

A Bitter-Sweet Love Story – Knowing and Preventing Intimate Partner Violence

There was once a pop song singing that ‘I’m so in love that I don’t know I’m hurt, and I surrender completely.’ We’re wondering if you have that kind of feeling very often. Because you love someone very much, so when s/he hurts you, you choose to put up with her/him, to give in, to tolerate, and even to persuade yourself that it is actually your fault. If you have that kind of feeling from time to time, or you have actually been physically hurt, you might want to think carefully whether or not you have a dangerous lover.

Is this love making you feel tired?

Having a dangerous love might put you into the cycle of intimate partner violence, and there are some hints you can watch out for to prevent it:

1. Because I love you, so you must satisfy my expectation on you: Has s/he set up some mission-impossible criteria for you, and ask you to become her/his ideal partner? You’re feeling extremely tired because you have to do your utmost to meet her/his demands.
2. Because I love you, so you must let me know where you are: Does s/he demand all the time to know your whereabouts? If s/he can’t find you, you will be bombarded with phone calls questioning where you are. When you go out with someone, s/he will ask you in detail about that someone like s/he is performing a full-scale background check. When s/he becomes suspicious, s/he becomes jealous, and that makes you feel s/he doesn’t trust at all.
3. Because I love you, so you must tolerate my emotions: Does s/he get out of control very often? If something isn’t s/he wishes, s/he gets really angry and start to shout with abuse, even smash things or hurt you physically, and that makes you feel scared, helpless, even doubtful about if you have done something wrong. Gradually, you’re filled with the sense of guilt, and you think you’re actually not a good person.
4. Because I love you, so you must have me and me only in your world: Does s/he demand that you must stay be her/his side, and that makes you feel that you don’t have your own time and space? If you have something to do elsewhere, s/he gets pissed or depressed, and gradually you find that you no longer have other friends but only s/he in your life.
5. Because I love you, so you must have sex with me: Does s/he regard love and sex as the same thing? So, whenever s/he wants it, you must comply, and you always do it her/his

way. Sometimes you find her/his abusive or violent.

The so-called “Intimate Partner Violence” includes language abuse, public humiliation, physical injury, isolated interpersonal relationship, sexual assault, and so on. If your comments on the abovementioned five statements are ‘Yes’, and you very often feel depressed, helpless, and guilty in your intimate relationship, it is highly likely that you have found yourself a dangerous lover, who has been draining your energy and costing you the welfare of your body and mind.

To love is not to put up with and tolerate all the time

Do you soothe yourselves from time to time thinking maybe s/he would change one day, maybe things would be better one day? But deep inside you don't know when your wishes will come true. Here are some common "Myth" for your reference:

The "Myth" is...	The "Truth" is...
As long as I love her/him, s/he will change (happy, regain her/his nerve, give up her/his bad habits, etc.)	You love her/his, but s/he doesn't love herself/himself, so it's difficult for her/him to change. Studies show that dangerous lovers have chronic personality issues, which require professional assistance. What you can change is yourself.
To love her/him is to put up with and tolerate her/his shortcomings.	You're right about that, but does s/he tolerate your shortcomings? Or, is s/he always picky about you? A good intimate relationship requires mutual tolerance, communication, and negotiation so that the couple involved can find a way of life acceptable by both of them.
To love her/him is to satisfy her/his demands.	Like the "Truth" revealed above, a good intimate relationship requires mutual satisfaction. If you're the one to satisfy but not to be satisfied, this relationship will only make you feel tired. Besides, some demands are really difficult to meet, is s/he being too unreasonable?
It's all my fault, and that's why s/he treats me badly (hit me or use abusive language at me).	Both of you are responsible for your intimate relationship; you can't just shoulder all the responsibilities yourself. Even if you have made some mistakes, s/he doesn't have the right to hit you or abuse you.
I know s/he hit me (used abusive language at me), but I choose to forgive her/him, because s/he has sincerely apologized.	The intimate partner violence comes with a cycle, which means your dangerous lover may feel ashamed or guilty afterwards, s/he may ask for your forgiveness, and you will have a sweet and peaceful period of time, but then s/he most likely will drop back into her/his old habits.
As long as I'm well-behaved and obedient, s/he will treat me nicely.	Even if you're well-behaved and obedient, any good response from her/him isn't guaranteed. Actually, the situation might get worse because

	s/he mistakes your good behaviors and obedience as an approval of what s/he has done to you. S/he then takes your good behaviors and obedience for granted.
S/he cares about me so much, and that's why s/he gets so mad at me.	Actually, what s/he really cares about is whether or not you take care of her/his demands. In other words, s/he cares about herself/himself much more than s/he cares about you.
I don't know what to do without her/him! I can't imagine my life alone, so I'd better stay with her/him.	Breaking up is painful indeed, but that kind of pain will be gone gradually if you have friends to support you, and if you keep a regular way of life. The intimate partner violence, on the contrary, will gradually eat you alive – both physically and mentally.

A healthy intimate relationship is a carefree one

If you find your intimate relationship somewhat violent or tiring as mentioned above, please remember the following strategies: (1) Find someone to talk to: Seeking support from your friends, or seeking assistance from the Psychological Counseling Center. You need someone to be with you while handling the situation. That's the first step for a change. (2) Ensure your personal safety: Taking into serious consideration your personal safety. When your dangerous lover becomes extremely emotional and you start to worry about your safety, leave the scene ASAP! (3) When your dangerous lover appears to be calm, trying to explain to her/him the difficulties you have felt in your relationship, or the things you want her/him to change. If it's possible, ask her/him to go to the Psychological Counseling Center with you to seek help. Last but not least, you should start to think that if none of the solutions works, maybe breaking up is the only solution.

Reference

Yao, Shu-Wen and Hsiao-Wen Wen (2009) *Happy Love and Rational Break-up – Handbook on Intimate Partner Violence Prevention*. Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Prevention Committee, Ministry of Interior.

Chen, Roda (2009) Counseling clients who involved in intimate partner violence in university counseling center: treatment strategy and related ethical issues. *The Archive of Guidance & Counseling*. 31:1, pp.39-53.