

This section is from the book *Why Does He Do That* by Lundy Bancroft.

The gender language has intentionally been left as it was written by Mr. Bancroft, but the dynamics of abuser behavior explained below can be the same regardless of the gender of an abuser or a survivor.

For more information, visit his website at <http://lundybancroft.blogspot.com/>

MYTHS, EXCUSES, AND REALITY

Men abuse because it works!

Abuser's behavior is driven by their values of entitlement and privilege. They learn that they can ensure that their feelings and needs are always the focus in the relationship by using tactics of power and control.

Why does he do that?

Battering is a choice. Just like they chose not to abuse their bosses, neighbors, pastor, friends, or other family members, they chose to abuse their partners because they get what they want when they do it.

Myths & Excuses about Battering:

Both abusers and many other people blame victims and make excuses for the abuser's behavior.

He is angry. He needs anger management classes. He lost control.

If a man had an "anger control problem" he wouldn't be able to reserve that side for his partner only.

While a man is on an abusive rampage, verbally or physically, his mind maintains awareness of some level of what would look bad, get him in trouble, or hurt himself or his valuables which demonstrates a large level of control. An abuser's problem is not that he loses control of himself, but that he takes control of his partner

- Extensive interviews with abusers and studies on abusive behavior has shown that batterers make conscious, calculated decisions, have a great deal of self-control, and rarely do anything they consider morally wrong.

He was drunk or wasted or high.

Even while intoxicated, abusers continue to make choices about their actions; other wise everyone who drank or used would be abusive. Abusiveness and addiction are two distinct problems requiring separate solutions.

- Receiving help for a substance abuse issue will not fix the abusive behavior as substance abuse does not cause the behavior. However, substance abuse can increase the danger of the abusive behaviors as it does decrease inhibitions and fear of repercussions in the offender.

He is insecure. He experienced abuse as a child, or with a previous partner.

This myth is rewarding for an abuser, because it gets his partner, his therapists, and others to cater to him emotionally, and the more positive attention he receives the more he demands.

Abusive men often have a distorted view of themselves as victims. This serves the purpose of redirecting the focus from their behavior by blaming the victim.

- Feelings do not directly cause behavior. Behavior is more determined by our attitude, beliefs, and habits.
- Multiple research studies examining the link between abuse as a child and battering behavior show that it does not "create" batterers.
- If a person was that in touch with their experiences as a victim of child abuse or other mistreatment, they would remember how miserable it feels to be disrespected, violated, in fear, and blamed- and less likely to abuse others.

Will he ever stop?

Abusive men can change *if* they want to; *if* they recognize that their behavior is wrong, and that their belief that they have the right to control their partner through abuse is wrong. However, few men are willing to do this.

Why does he stay the same?

Because he benefits from being the one in power and having control:

- He gets to have his way without compromise.
- He has someone to blame for his problems.
- He has someone to care for him & do all the work.
- He gets public status of partner and/or fatherhood without sacrifice.
- He is often in a better financial position
- He gets to be the center of attention.
- His careers, education or goals are the priority.
- He is exempt from the rules that apply to his partner.
- People are often supportive of his abusive attitudes.

Will therapy help?

Abusers who do participate in individual therapy typically get worse as they use therapy to:

- Develop new excuses for their behavior.
- Develop more sophisticated arguments to prove that their partner is mentally unstable.
- Develop more creative ways to make her feel responsible for their emotional distress.

In addition, many therapists guide abusers in identifying and expressing feelings which feeds the abusers selfish focus on himself.

Will medication help?

There is no particular mental health condition that is typical of abusers and some abusers perform normally in clinical evaluation and psychological tests. Some abusers may have a mental health diagnosis but it is their value system that is unhealthy not their psychology.

If they do have a mental health diagnosis, abuser behavior may improve for a while as a result of taking medication prescribed by a psychiatrist but typically this may only stop the most devastating or terrifying behavior but not his overall abusiveness.

Will couples counseling help?

Domestic violence is a criminal act, not a marital problem. We do not recommend couples counseling because the behavior is solely the responsibility of the abusive person, only he alone is capable of changing it.

Couples counseling may have the following unintended effects:

- Allowing the abuser to stay focused on his criticisms of his partner, rather than dealing with his own problems
- Leading to retaliation by the abuser for the victim revealing information during a session,
- Ignoring the denial, minimization and deception of the abuser.
- Ignoring the victim's rights in a relationship.
- Increasing the victim's sense of isolation if the abuse is kept hidden.
- Implying that the victim has responsibility for seeing that her abuser gets help.

Violent behavior must be addressed and stopped before couples counseling takes place.

What will help?

Anger management does not address flawed attitudes and beliefs that reinforce abusive behavior.

Perpetrator treatment is a 12 month program that promotes a change in belief system which supports the use of non-violence in intimate relationships, holds the abuser accountable for all abusive behaviors, confronts denial, minimization and victim blaming, and helps to develop non-violent, non-controlling relationship skills.