

Someone
I care about
is in an
abusive
relationship

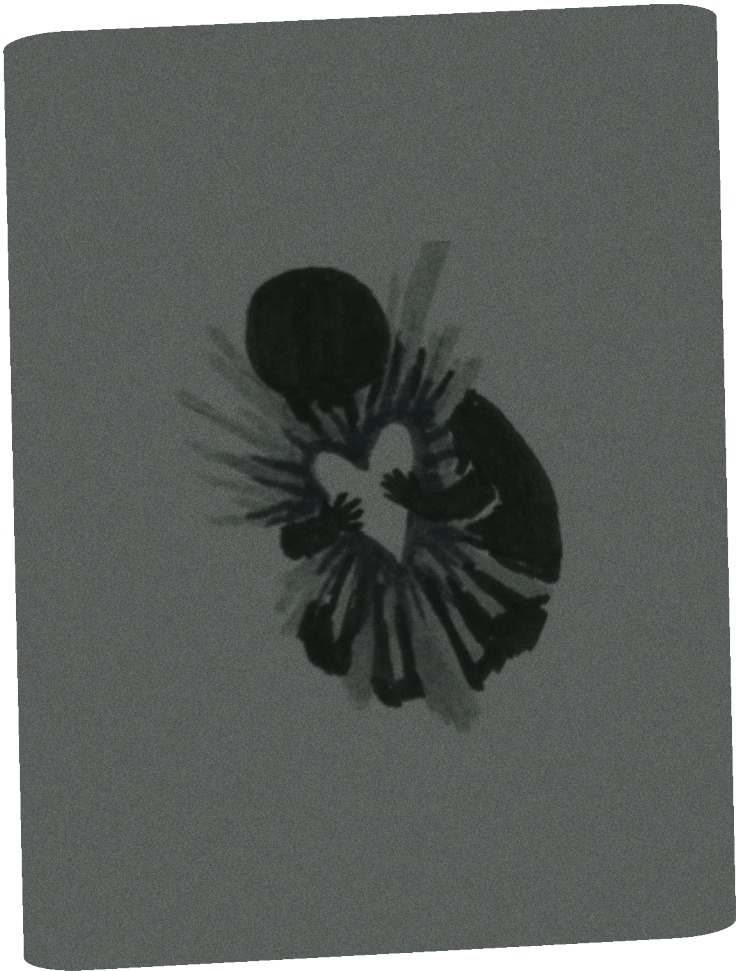
a zine to assess danger during
support and intervention

Supporting someone who wants to leave an abusive relationship can be confusing and sometimes dangerous. This is a resource to help build capacity to assess risks for violence during the support & intervention process.

Research shows that almost all survivors try- and fail- to leave an abusive relationship multiple times. Support can be a long-term process. Assessing danger and learning to plan for safety must be an on-going process, too.

Those who try to leave a high-risk abusive relationship might be at risk for homicide. Someone is killed by their intimate partner every 6 days in Canada. This zine is designed to help you take that statistic seriously- even if you, or the survivor, don't think that they are at-risk.





What is abuse?

There are many types of abusive relationship and some types are very dangerous to the abused person, their children and those who are close to them. Some types of abuse are statistically more likely to end in homicide or serious injury.

This zine will help you understand the signs and patterns that indicate an abusive relationship that presents a serious threat to someone's life or physical safety.

Different types of violence and abuse require different kinds of interventions, so use this guide to figure out how to intervene safely.



Types of abusive relationships

Violence researchers have discovered patterns in different types of abusive relationship. Some are more likely to result in homicide or serious physical violence.

Situational Couple Violence

Situational Couple Violence is when one or both partners respond to conflict with violence or aggression. The violence can be minor and does not result in serious injury. This kind of relationship does not have a pattern of intensifying violence, stalking or threats and survivors are less likely to feel 'controlled' by their partner. Violence can still lead to injury. Relational strategies (counselling, accountability circles and mental health and healing supports) can help stop this kind of violence.

