

Warning Signs Someone Is Experiencing Abuse

Changes in How They Talk About Their Partner

- Often apologizes or makes excuses for their partner's behaviour
- Becomes defensive or uncomfortable when the relationship is mentioned
- Seems afraid to disagree or speak openly when their partner is present

Physical and Health-Related Signs

- Hides bruises, cuts, or other injuries
- Appears tired, unwell, or stressed
- Frequently misses work, school, or social events without clear reason

Isolation from Friends and Family

- Frequently cancels plans or avoids loved ones
- Appears lonely or withdrawn
- Partner controls communication or movements

Emotional and Mental Health Shifts

- Often sad, anxious, or on edge
- Shows low self-esteem or hopelessness
- Fearful around their partner

Higher Risk!

Danger may be greater when the person experiencing abuse:

- Has recently left, or is planning to leave, the relationship
- Fears for their life or children's safety
- Is involved in a custody dispute or has children from a past relationship
- Has started a new relationship
- Is unaware of risk level
- Lacks a phone or reliable service
- Little or no support network
- Lives in a rural area with or without transportation
- Faces barriers such as language, immigration status, or legal concerns



How You Can Help

If you are concerned about someone you know experiencing IPV or using abusive behaviours and are unsure how to help, you are not alone.

Knowing how to respond safely is just as important as noticing the warning signs of IPV.

Learn More

Start with the free NFF online training, **Working Together to End Abuse**. This training helps you understand, recognize, and respond to IPV and offers practical guidance for supporting someone experiencing abuse or for engaging safely with someone using abusive behaviours.

The NFF website also provides additional resources on overcoming hesitation to help, safety planning, supporting victims/survivors, and connecting people with appropriate services.

Everyone has a role to play in ending intimate partner violence.

Start Today

Find more resources at
www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca
—or—
scan the QR code



Neighbours,
Friends & Families

Western  Centre for Research & Education on
Violence Against Women & Children



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Neighbours, Friends and Families

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ending intimate partner violence





Who We Are

Neighbours, Friends and Families (NFF) is a trusted Ontario public education campaign and leading source of intimate partner violence (IPV) prevention education.

NFF provides practical prevention tools, training and education to help people recognize warning signs of IPV and support those experiencing violence or using abusive behaviours.

By engaging everyday relationships—as neighbours, friends, and family—NFF empowers communities to act, support those affected, and promote safety in the places where people live, work and gather.

What is Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)?

IPV is any behaviour by a current or former partner that causes harm. This includes physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, and financial abuse, as well as stalking and harassment—both in person and online.

Anyone can experience IPV, but risk is higher for women, 2SLGBTQIA+ people (including transgender and non-binary individuals), Black, Indigenous, and other racialized and marginalized communities, due to systemic inequalities, inequities and power imbalances.

IPV can occur in any type of relationship, such as dating, married, common-law, and may continue after separation, including during co-parenting.

Identify the Warning Signs of IPV

Recognizing warning signs of IPV early can save lives.

Some signs may show up in the person experiencing abuse. Others may point to someone using abusive behaviour. Knowing what to look for is the first step to helping safely.

Warning Signs of Abusive Behaviour

Control & Isolation

- Controls where partner goes, who they see, or finances
- Isolates partner from friends, family, or community
- Constantly checks in or monitors (even at work)

Emotional & Verbal Abuse

- Puts partner down, speaks for them, or dominates conversations
- Lies to gain sympathy or claim victimhood
- Acts superior or devalues others in the home

Threats, Intimidation & Possessiveness

- Uses weapons or threats to create fear
- Threatens children, pets, or farm animals
- Threatens to “out” their partner’s identity
- Treats partner like property or shows extreme jealousy

Higher Risk!

Danger may be greater when a person who uses abusive behaviour:

- Has weapons or access to children
- Has a history of violence, strangulation, or head injuries to the victim/survivor
- Threatens harm, suicide, or says “If I can’t have you, no one will”
- Stalks, monitors, or accuses of cheating
- Has trouble holding a job
- Uses substances daily
- Faces major stress (e.g., job loss, depression)

