

Domestic Abuse and Coercive Control Dynamics in Relationships

Course #1

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Advocacy Training Program Format: Research Alongside Scripture

Training Team

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- History behind these courses
- The importance of being grounded in peer reviewed research
- The importance of adding in a biblical perspective

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Course Description

This course provides foundational knowledge upon which all remaining courses build. It introduces the concept of coercive control as a pattern of behaviors used by abusers to dominate, entrap, and regulate their spouses or intimate partners over time.

We will explore how coercive control operates through a range of tactics, including intimidation, isolation, threats, manipulation, and psychological harm, that keep spouses/partners in a constant state of vigilance and self-monitoring.

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Coercive Control

"Coercive control" refers to a pattern of behavior by which one person seeks to control another through threats, intimidation, harassment, isolation, and other tactics. It's a form of domestic abuse that doesn't necessarily involve physical violence.

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Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, class participants will be able to:

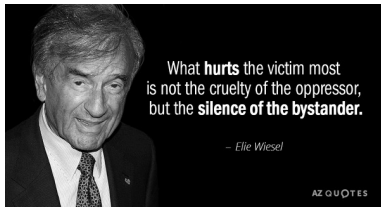
- ▶ Define coercive control and differentiate it from incident-based models of domestic abuse.
- ▶ Identify key coercive control tactics used by abusers across relational, psychological, economic, sexual, technological, spiritual, and child-related domains.
- ▶ Explain how coercive control functions as a patterned system of domination rather than isolated acts of abuse.
- ▶ Analyze the impacts of coercive control on adult survivors, children, and family systems.
- ▶ Apply a coercive control framework to recognize patterns and assess risk in advocacy, faith-based, and legal contexts.

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Stand Up - Speak Out for the Oppressed Advocacy Personified



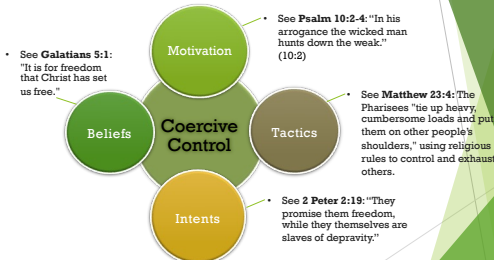
Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed. Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice. (Proverbs 31:8)

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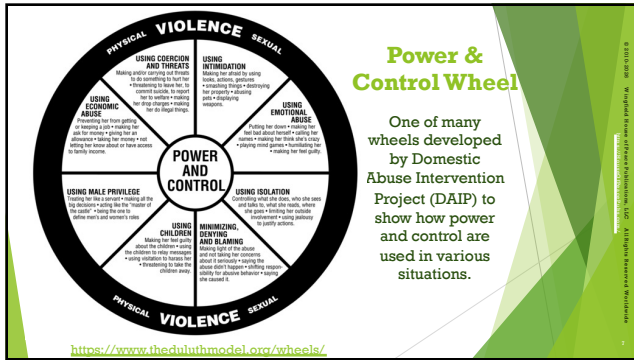
Multi-faceted Nature of Coercive Control



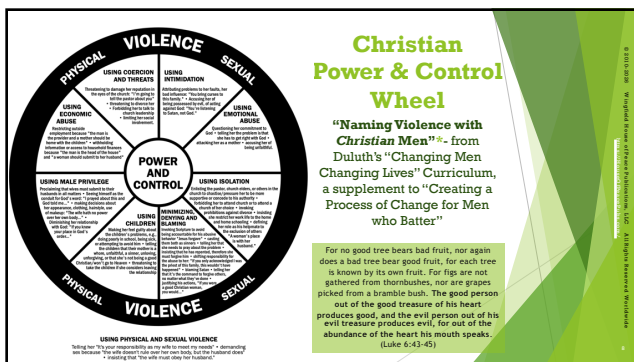
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The Shift



Domestic violence comprises a range of behaviors beyond physical and emotional abuse. Abusers often use violence, intimidation, degradation, and isolation to deprive victims of their rights to physical security, dignity, and respect.



Evan Stark encouraged the use of "coercive control" to describe a course of oppressive behavior grounded in gender-based privilege.

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Origins of Coercive Control: Evan Stark's Work

Stark re-framed "Battering" to "Coercive Control"

"Shifts the emphasis to the abuser's **patterned behavior**, accounts for **'entrapment'** without relying on either a victimization or pathology model and broadens the claims of battered women for justice and civil liberty." (Stark, 1995, pg. 3)

Caused by **one partner striving to control and subordinate the other** (Stark, 2007)

Involves domination, restriction of human rights, and removal of freedom and liberty- A "pattern of **oppression**...an offense to liberty that prevents women from freely developing their personhood, utilizing their capacities, or practicing citizenship, consequences they experience as **entrapment**." (Stark, 2007, pg. 4)



So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female. (Genesis 1:27)

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Research Language: Terms You May See

- Battering
- Domestic Violence (DV)
- Domestic Abuse (DA)
- Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)
- Intimate Partner Abuse (IPA)
- Intimate Partner Terrorism



...and why **Coercive Control** is a preferred term.

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The Process of Coercive Control

Coercive control is described as a dynamic process linking a demand with a credible threatened negative consequence for noncompliance. (Dutton, Goodman, & Schmidt, 2006; Hamberger et al., 2017)

Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause. (Isaiah 1:17 ESV)

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Coercive Control: Multiple Study Findings

Coercive control is an abusive dynamic that incorporates intimidation, microregulation, restricting a partner's autonomy, humiliation, and manipulation to ultimately exert control over an intimate partner. (Kaplenko, Loveland, & Raghavan, 2018)

"Coercion encompassed psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse."