Coercive control, or intimate terrorism

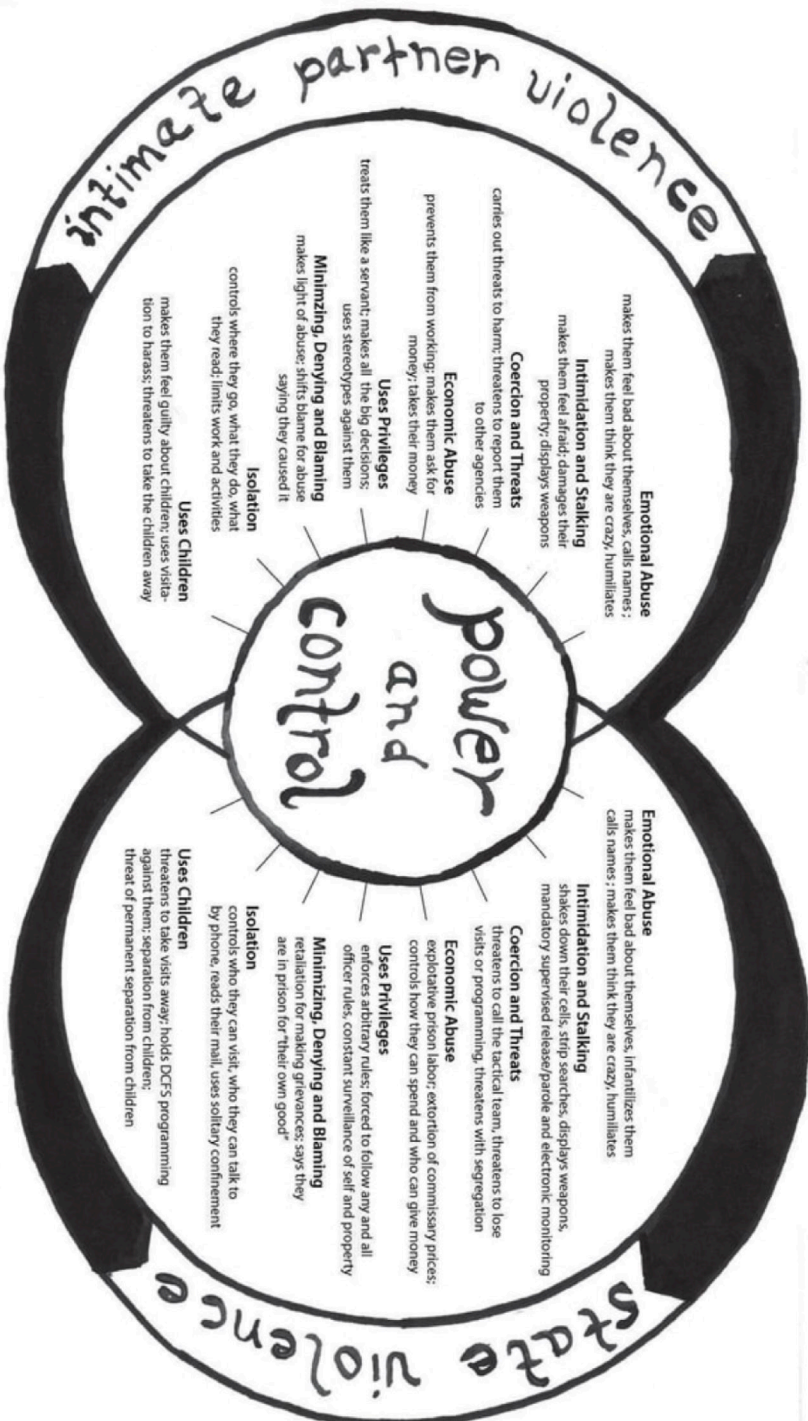
Coercive control, or intimate terrorism, is a kind of abusive relationship where violence forms a pattern of total control over one person. There is an atmosphere of fear and abuse strategies include stalking, physical violence, emotional abuse, financial control and emotional blackmail (suicide threats or threats to children or pets) to keep survivors in the relationship. This kind of relationship is the most dangerous- for survivors, children, bystanders and supporters. Supporting someone in this kind of relationship requires intensive safety-planning. Domestic violence crisis shelters can help with the safety planning process.

