

DV Abusers Quiz: Answer Key

1. It is difficult to identify a DV abuser.

Answer - True: Identifying domestic violence abusers is challenging because they don't fit stereotypes. Common biases expect abusers to be poor, unemployed, from certain racial or ethnic groups, look "rough" or threatening, be obviously aggressive, work in certain professions, or be young. In reality, abusers come from all socioeconomic levels, races, ethnicities, age groups, and professions—including helping professions like doctors, teachers, and clergy. Many are well-groomed, professionally successful, charming, and well-liked outside the relationship.

Behaviorally, abusers present in vastly different ways. Some are difficult to work with while others avoid issues, some appear angry while others seem quiet or defensive. Many can be very charming and often position themselves as the victim.

However, all abusers share core characteristics: they use violence and coercion to control others, blame everyone else for their actions, minimize their abuse, and use threats, manipulation, or intimidation to get what they want.

Understanding these realities is crucial because relying on stereotypes can lead to missing warning signs, failing to take disclosure of abuse seriously, or making assumptions that compromise victim safety. The ability to appear "normal" is often part of how abusers maintain control and avoid accountability.

2. Domestic violence is often caused by substance abuse or mental illness.

Answer - False: Most mind-altering substances or mental illnesses do not cause DV. Some abusers also abuse substances, but most people who abuse substances are not violent. Same with mental illnesses. While mental health conditions can increase the risk of abusive behaviors, the use of DV is not a clinical diagnosis. Substance use or mental illnesses can make abuse worse but it never excuses or justifies violence. It is a behavioral profile, which includes intimidation and coercion, psychological and emotional abuse, the belief that the person has the right to dominate or control others, and the use of physical and sexual violence.

3. Women are as violent as men.

Answer - False: Research shows that abuse focused on controlling and dominating others is mostly committed by men. Sometimes women are violent toward men, but often these women are also being abused. Their violence may be them fighting back or defending

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themselves against the abuse they're experiencing. This doesn't make the violence right but understanding what's happening can help us figure out how to handle the case better. For example, if the noncustodial parent is actually the victim of domestic violence, that changes how we should respond.

4. If the abuse was really that bad, the victim would just leave.

Answer - False: *This victim-blaming myth is one of the most harmful and persistent misconceptions about domestic violence. Leaving is often the most dangerous time for a survivor. Perpetrators often escalate the abuse when they feel like they are losing control over their victim. We cannot ignore the many barriers survivors face when deciding to leave an abusive relationship: fear for their lives or their children's safety; lack of safe housing, income, or legal support; isolation, threats, and manipulation; and trying to protect their children from further abuse or trauma.*

5. Abusers often manipulate caseworkers, courts, and systems.

Answer - True: *As we've talked about, perpetrators can be master manipulators and charmers. They often portray themselves as victims and blame everything on their intimate partner or the system. They may present as the calm, cool, collected, and responsible parent, while trauma responses may cause the victim to present as paranoid, distrustful, unfocused, and minimally engaged with the child support process.*

6. Separation does not end domestic abuse.

Answer - True: *It is well established that separation and divorce often trigger increased controlling and potentially dangerous behavior from individuals with a history of domestic violence. This makes the post-separation period particularly high-risk for survivors.*