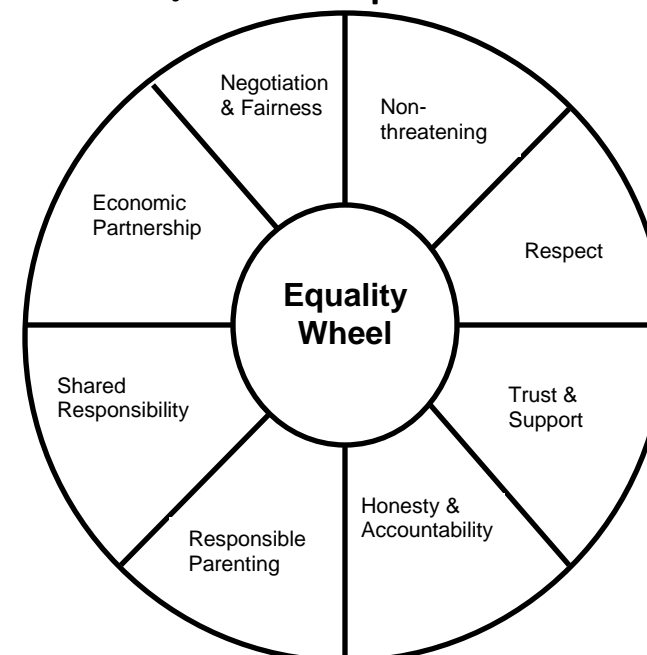
Once you recognize the abuse, know you are not to blame and you are not alone.

No one deserves to be abused.  
This is not just the law in America.  
This is the teaching of the Catholic Church.

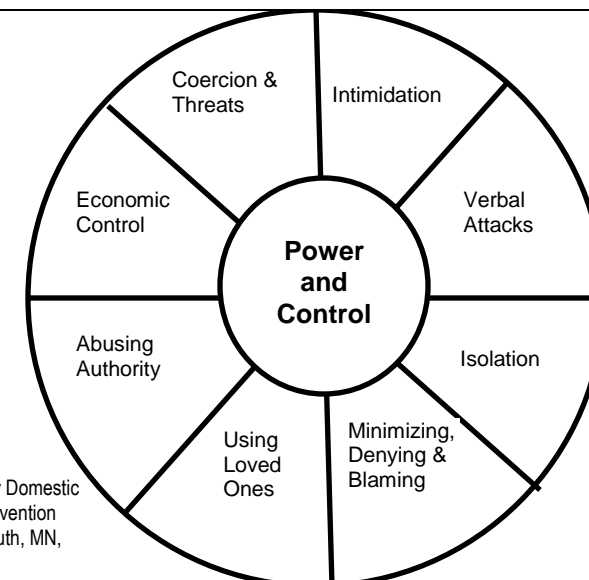
## How do I know if I am abusing?

- If you are extremely jealous
- If you control your partner's activities
- If you use physical force to solve problems
- If you believe that you are the head of the household and should not be challenged, you are probably hurting the people you love and you need to seek help.

## A Healthy Relationship Looks Like This



The **Equality Wheel** offers a view of a relationship based on equality and non-violence. Compare the characteristics of a healthy relationship to those of an abusive relationship in the **Power and Control Wheel** below.



\*Developed by Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, Duluth, MN,

The **Power and Control Wheel** links the different behaviors that form a pattern of violence. It shows how each behavior is an important part of the overall effort to control someone.

**The Catholic Church teaches that violence against another person in any form fails to treat that person as someone worthy of love. Instead, it treats the person as an object to be used.**

**From the U.S. Catholic Bishops' Committee:  
*When I Call for Help: A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence against Women:*  
[http://bit.ly/usccb\\_dv](http://bit.ly/usccb_dv)**

As pastors of the Catholic Church in the United States, we state as clearly and strongly as we can that violence against women, inside or outside the home, is never justified. Violence in any form"—physical, sexual, psychological, or verbal"—is sinful; often, it is a crime as well. We have called for a moral revolution to replace a culture of violence. We acknowledge that violence has many forms, many causes, and many victims—men as well as women.

The Catholic Church teaches that violence against another person in any form fails to treat that person as someone worthy of love. Instead, it treats the person as an object to be used.

When violence occurs within a sacramental marriage, the abused spouse may question, "How do these violent acts relate to my promise to take my spouse for better or for worse?" The person being assaulted needs to know that acting to end the abuse does not violate the marriage promises.

While violence can be directed towards men, it tends to harm women and children more.

Visit [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org) for more Catholic resources.

## Helping Yourself

**Know that God loves you** and that the Christian community cares about you.

**Ensure your safety.** Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline:  
**800-799-SAFE (7233), 24 hours, toll free.**

If you are injured due to domestic violence, **get medical treatment** as soon as possible. The doctor/nurse will be able to treat you best if they know exactly what happened. Keep notes or a diary of your injuries and the times you were abused. This should be hidden in a place where your abuser will not find it and may help if you decide to leave later.

**Tell someone** trustworthy about it. Telling someone is a way of relieving your suffering, breaking the silence, and the first step in getting help.

**Prepare to Get to a Safe Place.**

Keep copies of important documents, extra clothing, money and an extra set of keys in a safe place (like the home of a friend or relative) in case you need to leave your situation quickly. Also, memorize important phone numbers.



[www.CatholicsForFamilyPeace.org](http://www.CatholicsForFamilyPeace.org)

An Educational Ministry to Prevent Domestic Abuse and Promote Compassion



*Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.*

– Matthew 11:28 NRSV

If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic abuse, there is help in the Catholic Community.