

# Understanding Intimate Partner Violence

*A gentle guide to recognizing harm, holding onto what's true, and finding support*

## What It Is

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a **pattern of behavior** one person uses to gain and keep power and control over a partner. It can happen in any relationship — regardless of gender, orientation, age, culture, or income — and it is never caused by the person being harmed.

## Forms It Can Take

- **Physical** — hitting, grabbing, blocking, or any use of the body to frighten or hurt.
- **Emotional / psychological** — insults, threats, blame, gaslighting, constant criticism.
- **Sexual** — any unwanted sexual contact, pressure, or coercion.
- **Financial** — controlling money, work, or access to resources.
- **Coercive control & isolation** — monitoring, cutting you off from people you trust.
- **Digital** — tracking your phone, messages, location, or accounts.

## Warning Signs

- You feel afraid, tense, or “walking on eggshells” around your partner.
- They are jealous, possessive, or check up on you constantly.
- They blame you for their anger or actions.
- They threaten you, your loved ones, pets, or themselves.
- They control decisions, money, or where you can go.
- The behavior follows a cycle: tension → an incident → apologies or calm → tension again.

## Truths to Hold Onto

- The abuse is **not your fault**. Harm is a choice the other person makes.
- You deserve to feel safe, respected, and free.
- Leaving can be the most dangerous time — a plan and support matter.
- Kind moments between the hard ones don't erase the pattern.
- Asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.
- You are not alone, and support is confidential and free.

## Safety-Planning Basics

- Identify safe exits and a place you could go quickly.
- Tell someone you trust and agree on a code word for “I need help.”
- Keep phone, keys, cash, and copies of key documents within reach.
- Save emergency numbers; a hotline advocate can plan with you.
- If your devices may be watched, use a safer phone or clear history.
- In an emergency, call 911 if it is safe to do so.

## Where to Get Help — free, confidential, 24/7

|                                    |                                                            |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| National Domestic Violence Hotline | 1-800-799-7233 • text START to 88788 • thehotline.org      |
| StrongHearts Native Helpline       | 1-844-762-8483 (for Native & Alaska Native survivors)      |
| Teen Dating Abuse Helpline         | 1-866-331-9474 (loveisrespect.org)                         |
| Deaf Hotline (videophone)          | 1-855-812-1001                                             |
| 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline      | call or text 988 • Emergencies: 911 • Local referrals: 211 |