

9 Ways to Collude with Abusive Men

by John Went

The following list reflects some of the most common mistaken beliefs about abusers and their violence:

1. "I actually like him."

Abusive men are likeable. In many ways they are the same as all of us. But it is important to remember that this likeable man exerts his power and control in ways that physically and/or emotionally destroy his family. Liking him can be the first step toward minimizing his abuse.

2. "He's a victim."

Many, if not all, of abusive men have been victimized in their lives. He needs to take responsibility for what he is doing now in order to stop the cycle. By itself, dealing with his own victimization will not stop his abusiveness. Understanding his victim/s will help him stop his abuse and better understand himself.

3. "She's the perpetrator."

His partner may not be a very nice person (or he may paint her that way). Men almost unanimously use this as an excuse for their behavior. No matter what she does, he has no right to abuse her.

4. "He's stressed out."

Stress does not cause abuse. In fact, men who stop trying to control members of their families often report a reduction in stress.

5. "His life stinks. He's being oppressed by (his boss, mother, victim, etc.)"

Oppression is bad. Abuse is bad. We can end oppression by dealing with oppressors, not by abusing those lower in the cultural hierarchy.

6. "If he stops his substance abuse, he will stop his violence."

Substance abuse can dramatically increase the forms abuse takes. However, unless the man is willing to confront his attitudes about power, control, and his family and take concrete steps to redistribute the power in the relationship, he will continue to try to dominate others, even when he is sober.

7. "Anger is an addiction."

Many men report feeling "high" and find a release of tension when they lose their temper. Although there are physiological components to anger, abusive behavior is a political (power and control) issue. There are many non-abusive ways to deal with tension.

8. "It's a problem in the family system."

Abusive men generally have family issues that need to be dealt with at some point. Abuse maintains an inequity in power in the relationship that cannot be dealt with by seeing the partners as equals. This view can lead to serious safety issues for family members.

9. "He's sorry and he's trying really hard."

The only way to say you're sorry is to end the abuse.