Sometimes, a survivor might be at serious risk in a relationship where there was no prior physical violence. Usually, in these situations, stalking, emotional blackmail and other forms of control will form the pattern of abuse.

Power and control wheel

Getting support, or attempting to leave a violent relationship can be a dangerous process for a survivor. Both the abusive partner and the policing and legal systems can cause distress and harm. Talk with the person you are supporting and ask them what they are worried about. Support them by making a list of possible risks to them, and imagine how you might support them to avoid these dangers. Take notice of what additional supports you might need.

Decades of research in intimate partner and family homicide has shown that there are predictable patterns or 'red flags' that tell us when a survivor is at a high risk of being killed or seriously injured. The risk assessment questionnaire (next page) is what professionals use to determine whether a relationship is 'high risk'. Try going through this questionnaire with the person you are supporting. How many of these things apply to them? The following questionnaire is the result of research by Jacqueline Campbell. You can find more information by visiting www.dangerassessment.org. There is a separate danger assessment questionnaire for lesbian relationships at the link above and additional versions of this danger assessment tools in English, Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese.



Self Danger Assessment

DANGER ASSESSMENT

Jacquelyn C. Campbell, Ph.D., R.N. Copyright, 2003; update 2019; www.dangerassessment.com

Several risk factors have been associated with increased risk of homicides (murders) of women and men in violent relationships. We cannot predict what will happen in your case, but we would like you to be aware of the danger of homicide in situations of abuse and for you to see how many of the risk factors apply to your situation.

Using the calendar, please mark the approximate dates during the past year when you were abused by your partner or ex-partner. Write on that date how bad the incident was according to the following scale:

1. Slapping, pushing; no injuries and/or lasting pain
 2. Punching, kicking; bruises, cuts, and/or continuing pain
 3. "Beating up"; severe contusions, burns, broken bones
 4. Threat to use weapon; head injury, internal injury, permanent injury, miscarriage or choking* (use a © in the date to indicate choking/strangulation/cut off your breathing- example 4©)
 5. Use of weapon; wounds from weapon
- (If any of the descriptions for the higher number apply, use the higher number.)

Mark **Yes** or **No** for each of the following. ("He" refers to your husband, partner, ex-husband, ex-partner, or whoever is currently physically hurting you.)

1. Has the physical violence increased in severity or frequency over the past year?

 2. Does he own a gun?

 3. Have you left him after living together during the past year?

- 3a. (If you have *never* lived with him, check here:)

4. Is he unemployed?

5. Has he ever used a weapon against you or threatened you with a lethal weapon? (If yes, was the weapon a gun? check here: ___)

6. Does he threaten to kill you?

7. Has he avoided being arrested for domestic violence?

8. Do you have a child that is not his?

9. Has he ever forced you to have sex when you did not wish to do so?

10. Does he ever try to choke/strangle you or cut off your breathing?

- 10a. (If yes, has he done it more than once, or did it make you pass out or black out or make you dizzy? check here: ___)

11. Does he use illegal drugs? By drugs, I mean "uppers" or amphetamines, "meth", speed, angel dust, cocaine, "crack", street drugs or mixtures.

12. Is he an alcoholic or problem drinker?

13. Does he control most or all of your daily activities? For instance, does he tell you who you can be friends with, when you can see your family, how much money you can use, or when you can take the car? (If he tries, but you do not let him, check here: ___)

14. Is he violently and constantly jealous of you? (For instance, does he say: "If I can't have you, no one can.")

15. Have you ever been beaten by him while you were pregnant? (If you have never been pregnant by him, check here: ___)

16. Has he ever threatened or tried to commit suicide?

17. Does he threaten to harm your children?

18. Do you believe he is capable of killing you?

19. Does he follow or spy on you, leave threatening notes or messages, destroy your property, or call you when you don't want him to?

