



Is My Partner Changing?

Many times, survivors want to know how to tell if their abusive partner is changing. This is a really tough question to answer, and one that only the survivor can answer. There are some options that may help an abuser to change that are better than others, such as attending a certified Batter's Intervention Program (BIP) rather than counseling. BIPs are designed as a psycho-educational group to address the core issues of power and control. It is important to remember that just because he/she completes a BIP group, it does not mean he/she has changed.

Some survivors share that to help with the situation they are going to try couples counseling. Couples counseling is not a safe option due to the fact that a survivor, more often than not, will not be able to share how she/he truly feels. At the same time, the abuser will most likely dominate the conversation in a manner that will not hold him/her accountable for being abusive. If the victim does share information in the session, the abuse may "punish" the partner for this at a later time, or use the information against the partner.

For a survivor wondering if her/his abusive partner is changing here are some things to think about:

- Do you feel you can truly say what you want without fear of "punishment" or being yelled at?
- Do you feel you can do things that your abusive partner has not "allowed" in the past and he/she will be ok with it?
- What does your "gut" instinct tell you?
- Think of the abusive behaviors and tactics that your abusive partner has used against you. Do you see those same behaviors and tactics? Has your abusive partner started using new tactics and behaviors against you that might not seem as bad as the other ones, but are still abusive?
- Look over the power and control wheel, are any of those tactics/behaviors taking place? For example does he/she blame you for making him/her mad? Does he/she try to determine what you can and can't do?

Talking with a domestic violence advocate can be very helpful for you. The advocate will not tell you what to do or determine if your abusive partner has or hasn't changed, but they will be able to have discussions with you about this topic and provide you educational materials and support regarding domestic violence in general.