

## **CAN AN ABUSER CHANGE?**

As one of the big questions from victims of abuse is hoping their abuser is changing, this list puts that into black and white.

Although it says HE as the abuser we would like to state that we do NOT believe that just MEN are abusers.

---

### HOW TO TELL HE'S CHANGING

He acknowledges and accepts responsibility for what he's done, fully acknowledges that he used abuse to control you and that it was wrong, and he isn't blaming you, other people, his stress, his job, or any other outside circumstances for his choices. He is no longer denying it, making light of it, or making excuses for it. He acknowledges that he chose to behave this way instead of saying that other people made him do it, or that he can't control himself. He fully understands and acknowledges that what he did was wrong. He admits lies, he admits what he's done and is not longer making up stories to make himself look better. He is no longer trying to hide his behavior from others. He understands that recovery from abusiveness takes a long time and he'll have to work at it for a long, long time.

He understands what his behavior has cost you. He understands fully that you and your children have been hurt by what he's done, and the ways in which you've been hurt. He will talk about it with you in depth about how you feel, your fear, your hurt, your anger, your rights, your lack of trust for him and understands fully that it is his behavior that has caused it. When you express anger at him, he listens instead of getting angry and trying to shout you down, threatening you or trying to convince you that something's wrong with you for feeling that way. He is sorry for what he's done, and is working hard to overcome the damage he's done and is actively making up for it by giving you back what is rightfully yours - money, rights, freedoms, choices, etc.. He understands that it will take his victims a long time to recover from what he's done to them.

He is proving to you that he understands that you're a human being with rights and is no longer trying to take them away from you. No more double standards. He understands that you're an equal human being, and he's not superior to you. He's pulling his weight. He's respecting your opinions, even the ones with disagree with his. He's accepting your right to be angry with him for what he's done, and you can talk about his abuse with him. He's respecting your right to independence and your right to freedom. He stops interfering in your friendships and family relationships and you are able to re-establish and repair these, and make new friends. He stops monitoring your movements, demanding to know where you are and who's there. He stops expecting sex on demand. He is taking into account how you're affected by his behavior and choices. He's stopped drinking. He's stopped doing those things that are inappropriate for a committed relationship. Affairs, keeping all the control over the money, etc. He's fair with money, allowing you to have your assets in your name, a job if you want, etc. He takes responsibility for what he does and how it affects you and the children. He's no longer treating

you like a servant. He acknowledges the contributions you made to the relationship.

He is no longer blocking communication, he listens and respects what you have to say. He will discuss with you the controlling behaviors and attitudes he's had. He listens to you, even when you're angry instead of trying to bully you or threaten you into shutting up. You are able to express yourself, speak freely and feel safe doing so. You're able to express your anger, feelings. He accepts your right to be angry and he listens when you express it and thinks about your points, he makes an effort to understand. He listens to you without interrupting and allows your thoughts even if he doesn't agree. When you discuss his behaviors that hurt you and the children, he takes them seriously and stops them. You can speak and act freely without him retaliating. He's communicating without manipulation, his usual tactics to block you. If he tries to control you, you can point it out to him and he'll stop. Accepts feedback, criticism.

He stops cutting you down and starts focusing on what's good, your strength and your abilities. He is not putting you down, trying to convince you your perception is off, that you're crazy, that you're stupid, etc. He stops his abuse. Completely, once and for all. He's respectful and doesn't guilt you into things or throw fits. He does not pressure you into things or out of things. He's not intimidating you, he's not threatening you. He's stopped undermining you, and supports you instead. He is making a big effort to be non abusive.

#### HOW TO TELL HE'S NOT CHANGING

He says "I can't change unless you do." Which means that he's trying to get you to agree to give up your rights and freedoms in exchange for him not abusing you. Also stated as "I've changed, but you aren't changing"; "I'm not the only one who needs help".

He tries to get sympathy from you, family members, and friends. He is still lying to you, the children, your family or other people about what he's done. He continues to attempt to cover up what he's done to you and the children. He won't acknowledge that it was wrong. He doesn't seem sorry that he did it, he only seems sorry that he has suffered some consequences for it.

He refuses to let the subject of his abuse come up or gets angry when it does. He won't discuss his controlling behaviors and attitudes. He still tries to deny it, minimize it, excuse it, or justify it. Defends his behaviors. He insists you just get past it.

He plays victim. He says "How could you do this to me.?" He still whines and blames you for all the problems. \*He is overly charming, always trying to remind you of all the good times you had together and ignore the bad. He tries to buy you back with romantic gifts, dinners, flowers. All while trying to convince you that you need to stay together to work it out.

He will not get help or He says he'll get counselling or other help, but never

does. Or he does and tries to convince you that he's cured and you need to take him back now. "Now that I'm in this program, you have to be more understanding." Or "I'm learning a lot from this program". If a man is pressuring you this way, then as soon as he gets back in, he will most likely drop the program. This is why it's so critical, if you're considering taking him back, to watch his behaviors, to talk in depth, and to give it time. Sometimes, instead of counseling they will suddenly claim to have found God; he goes to church a few times.

He cries and begs, they particularly like to do this in a public situation so that you are embarrassed and appear to be "cold hearted".

He does things to try to sabotage your efforts to make it on your own.

He harasses or stalks you. If you ask him for space or time, he refuses to allow you to have any and continues to make contact in any way he can. Harassment by phone calls, threats, legal frustrations, showing up at work, hanging around family.

He continues to restrict your rights. He still behaves as if he's superior. You aren't able to express yourself and speak freely. He still demands constant attention, won't allow you to take care of your own needs. He still picks at you and criticizes you, and ignores your strengths and contributions to the relationship. He doesn't support your independence, still refuses to acknowledge that you have rights. He hangs on to double standards. He is still denying you your fair share of the marital assets, money. He puts his wants and needs above yours.

He doesn't recognize the damage he's done. He gets angry with you over the consequences you've suffered over his abuse. He's mad or seems confused as to why you fear him, don't trust him, are hurt, and angry. He tries to get out of the consequences by trying to convince you that something's wrong with you for allowing him to have any consequences. He behaves as if he's above reproach. He claims that he would never hurt you, despite that he's done many things to hurt you. He's mad that you left, instead of recognizing your right to have done so. He still acts like you owe him. He's impatient or critical with you for not forgiving him immediately, for not being satisfied with the changes he may have already made, especially if he hasn't made the changes you requested, or hasn't changed but claims he has.

He's only concerned with how hard the situation is for him, and no one else. He feels sorry for himself. He doesn't show appropriate concern for how you and the children feel about what he's done. Abuse does more than just hurt, it is damaging, and if he doesn't show appropriate concern for the damage he's done, then he hasn't changed.

He still does things that are inappropriate for an intimate relationship. Cheating, not including you in family decisions, hoarding all the marital assets - money, property, cars, stocks, bonds, etc. and won't allow you to have access to them.

He says he can only change if you help him, he wants emotional support and forgiveness, and give up your break from him.

He says I'm changing but you can see that he's not. He gets angry with you for not realizing how much he's changed. He gets angry for not trusting that he's changed for good. Abusive men often say I'm sorry then get mad if you don't immediately forget what they did, he thinks his sorry resolves the matter and it should be dropped and you should just move forward.

He pressures you into taking him back because he "can't wait forever".

He trash talks you to the children.

He threatens and tries to intimidate you. The next step of behavior is generally one of threats and attempts to intimidate. This will often include threats to attack family and friends, threats to kill you or "put out a contract on you." Threats that he will take the children away or get custody of them himself, or threats to kill himself.