

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.

Answer - False: Most mind-altering substances, including alcohol, do not cause DV. Some perpetrators also abuse substances, but most people who abuse substances are not violent. Alcohol and drugs can make abuse worse by lowering someone's self-control, but substance use never excuses or justifies violence. Furthermore, there are many examples of people who stop using substances but continue to be abusive.

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 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

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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. Mental illness causes abuse.

Answer - False: *Mental illness does not cause abuse. While mental health conditions can increase the risk of abusive behaviors, the use of DV is not a clinical diagnosis. 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. These are strategies for people to get their way in an intimate relationship, not a mental illness.*

6. 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.*

7. Domestic violence ends when the couple separates.

Answer - False: *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.*

8. Couples counseling or family therapy is an effective tool to help abusers change their behavior.

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Answer - False: *Traditional couples counseling can actually be dangerous in abusive relationships. Abuse is not the same as conflict in relationships. Domestic violence doesn't happen "between" partners — it is violence used by one partner to gain and maintain power and control over the other.*

9. Anger management classes have been shown to be effective at reducing abusers' use of violence in relationships.

Answer - False: *DV is not fundamentally about the inability to control anger or poor communication. Anger management alone does not address the root dynamics of power, control, entitlement, or the coercive behaviors that underlies domestic violence.*

10. Abusers were abused as children or exposed to DV as children

Answer - False: *While some abusers have trauma histories, most people who experience childhood abuse don't become abusers. This myth can unfairly stigmatize child abuse survivors and excuse harmful behavior.*