

Deaf Power and Control Wheel

Domestic violence manifests itself differently in each culture based on the language and values of their people. The Deaf community is unique because it has language and cultural norms that cross geographic borders. Aspects of domestic violence in the Deaf community are often overlooked by hearing professionals (DV advocates, law enforcement, medical professionals, etc.). DeafHope advocates have compiled information through years of interviews from Deaf survivors of domestic violence into the Deaf Power and Control Wheel. Thanks to the Domestic Violence Intervention Project of Duluth, Minnesota for their pioneering work on the Power and Control wheel.



Intimidation:

- Uses ASL to make you afraid with gestures, facial expressions, or exaggerated signs, then uses Deaf culture to justify the behavior
- Overuses floor stomping and pounding on the table or door
- Signs very close to your face when angry
- Gets angry because you look away while he is talking

Emotional Abuse:

- Criticizes your speech, ASL or English skills
- Calls you “hearing-mind” because you aren’t fluent enough in ASL or don’t socialize or identify with the Deaf community
- Makes fun of your ASL style
- Puts down your education background, public school or residential school
- Tells you that you are too sensitive “like hearing people”

Isolation:

- Checks your pager, instant messenger, videophone, e-mail and/or TTY conversations
- Moves away from the Deaf community and/or your family to isolate you
- Tells you no one will believe you, because he is too well-known in the Deaf community
- Takes advantage of the lack of accessible services for Deaf survivors

Minimizing, Denying & Blaming:

- Denies abuse by saying it accepted in Deaf culture
- Angrily throws things at you as a way to get attention
- Tells people private things (example: “My wife is lousy in bed.”), and says it is okay to share private information because it is part of Deaf Culture

Using Children:

- Your partner is hearing and doesn’t allow your children to use ASL to talk with you
- Doesn’t allow your children to be proud of Deaf culture
- Criticizes you as a Deaf mother, says bad things about you to your children
- Tells you and the children that you cannot go to a shelter because everyone is hearing

Hearing Privilege:

- Excludes you from important conversations (talking to the bank without you knowing)
- Leaves you out in social situations (such as a party or dinner) with hearing people
- Talks negatively about the Deaf community
- If you call the police, he interprets to manipulate the situation to his benefit

Economic Abuse:

- Takes away your SSI checks or making you lose it by reporting additional income
- Ruins your chances for a job by spreading rumors about you in the small Deaf community
- Demands you ask for permission before spending money

Coercion and Threats:

- Destroys your reputation by spreading false rumors
- Uses his power in the Deaf community to pressure you to stay
- Uses the Deaf school as the reason to stay together to support your Deaf children
- Uses his position as a leader in the Deaf community to discredit your story