

Deaf Power and Control Wheel

Domestic violence manifests itself differently in each culture based on the language and values of their people. The Deaf community is unique because it has language and cultural norms that cross geographic borders. Aspects of domestic violence in the Deaf community are often overlooked by hearing professionals (DV advocates, law enforcement, medical professionals, etc.). DeafHope advocates have compiled information from 5 years worth of interviews from Deaf survivors of domestic violence into the Deaf Power and Control Wheel. Thanks to the Domestic Violence Intervention Project of Duluth, Minnesota for their pioneering work on the Power and Control wheel.



DeafHope's Deaf Power and Control Wheel

Each cultural group has unique manifestations of domestic violence based on the group's norms, values, and language. The Deaf community has its own unique aspects domestic violence situations, many of which are overlooked by the hearing professionals such as DV advocates, law enforcement, medical professionals, etc. DeafHope advocates interviewed several Deaf survivors of domestic violence and developed the Deaf Power and Control Wheel based on their anecdotes:

Intimidation:

- Using ASL to make you afraid with gestures, facial expressions, or exaggerated signs, then denying it by saying that is Deaf culture to justify the behavior (example: saying you are so fat in ASL with deep or strong facial expressions, and claiming that it is permissible by Deaf culture to do so)
- Overuse of floor stomping and pounding on the table or door to get your attention
- Signing very close to your face when angry
- Using intimidation with body language in ASL
- Getting angry because you look away while he is talking

Using Emotional Abuse:

- Making fun of your speech or English skills
- If your partner is Deaf, he puts you down by calling you "hearing" because you are not fluent enough in ASL, or because you do not identify strongly as Deaf
- Making fun of your ASL style
- Taking advantage of the Deaf hierarchy, saying Deaf families are better
- Telling you that you have problems while he has no problems interacting in the Deaf community
- Telling you that you are too sensitive, too "hearing," or "hearing-minded"

Using Isolation:

- Taking your SSI check
- Checking your pager, instant messenger, or e-mail
- Checking your TTY, VRS, and Videophone conversations
- Controls which Deaf friends you talk to
- Moving away from the Deaf community to isolate you

- Demanding that you discuss issues with him first before discussing with others in the Deaf community
- Telling you that no one will believe you, and that he is too well respected in the Deaf community
- Telling you that a shelter will not accept you because you are deaf
- Taking advantage of the lack of accessible services for Deaf survivors

Minimizing, Denying & Blaming:

- Denying abuse by saying it is ok in Deaf culture to touch you roughly or talk to you roughly
- Throwing objects as an acceptable way to get attention
- Telling private things to people while standing next to you (example: "My wife is lousy in bed."); justifying this action by saying that is common for Deaf people to share everything with each other

Using Children:

- If you have a hearing partner, he doesn't allow the children to use ASL to communicate with you
- He doesn't allow the children to be proud of Deaf culture, he puts down you as a Deaf mother, and puts down your Deaf friends
- He tells you and the children that you cannot go to a shelter because everyone is hearing, so you are better off with him because you can communicate with him

Using Hearing Privilege:

- He does not tell you when people try to call you
- He excludes you from important phone calls (example: making financial decisions without you knowing)
- Leaving you out in social situations with hearing people
- Not allowing you to have access to Deaf culture, or putting down the Deaf community
- Taking advantage of the system which is not fully accessible to Deaf people.(i.e. the restraining order hearing gets postponed because of no interpreters)
- Putting you down by saying you are no good because you are Deaf

- If you call the police, he will try to interpret and take control of the situation to his benefit

Economic Abuse:

- Taking away your SSI checks or making you lose it by reporting additional income
- Ruining your chances for a job by spreading rumors about you in the Deaf community

Using Coercion and Threats:

- Threatening to report you to SSI if you make too much money
- Destroying your reputation by spreading false rumors
- Using his power in the Deaf community to pressure you to stay with him
- Using the Deaf school as the reason why you have to stay together to support your Deaf children
- Using his prestige as a leader or position of power in the Deaf community to discredit your story about the violence