



Evidence of Growth & Willingness to Change

Unless God works an instantaneous miracle, change tends to be a process that takes time, deep honesty and sustained effort. A person must be willing to identify and then reject the values that drive his (or her) abusive behavior. If you are involved with someone who has a history of abusive behavior, here are some questions which may help you determine whether real growth and change are taking place.

Has his belief system changed?

- Can he identify the values or beliefs that have driven his behavior? Can he not only articulate in some fashion that he knows certain behaviors are wrong (abusive speech; being controlling, etc.), but also identify the heart beliefs (lies) that have driven his outward behavior? Does he give evidence of rejecting these beliefs?
- Can he identify and describe the new values or beliefs that must begin or drive his behavior?
- Can he describe the truth he desires to live by in contrast to the lies that have controlled his life?

Does he accept responsibility for his attitudes and actions?

- Does he fully and unconditionally admit the wrong he has committed?
- Has he stopped making excuses for his behavior or is he still, in any way, blaming you or others (even if there are wrongs that another person is responsible for)?
- Has he stopped denying or minimizing the wrong he has committed?
- Can he identify the self-justifying reasons he has used to rationalize his right to abuse? Does he now reject those reasons?

Will he accept the consequences of his actions?

- Does he unconditionally acknowledge that those who have stood against him were right to do so?
- Is he willing to give you and others he has offended the right to be angry? The right to avoid him until such time as you believe you want contact, even if that is never? Does he in any way try to pressure you to return to the relationship?
- Does he recognize and respect the difference between forgiveness granted and relationships restored?

Does he fully embrace his need to pursue change apart from any other person?

- Is he willing to continue meeting with counselors, pastors, etc....even if relationships are not restored? Does he see and pursue his need to change apart from you?
- If you say 'no' to his requests, does he give you the right to do so without demanding a timetable or some other response from you? Are you free to change your mind?
- Does he give you the right to make your own decisions, even if they may be wrong: will he allow you the freedom to make mistakes?

Does he show empathy/sympathy because he recognizes the effects of his abuse on others?

- Does he recognize both the short and longterm impact that his abuse has on others? (emotional pain, loss of trust, broken relationships, etc....).
- Does he show respect by listening and showing that he values your opinions, especially during conflict or disagreements?

Does he accept accountability for his actions? Both past and present?

- Is he willing to accept feedback and criticism? Does he show honesty when he slips back into abusive behavior and speech?
- Is he ever repentant without confrontation? Does he really see his abusive behavior, and if not, will he willingly accept your evaluation? Does he distrust his own opinion?
- Is he owning his wrong abusive behavior toward others? Does he willingly seek forgiveness and reconciliation from those he has wronged outside of family and close friends? Does he seek to do this on his own, without prompting from family?

Does he acknowledge that abuse is primarily about power and control?

- Does he recognize this or is he simply learning new, seemingly less abusive (positive control) techniques to control and manipulate? (This is the danger of dealing with outward behavior alone. Inner values, beliefs and a person's sense of entitlement must also change.)

Without denying God's ability to instantly change a repentant person, it does appear that God's normal way of changing a person's heart is a process. Trust God to work in the other's heart and recognize that He can work even if you are not involved. Give God and yourself TIME. It may take a long time and the process may be messy, but if the abuser genuinely desires change, the process will produce greater maturity and good fruit in his life.

This SPM Quicklook was first written by Pastor Rob Zaklan.

Additional Resources:

Book: *Why Does He Do That? Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men* (Lundy Bancroft, Berkley Publishing Group, New York, New York, 2002)

Book: *The Emotionally Destructive Relationship* (Leslie Vernick, Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, Oregon, 2007)

SPM Quicklook: *Is Your Abusive Partner Changing or Not?*