Controlling behavior was defined as "making a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday lives." (Stark, E., & Hester, M., 2019)

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Coercive Control: Multiple Study Findings

Occurs with and without physical violence. "All of the characteristic effects of battering may be produced even when no violence has occurred or when violence has not occurred for some time." (Stark, 2010, pg. 11-11)

"Abusive pattern remains largely outside the scope of evaluation and decision-making in family court." (Stark, 2010, pg. 11-11)

EMOTIONAL ABUSE IS A FORM OF BATTERING. It doesn't leave visible evidence, but it's JUST AS PAINFUL and can take people LONGER TO HEAL. BTR.ORG

It usually happens in secret (only the victim experiences it) btr.org/podcast

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Theory of Coercive Control (Stark)

The “**generality**” of coercive control- refers to features it shares with other “capture crimes,” like:

- hostage-taking,
- kidnapping,
- or prisoners of war (Biderman’s Chart of Coercion, 1957)

Examples of shared elements:

- surveillance
- microregulation
- isolation
- intimidation

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Theory of Coercive Control (Stark)

The “**particularity**” of coercive control- refers to the unique dimensions of the violence and other tactics used against partners

- strategic ways in which a specific coercive controller individualizes his abuse based on intimate knowledge of that particular partner

Aim of coercive control:

- to usurp and master a partner’s subjectivity
- focused on imposing sex stereotypes in everyday life

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Result:



- a condition of “**unfreedom**,”
- experienced as **entrapment**,
- gendered in its construction, delivery, and consequences (Stark, 2007, pg. 206; Stark, 2018)

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor. (Luke 4:18-19)

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Purpose of Coercive Control Tactics

- Intimidate
- Humiliate
- Exploit
- Isolate
- Control partner
- Gain power over partner
- Dominate
- Manipulate

Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the LORD; be assured, he will not go unpunished. (Proverbs 16:5)

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Grounding Break

The LORD works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed. (Psalm 103:6)

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Coercive Control is Counterintuitive

If you love your partner, how would you treat them?

If you enjoy the most intimate relationship with the person you are partnered with, how would you treat them?

If you commit to a monogamous relationship, how do you maintain that trust?

If a child's bedtime is 8 p.m. while residing with both parents, what would you expect the parents to do post-separation?

If children are provided healthy meals and snacks prior to separation, what would you expect both parents to do post-separation?


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Coercive Controllers Use of the 4 Cs

Cunning	Conning
Convincing	Charming

Four C's




Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. (Matthew 7:15)

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Cunning

"Coercive controllers lull [her] into a sense of security and safety. They do this by letting [her] know they will protect [her] and make sure [she is] safe from any outside harm. What they do not tell [her] is that they will be the source of harm to [her] in the future. They are just waiting for [her] to tell them how much [she] love[s] them and only want to be with them for the rest of [their lives]."

Excerpt from Eyes Wide Open: Help! with Control Freak Co-parents (© 2014, Revised and updated © 2025, Wingfield)



Amazon book link: <https://a.co/d/aGSMldc>


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Conning

"Coercive controllers show [her] how wonderful they are and that [she is] now forever in debt to them for rescuing [her] from [her] previous 'awful' situation. Coercive controllers con [her] into believing that they really love [her] and that [she is] the only one for them."

Excerpt from Eyes Wide Open: Help! with Control Freak Co-parents (© 2014, Revised and updated © 2025, Wingfield)




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Convincing

"Coercive controllers reinforce what they have conned [her] into believing about them. They will lie and exaggerate to "make [her] feel" that [she] "want[s] to take care of them" because they have been hurt or abused themselves. They appeal to the "rescuer" in [her] and say they understand what [she] [has] experienced in prior coercive controlling relationships or with [her] parents because the same thing happened to them."

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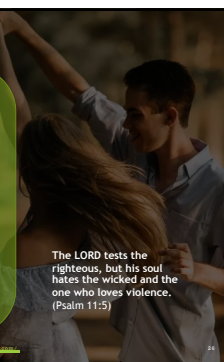
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Charming

"Coercive controllers know how to say and do "all the right things" to feed into [her] fantasies of being cared for, loved, and nurtured. He buys just the right presents, brings flowers at just the right time, and woos [her] until [she convinces herself] he will always treat [her] as special. He counts on [her] falling under the spell of romance as described in all the books, songs, and movies that end with the couple 'living happily ever after.'"

Excerpt from Eyes Wide Open: Help! with Control Freak Co-parents © 2014, Revised and updated © 2025, Wingfield

The LORD tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence. (Psalm 11:5)



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Power over, never "between" partners

WHY WAS THE BANK ROBBED?

- What did the bank do wrong?
- How did it fail?
- Is this bank prone to robberies?
- Does it have a history of being robbed?
- Why didn't the bank see it coming?
- Didn't it notice the red flags?
- What was the bank wearing?
- Had it advertised about having money?
- The bank was robbed because the robber made a choice. Stop blaming the bank for the robbery. The robbery was a premeditated, carefully calculated crime.

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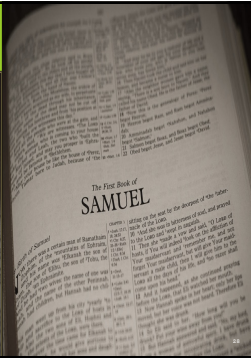


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Dynamics of Coercive Control/ Abuse in Scripture

- ▶ Story of Amnon & Tamar (2 Samuel 13)- account of assault and abuse
- ▶ "Now there was a man in Maon whose business was in Carmel; and the man was very rich, and he had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. And it came about while he was shearing his sheep in Carmel. Now the man's name was Nabal, and his wife's name was Abigail. And the woman was intelligent and beautiful in appearance, but the man was harsh and evil in his dealings..." (1 Samuel 25:2-3, full story 2-35)
- ▶ Story of Saul & David (1 Samuel 18-31)- <https://ioyforrest.wordpress.com/2015/10/20/a-biblical-account-of-the-abusive-personality/>

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Legal Standpoint: Coercive Control Statutes

- Different states and countries define coercive control differently in their statutes.
- Statutes are unreflective of the research language!
- Judges are ruling based on statutes, but the research provides so much more information.
- ...So how do we bring the two together to support survivors and protect children?

Note: While some jurisdictions now explicitly criminalize coercive control, many elements of coercive control are still not independently criminal in large parts of the United States and around the world as these statutes start to be developed. Historically, and in some locations still today, these behaviors are treated as crimes only when committed against strangers, which continues to complicate legal responses to coercive control within domestic abuse contexts.




