

Beyond violent behaviours : power and control



It can be difficult to understand the dynamics that a person is facing when you only look at the violent behaviours that are present in a relationship. To understand intimate partner violence (IPV), it is also necessary to understand it from the perspective of power and control.

1

Domination : the objective of intimate partner violence (IPV)

In a dynamic of IPV, violent behaviours are used to create a relationship of control and domination over the other person. Essentially, the violent partner imposes their will, opinions, way of doing things and way of thinking, by using violent behaviours if the other person does not submit.

2

A victim who doesn't "let it happen".

Contrary to popular belief, the victim will react in an attempt to restore the balance of power. The victim may use several strategies to achieve this: rationalization (trying to explain, argue), negotiation (offering compromises), appealing to morality (trying to show the other person that their reactions are excessive or that their expectations are unreasonable), appealing to love (begging, imploring in the name of the relationship), etc. **In a relationship where the other is not trying to impose their will, this would be effective in restoring balance, but in a relationship where the other wants to establish domination, the victim's attempts are doomed to failure.**

3

The victim's reactive violence

When what is at stake is important for the victim and that they are unable to influence the situation, or in a context of self-defense, the victim risks increasing the intensity of their reactions to the point of using coercive or violent behaviors: shouting, insulting, physically defending themselves, etc. This is called reactive violence or violent resistance. It is important not to confuse the violent behaviours of the abuser (*which aims to gain illegitimate power*) and the reactive violence of the victim (*which aims to regain legitimate power or to protect oneself*).

4

From powerlessness to guilt

It is important to realize how much the continual failures a victim faces are detrimental to their self-esteem and self-confidence. They are left with a very strong sense of powerlessness that can spread to other areas of their lives, such as their work. Moreover, since the violent partner increases the intensity of their violence as soon as the victim tries to regain power, and uses the reactive violence to show the victim that they are "not doing any better", the victim is likely to feel responsible for the situation.

*Just before my office holiday party, he grabbed me by the shoulders and held me in front of the mirror. He told me that I had put on make-up like a "tramp". I begged him to stop. He said I wanted to impress someone. I told him that it wasn't true, I tried to reason with him, I told him that he was the one I wanted to look good for, but he just kept going. I felt like I was suffocating. I ended up shouting at him and I scratched his hand trying to get him off my back. He let go of me and called me a "crazy b*tch". Later, at the party, a colleague came up to me and told me that my partner was showing everyone his scratch and asking them how they felt about me at the office, because I was aggressive at home and he didn't know what to do with me anymore...*

SOS VIOLENCE CONJUGALE IS AVAILABLE 24/7 ACROSS QUEBEC, AND PROVIDES ACCESS TO ALL THE APPROPRIATE SERVICES AND RESOURCES FOR VICTIMS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE (IPV) AND ANYONE WHO IS CONCERNED ABOUT A SITUATION OF IPV.

* Although most victims of intimate partner violence are female, it can also affect some men and members of the GLBTQ and non-binary community.