

Is Change Possible In An Abuser?

While people do have the capacity to change, they need to deeply want to and be committed to all aspects of change in order to begin to do so and even then it's a lot easier said than done.

In discussing why abusers abuse, it's clear that a lot of the casual factors behind these behaviors are learned attitudes and feelings of entitlement and privilege, which can be extremely difficult to truly change. Because of this, there's a very low percentage of abusers who truly do change their ways.

One part of changing may involve an abusive partner willingly attending a certified batterer intervention program that focuses on behavior, reflection and accountability. At the Hotline we don't recommend couples counseling, anger management, substance abuse programs or mental health treatments for abusers to learn about and deal with their abusive patterns (although often times these can helpfully supplement a batterer intervention program).

How can abusers change?

According to author Lundy Bancroft, the following are some changes in your partner that could indicate they're making progress in their recovery:

- Admitting fully to what they have done
- Stopping excuses and blaming
- Making amends
- Accepting responsibility and recognizing that abuse is a choice
- Identifying patterns of controlling behavior they use
- Identifying the attitudes that drive their abuse
- Accepting that overcoming abusiveness is a decades-long process – not declaring themselves “cured”
- Not demanding credit for improvements they've made
- Not treating improvements as vouchers to be spent on occasional acts of abuse (ex. “I haven't done anything like this in a long time, so it's not a big deal”)
- Developing respectful, kind, supportive behaviors
- Carrying their weight and sharing power
- Changing how they respond to their partner's (or former partner's) anger and grievances
- Changing how they act in heated conflicts
- Accepting the consequences of their actions (including not feeling sorry for themselves about the consequences, and not blaming their partner or children for them)