



REGIONAL GUIDE

Durham

Chapter 2: Is This Abuse?
Signs to Look Out For



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This Guide is For You

Welcome. We believe you. We believe them.

This guide is for you and anyone who needs it. You have a friend and you're worried about them. They might be in a bad situation. You're pretty sure things aren't good and they're getting worse.

What do you need? Information. Resources. Things to do right now.

This guide is a list of resources that you can share and take action on, if you or they choose to. It has been written and sourced specifically for the Durham region. We created this guide for survivors of sexual violence and for those who want to help them. Maybe your friend needs support. Maybe you are a survivor and you never want to see another go through what you've experienced.

Sexual violence is a prevalent, intersectional and multi-factor issue affecting all communities. Its complexity makes it impossible to tackle alone. It takes every person who has endured gender-based violence standing up and refusing to let it happen to another.

Thank you for taking the initiative.



Is This Abuse?

It wasn't anything you could put your finger on. Maybe someone was telling you a story, almost like it was a joke, but something in their tone caught your attention and made your stomach knot up.

You don't know what it is exactly that's making your stomach knot up or making you feel or think that something isn't quite right. It may not feel right to ask outright if everything is ok or if someone is hurting them. They might not realize it themselves. so how do you know?

There are signs. Gender-based violence follows pretty standard patterns because abuse isn't about love or jealousy. It's always about power and control.

Abuse and gender-based violence doesn't always start with physical violence. It often begins with emotional, sexual, financial or spiritual abuse that slowly cuts the survivor down, makes them feel alone, and like no one else will love them.

The following pages will outline common signs of abuse. Not all of these signs constitute abuse or violence. Some people may exhibit some of these and some may not - every situation is different. This is why people need help and guidance and even legal support.



Signs to Look Out For

Here are some common signs* to look out for:

The other person is just plain mean. Your friend has told you (or you've seen) them be humiliated or be made fun of by their partner. They may say things like "we're just joking", but it doesn't feel like teasing or joking.

They've told you stories about having to have sex just to make the other person happy. Your friend may have told you stories about having to have sex just to make the other person happy. They might be making it seem like a normal part of a relationship, but something seems off and you suspect that you're not hearing the worst parts.

One person is doing things that they don't want to do just to make the other person happy. In any relationship, you might notice that one person is always partaking in things that make them uncomfortable or unhappy, such as drugs, stealing, drinking, or any kind of dangerous activity.



*Source: [Canadian Women's Foundation](#)

Signs to Look Out For

One person is always texting, calling, and showing up uninvited. They have to know where the other is all of the time. Sometimes, they don't let the other person leave the house or they will hide their belongings, such as their phone or their wallet.

One person in the relationship controls all the money and spending. The other person can't make any decisions around money and their financial situation is kept a secret. You may also suspect that one person is stealing money from the other.

One person uses physical force (push, punch, slap, choke, shake, used objects/weapons) and you know that they've hurt other people (children, pets, family members, friends, neighbours). They may have even destroyed household items. The stories you hear make it clear that this person is threatening violence, and sometimes those threats aren't words – there may just be glares or other non-verbal cues that threaten physical assault.

One person is manipulating the other with religion and using it to justify hurting them. Or one person is being forced to practice religion (or not not being allowed to practice religion at all).

When one person is called out on their behaviour, they say it was because they love the other person. It may get better for a little while, but then the same behaviours start up again.

When one person is called out on their behaviour, they blamed the other person and said it was all their fault.

One person threatens to kill themselves or someone else if the other person says they'll leave them.

**Together we can
end gender-based
violence. Be ready
with resources.**



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