



How to spot the risk of harm in your relationship

If a crime is happening now or someone's life is in danger, call 911.

Abuse in relationships can look like many things, including emotional abuse, intimidation, controlling behaviour, and physical violence.

Abuse doesn't always happen over a long time or from the start of a relationship. It can also happen suddenly or for the first time during times of conflict, separation, arguments or stress.

Warning signs may include:

Controlling – like controlling where you go, what you wear, who you see, or how you use money.

Hurting – like hitting, kicking, pushing, or grabbing you.

Isolating – keeping you away from friends, family, community, or medical support.

Monitoring – always checking your phone, emails, or social media.

Stalking – following you or showing up uninvited at your home, work, or social events.

Jealousy – like getting upset if you spend time with someone else.

Threats and intimidation – making you feel afraid, which can include threats about using weapons.

Blame – saying everything is your fault or holding grudges.

Insults – saying things to make you feel bad about yourself.

Social embarrassment – humiliating or embarrassing you in front of other people.

Mood swings – switching quickly from being affectionate to being angry or violent.

Coercion – pressuring or forcing you to do things, like using drugs or alcohol.

Sexual abuse – pressuring or forcing you into sexual activities you don't want.

Gaslighting – making you think there's a problem with your memory, judgement, or sanity to control you.

Minimizing – like saying their hurtful behaviour isn't a big deal or that you're overreacting.

Destroying property – harming your things, like your clothes, car, or medication.

Apologizing without change – saying sorry, often with gifts or promises, but then hurting you again.

Threatening self-harm or suicide – saying they will harm themselves if you try to leave, possibly with a weapon.

Learn more about harm in intimate relationships at www.stopviolence.ca.

If you think you're being harmed by your partner, getting support early can help you understand your options and make a plan for your safety.

Queer relationships

Risk doesn't always look the same for everyone. Harm in queer relationships can be affected by unique pressures, including:

- **Fear of being “outed”** — You might be worried people will find out you're queer if you ask for help. Your partner may threaten to “out” you to family, work, friends, or community as a way to control you.
- **Your identity used against you** — Your partner may use your identity, gender, experiences, or sexuality to insult, threaten, or manipulate you.
- **Limited support** — You may feel isolated from your community and find it difficult to get support from people who understand queer experiences.

Rural living

Violence, risk, and finding support can feel different when you live in a rural area.

It may be common to have weapons in the home for things like hunting, farming, sport, or recreation. Many Canadians own weapons responsibly — but having weapons around means it's easier for people to get seriously hurt if someone is violent.

It can also feel harder to get help or leave quickly. There may be little or no public transportation in your area, like buses or trains. Services like shelters, legal advice, police, and healthcare may be farther away.

But support is still available. You deserve safety and care, no matter where you live.

Ottawa Victim Services (ovs-svo.com) can help you understand your options and connect you to the best services for your situation.

You can also increase your safety by:

- finding support nearby, like trusted neighbours or community groups
- planning transport in case you need to get away quickly
- finding safe and private ways to communicate, like a public computer at a library
- understanding your legal options, like an Emergency Order which can limit access to weapons for up to 30 days while you make other safety plans (learn more at stopviolence.ca/orders)

You can get a detailed guide on how to plan for safety — especially in rural areas — from Lanark County Interval House and Community Support at lcih.org/safety-planning.

Understanding your legal options

If you're experiencing abuse in your relationship, you may have some legal options to help make you safer. These options may limit how your partner can contact you or access weapons. They can include prohibition orders, police reports, emergency safety measures, and access to free and confidential legal advice.

Every situation is different and it's important to understand what may be safest for you before taking action. It's up to you whether to take legal action, and support is on hand to help you explore your options at your own pace.

Read our Legal & Safety Options Tip Sheet at stopviolence.ca/options to learn more about:

- Red Flag Laws (emergency firearm restrictions)
- Peace Bonds and Restraining Orders
- Police powers and safety measures
- Free Independent Legal Advice (ILA)

Support Services

If you're worried about violence or your safety, you can ask for help from support service organizations like:

Assaulted Women's Helpline
awhl.org

Luke's Place (Legal & Family Court Support)
lukesplace.ca

Ottawa Victim Services
ovs-svo.com

**Lanark County Interval House
& Community Support**
lcih.org | 613-257-5960 (crisis line)

Hope for Wellness Helpline
(for Indigenous individuals)
hopeforwellness.ca

Immigrant Women Services Ottawa
immigrantwomenservices.com

Interval House Ottawa
intervalhouseottawa.org

You find more support services at ovs-svo.com/resources.

If someone may be in immediate danger, consider calling 911.

