

The quick answer to, “Can he change?” - Yes. The bigger question is, “Will he change?” Most abusive men don’t **see or believe** that they are abusive. They believe the problem is with their partner or someone else. Since they don’t believe they are the problem, they rarely reach out for help without some kind of external pressure.

*Studies show when women get at least twelve hours of victim advocacy they’re more likely to leave and end the relationship.*

Getting an abuser into an intervention group is important. It gives him the chance to make the changes he didn’t recognize he needed. But, it does not guarantee that he will change.

The best way to persuade an abuser to attend an intervention group is to set a boundary that he needs to attend and make changes in order for our relationship to have a chance. This is a difficult decision. It might mean losing the relationship.

## Signs of Change

When a man first enters a program, he will experience some “Ah-ha” moments. This is where he realizes that abuse is more than just hitting, and there have been many things he’s done that are considered abusive. Gaining knowledge about their abuse is very important, but **it does not** equal change. Change takes a long time and a lot of effort. Even then, he will make mistakes along the way and could fall back into old patterns. Women who have separated should not rush back into the relationship. Women should take at least six-months of separation, because anyone can behave well for a short time. Here are some common signs that can indicate he has changed.

- He has stopped being violent or threatening
- He does not blame you for his abusive behavior, but acknowledges it was wrong and how it affected you
- He understands that he has no right to control you
- You no longer feel afraid when you are with him
- He respects your boundaries
- He respects your opinions even when he disagrees with you
- You can negotiate without feeling humiliated or belittled by him
- He listens to you, and you feel heard
- He does not try to manipulate you with lies, half-truths, or by leaving things out
- He’s not forceful about having sex, nor does he accuse you of being unfaithful
- He recognizes that change is a lifelong process and something he will have to continue to work on for the rest of his life

## Healing Without your Partner

What if he doesn't change? Many women who are healing from abusive relationships really love their partners and don't want the relationship to end. They just want the abuse to end. They want their partners to make it to the other side with them. An important question to ask yourself is, "Am I willing to live the rest of my life this way?" If not, what do you need to do differently?

There are many boundaries you can set before the relationship ends. If he enters a program but chooses not to progress, these boundaries help you to make clear decisions about your next steps. Some women feel they have no options but to stay in the abuse and often do. If you can see there is no way to move forward because he's not willing to change, you can protect yourself, and take those steps toward healing.

## Final Thoughts on Change

You will know that he is truly changing when he stops focusing on you and your behavior. Listen for statements and watch for actions that reflect true change. There is good news - **even if he doesn't choose to change, YOU CAN!** You can heal and have healthy relationships regardless of your partner's choices. ***Your healing doesn't rest in the hands of your abuser, but in God's hands.***