

LETTERS

Not Just a Bad Relationship

Don't minimize abuse
In reference to "Perspective,"
Issue 494

Dear Editor:

It is critical for those who are trying to help a friend or relative in an abusive relationship to realize that what they observe is not simply a "bad" relationship, and that there are not two equally valid sides to the story.

Due to a vast gap in education and awareness in regard to identifying what abusive behavior looks like, it is easy to unintentionally contribute to the abuse or to minimize the victim's experiences. The confusion is intensified if the victim has been manipulated by the abuser to believe that there is nothing problematic, let alone abusive, going on—and if there is, it's not that bad, and at any rate, it is the person's own fault.

All of this denial, minimization, and justification erodes not only a person's self-esteem but his or her perception of reality, leading them to feel responsible for how they are being treated and powerless to leave. They become so worn down that they don't think they are worth being treated with dignity and respect.

When people are driven by power and control, that is an individual issue. That is

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not a relationship issue, because they take that mindset with them wherever they go. This is the main reason couple's counseling makes narcissistic people worse, not better. You have one person, the victim, who is making him/herself even more vulnerable by being open, honest, sincere, and solution-oriented, while the controlling partner gathers information about the victim's concerns, fears, and insecurities, all of which will be used against the victim later on.

It is advisable and safer for the victim to seek out therapy with a trauma-informed therapist trained to understand psychological and emotional abuse.

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