

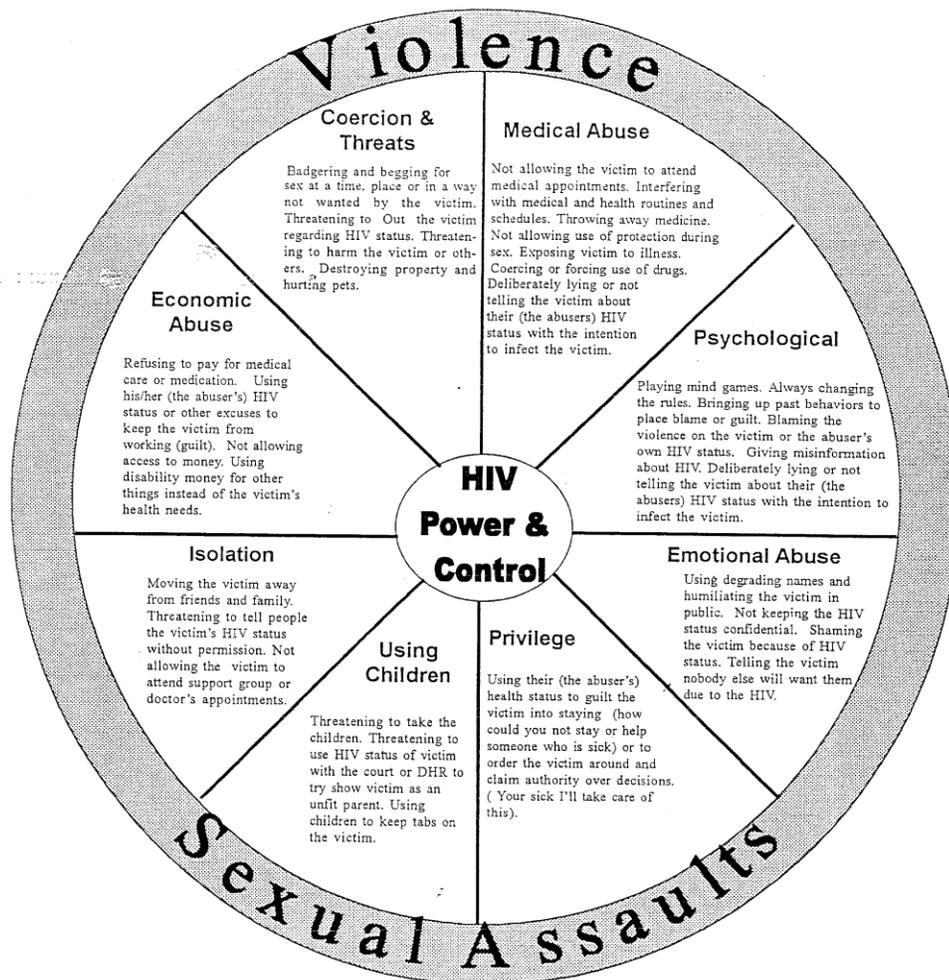
Positively Safe

THE INTERSECTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS Power & Control Wheel

Domestic violence (DV) is an act or pattern of acts used by a person to gain or maintain control, harm, threaten, intimidate, harass, coerce, control, isolate, restrain, or monitor another person in an current or former intimate relationship or a social relationship. DV usually is not a single isolated event and typically involves several tactics. The below wheel explores how the intersection of HIV/AIDS and DV changes the tactics used by abusive partners to gain power and control over an individual when either one or both partners have HIV/AIDS.

This tool can be used to educate the public, victims, law enforcement, and health service providers about domestic violence and the intersection with HIV/AIDS.



Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence & Montgomery AIDS Outreach
Based on the Power and Control Wheel developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, Duluth, MN.

The HIV/AIDS status of either or both the victim and abusive partner gives the abusive partner additional means of control. The wheel and the below examples clarify what domestic violence can look like when either or both partners have HIV/AIDS.

Medical Abuse

- An abusive partner may interfere with the victim's health care by withholding, throwing away, or hiding medications, canceling medical appointments, or preventing the HIV/AIDS-positive partner from receiving needed medical care.
- An HIV/AIDS-positive abusive partner may even do the same things to themselves, in an attempt to blackmail the victim.
- An abusive partner may make many, if not all, of the decisions about their partner's reproductive health; for example, forbidding his partner to take birth control and therefore forcing her to have children.