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Moving toward Criminalization of Coercive Control

- ▶ 2011 Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (also known as CoE Istanbul Convention)
 - ▶ Highlights gender-based violence committed against women
 - ▶ Serves as the blueprint for defining various forms of violence against women (VAW)
 - ▶ Creates a legal framework to protect women against all forms of violence
 - ▶ Uses the term "coercive control," rather than psychological violence- provides criminalization of many forms of VAW, including psychological violence
 - ▶ For more information, visit: https://www.europa.eu/europa/en/ReoData/etudes/ATAG/2018/630287/FP_S8_A7A760161830287_EN.pdf



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Criminalizing Coercive Control

UK Statute: First to Define Coercive Control in Criminal Law

The UK's **Serious Crime Act (England & Wales, 2015)** closed a gap in the law by creating a new offence of **controlling or coercive behaviour** in intimate or familial relationships (section 76). The offence carries a maximum sentence of 5 years' imprisonment, a fine, or both.


Constituted by behavior on the part of the perpetrator which takes place "repeatedly or continuously"

Victim and alleged perpetrator must be "personally connected" at the time the behavior takes place.

Must have had a "serious effect" on the victim (caused the victim to fear violence will be used against them on "at least two occasions", or it has had a "substantial adverse effect on the victims' day to day activities")

Alleged perpetrator must have known that behavior would have a serious effect on the victim (or such that he or she "ought to have known")

How to emulate the UK Statute:
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/dec/28/domestic-violence-law-coercive-control-abuse-warnings-course>




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Criminalizing Coercive Control

Scotland's Domestic Abuse Act (2018) is considered by many to be a **stronger statute**- clearer and more aligned with coercive control theory/research (Stark, Dutton, etc.) and survivor experience.

- ▶ **Key Improvements**
 - ▶ Defines domestic abuse as an **ongoing pattern of coercive and controlling behavior**
 - ▶ Removes the requirement to **prove fear of violence**
 - ▶ Explicitly recognizes **psychological harm**
 - ▶ Explicitly recognizes the **impact on children**
 - ▶ Also covers **post-separation abuse**
 - ▶ Carries significantly **stronger penalties**
- ▶ **Conceptual Shift**
 - ▶ **Pattern and intent**, not victim reaction
 - ▶ Reduces the burden on victims to demonstrate "**serious effect**"

The LORD tears down the house of the proud but maintains the widow's boundaries. The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD, but gracious words are pure. (Proverbs 15:25-26)



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Other Country's Statutes

- ▶ **Australia, New South Wales-**
 - ▶ **New South Wales- Crimes Legislation Amendment (Coercive Control) Act HB438** passed in 2023; makes coercive control in current and former intimate partner relationships a standalone criminal offence. **Effective 1 July 2024.**
 - ▶ **Queensland- Criminal Law (Coercive Control and Affirmative Consent) and Other Legislation Amendment Act** passed in 2023; introduced a criminal offence targeting repeated coercive and controlling conduct in domestic relationships, alongside consent reforms. **Effective 26 May 2025.**
- ▶ **Canada- Bill 207, Moving Ontario Family Law Forward Act** received royal assent in 2020; definition of "family violence" includes "any conduct by a family member towards another family member that constitutes a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour."
- ▶ **France- adopted Law 2010-769 (2010)**, a ban against "psychological violence within marriage," becoming the first country to officially criminalize psychological abuse. France has also enacted protections for victims along with high penalties, including fines and imprisonment. In July 2020, improvements were made to protect victims and children.
- ▶ **Ireland- coercive control is provided for in section 39 of the Domestic Violence Act (2018). Effective 1 January 2019**, coercive control is a criminal offence.
- ▶ **New Zealand- Family Violence Act (2018)** defines family violence to include a pattern of behaviour that is coercive or controlling or causes cumulative harm. **Effective 1 July 2019.**

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Advocates for Change in Statutes

- ▶ <https://endcoercivecontrolusa.com/>
- ▶ <https://www.nationalsafeparents.org>
- ▶ <https://www.daniellepollack.com>
- ▶ Safe Child Act (federal level, US)- [https://www.congress.gov/bills/116th-congress/house-concurrent-resolution/72#:~:text=H.C.Con](https://www.congress.gov/bills/116th/congress/house-concurrent-resolution/72#:~:text=H.C.Con)




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U.S. State Statutes

- ▶ Arizona- coercive control not codified as a separate offense but addresses controlling behavior through existing domestic violence and custody statutes (**A.R.S. § 13-3601**).
- ▶ Arkansas- **§ 9-15-219** (2021) adds "course of control" language
- ▶ California
 - ▶ **SB1141** (2020) amends CA family law code to include coercive control
 - ▶ **SB331 "Piqui's Law"** **SB 331** (2023) prohibits courts from ordering children into unregulated services known as reunification camps and ensures training is developed and established for judicial officers involved in domestic violence and child custody matters
- ▶ Connecticut- **SB 1091 "Jennifer's Law"** (2021) includes a working definition of coercive control to protect partners and children
- ▶ Colorado
 - ▶ **"Jalie's Law"** (2021)- requires domestic violence training for family court professionals and requires the courts to make children's safety a top priority in domestic violence-related divorce cases

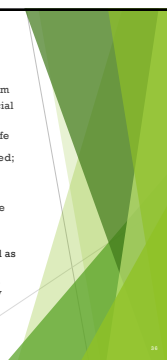


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U.S. State Statutes

- ▶ Colorado (cont.)
 - ▶ **"Ty's Law"** (2021)- applies similar requirements to the child welfare system
 - ▶ **HB 23-1108** (2023) creates a task force to make recommendations for judicial training to improve outcomes in alleged domestic violence cases
 - ▶ **HB 23-1178** (2023) makes court comply with federal "Keeping Children Safe from Family Violence Act," including clarifying the role of experts in domestic violence cases, and how past incidents of abuse can be considered; prevents the Colorado courts from removing children from a protective parent to whom the children are bonded or ordering reunification therapy with an accused abuser
- ▶ Florida- **HB 781/SB 1106 "Greyson's Law"** (2021) adds a definition of coercive control into the state law to add further protections to children
- ▶ Hawaii- **HB 2425** (2020) criminalizes coercive control
- ▶ Maryland- **HB 1352** (2020) expands abuse definition and adds coercive control as a reason to petition for peace/protective order
- ▶ Massachusetts- **Domestic violence statute amendment** (2024) add "coercive control" to the statutory definition of abuse in civil protective orders and family law cases
- ▶ New Jersey- **Protective order amendments** (2024) require courts to consider coercive control patterns in protective orders



