

Awakening Women: The Relationship Pattern Discernment Test

This tool is a research-informed self-evaluation tool for telling occasional friction apart from a pattern worth taking seriously.

Grounded in Charlot, Joel, & Campbell (2023), The Predictive Validity of Intimate Partner Violence Warning Signs, published in Social Psychological and Personality Science — the first study to identify behaviours that, while not abusive on their own, predict future relationship abuse.

The 18 Red Flags of Abusive Behaviour

1. **Acted arrogantly or entitled**
2. **Disagreed about something sexual (Boundaries or comfort levels)**
3. **Had sex even though not in the mood**
4. **Created an uncomfortable situation in public**
5. **Disregarded your reasoning or logic**
6. **Reacted negatively when you said no**
7. **Resented being questioned about how they treat you**
8. Did not admit when wrong
9. Questioned where you'd been / who you were with
10. Was financially irresponsible
11. Tried to make you jealous
12. Did not accept responsibility for their actions
13. Treated you like you were stupid
14. Tried to manipulate or control you
15. Made you feel “crazy” / harmed your mental health
16. Was unsupportive of you

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17. Criticized you

18. Had unrealistic expectations for the relationship

The 7 strongest, most consistent predictors: The seven items in bold replicated in both the initial study and a 6-month follow-up: arrogance/entitlement, sexual disagreement, sex when not in the mood, public discomfort, disregarding your reasoning, reacting negatively to “no,” and resenting being questioned about how they treat you.

This list is a good starting point, but there is nuance that is required to make a real decision about a relationship from integrity and from a place of power. I go much more in depth about the traits, how they show up, how to allow them to be who they are as you navigate deciding what you will do about it when they show you inside of my signature program, End The Cycle.

Layer 1 — Count

Look back over the last few months. How many of the 18 items above have shown up, even mildly?

0–2	Likely normal relational friction.
3 or more	Worth moving to Layer 2. The research found that the number of different warning signs present — not any single one — is what predicts future abuse.

Layer 2: Trajectory

For each item you counted, ask:

Is this static? Happened once or twice, hasn't recurred as a pattern?

Or is it increasing? Happening more often, or with more intensity, than it used to?

A flat pattern is different from a rising one. Escalation over time is the signal to weigh most heavily, even if the raw count hasn't changed much.

Layer 3: The Repair Response

The fastest, most usable clarity marker. Name the behaviour calmly, once, when you're both regulated. Then watch what happens next.

Healthy repair looks like…	**A red flag response looks like…**
Gets curious, asks questions	Gets defensive immediately
Can sit with discomfort without punishing you for raising it	Turns it into an argument
Owns their part, even partially	Reverses it — makes you the problem for bringing it up
Behaviour actually shifts over time	Same conversation, same behaviour, repeatedly

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You don't need to resolve whether the behaviour itself was “bad enough” to justify raising it. You only need to observe what they do with the information once it's on the table. This is one of the seven strongest predictors identified in the research: resenting being questioned about how they treat you, measured directly.

The Trigger Check

For when it's hard to tell if it's them or your history.

1. Strip the story. Describe the specific incident neutrally, as if telling a friend with no emotional charge attached. Does the behaviour itself still hold up as concerning, on its own?

2. Check the count. Is this the first time, or the fifth time this exact thing has happened?

3. Check the size. Does the size of your reaction match this one moment or does it feel like it's carrying weight from somewhere else?

4. Then go to Layer 3. Regardless of where your reaction is coming from when you raise it, what do they actually do?

This last step matters most, because it doesn't require you to have your history fully sorted before you can trust what you're seeing. It gives you a clean, present-tense read regardless of what's underneath your reaction.

Important Context

• These 18 items are **not themselves abuse** — they are precursors identified because they statistically predicted later abuse in the research.

• The research measured **frequency of occurrence**, not intent or consent context — so an item like “sex even though not in the mood” captures both a one-time act of generosity and a pattern of pressure identically on the survey. The count-and-trajectory-and-repair-response framework above is what separates the two in real life.
• The researchers themselves note this pattern is more indicative of lower-severity **situational conflict** than of severe, one-sided **coercive control** — meaning this tool is best used for **early discernment**, not as a diagnostic for relationships where abuse has already clearly escalated. If that's the situation, the priority is safety and support, not self-evaluation.

• One identified protective factor: a partner who **values your abilities and opinions**. Its presence is a meaningful counterweight.

This tool is for personal reflection and pattern awareness. It is not a diagnostic instrument and does not replace professional support. If you are in a relationship where you feel unsafe, please reach out to a domestic violence hotline or a licensed professional.

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