

GAMES BATTERERS PLAY

The following "games" have become common ploys and very effectively play on the emotions of fear, guilt, concern and trust. Giving in to these pressures often prevents constructive changes from occurring.

1. **Threats of suicide** – Occasionally attempts are made, but rarely succeed. Makes women feel responsible for their mates' well being.
2. **Threats to kill woman or the children or her counselors** – Certainly the most fear producing threat. May involve hunting for the woman, brandishing weapons. Can produce paralyzing fear, a very strong weapon.
3. **Threaten mythical legal actions and sanctions** – The most common threat is taking away child custody because of desertion.
4. **Harass or threaten relatives or friends** – Makes woman feel responsible for the safety of these people. Often follows through with this threat.
5. **Burns clothes or belongings** – A symbolic gesture which alternately enrages and depresses the woman.
6. **Organizes a posse of relatives and friends, including in-laws, to search for and convince the woman of her mistake** – Can be very over-whelming and powerful.
7. **Reports that he (or a close relative or friend) has been in a car accident** and has been hospitalized. This faked report is very effective in flushing a woman from hiding and leaving her off guard for other tricks, like child snatching.
8. **Cry, saying he can't live without her** – Guilt and a sense of responsibility for his life is difficult to shake.
9. **Promise to get counseling** – Usually won't follow through, but sometimes will go only to focus on how to get the woman back. Will usually discontinue when and if she returns home.
10. **Get religion** – Enlist the aid of the preacher, gets baptized, saved, or prays.
11. **Makes promises in general** – He won't hit her again, will clean house, give up drinking or drugs, get rid of guns, go to work, etc.
12. **Develops psychosomatic complaints** – Can't eat, sleep, nausea, etc. Again, guilt and responsibility make it tough to ignore.
13. **Files Missing Person report** – Enlists the help of unsuspecting police to track the woman down.
14. **Has friends calling saying they are the woman's lawyer, counselor, or doctor and need to meet with her right away** – Again, this can catch the woman off guard.

These are only a few of the many possible "games" batterers may play. Women who have not been helped to anticipate these "games" could quite effectively be forced to return to unchanged situations, only to find the threats and promises very short-lived.

(adapted from Susan Swala, RDVIC, Morgantown)

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