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U.S. State Statutes

- ▶ New York- **Assembly Bill A2375C** (2021) requires that court-ordered forensic evaluations involving child custody and visitation be a licensed psychologist, social worker, or psychiatrist who has completed a training program developed by the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- ▶ Oklahoma- **§43-109** (2023) includes "coercive control" under "domestic violence"
- ▶ Pennsylvania- **SB 55 "Kayden's Law"/Senate Bill 55** (2023)- requires training for court professionals and supervised visitation at a minimum when there is a potential risk to the child's safety
- ▶ South Carolina- **HB 5271** (2020) amends the Domestic Violence Bill, adding section 16-25-130, creating offense of coercive control
- ▶ Utah- **HB 0272 "Om's Law"** (2024) modifies how domestic violence and abuse evidence is handled in child custody and parent-time (visitation) proceedings
- ▶ Vermont- **Domestic abuse statutes** (2024) adds "coercive controlling behavior" to abuse definition
- ▶ Washington State- **HB 1901** (2022) amends protection order system to include coercive control; builds on HB1320 (2021)

Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare. (Proverbs 22:24-25)

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Violence Against Women Act

- ▶ The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) creates and supports comprehensive, cost-effective responses to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking
- ▶ Since its enactment in 1994, VAWA programs, administered by the U.S. Departments of Justice (DOJ) and Health and Human Services (HHS), have dramatically improved federal, tribal, state, and local responses to these crimes.
- ▶ <https://nswdv.org/content/violence-against-women-act/>

What is the Violence Against Women Act?

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) creates and supports comprehensive, cost-effective responses to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking. Up for renewal every five years, each VAWA reauthorization builds on existing protections and programs to better meet survivors' needs.

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

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VAWA Reauthorization 2022, Title XV

KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE FROM FAMILY VIOLENCE




See the course webpage for full VAWA reauthorization information or visit <https://www.congress.gov/bills/117th/congress/senate/bills/2023/text>

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VAWA SEC. 1503: PURPOSES



- To prioritize child safety in private custody proceedings in State court
- To strengthen the ability of courts to recognize and adjudicate domestic violence and child abuse
- To ensure that court personnel are appropriately trained in the dynamics, signs, and impact of domestic violence, using a trauma-informed approach

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What is Kayden's Law? (VAWA §1501, within Title XV)

A federal child-safety law enacted by Congress as part of the VAWA (2022)

In response to documented family court failures to protect children from domestic violence and child abuse

Core requirements

- Child safety is the primary consideration in custody and visitation determinations
- Courts must meaningfully consider evidence of domestic violence and child abuse
- Custody or visitation must be restricted or denied when a parent poses a safety risk
- Courts must avoid reliance on discredited concepts that minimize or excuse abuse
- Judges and court personnel must receive coercive control trauma-informed training

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Captivity Crime Defined (proposed by D. Wingfield)



- Coercive control is a captivity crime that involves:
 - (a) mental control of the captive,
 - (b) threats of negative consequences,
 - (c) patterns of control that entrap the captive and captive's children in the relationship,
 - (d) the captive and captive's children make more than one unsuccessful attempt to escape,
 - (e) the captive and captive's children may only escape after:
 - (i) major escalation of coercive control, (ii) significant injury requiring medical intervention, (iii) significant law enforcement intervention, (iv) threat of significant harm or significant harm to children, (v) harm to children that involves child protective services and intervention from juvenile courts.

Excerpt from Open Wide
Open Wide with Consent
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Captivity Crime (proposed by D. Wingfield)

What is mental kidnapping?

While there are situations of physical confinement by coercive controllers of their captive partner and their captive children, coercive control without physical violence is very commonly reported by survivors without physical confinement to understand how this works. I relate it to "psychological kidnapping" as defined by the American Psychological Association - "depriving a person of the free functioning of his or her personality." The term is sometimes used to describe the psychological mind control associated with cults. See also [brainwashing](#)."



What is emotional blackmail?

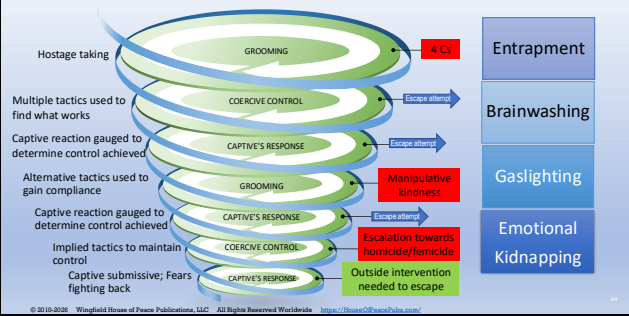
Emotional blackmail is part of entrapment used to maintain coercive control over the captive partner and captive children even when the coercive controller is not present. Emotional blackmail [employs similar tactics to brainwashing](#). The American Psychological Association defines "brainwashing" as a broad class of intense and often coercive tactics intended to produce profound changes in attitudes, beliefs, and emotions. Targets of such tactics have typically been prisoners of war and members of religious cults.

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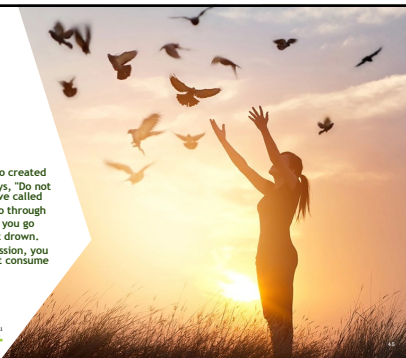
Web of Entrapment = Coercive Control



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Grounding Break

But now, O Jacob, listen to the LORD who created you. O Israel, the one who formed you says, "Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you." (Isaiah 43:1-2 NLT)



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Typical Case Of Coercive Control

Frequency

Severity

Even routine

Minor assaults

Often accompanied by coerced sex

(Stark)

A man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger causes much transgression. (Proverbs 29:22)

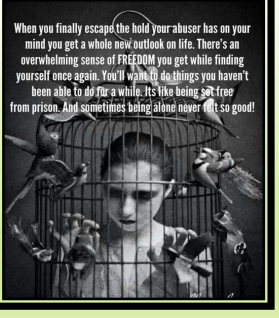


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When you finally escape the hold your abuser has on your mind you get a whole new outlook on life. There's an overwhelming sense of FREEDOM you get while finding yourself once again. You'll want to do things you haven't been able to do for a while. Its like being set free from prison. And sometimes being alone never felt so good!

Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation. God settles the solitary in a home; he leads out the prisoners to prosperity, but the rebellious dwell in a parched land. (Psalm 68:5-6)



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Coercive Control "Course of Conduct"

Violating	Denying	Depriving	Appropriating or denying
Violating physical integrity > Physical/sexual assault	Denying respect and autonomy > Intimidation > Threats > Emotional attacks > Using children > Male privilege > Minimisation > Blame-shifting	Depriving social connectedness > Isolation > Deprivation of resources > Imprisonment Depriving of respect and lowest level of human kindness	Appropriating or denying access to resources required for personhood and citizenship > Control of time and movement

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Abuse Grows From Attitudes & Values, Not Feelings



CONTROL
"He wants to shut her up, retaliate or take revenge on her."- Michael Paymar

MOTIVATION
Entitlement, Survival, & Sadism (Stucky-Halley, 2015)


OWNERSHIP
(Bancroft, 2002, Pg. 75)

Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts. (Malachi 3:5)

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Coercive Control tactics are used in multiple settings to control intimate partners.



One's pride will bring him low, but he who is lowly in spirit will obtain honor. (Proverbs 29:23)

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Women's Voices: Experience of Coercive Control

- His attitude always seems to be: "you owe me."
- He manages to twist everything around so that it's my fault.
- I feel suffocated by him. He's trying to run my life.
- Everyone seems to think he's the greatest guy in the world. I wish they could see the side of him that I have to live with.
- He says he loves me so much. So why does he treat me like this?

Everyone else thinks he's great. I don't know what it is about me that sets him off.

I feel like he's never happy with anything I do.

He really doesn't mean to hurt me. He just loses control.

He scares me a few times, but he never touches the children. He's a great father.

He messes up my mind sometimes.

He calls me disgusting names, and then an hour later he wants sex. I don't get it.

He's two different people. I feel like I'm living with Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

The thing is, he really understands me. *


(Bancroft, 2002)

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CHAT DISCUSSION

- ▶ If you hear these things from survivors, how do you respond to help her understand that she may find other men as she's healing who are different from her coercive controlling partner?
- ▶ How do you help her listen for "green flags"?

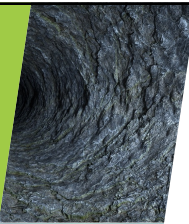


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Survivor Strategy: "Getting out of his way"

- ▶ Some survivors experience a strong urge to **justify, defend, minimize, cover for, or rescue** the coercive controller from the consequences of his choices. Others become intensely focused on **trying to make professionals and people in their lives understand who he really is**, often engaging in **JADE** (justify, argue, defend, explain). This is not irrational. It is a survival strategy developed under coercive control. However...
- ▶ **Caution!** In her attempt to convince everyone of who he is, she may unintentionally draw scrutiny and attention onto her own behavior; be perceived as "high conflict," "obsessive," "uncooperative," or the problem, rather than the one being harmed.
- ▶ **What we have found:**
 If you get out of his way, he will often show his true colors! (This can take time!)



THEY SPREAD A NET FOR MY FEET;
 MY SOUL WAS DESPONDENT. THEY
 DUG A PIT BEFORE ME, BUT THEY
 THEMSELVES HAVE FALLEN INTO IT!
 — PSALM 87:6


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"Getting out of his way" ...

Does NOT mean silence, passivity, or tolerating abuse. It means:

- disengaging from managing his image,
- reducing JADE responses,
- allowing systems to observe patterns over time, and
- prioritizing safety and documentation over persuasion. We do encourage documenting patterns and presenting facts.



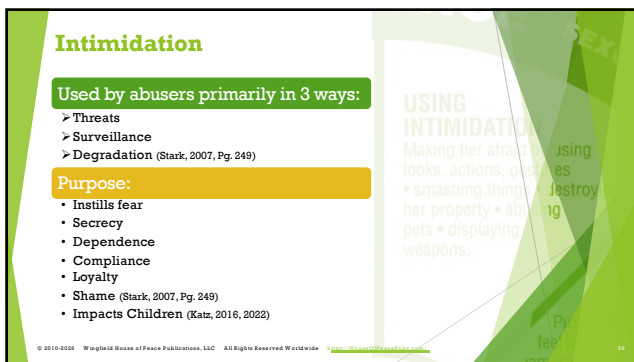
LET THE WICKED FALL
 INTO THEIR OWN NETS,
 WHILE I PASS BY IN
 SAFETY.
 — PSALM 141:10

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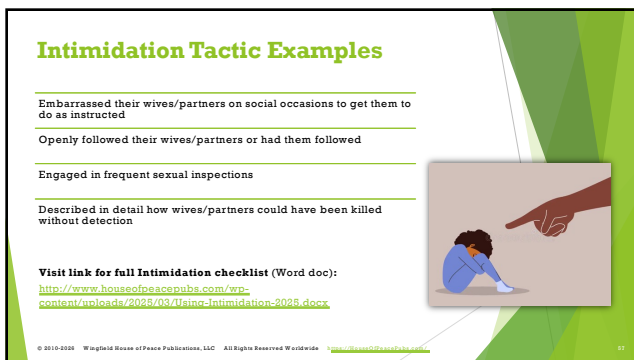
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Types of Threats

Visit link for full Threats and Coercion checklist:
<https://www.homesofpeace.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Threats%20and%20Coercion%20Control%20Practices%20ver-1.docx>

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What Threats Do

- Violate the person's right to physical and psychic security and tranquility
- Immediate effect on the victim's autonomy regardless of whether or not they are carried out
- Spiritual threats remove autonomy and personhood
- Community threats contribute to isolation, autonomy and personhood
- Workplace threats contribute to isolation and remove autonomy
- Family threats contribute to isolation and outside support

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Victim Impacts of Threats

- Feels isolated in her fear
- Feels crazy because her terror contrasts with the positive reaction of others
- Cuts off contact with friends and family by phone, visits, driving self to work
- Implant the idea of physical harm in victim's mind, more devastating effect than actual violence
- Impacts on children - feel fearful of doing anything wrong; walk on eggshells; run and hide


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Isolation

Purpose:

➤ "designed to enforce dependence of victims, secure exclusive possession, monopolize their time, skills and resources, and 'keep the secret' of abuse by cutting them off from core sources of support and reality testing, such as family, friends, coworkers or helping professionals." (Stark, 2010, pg. 11-13)



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Isolation Tactic Examples

Forbidding wives/partners from leaving the house, going to church, or forcing them to quit home-schooling network

Controlling who children have contact with including church friends, extracurricular activities, having friends visit in the home.

