

What can I do if I think I'm being abusive?

Ask yourself: am I threatening my partner? Am I trying to punish or blame my partner for my actions? Am I constantly lashing out at them? Do I feel like hurting my partner or myself?

Answering yes to any of these means it's time to think about your actions, take responsibility and stop hurting your partner. Leave the situation or relationship if necessary to keep your partner and/or yourself safe. Call on friends, family and/or a counsellor to help you change your behaviours.

Responding as a community

Stopping same-sex partner abuse requires a community response. Here are some ideas...

Talk openly about abuse in same-sex relationships. Support friends to stay connected to one another and help to break isolation. Help to find information and resources if friends are abused or abusive.

Abuse happens in all our communities. Don't support harmful stereotypes that say some communities are more likely to have violent relationships. For example, people of colour; Aboriginal people; 'the bar crowd'; s/m community; butch/femme couples; trans & bisexual communities.

Resources

The Centre (LGTB community centre)
Information, referrals & support
1170 Bute St., Vancouver
Days: 604 684-5307
Evenings: 604 684-6869 or 1-800-566-1170
www.lgtbcentrevancouver.com

Safe Choices, BCASVACP, Vancouver, BC
Education & training re: abuse & healthy relationships for lesbian, bisexual & trans women
(604) 633-2506

North West Network of Bi, Trans, Lesbian and Gay Survivors of Abuse, Seattle, WA
<http://www.nwnetwork.org>

Education Wife Assault, Toronto, ON
http://www.womanabuseprevention.com/html/same-sex_partner_abuse.html

Contains information adapted from pamphlet produced by the Network Against Abuse in Same-Sex Relationships, a Vancouver-based coalition of LGBT service providers and the book *No More Secrets: Violence in Lesbian Relationships* (2002) by Janice Ristock.

For additional copies contact:
BCASVACP 604 633-2506 or
The Centre 604 684-5307, or visit websites:
www.endingviolence.org,
www.lgtbcentrevancouver.org

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Abuse in Same-Sex Relationships

Information & Resources

Creating Strong & Safe LGBT Communities



BC Association of
Specialized Victim
Assistance &
Counselling Programs



THE CENTRE
A Community Centre Serving and
Supporting Lesbian, Gay,
Transgendered, Bisexual People
and their Allies

Abuse in same-sex relationships is a serious problem within lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and Two-Spirit communities.

Same-sex partner abuse is often ignored, minimized or misunderstood by families, friends, communities and services providers, but it is a reality.

What is an abusive intimate relationship?

Abuse and battering are words that describe a pattern of behaviours used to intimidate, isolate, dominate and maintain power and control over someone.

It can feel confusing. In some cases, there may be an on-going pattern of abuse. In other cases, abuse may happen less often.

Abuse may take many forms and can be physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, spiritual and/or financial.

Also see pamphlets on healthy relationships for lesbians and gay men.

Examples of abusive behaviours

She/He...

- tells you that they love & support you, but constantly puts you down. You feel crazy.
- keeps you from seeing your friends or family.
- threatens to 'out' you or have you deported
- says you're confused because you identify as bisexual
- denies or makes fun of your gender identity

- insults your racial, ethnic, religious &/or class background
- is extremely jealous & possessive, accuses you of cheating
- threatens, slaps, shoves, punches, or restrains you against your will
- forces you to drink or take drugs
- forces you to have sex or unprotected sex; sexually assaults you
- destroys your personal belongings or hurts your pet
- doesn't respect your boundaries & ignores your safe words in your s/m relationship
- keeps promising to change but the abuse happens again

What can I do if I think I'm being abused?

- Conflict and abuse can feel confusing when it's happening. Ask yourself: am I being physically, sexually or emotionally abused, controlled or threatened? Am I anxious and stressed about how my partner treats me? Do I feel isolated, afraid or hopeless? If you said yes to any of these, it's important to get some perspective about what's happening.
- Try to find at least one person you can talk to about what is going on – a friend, family member, or counsellor. This may give you perspective, and help you make decisions about what to do. Remember that the abuse is not your fault.
- Making the decision about staying or leaving may feel difficult. You may not want to leave or feel you can't. Or leaving the situation

temporarily or permanently may be options. While deciding what to do, ask yourself what you can do to feel safer and have more options such as: connecting with others and reducing your isolation, increasing your financial independence, and setting stronger boundaries and limits with your partner.

- You might want to make a plan for leaving and work towards that over time doing some of the things suggested above.
- Create a safety plan to reduce the risks or harm. Think about what you (and your children) need to be as safe as possible – while in the relationship or if you leave.
- Put emergency money, keys and important documents in a safe place (with a friend or neighbour) in case you need to leave quickly.
- If you decide to leave, find a place where you can feel safe and your partner will not find you (family or friend's home, shelter/transition house). LGBT people face numerous challenges in accessing safe housing/shelter. This may be especially true for gay men & trans people who have even fewer options.
- Try to vary your routine so your partner won't find you. Because LGBT communities are small you may run into your partner at social events. If you end up in situations together try to set boundaries for yourself and look to friends and family for support.
- If you are in immediate danger, call the police. Remember, physical and sexual assault are against the law. You have legal rights to protection. If these rights are ignored by the police find an advocate to help get what you need.