Early Warning Signs of Relationship Violence

Relationship violence, also known as domestic violence or partner abuse, is where one person is controlling and abusive towards their partner. There are sometimes early warning signs of controlling behaviors that can predict when someone is likely to be abusive. These types of control and abuse are ongoing, and do not happen only once. The abuse often becomes more frequent and severe with time. Here are some warning signs that one can look out for when dating others. People who are abusive may:

- **Be “too good to be true”** when you first start dating. They may be overly attentive to your needs and be very charming to other people in your life.

- **Move very quickly**, wanting to spend time with you frequently or wanting to move in together right away (within months of dating).

- **Be insistent on sexual contact** regardless of your feelings and may become coercive or no longer be sensitive to when and how you want to be intimate.

- **Be very jealous** of your outside life, which may be flattering at first, but in time can become smothering, and may lead to cutting you off from seeing your family and friends and taking part in interests and hobbies. Your partner may end up accusing you of liking other people and/or cheating.

- **Call you names** that are insulting or derogatory.

- **Blame behavior on external factors** such as stress from classes, growing up with abusive or neglectful parents, having trouble at work, struggling with alcohol or drugs, not having money, etc. The person may also blame you for “making them angry.”

- **Use finances** to control you, either by relying on your income to pay current or past bills, asking you to quit your job so that you can be dependent on their income, having you handle all the bills, or handling all the bills and not giving you any extra money to do things you are interested in doing.

- **Use values to control you** and convince you that their behavior is acceptable, and/or to keep you in the relationship even if it is abusive.

- **Make threats to you or others** that prevent you from leaving the relationship, such as abusing a pet with the threat that the same violence could happen to you or driving recklessly and putting you and others at risk. If you end the relationship or contact with the person, they may harass your friends and/or family until you “give in” and go back.

- **Be critical** of your thoughts, interests, how you dress, your friends, etc.

Many of these behaviors are subtle, but with time the control and abuse becomes more frequent and severe. For support and information contact MSU Safe Place, the campus relationship violence program at (517) 355-1100 or noabuse@msu.edu.