Taking the only cell phone to prevent her from making calls while he is gone. (adapted)

Visit link for the full Isolation checklist:
<http://www.houseofpeacepub.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Using-Isolation-2025.docx>

They (the early church) devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. (Acts 2:42)

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Economic Control

Purpose:

- To create economic instability and/or make one partner economically dependent, which limits their freedom.
- Without access to money, it is difficult to leave an abuser and access safety.
- Someone experiencing this type of abuse can become trapped in a relationship with the abuser, unable to resist the abuser's control and at risk of further harm. In this way, economic safety underpins physical safety.

Impact:

- Makes rebuilding challenging. Many leave with nothing — having no money even for essentials — and have to start again from scratch.
- Many leave with large amounts of debt and poor credit ratings, affecting their long-term economic stability, and many are unable to maintain savings that provide economic security.

USING ECONOMIC ABUSE

Preventing her from getting or keeping a job • making her ask for money • giving her an allowance • taking her money • not letting her know about or have access to family income

But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. (1 Tim. 5:8)


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Economic Control Tactic Examples

- Steal the car keys or take the car so you couldn't go look for a job or go to a job interview.
- Keep you from having the money you needed to buy food, clothes, or other necessities.
- Decide how you could spend money rather than letting you spend it how you saw fit.

Visit link for the full Economic/Financial Abuse checklist:
<http://www.houseofpeacepubs.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Using-Economic-CC-2025.docx>



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Using Children

Children who experience coercive and controlling behaviors of a parent may:

- Learn "destructive patterns about the use of violence and power in relationships" (Lee, Wells, Gray, & Esina, 2020)
- Experience "narrower space for action" (Katz, 2016)
- Experience "isolation from sources for support" (Katz, 2016; Lawler, Sterne, & Armstrong, 2021)
- Internalize victim-blaming attitudes and/or harmful views about unequal power relations between men and women (Cunningham & Baker, 2007)
- Be at higher risk of severe injury, death threats, and/or homicide (Oll & Aspinall, 2020)

PRIVILEGE
 • making all the the "master of the house" roles

USING CHILDREN
 Making her feel guilty about the children • using the children to relay messages
 using visitation to harass her
 • threatening to take the children away

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Using Children Examples

- Using visitation as a way to harass her
- Using child custody court as a way to control her
- Undermining her parenting



Visit link for the full Using Children checklist:
<http://www.houseofpeacepubs.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Using-Children-CC-2025.docx>

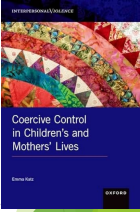
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Coercive Control Impacts on Children

Emma Katz research (2016, 2022) found that children were affected by many forms of coercive control beyond the physical violence against their mother, including:

- Control of time and movement**
- Deprivation of resources and imprisonment**
- Isolation**




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“Violence is experienced as **'subjugation'** rather than a physical threat, we have to listen to women and children talk, together and separately, about the cumulative effect of **'a thousand cuts,'** and harms to their **dignity, safety, autonomy, intelligence, and liberty,** not just about physical safety.”

-Children of Coercive Control, Evan Stark, 2023



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Grounding Break

For he will save the needy when he cries for help, The afflicted also, and him who has no helper. He will have compassion on the poor and needy, And he will save the lives of the needy. He will rescue their life from oppression and violence, And their blood will be precious in his sight... (Psalm 72:12-14)



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Spiritual Abuse

- A form of psychological and emotional abuse that takes place within a faith context, which for many people permeates their entire lives.
- Victims may experience being controlled and coerced within a church or places of worship.
- Spiritual abusers may be a person of power and influence within the place of worship, but don't have to be preachers or leaders of worship.
- The use of scripture and an abuser's interpretation of "the word of God" has been documented justification for many types of abuse and violence against intimate partners.

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Spiritual Abuse Tactic Examples

- Using the spouse's or intimate partner's religious or spiritual beliefs to manipulate them
- Preventing the spouse/partner from practicing their religious or spiritual beliefs
- Undermining relationships with people connected to her spiritual community

Visit link for the full Spiritual Abuse checklist:
<http://www.houseofpeacepubs.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Using-Spiritual-Coercive-Control-2025.docx>

"Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God to the shepherds: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fattlings, but you do not feed the flock. The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost, but with force and cruelty you have ruled them.'" (Ezek. 34:2-4)

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God Hates Abuse (Oppression) & His Heart is for the Oppressed

► **Isaiah 58:5-10**

- Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for people to humble themselves? Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying in sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD?
- "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.
- "If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.

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Emotional Abuse

- Verbal assaults
- Humiliation
- Sexual coercion
- Psychological abuse
- Economic exploitation

DEATH BY A THOUSAND CUTS

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Emotional Abuse Tactic Examples

- Early generosity turning more and more to selfishness
- His changing moods are especially perplexing. He can be a different person day-to-day or even hour-to-hour.
- His growing attitude that he knows what is good for her better than she does
- He twists her words around so that she always ends up on the defensive. "I just can't seem to do anything right."

USING EMOTIONAL ABUSE

- Putting her down • making her feel bad about herself • calling her names • making her think she's crazy
- Playing mind games • humiliating her • making her feel guilty

Visit link for the full Using Emotional Abuse checklist:
<https://www.houseofpeacepubs.com/wp-content/uploads/wp-assets/Using%20Emotional%20Abuse%20checklist.docx>

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Verbal Abuse

A subset of emotional abuse

Effects

- Patricia Evans states "surely the creative and intellectual potential of each one of us can thrive best when there are no emotionally debilitating obstacles thrown in our path – obstacles such as verbally abusive diminishment and invalidation." (Evans, 1993, pg. 15)
- The abuser's desire to have power over his victim, to dominate her, overrides the prospect of mutuality in a loving relationship. (Evans, 1993, pg. 16)
- Projection by the abuser of their own attributes and actions onto the victim highlights a verbally-abusive relationship. (Evans, 1993, pg. 16)
- See handout - evaluation adapted from Patricia Evans, The Verbally Abusive Relationship

Cursing, deceit, and violence fill his mouth; trouble and malice are under his tongue. Psalm 10:7
 HCSB

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Using Male Privilege

- Drives coercive control
- Rooted in **entitlement**- the woman is viewed as property
- "...the notion that as a man in relationship with a woman, I believe that **I get to dominate you-control you, use physical violence if necessary-to get you to submit to me.**" (Duluth Model Batterer Intervention Specialist)
- Male privilege goes to the core of the abuser's identity- his identity is so grounded in the notion of **superiority**, that he views equality with the woman as diminishing him.