Psychological

- An abusive partner may threaten to "out" a current or former partner as HIV/AIDS positive to friends, family, co-workers, etc., before she/he is ready. The fear of the stigma attached to HIV/AIDS can pose an additional threat to 'being out'.
- An abusive partner may lie or not tell his/her former or current partner about his/her HIV status with the intention of infecting the other person.

Emotional Abuse

- An HIV/AIDS-positive abusive partner may suggest that his/her condition will worsen or he/she will die if the victim ends the relationship.
- The abusive partner may taunt the HIV-positive victim saying, "Who would want to be with you?" Victims may perceive this to be true if the HIV/AIDS-positive partner is dependent on the abusive partner for housing, nutrition, health care, or other forms of support. The additional power that accompanies this threat is that the victim may be afraid of dying alone and/or that the abusive partner, to whom the victim often has a strong emotional connection, will die alone.
- The victim may also fear that family, friends, and/or people in the community who do not understand or are not aware of the abuse may fault and turn against her/him for leaving the HIV/AIDS-positive abusive partner who may be sick and/or perceived as vulnerable.
- An abusive partner may make moral judgments about a victim's HIV status and verbally insult their partner regarding appearance, physical abilities, or economic burden.
- Forcefully attempting to maintain normalcy of life by acting as if the HIV/AIDS-positive partner does not have physical limitations based on HIV/AIDS status is a tactic that could be used to dismiss and/or control the victim's needs.

Privilege

- An abusive partner may use his/her health status to control and manipulate the victim into staying in the relationship. He/She may also use the victim's HIV status to assert his/her authority in making decisions for the HIV-positive victim.
- An abusive partner with HIV/AIDS may infect, or threaten to infect, the victim.
- The threat of violence can limit a victim's ability to negotiate condom use and other sexual practices/behaviors that would decrease her/his risk of infection or re-infection.

Using Children

- Questioning the ability of the partner living with HIV/AIDS to provide continuous support (emotional, economic) for children may be a tactic used to undermine the victim as a parent and/or to influence their children's view of the victim.
- An abusive partner may threaten to take children away and/or deny an HIV-positive partner access to children.
- An abusive partner may threaten to use a victim's HIV/AIDS status due to drug use or sexual partners outside the relationship in legal proceedings regarding the custody of her/his children.

Isolation

- An abusive partner may take advantage of an HIV/AIDS-positive partner's poor health by using it as a rationale to limit contact with other individuals.
- An abusive partner may limit or interfere with the victims ability to discuss and/or get support for health status with friends, assistance programs, or support groups.
- Using physical limitations to keep partner separated from outside community can be used to limit a victims interactions with other.

Economic Abuse

- An abusive partner may take advantage of the victim's poor health by assuming sole power over all the finances and financial decisions to deepen their partner's dependency.
- Denying access to financial resources for expenses related to HIV/AIDS; i.e. medication, medical care, nutritional services, is a tactic that can be used to assert control over an HIV-Positive partner.
- An abusive partner may force an HIV/AIDS-positive partner to maintain a certain level of work activity to generate income without regard to his/her physical limitations.

Coercion & Threats

- The threat of physical violence can become more potent to victims living with an illness, who may be too weak to defend themselves or may fear the HIV/AIDS-related complications (easy bruising, infections, slow or difficult healing) that can result from being subjected to physical harm.
- Additionally, the emotional stress associated with surviving an abusive relationship can adversely affect a person's already debilitated immune system, potentially resulting in exacerbated symptoms, and further compromising the health of someone with HIV/AIDS, or another life threatening illness.
- Reproductive coercion is defined as threats or acts of violence against a partner's reproductive health or reproductive decision-making. It includes sex without consent, pressuring someone to become pregnant against her will and interfering with methods of birth control, such as refusing to wear a condom, poking holes in condoms, refusing to let a woman use forms of birth control. In an abusive relationship, asking an abusive partner to use a condom may cause him to react by accusing the survivor of cheating on him or not trusting him. This reaction can be followed by physical or sexual violence.

Additional Resources:

- Find more information about Domestic Violence, HIV/AIDS, and the intersection of DV and HIV/AIDS on our **Fact Sheets** in the *Positively Safe Toolkit*.