

Does Your Man Fight Fair?

Excerpts from *Why Does He Do That?*
Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men, by Lundy Bancroft (2002).

“Each verbal battle with an abuser is a walk through a minefield, and each field is different. ...regardless of specific style very little of what an abuser does in an argument is as irrational or as emotional as it seems.” (p. 143)

It seems pointless to even talk with him.

“Your gnawing sensation of futility...is actually coming from the abusive man’s thinking about verbal conflict. His outlook makes it impossible for an argument to proceed toward anything other than fulfillment of his wishes—or toward nowhere at all” (p. 143-144).

I can’t understand why it always turns into a major battle whenever we try to discuss things.

The abuser sees an argument as war.

“His goal in a verbal conflict is not to negotiate different desires, understand each other’s experiences, or think of mutually beneficial solutions. He only wants to win....He won’t settle for anything other than victory. If he feels he has lost the argument, he may respond by making a tactical retreat and gathering his forces to strike again later....To this mindset, relationships are dichotomous: and you’re on either one end or the other: the dominator or the submitter, the champ or the chump, the cool man or the loser. He can imagine no other way” (p. 144).

He won’t even listen to me or consider what I’m saying.

She is always wrong in his eyes.

“It is frustrating, and ultimately pointless, to argue with someone who is certain beyond the shadow of a doubt that his perspective is accurate and complete and that yours is wrong and stupid. ...When your partner says to you disparagingly, “*Oh, the real reason why you complain about how I argue is that you can’t deal with my having strong opinions,*” he’s diverting attention from the tactics he uses. He is also reversing reality, which is that *he* can’t accept *your* differences of opinion and doesn’t want to let his thinking be influenced by yours” (p. 144).

Somehow, he always seems to twist my words or to disregard them completely.

He has an array of control tactics in conflicts.

- Sarcasm
- Ridicule
- Distorting what you say
- Distorting what happened in an earlier interaction
- Sulking

- Accusing you of doing what he does, or thinking the way he thinks
- Using a tone of absolute certainty and final authority – defining reality
- Interrupting
- Not listening; Refusing to respond
- Laughing out loud at your opinion or your perspective
- Turning your grievances around to use against you
- Changing the subject the subject to *his* grievances
- Criticism that is harsh, undeserved, or frequent
- Provoking guilt
- Playing the victim
- Smirking, rolling his eyes, contemptuous facial expressions
- Yelling, out-shouting
- Swearing
- Name-calling, insults, put-downs
- Walking out
- Towering over you
- Walking toward you in an intimidating way
- Blocking a doorway
- Other forms of physical intimidation, such as getting too close while he’s angry
- Threatening to leave you
- Threatening to harm you”: (p. 145-146).

Why won’t he even try to work with me?

“The abusive man wants particularly to *discredit* your perspective, especially your grievances. He may tell you for example that the “real” reasons why you complain about the way he treats you are:

--You don’t want him to feel good about himself

--You can’t handle it if he has an opinion that differs from yours, if he is angry, or if he is right

--You are too sensitive, you read too much into things, or you take things the wrong way

--You were abused as a child or a former partner, so you think everything is abuse” (p. 146).

“These are all strategies he uses to avoid having to think seriously about your grievances, because then he might be obligated to change his behaviors or attitudes. The abusive man’s goal in a heated argument is in essence to get you *to stop thinking for yourself* and to *silence you*, because to him your opinions and complaints are obstacles to the imposition of his will as well as an affront to his sense of entitlement” (p. 147).

“He makes sure to get his way—by one means or by another.

The bottom line with an abuser in an argument is that he wants what he wants—today, tomorrow, and always—and he feels he has a right to it” (p. 147).

If you see things on this list that seem familiar, you may be abused. Abuse won’t stop on its own. Call today to discuss your situation with a qualified counselor. All calls are free and confidential.

The Ripple Effect

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