Everyone is entitled to my opinion.

your guards...

Pride comes before disaster and arrogance before a fall. (Proverbs 16:18)

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Using Male Privilege Examples

USING MALE PRIVILEGE
 Treating her like a servant • making all the big decisions • acting like the "master of the castle" • being the one to define men's and women's roles

CH
 Making her about the child the children to relay
 • using visitation to threatening chi

PHY

Visit link for the full Using Privilege checklist:
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Minimizing, Denying, Blaming

- Anytime something does not go the way he thinks it should, he uses these tactics
- To **avoid responsibility, protect his image, and to regain power and control** (Smyth, Teicher, & Wilde, 2023)
- When he blames her, if she attempts to blame back, he will "up the ante."
- Impacts**
 - Gradually loses her own way of thinking
 - Ultimately, she takes on his way of thinking and blames herself (sometimes even before he does)- "I should have..." "if I would have just..."

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Minimizing, Denying, Blaming Tactics

Makes light of the abuse

Says the abuse didn't happen

Blames woman for his problems

Visit link for the full Using Minimization, Denial, Blaming checklist:
<http://www.houseofpeacepubs.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Using-Minimization-Denial-Blaming-2025.docx>

There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him; haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers. (Proverbs 6:16-19)

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Gaslighting

Psychological manipulation of a person

- usually over an extended period of time
- that causes the victim to question the validity of their own thoughts, perception of reality, or memories
- typically leads to confusion, loss of confidence and self-esteem, uncertainty of one's emotional or mental stability, and a dependency on the perpetrator

Examples

- "make wife/partner feel she is crazy by sabotaging a common activity like turning off the stove after she has turned it on and then asking innocently about dinner or..."
- moving her car without her knowledge or putting her car keys in a strange place." (Stark, 2010, pg. 11-13)



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Non-physical sexual abuse

Sexual harassment

- Ridiculing another person to try to limit their sexuality or reproductive choices

Sexual exploitation

- Sexual trafficking
- Forcing someone to look at pornography, or forcing someone to participate in pornographic film-making

Sexual intimidation

- Making inappropriate sexually-laden comments about a partner's dress or hairstyle
- Choosing a partner's clothes they can wear in public
- Demanding a partner wear certain clothes at home that are sexually revealing and inappropriate for the situation

Visit link for the full Non-physical Sexual Abuse checklist:
<http://www.houseofpeacepubs.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Using-Non-physical-sexual-coercive-control-2025.docx>

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Sexual Coercion

- ▶ Advanced course offering: Intimate Partner Sexual Violence- <https://www.houseofpeacepubs.com/intimate-partner-sexual-violence/>
- ▶ The use of **non-physical, controlling, degrading, and manipulative tactics to obtain, or attempt to obtain, unwanted oral, vaginal, or anal intercourse, including forced penetration and sex with objects** (Bragwell-Gray, Messing, & Baldwin-White, 2019)
- ▶ One of the **most subtle manifestations** of male sexual violence against women (Smith et al., 2017)
- ▶ Some tactics include:

Telling lies	Making untrue promises	Wearing someone down/continually using verbal pressure to have sex
Threatening to end the relationship or spread rumors	Showing displeasure or getting angry	Using influence or authority

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Sex & Strangulation

Findings from recent research on sexual strangulation (some call it "sexual choking," though this terminology is inaccurate) **from Herbenick et al., 2023:**

- ▶ Has become prevalent among young people in the USA- **majority of college age women** are experiencing sexual strangulation
- ▶ **Mostly manual** (hands); sometimes using a limb or ligature
- ▶ **Disproportionately impacts women**, as well as sexual and gender minorities
- ▶ More common with **relationship partners**
- ▶ **Short term health consequences**- e.g., headaches, bruising, neck pain, neck swelling, loss of consciousness
- ▶ **Long-term health sequelae** (neurological health, "brain morphology")
- ▶ Prevalent misinformation about safety of sexual "choking." The truth is there is **NO safe way to "choke"/strangle someone during sex!**
- ▶ Resources:
 - ▶ Strangulation Institute- <https://www.familyviolencecenter.org/resources/survivors-participating-the-immune-to-strangulation-during-sexual-coercion/>
 - ▶ Advocacy Training- Trauma Issues course

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Grounding Break

The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. (Deut. 31:8 NIV)

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Crossover of Stalking & Coercive Control

"[C]oercive behaviors overlap with many of the forms of surveillance and persistent communication used by stalkers."

Victim experience of stalking- harassment of or threatening another person, especially in a way that **haunts the person physically or emotionally** in a repetitive and devious manner.

Monckton-Smith describes 2 key aspects of the **stalker's internal state**:

- 1. Obsession and Fixation:** A psychological preoccupation with the victim that does not stop when the relationship ends.
- 2. Surveillance or Tracking:** Active efforts to monitor the victim

Motives associated with persistent pursuit (Davis et al., 2012):

- > a desire to control the partner.
- > jealousy of the partner's interest in others.
- > fear of abandonment, and
- > a feeling of entitlement to maintain the existing norms of gender inequality (Stark 2007)

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Stalkers Employ a Number of Threatening Tactics

- Repeated phone calls, sometimes with hang-ups
- Following, tracking (possibly even with a global positioning device)
- Finding the person through public records, online searching, or paid investigators
- Watching with hidden cameras
- Suddenly showing up where the victim is, at home, school, or work
- Sending emails; communicating in chat rooms or with instant messaging (cyberstalking; see next slide)
- Sending unwanted packages, cards, gifts, or letters
- Using Children's Technology

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Stalking Tactics (cont.)

- Monitoring the victim's phone calls or computer-use
- Contacting the victim's friends, family, co-workers, or neighbors to find out about the victim
- Going through the victim's garbage
- Threatening to hurt the victim or their family, friends, or pets
- Damaging the victim's home, car, or other property

Stalk-ing, v.

