

## Case Study – Intimate Partner Abuse: Joey & Martha

Your friend Joey (pronouns=they/them, 29 years-old) is reaching out to you and your friends/pod for support in an intimate partner violence situation. You and Joey are part of a tight-knit group, and you've known Joey for nearly 10-years, and lived in a house with them and a few of your other friends a few years back. You and most of your friends are close with Joey but not their partner Martha (pronouns=she/her, 32 years-old), though your friends Risa and Leo do have friendly independent relationships with Martha. Until Joey moved recently, you and Joey spent a lot of time together, usually with some of your other friends and less often one-on-one, but at least once a week. They are family to you, and you show up for each other and have supported each other through tough times in the past.

Joey and Martha have been dating for two years, and have broken up several times for brief periods and quickly gotten back together. When Joey and Martha broke up once, Joey confided in you and a few other friends that Martha scares them when she drinks, has held them down and pushed them up against a wall, and has made them feel physically and emotionally unsafe. Joey also called you and another friend in the middle of the night after Martha came to their house unexpectedly when they were separated a few months ago, saying that they got into a loud argument and that they feared Martha would come back and might hurt them. None of your friends have talked to Martha about this behavior. In the past, soon after Joey shared their experiences, friends followed up with Joey and Joey downplayed what they had originally shared.

Martha and Joey left the Bay Area a few months ago and moved to Sacramento, where neither have close friends or family. Martha got a job there, and Joey took it as an opportunity to go back to school in the area. In the Bay Area, they were in a non-monogamous relationship and Joey had other dates, but when they moved Martha asked that they become monogamous. Joey has a sister who lives in a small town about 45 minutes away and they have a loving but somewhat distant relationship. Joey's sister is straight and cisgender, married with a 3-year-old child, and though their politics and lives differ they were very close growing up, and they show up for each other. Their sister has really loved and welcomed Joey's past partners but never connected with Martha, and because Joey sensed that their sister didn't like Martha, they have spent less time together recently, but Joey knows that their sister is there for them. Joey's mother lives in Southern California, and they keep in touch but only see each other once or twice a year, and are not particularly close. Their father died in a car accident when they were a teenager. Most of Joey's closest friends and chosen family live in the Bay Area. Joey is black and transmasculine, and had a lot of loving QTPOC friends in the Bay Area in particular. Since moving, they talk to some of their Bay Area friends on the phone once every week or so, and they've visited the Bay Area a few times, but you all definitely feel like you know less about their day-to-day than you used to. They have a couple of new friends in Sacramento, but are still trying to find people they feel close to there. Martha is white, cis and femme, and also doesn't know very many people in Sacramento.

Martha recently confided in Joey that she was sexually abused by her older sister over the course of two-years growing up. She hasn't talked to anybody else about it. Martha has said to Joey that she's really struggling right now with this, that Joey is the only one she can talk to, and that if Joey leaves her she's afraid she might hurt herself. Martha still talks to her sister but their

relationship is distant, and Martha has never confronted her about the abuse. Martha is in good touch and has a loving but fairly surface-level relationship with her dad and younger brother who live on the east coast. They tend not to talk about really hard things or their emotions - it's just never been their dynamic, though Martha knows that they love and care about each other, and would be there for each other if needed. Neither Martha's brother nor dad know about the abuse that happened when Martha was growing up. Martha is also close with several of your and Joey's friends in the Bay Area – they met through mutual friends and had spent time in the same circles before dating. Martha has mentioned a few good friends she has from growing up who live in New York, and one of them - Bailey - visited the Bay Area about a year ago and hung out with some of your mutual friends. You are friends with Bailey on Facebook since that meeting, but really don't know her well. Joey though has more people they are close to in their life – your mutual friends are closer with Joey than with Martha, with the exception of Risa and Leo who are somewhat close to Martha, too. When friends hang out with Martha and Joey together, Martha is shy and seems like she'll do anything for Joey, and is always asking Joey what they need. It's hard for you and your friends to picture Martha threatening Joey, but you believe Joey about Martha's violent behavior and are worried.

Now, Joey has come to you and your friends to share that they want to leave Martha, and to ask for help brainstorming how to do that safely for both them and Martha. Martha and Joey recently moved in together, and Joey can't afford the rent on their own and doesn't know where to go that will feel safe. They also share a car that Joey uses to get to and from work and school, but that Martha also uses for work. Joey just went back to school and started a part-time job, and doesn't want to leave the place they're renting with Martha in Sacramento, but doesn't know what else to do. They also love Martha and are worried about her well-being.