20. Have you ever threatened or tried to commit suicide?

Total "Yes" Answers

Thank you. Please talk to your nurse, advocate, or counselor about what the Danger Assessment means in your situation.

Self-Assessment Checklist

The following questions are designed to help you understand and clarify your role as a support person and acknowledge your boundaries and limitations in the process. Knowing your limits will help you support someone on a longer-term basis, and not burn out in the process.

- **Has the survivor asked for my help?** If so, what kind of help do they want? Make a note to check-in regularly with them, as support-needs might change.
- If they simply want me to listen, **am I prepared to listen without judgement if they disclose things that make me concerned for their safety or if I disagree with their choices?**
- **Am I prepared to seek resources to build my own literacy about abuse and get acquainted with local support services,** if more help is needed?
- **Am I survivor, too?** Is it possible that this could set me back with my own healing? If so, plan for how to respond and address your own needs during this process.
- **Who will I turn to, if the support becomes confusing or difficult?** Is there a support group or someone I trust who is literate on issues of abuse and can support me, too?



○ **Are children exposed to, or experiencing violence?** Is the abuse serious enough that I may have to weigh my loyalty to the survivor with the safety of their children? What kind of secrets am I willing to keep? How can I plan for scenarios that keep all of us safe, in advance? Be upfront with the person you are supporting about this.

○ **If a risk assessment determines that the relationship poses high risks for serious violence, how will I keep myself safe?** How can I apply safety planning principles to my role as supporter and bystander?

○ **Am I participating in support out of feelings of guilt or shame?** Was I called into a support circle without my consent? No one should engage in survivor support or accountability circles out of guilt or shame. If you are, then find another way to participate that respects your boundaries and values.

○ **Am I prepared to be gentle on myself, if things go in an unexpected direction?** Risk assessment is not perfect and neither are we. Supporters don't have to be experts in family violence. The abusive person is the only one who is responsible for their violence.

Safety Planning

Once you've worked with the survivor and other folks who are supporting them to identify potential risks for serious violence or harm from the abusive partner, and possibly from police or child welfare systems, then you are ready to safety plan!

There are many good resources that can help you support a survivor to plan for safety. Your local domestic violence crisis shelter might be able to help you, too. You can always phone them and let them know you are supporting someone to plan for safety and they may be able to give you helpful info or other local resources.



✧ If you or the survivor feel that their relationship **presents a threat to their physical safety or survival, OR if the survivor is deeply afraid of their partner** then safety-planning should consider the following:

> Are they willing / able to find space in a secure crisis shelter with kick-proof doors? Most secure crisis shelters do not have public addresses and are designed to keep survivors safe.

> Designate someone to hold emergency cash and copies of all their important documents (mortgage documents, passports, ids) in the event that they leave suddenly.



✧ If you and the person you are supporting feel that their relationship is **low-risk for serious violence and does not show a pattern of controlling or coercive abuse**, then ask them if they want to stay. If they do, consider harm reduction for when/if physical violence or aggression happens again in their relationship.

> Are there places to turn to, for accessible and safe counselling support for both partners?

> Would they consider a self-defense class?

> If substance use is a trigger for violence can they plan to use substances in places where others can intervene, safely? Can they sleep elsewhere?

> Are they asking for an accountability circle? If so, make a list of supportive resources to build literacy on abuse and violence, so all supporters can be on the same page.

