

Why Are Women Attracted To Men Who Abuse Them?

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This question has long puzzled me. The answer, according to domestic violence expert and hypnotherapist Darling G. Villena-Mata, Ph.D., is not simple. However, whatever the cause, Dr Villena-Mata, clarifies the interaction of abuser and abused. Just as importantly, she recommends preventative steps to help girls avoid becoming victims.

Of course, there are instances when it's the woman in a relationship who is the batterer and the man who is victimized. But because the vast majority of batterers are men and for the sake of clarity, we focus here on women as victims. [Dr.B.]

[For a related topic go here: [Hypnosis to Heal Male Rage](#)]

Here's Dr Villena-Mata's commentary:

While it may be true that women who come from abusive or dysfunctional childhood backgrounds may attract abusive men as mates, this is not always the case.

Also, it is a myth that those with these backgrounds are the ones that end up in abusive situations.

Women from loving homes, good boundaries, and high self-esteem may end up with abusive mates.

Battering runs the gambit, as do the personality traits of the abuser and abused. What normally occurs is that the abuser very slowly to slowly to quicker (depending on the would-be-abused/battered) chips away at her self-esteem.

Normally the would-be batterer:

- picks on the little things that the woman is doing 'incorrect' or 'wrong'
- shows her the 'right' way with love and patronization or
- acts as an instructor type to a student.

There is a mixture of love, training, and correction.

Eventually, the woman starts to doubt her judgment and abilities and starts slowly to turn her "locus of control" (decision-making and power) over to the abuser.

Eventually she enters what is called "learned helplessness", doubting herself and believing more of what is "true" and "correct" from the abuser who uses love, control, and correction to manipulate and mold the woman.

Finally that psychological mind-game may erupt in shouts, yells, shaming, and embarrassing the woman.

So the battering gears up. It has cycles and there is a range of battering type behavior. (Usually only the extreme version is shown in movies).

It is psychological warfare at the worst and at the least a "control freak" who, if he does not have his way, erupts into rage or a feeling that he is being victimized by the inadequacy of the woman, whom he needs to bring into line.

Physical assault may occur as the cycle continues. The violence may be sporadic or may be used as a threat to keep the woman in line.

During the first and second cycles of domestic violence or even in date violence, the abuser:

slowly encourages the woman to distance herself from family and friends, then makes the distancing an either/or command.

The woman fears losing the man, who gives her that ultimatum -- covertly or overtly.

At this stage the man has the woman convinced that no one will have her or that no one understands her better than he.

The batterer tends to be charming and normally above intelligence (although this is not always the case), attentive (but in fact, controlling every movement) and able to find the 'weak areas' of the woman to use against her.

Threats of violence and actual violence - no matter how infrequent - can serve to keep the woman in the relationship.

High rates of violence and death do occur when:

- the woman is pregnant,
- attempts to leave the relationship,
- actually leaves the relationship, and
- during the Super Bowl and other intense sports broadcasts, when male hormones, mixed with alcohol magnify the retaliation for any perceived slights in front of the abuser's buddies.

It is not easy for a woman to escape, without an 'escape plan' given by a domestic violence shelter center. 'Escaping' is the correct term, especially if the man has shown signs of physical violence or potential suicide: "if you leave me, I will kill myself" and/or homicide ("no one can have you; you embarrass me and you are the source of my pain").

If this is the case, the woman should NOT return to her parents as she will put herself and anyone around her at risk for death. Rather, she should go to an unknown location (no friends' homes either) where the abuser cannot track her down or stalk her. The domestic violence center can help with this.

There are many psychological factors involved in a battered woman's predicament:

- learned helplessness,
- the Stockholm Hostage Effect or Syndrome,
- Concurrent Trauma Stress,
- legitimate fear of death and being beaten and stalked.

Also, the woman, *no matter how high her self-esteem was in childhood and adulthood* can be 'conned' or 'snowed' by an effective batterer.

The best defense is teaching girls and young women to:

- **learn martial arts,**
- **recognize and trust their 'gut' or body reactions,**
- **see 'time' as a friend** ♦ **no need to be rushed into a relationship or any other situation that she is not comfortable with,**
- **take time to know herself and her needs and wants, and**
- **have a healthy support system of friends whom she uses to 'check out' her would-be boyfriend.**

Even this does not work all the time, it does cut down on falling into the trap laid by a would-be abuser who has decided to 'have you' and who will wine/dine and sweet talk until you are 'mesmerized' (pun intended) and then you start to forget yourself.

It is about trusting one's Self and one's observations and one's body showing the red flags and letting it be okay that one's actions might disappoint someone else's expectations.

It is ok to say no and not to explain. One can still be courteous and friendly and still have an energetic protection. And that takes practice, no matter the age.

Stress plays an enormous part of keeping one in a fight-or-flight mode. It greatly magnifies "either/or" thinking, with no time for critical thinking by any party involved.

A caveat when helping a battered person understand the differences between unhealthy relationships and loving relationships is to make sure to know if they are in an existing abusive relationship.

IF they are, it is very important to add to any form of counseling or education that the abused woman does NOT go back to the battering relationship even though she is fully assertive, feels equal, and wants to educate the man or demonstrate that there has been a change in behavior or attitude. Why?

Because the batterer will:

- get suspicious,
- not feel in control, and
- will have a higher tendency to increase the violence -- raging, hitting, yelling, demeaning, etc.

Any changes seen in the battered/abused will be seen by the batterer as:

- So you went to talk to someone about us?
- How dare you embarrass me!
- So you think I am not doing a good job in making this family work?
- Who do you think you are? Or,
- What is going on?
- I notice a change in you
- Are you having an affair? or
- Someone is telling you that our relationship is not good enough?
- Who is that person? And how dare she/he?!!
- Who is getting into our business? and
- I forbid you to go again."

And so on.

Some victims of domestic violence may be drawn to abusive partners because they are unwittingly seeking Mastery. Meaning that the girl who wanted

something to work out and failed to get the outcome she needed will later in her life attract similar situations in order to do a 'do over' or try to master it this time around.

(A word to therapists)

Working with women who are in the actual throes of being battered is not the same as working with those who are no longer in such relationships, but are experiencing the effects of being battered and degraded.

Those women who have left abusive relationships may end up at the unconscious level attracting similar men.

The 'chords' need to be cut and the 'portals' closed and healed.

This is something to ascertain in a safe manner so that person is not re-traumatized (i.e. does not abreact). There are many hypnosis methods to keep this from happening. The bubble/time travel is one that comes to mind. A combination of EFT within the hypnosis, and in beta or conscious state of doing EFT is another. Those who are also psychotherapists might use a combination of cognitive and narrative approaches. Those who are not can use elements of these theories to help the survivor realize how her thinking has been affected by the abuse and that she has the power to re-write her story into one that allows her heart to sing freely.

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To **make an appointment in Montreal with Dr Knight** go to [Hypnotic Testimonials and Hypnotherapy Fees](#). Or email me drknight@therapy-insights.com