

5 RED FLAGS THAT YOU'RE IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP – AND IT'S TIME TO GET OUT

by: Lois Brenner, Esq. (NY), Dec. 9, 2012

It is often said, “the meek will inherit the earth,” but unfortunately sometimes the meek also inherit abusive relationships. In society we typically think of meek as weak and subservient but there are also those who have high powered careers and look dapper in a suit who display characteristics of meekness in other aspects of their lives.

All too often as a divorce attorney and mediator I hear a person who has suffered from abuse from their soon-to-be ex-spouse say when the two of them first got together it was all flowers, hand-written cards, and boxes of candy. Yet soon after their wedding night their spouse's abusive behavior began to surface and they, “never saw it coming.”

But if one really takes the time to look and maybe even trust their intuition, there are some red flags – signs that tell you, you may be dealing with an abusive person and it's probably a good idea not to have a third date or even agree to marry that person.

Here are five of those red flags:

- **Name Calling:** This is a nasty little psychological tactic of an abusive person to try to raise their status over the person they're mistreating.
- **Playing the blame game:** Someone who is not able to take responsibility for their actions or missteps is not an adequate partner, especially when they erroneously put the blame for their failure onto you. Failure is a wonderful tool to help us grow and learn from our mistakes, but someone who chooses not to see it that way isn't growing as a person – and is more than likely growing apart from you.
- **Verbal arguments escalating to physical abuse:** This one is more than a red flag, it's a king-sized alarm clock giving you a wake up call that your partner is not the right one for you. If it happens once, it's more than likely to happen again and it usually gets worse.
- **Manipulative:** It seems pretty self explanatory, but a potential abuser will prey on your emotions and fears to get you to do their bidding. They might even go as far as forbidding you to see a specific friend or from going certain places. In some cases the abuser will do everything they can to get their future or current spouse to quit their job, – not because they care about their comfort but because they want the other person to rely solely on them so they can leverage that reliance to keep the other person in a weaker position. They subtly separate you from your sources of support – people and money.
- **Subtle attacks on your character and abilities:** This one is a bit of a wolf in sheep's clothing. The abusive partner might smile and act very polite while telling you you're no good at your chosen field, you'll never achieve your goals and dreams, or you're not handsome or pretty

enough.

Sadly it can take weeks, months, and even years to muster the courage to leave that abusive relationship and dissolve a marriage that should never have happened in the first place. Knowing some signs you may be in a relationship with an abusive person is helpful for two reasons.

- If you haven't married the abuser, you can get out now before it ever has the chance to end in a messy, expensive, and painful divorce.
- If you're currently married to an abusive person, it's never too late to get out. While the divorce process might be scary, pricey, or painful; staying can lead to the death of your spirit or much worse. And if you feel like you might be in a crisis situation, you can always call the Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-7233, or the Victim Center at 1-800-394-2255.

If you have any other questions about abusive relationships or need help in the choice you are thinking of making in leaving that relationship, please feel free to call me at 212-734-1551, and I'd be happy to advise or help you fight or negotiate the outcome you are looking for. I'm Lois Brenner and I will always help you achieve the future you deserve.