Helpful Resources

Safety Planning and Intimate Partner Violence: A toolkit for survivors and supporters

<https://survivedandpunished.org/2022/04/13/new-toolkit-safety-planning-and-intimate-partner-violence/>

Canadian National Directory of Family Violence & Crisis Support Services in your region

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/health-promotion/stop-family-violence/services.html>

Guide to Risk Assessment and Safety Planning for Victims of Family Violence

<https://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/professionals/sites/professionals/files/resources/guide-risk-assessment-safety-planning-ccp.pdf>

Stay with Them' Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence Share Insights on How Friends and Family Can Help

<https://gbvlearningnetwork.ca/our-work/backgrounders/stay-withthem/index.html>



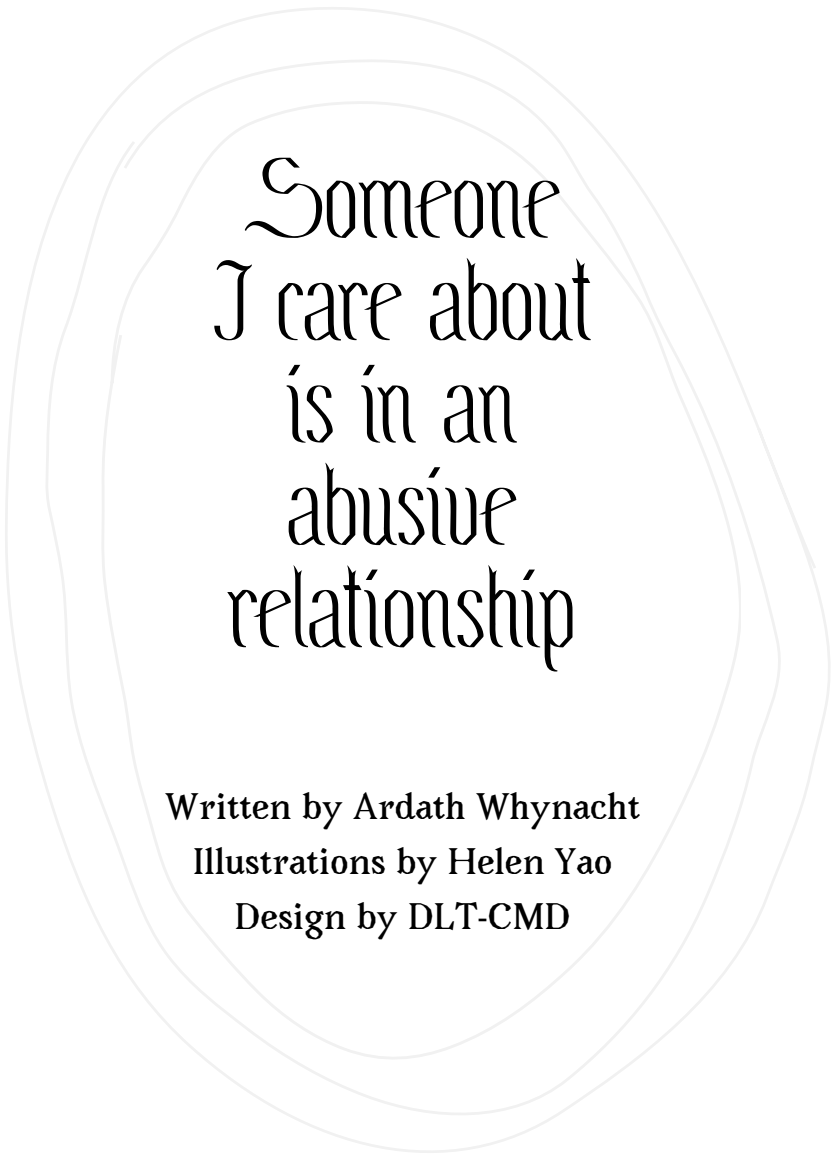
Supports for higher-risk relationships where the survivor is afraid

Creating a Safety Plan: a resource for survivors fleeing a relationship

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/criminal-justice/victims-of-crime/vs-info-for-professionals/training/creating-safety-plan.pdf>

Information on Coercive Control Abuse for Relationships Where Children are Impacted

<https://gbvlearningnetwork.ca/our-work/infographics/coercive-controlchildren/index.html>



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