

# Power and Control—Weapons of an Abuser

The Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, Minnesota demonstrates through a “Violence Wheel” chart the kind of behavior abusers use to get and keep control over their partners.

This chart uses a wheel as a symbol to show the relationship of physical abuse to other forms of abuse. Each spoke represents a tactic used to gain power or control, which is the hub of the wheel. The rim which surrounds and supports the spokes is physical abuse. It holds the system together, and gives the abuser his strength.

## Intimidation

Yelling, screaming, belittling, raising fists, knocking down doors, “playing with” guns or weapons, threats, playing mind games . . . these are subtle messages that an abuser uses to tell his victim to “watch it!”

## Verbal Attacks

By attacking verbally, the abuser keeps his hands clean but effectively degrades and intimidates his victim until her sense of perception is unstable, and her self-esteem is lowered until she believes what he says is true.

## Isolation

The abuser is better able to control his victim if he can isolate her from family, friends, and people who can help. Often, the victim becomes a prisoner in her own home, unable to invite people over and unable to go out without his permission.

## Minimizing, Denying, & Blaming

The abuser needs someone else on whom to place blame because his fragile ego cannot handle it. An abuser may become psychotic by denying that he hurt his victim, followed by accusing her of hurting him, and then minimizing her injuries. It is also common for an abuser to say to his victim, “*You made me hit you.*”

## Using Children

An abuser who wants to use the children as weapons may take his ex-wife to court

when she withholds visitation because the children are sick. An abuser will also feel a great sense of control by keeping the children past the court-appointed time of visitation or refusing to provide his ex-wife with travel information when he takes them out of town.

## Abusing Authority

Many abusers distort the Scriptures to validate their heavy-handed control and keep their wives in line. Whenever she fails to meet his demands, he reminds her that he is the “head of this house”, and she must submit to whatever he says.

## Economic Control

This type of abuse leaves the victim helplessly in the abuser’s control, as she has to beg for every penny, and account for the pittance he does give her. It often

leaves her trapped without the means to get help.

## Coercion & Threats

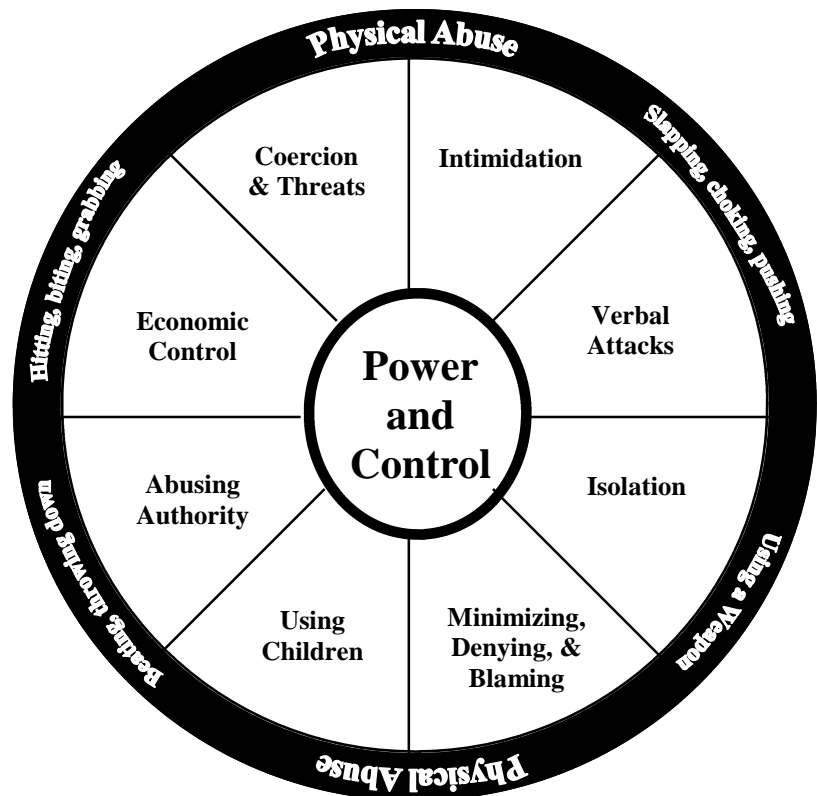
An abuser uses threats to keep his victim in continual fear so she will do whatever he demands. He may even coerce her into illegal acts by intimidation and belittling.

An abuser may also threaten to take the children and disappear if she tries to seek help.

## Physical Violence

When an abuser’s power and control is threatened, he will usually resort to physical violence to instill fear and regain control.

*(More on physical violence next issue.)*



Adapted from the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project  
Duluth, MN