Physical and sexual assaults, or threats to commit them, are the most apparent forms of relationship violence and are usually the actions that allow others to become aware of the problem. However, regular use of other abusive behaviors by the batterer, when reinforced by one or more acts of physical violence, make up a larger system of abuse. Although physical assaults may occur only once or occasionally, they instil threat of future violent attacks and allow the abuser to take control of their partner’s life and circumstances.

The Power & Control diagram is a particularly helpful tool in understanding the overall pattern of abusive and violent behaviors, which are used by a batterer to establish and maintain control over their partner. Very often, one or more violent incidents are accompanied by an array of these other types of abuse. They are less easily identified, yet firmly establish a pattern of intimidation and control in the relationship. (Adapted from: ncdsv.org)

**Power and Control Wheel**

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**Any one of any gender or age** can be the target of relationship violence

**Using Coercion & Threats:**
Making threats to do something to hurt a partner; threatening to leave them; threatening to commit suicide or murder; threatening to report them to welfare; making them drop charges; making them do illegal things; threats to commit physical or sexual harm; threats to commit property destruction

**Intimidation:**
Making a partner afraid by using looks, actions, or gestures. Smashing things; destroying property; abusing pets; displaying weapons; driving recklessly to make another feel threatened or endangered; throwing objects as an expression of anger to make another feel threatened.

**Emotional Abuse:**
Putting a partner down; making them feel bad about themselves; calling them names; making them think they’re crazy; playing mind games; humiliating them; making them feel guilty; ignoring or discounting activities and accomplishments; unreasonable jealousy or suspicion

**Isolation:**
Controlling what a partner does; what they read; where they go – limiting their outside involvement; using jealousy to justify actions; telling them you don’t think their friends like you to minimize contact; making them avoid friends/family by deliberately embarrassing or humiliating them in front of others. Controlling who they talk to; moving house

**Using Economic Abuse:**
Preventing a partner from getting or keeping a job; making them ask for money; giving them an allowance; taking their money; not letting them know about or have access to family income; forcing them to ask for basic necessities

**Using Privilege:**
Treating a partner like a servant; making all the big decisions; acting like king/queen/leader of the castle; being the one to define men’s/ women’s/ individual’s roles in the relationship

**Using Children or Pets:**
Making their partner feel guilty about children or pets; Using children to relay messages; threatening to take pets or children away; abusing children or pets to punish their partner

**Minimizing, Denying and Bullying:**
Making light of abuse and not taking their partner’s concerns about it seriously; saying the abuse didn’t happen; shifting responsibility for abusive behavior; saying that they caused it

Anyone of any gender or age can be the target of relationship violence

**Relationship violence can happen in any relationship and is not just physical**

Adapted from:
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