Stalking is a pattern of behavior directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to fear for the person's safety or the safety of others, or suffer substantial emotional distress. It is often used as a tactic of domestic violence to maintain power and control.

APA Dictionary of Psychology
#12483

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How likely is it that stalking will turn into violence?

- Stalking is **unpredictable** and should always be considered **dangerous**. If someone is tracking you, contacting you when you do not wish to have contact, attempting to control you, or frightening you, **seek help immediately**.
- Those around the stalking victim are also in **danger** of being hurt.
- Stalking can end in violence whether or not the stalker threatens violence and can turn into violence even if the stalker has **no history of violence**.
- In a study of 358 homicides, stalking behaviors were present in **94%** of cases, often beginning with these "low-level" but highly fixated actions. (Monckton-Smith)

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What is Cyberstalking?

- Cyberstalking**- use of telecommunication technologies such as the Internet or email to stalk another person.
- The best response to cyberstalking is **no contact**.
- Law enforcement**- cyberstalking falls in a gray area. Enforcement of most state and federal stalking laws requires that the victim be **directly** threatened with an act of violence (not implied).
- Take it seriously!** Cyberstalking sometimes advances to real stalking and physical violence.

*Deliberate...
Persistent...
Personal...*

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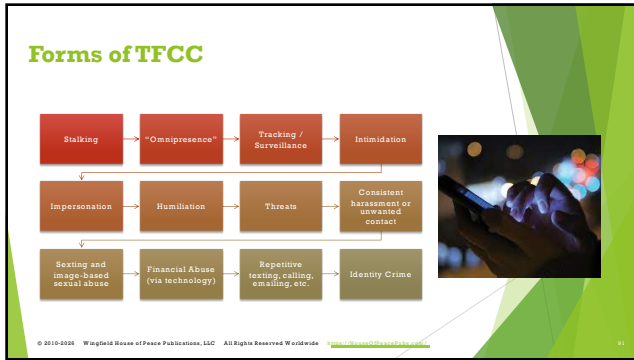
Technology Facilitated Coercive Control (TFCC)

- Technology CC increases at separation- perpetrator does not need physical access to maintain control.
- TFCC**- "controlling and coercive behaviors used by intimate partners through the use of technology" (Fiolet, et al., 2021).
- Significantly increases adverse effects of coercive control and poses an additional safety concern for survivors and their children.

*Another Form of Control
Tool to Engage Others
Amplify Fear*

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Image-based Sexual Abuse

- ▶ When coercive controlling partners **create, distribute, or threaten to distribute intimate images without consent**
- ▶ Used as a means of exerting **power and control** and a tactic of:
 - intimidation entrapment
 - degradation isolation

(Henry et al., 2023)

Cyber Child Rights Initiative's "2017 Nationwide Online Study of Unconsented Porn Distribution and Perpetrators: A Research Report" https://www.cyberchildrights.org/content/uploads/2017/04/CCRI_2017_Research.pdf

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Technology Facilitated Parental Stalking

Perpetrator may provide child/ren with device/s to covertly stalk the survivor's activities, communications, and whereabouts. (Fiolet et al., 2021)

- Threats of violence and death**
- Intrusive and obsessive fatherhood**
 - Communicates a continuous sense of threat in child/ren's lives
- Disparaging and insulting motherhood/womanhood**
 - Undermines child/ren's positive views of their mother

(Nikupeteri, et al., 2021)

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	Use of technology	Targets	Contents and motives
Unwanted contacts	Sending SMS, Whatsapp messages and emails, making phone calls, voice messages, sending private messages in social media platforms (for example, Facebook, Snapchat), creating and using pseudo profiles	Ex-partner, children, victim's relatives, friends	Threats, raise fear, control issues related to taking care of children and visiting them, property and separation issues
Sharing information	Writing texts and sharing written and visual material in social media platforms (for example, Facebook wall, Instagram, LinkedIn), making phone calls, sending messages and emails, communicating through pseudo profiles in social media	Ex-partner, wider audience, victim's loved ones, kindergarten and school staff, colleagues and employees	Tarnishing the reputation, humiliating, showing control, publishing the victim's private information or sexualised content without consent, disseminating false information about the victim
Gathering information	Installing or threatening to install spy software in cars or mobile phones, taking photos of children and/or ex-partner, identify theft, hacking bank accounts, e-mail or other internet/on-line accounts	Ex-partner, children	Monitoring, controlling, harming, hindering victim's activities

Three Components of Technology Facilitated Stalking

(Dragiewicz et al., 2019)

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Supporting Survivors of Domestic and Sexual Violence

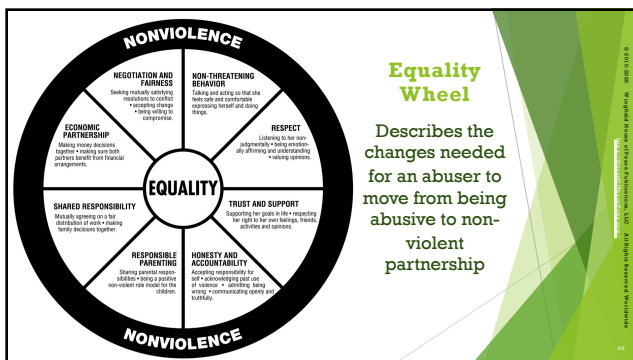


The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted an order in November 2023 implementing provisions of Safe Connections Act

The 2023 rules allow a survivor of domestic abuse to separate a mobile phone line from an account shared with an abuser.

<https://www.fcc.gov/consumer-governmental-affairs/fcc-adopts-rules-implementing-safe-connections-act-survivors-domestic-abuse>

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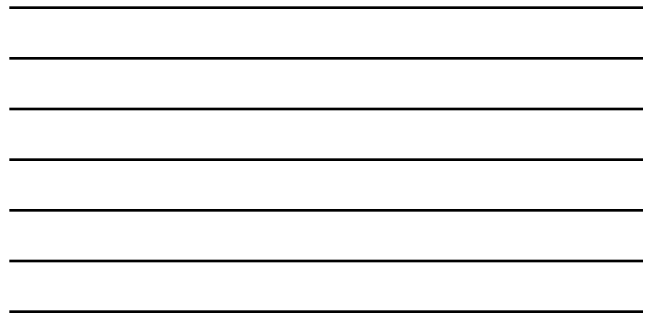
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