



When Men Batter Women: New Insights into Ending Abusive Relationships

By Neil Jacobson, John Gottman

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While national awareness of the issue of battering has increased in recent years, certain myths regarding abusive relationships still endure, including the idea that all batterers are alike. But as Neil S. Jacobson, Ph.D., and John Gottman, Ph.D., explain, this is not the case. Drawing on the authors' own research, *When Men Batter Women* offers a significant breakthrough in our understanding of the men who become batterers—and how to put a stop to the cycle of relationship violence.

After their decade of research with more than 200 couples, the authors conclude that not all batterers are alike, nor is the progression of their violence always predictable. But they have found that batterers tend to fall into one of two categories, which they call "Pit Bulls" and "Cobras." Pit Bulls, men whose emotions quickly boil over, are driven by deep insecurity and an unhealthy dependence on the mates whom they abuse. Pit Bulls also tend to become stalkers, unable to let go of relationships that have ended.

Cobras, on the other hand, are cool and methodical as they inflict pain and humiliation on their spouses or lovers; in one chilling discovery, the authors found that during violent arguments and physical beatings the heart rate of Cobras actually *declines*. Cobras have often been physically or sexually abused themselves, frequently in childhood, and tend to see violence as an unavoidable part of life.

Knowing which type a batterer is can be crucial to gauging whether an abusive relationship is salvageable (Pit Bulls can sometimes be helped through therapy) or whether the situation is beyond repair. Using the stories of several couples in their study, Jacobson and Gottman look at the dynamics of abusive relationships, refuting prevalent myths ("battering often stops on its own" or "battered women could stop the battering by changing their own behavior"). Never underestimating the inherent risk or danger involved, the authors discuss how women in their study group prepared themselves to leave an abusive relationship, where a battered woman can get help, and how she can keep herself safe.

Written with compassion and insight, *When Men Batter Women* offers invaluable advice and support to women in abusive relationships, as well as to friends, relatives, and caregivers who want to help.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

When Men Batter Women: New Insights into Ending Abusive Relationships by Neil Jacobson and John Gottman, is based on a decade of research with more than 200 couples in dangerous relationships. Jacobson and Gottman, professors at the University of Washington, use their work to shatter myths and shed new light on abusive relationships.

They introduce two types of batterers: Cobras and Pit Bulls. The Cobras, the more severely violent of the two, strike swiftly and ferociously, always remaining in control and feeling entitled to whatever they want, whenever they want it. Pit Bulls are more likely to lose control, letting their emotions burn slowly until they explode in anger. The research is brought to life with stories of real couples such as George and Vicky. We see the few months of happiness in their marriage before George's Cobra-like outbursts begin, and witness Vicky's desire to make their failing relationship work.

Research results and advice are woven throughout such accounts of how real people handled their situations. The authors address the many dangers of leaving an abusive spouse and the importance of forming a safety plan before doing so. Jacobson and Gottman do not come to optimistic conclusions about the ability to stop domestic violence or reform abusive men, but they *are* optimistic about the women. Their studies follow many women such as Vicky who ultimately left and began the difficult and courageous work of converting nightmares into dreams. --*Amy Sessler*

From Kirkus Reviews

A provocative psychological study of why men batter women and why women take it. For years many battered women have suffered from the misperception that being beaten is somehow their fault. After a 10-year study of 200 couples--60 of whom were studied intensively--psychologists Gottman (Univ. of Washington; *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail*, 1994, etc.) and Jacobson (Univ. of Washington) squash that myth and others in this revealing book. The uniqueness of their work begins with the methodology itself. The authors videotaped and observed nonviolent arguments of severe batterers and their spouses, and used control groups of nonviolent yet unhappily married couples. They also eliminated some of the subjectivity inherent in analyzing these arguments by hooking up couples to a variety of monitors that measured vital signs, such as heart rate and sweat flow, as they argued. As a result, the authors make a number of important new discoveries, including the delineation of two overall types of batterers. Pit Bulls, as they call one group, are violent because they are incredibly insecure. They fear losing their wives and therefore attempt to control them through physical and emotional abuse. Cobras, on the other hand, resemble the snake for which they are named, which "becomes quite still and focused just before striking its victim." They become internally calm during abuse, as evidenced from the fact that--unlike Pit Bulls, whose heart rates increase while verbally abusing their wives--Cobras' heart rates actually decrease. It is the Cobras, the authors argue, who are the more violent of the two groups. Refreshingly jargon-free, the book ends with specific advice about how our society could better deal with domestic violence and concrete suggestions for women wishing to leave abusive relationships. Since wife-battering has moved to the front of our collective consciousness, this is a useful book that deserves national attention. -- *Copyright ©1998, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Review

Elizabeth Loftus

Coauthor of "The Myth of Repressed Memory"

The most explosive and yet inspiring book ever written about domestic violence. This book will forever change the way we look at batterers and battered women: for anyone interested in insight into the nature of evil, or the resourcefulness of real heroism, this book is a must. It is the most intimate and lucid description of love gone bad that has ever been written. It is chilling, riveting, and will forever put an end to our ignorance about violence against women.

Ginny Nicarchy

Author of "Getting Free and the Ones Who Got Away - Women Who Left Abusive Partners"

Writing with respect for battered women's struggles for safety and their courageous survival strategies, Neil Jacobson and John Gottman offer fresh insights about men who batter. Their research jump-starts a new method of examining battering, and the book provides women with thoroughly accessible information to help them analyze their situations. Jacobson and Gottman's study challenges both conventional wisdom and professional assumptions, and will lead to further research about the questions all women want answered about abusive partners: why do they do it, and what will make them stop?

Pepper Schwartz, Ph.D. Author of "Love between Equals and the Gender of Sexuality" The most shocking and absolutely necessary observational study on abusive relationships of this decade. This will change the way the public, partners, and therapists will look at batterers, assess danger, and decide the likelihood of rehabilitation. The book is frightening because it is about violent men, but it is a must read. It has certainly changed my understanding of abusive relationships and how I would tell women to protect themselves.

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James Rodriguez:

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