

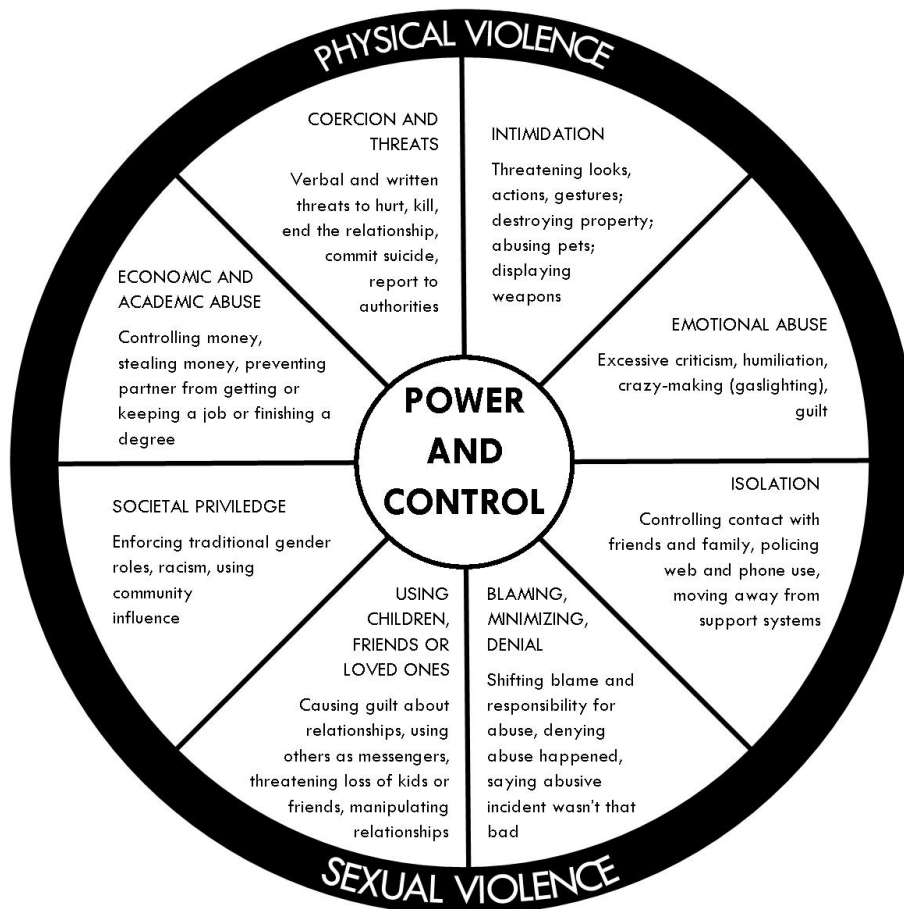
**Information from your Patient Aligned Care Team**

## Intimate Partner Violence

### What is Intimate Partner Violence?

The term “intimate partner violence” (IPV) describes physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse. IPV can occur among heterosexual or same-sex couples and does not require sexual intimacy.

Perpetrators of IPV may try to exert power and control over their partners in a variety of ways.



There are four classifications of IPV:

- Physical violence: the intentional use of physical force with the potential for causing death, disability, injury, or harm.
- Sexual violence: unwanted sexual activity (attempted or completed).
- Emotional violence: trauma to the victim caused by acts, threats of acts, or coercive tactics.
- Stalking: repeated behavior that causes victims to feel a high level of fear.

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## What Can I Do?

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### **Develop a Plan to Stay Safe**

Making a safety plan is something you can do to improve your safety now and in the future. There are many options to safety planning, including:

- If you think that you or your children are in danger, leave the situation right away.
- Write down a list of safe places within your home to go when conflicts begin to heat up. Avoid rooms with weapons or with no exits (such as closets, bathrooms).
- Consider finding a code word to use as a distress signal to family members, children, and friends. Inform them in advance that if they hear you use the code word, they should get help right away.
- Pack a suitcase with items to take with you when you leave. Make copies of important legal documents (such as driver's license, social security cards, birth certificates, medical records showing previous injuries) and set some money aside. Hide these items in a place where your partner will not find them.
- Make a list of people and agencies you can call or go to in case of an emergency. Learn key phone numbers (such as the number for your local shelter, even if you think you won't need it)
- Write down your safety plan. A format is available from the [National Coalition Against Domestic Violence](http://www.ncadv.org/protectyourself/MyPersonalSafetyPlan.php). (<http://www.ncadv.org/protectyourself/MyPersonalSafetyPlan.php>)
- An application downloaded to your smartphone, such as [MyPlan App](https://myplanapp.org) (<https://myplanapp.org>)
- Worksheets or interactive guides found on IPV/Domestic Violence (DV) organizations websites, such as <https://www.loveisrespect.org/for-yourself/safety-planning/interactive-safety-plan/>
- By following safety planning tips on <https://www.thehotline.org/help/path-to-safety>

### **Seek Support**

It may be difficult to seek help from IPV because of feelings of shame or doubt. You may also feel alone because your partner has kept you away from your support system. If you have been threatened, even indirectly, with harm to you or your loved ones, you might feel afraid of what could happen if you tell about your experiences or try to get help. It can take a lot of time and courage to decide to seek help.

Remember that although you cannot stop your partner's behavior (only he or she can do that), you can find support. Stay connected to friends and family who support your health and safety. Also, many professional resources and providers are available and well-trained to help you in a private and respectful manner.

If you are a victim of intimate partner violence, please consult your primary care provider or your behavioral health provider in primary care for assistance and support. Also the Veterans Affairs Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program (<https://www.socialwork.va.gov/IPV/Index.asp>) can provide assistance and support.