

Predictors of Domestic Violence

The following behavior patterns -- whether they're exhibited subtly or overtly -- can serve as predictors or warning signs of a family member's potential for domestic violence:

- Do they tend to use force or violence to solve problems? Do they have a quick temper? Do they over-react to little problems and every-day frustrations? Are they cruel to animals? Do they punch walls or throw things when they're upset? Any of these behaviors can be a sign of a person who might use violence in an attempt to maintain power or control.
- Do they abuse drugs or alcohol? There is a strong link between violent behavior and problems with drugs and alcohol.
- Do they become jealous of relationships other family members have with one another or with friends at work or school? Do they keep tabs on them? Do they want to know where they are at all times? Do they prohibit them from pursuing other relationships?
- Do they expect or demand that individual family members follow their orders or wishes? Do they become angry if their wishes are not fulfilled or if what they want to do is not anticipated?
- Do you or other family members usually do what they want to do? When they become angry, do the people around them become fearful? Has trying to avoid making them angry and finding ways to placate them become a major part of your life and/or other family members, as well?
- Do they ever treat someone in the family roughly? Do they ever physically force that person to do what they don't want to do?
- Do they go through extreme highs (behaving with great kindness) and pronounced lows (behaving with cruelty), almost as though they are two distinctly different people?
- Do they have access to guns or other weapons? Do they talk about using them against other people or threaten to use them to "get even"?
- Do they have strong and/or rigid ideas about traditional roles family members should adhere to? Some examples include such scenarios as thinking that a wife should stay at home and follow her husband's wishes and orders, or children should be "seen but not heard," or elders in the family are the absolute authority.
- Did they grow up in a family that was affected by domestic violence? In many cases, someone who was abused as a child or witnessed violence in the home as they grew up learns that violence is "normal" behavior. Note: this is not to say that there is a direct cause and effect relationship between early exposure to abuse and later abusive behavior, only that it can be a contributing factor in some cases.

Abusiveness and violence are behaviors that are learned and, like all learned behaviors, they can be changed.

For additional information contact the CSS Women's Commission at 704-336-3210.