

Violence between couples is usually calculated, and does not result from loss of control

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Violence between couples is usually the result of a calculated decision-making process and the partner inflicting violence will do so only as long as the price to be paid is not too high. This is the conclusion of a new study by Dr. Eila Perkis at the University of Haifa. "The violent partner might conceive his or her behavior as a 'loss of control', but the same individual, unsurprisingly, would not lose control in this way with a boss or friends," she explains.

In this new study, carried out under the supervision of Prof. Zvi Eisikovits and Dr. Zeev Winstok of the University of Haifa's School of Social Work, Dr. Perkis examined intimate [violence](#) based on the fact that in most cases the offending partner is a law-abiding individual living a normative life outside of the family unit. Dr. Perkis says that in most cases the couple continues living together and sustaining a shared family unit, so it is important that we learn to understand the dynamics of such partnerships in order to treat them.

First Dr. Perkis divided intimate violence into four levels of severity: [verbal aggression](#); threats of physical aggression; moderate physical aggression; and severe physical aggression. "These four levels follow one another in an escalating sequence; someone who uses verbal violence might well move on over time to threatening physical attack, and from there it is only downhill towards acting on the threat," she explains. Dr. Perkis warns however, that the results of this study should not be

correlated to cases of murder, since the dynamics between couples in such cases are different and such offenses are not included in the chain of violent acts being examined.

The researcher found that acting on each type of violence is calculated, such that the violence constitutes a tool for solving conflict between the partners. "Neither of the couple sits down and plans when he or she will swear or lash out at the other, but there is a sort of silent agreement standing between the two on what limits of violent behavior are 'ok', where the red line is drawn, and where behavior beyond that could be dangerous," she explains. She adds that when speaking of one-sided physical violence, most often carried out by men, the violent side understands that for a slap, say, he will not pay a very heavy price, but for harsher violence that is not included in the 'normative' dynamic between them, he might well have to pay a higher price and will therefore keep himself from such behavior. "A 'heavy price' could be the partner's leaving or reporting the incident to the police or the workplace. As such, it can be said that violent behavior is not the result of loss of control and both sides are aware of where the red line is drawn, even if such an agreement has never been spoken between them," she says.

According to Dr. Perkis, it is important to point out that use of violence is not a normative behavior; it is illegal, and of course, immoral. Therefore, it is only the violent partner who is culpable for the act. Nevertheless, once we understand that violence is being used as a tool for solving conflict between a couple that is interested in staying together, we can help them subdue such behavior by providing them with better tools to cope with the source of tension and conflict in their lives together.

"In couples therapy for partners who express the wish to stay together, therapy must be focused on identifying illegitimate motives, such as nonnormative tactics for solving conflict, and assisting the couple in

acknowledging their ability to convert destructive patterns into effective ones and ultimately to run their lives better," the researcher concludes.

Source: University of Haifa ([news](#) : [web](#))

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