

*This opinion is nonprecedential except as provided by  
Minn. R. Civ. App. P. 136.01, subd. 1(c).*

**STATE OF MINNESOTA  
IN COURT OF APPEALS  
A25-1073**

Alexis Lashun Suggs, petitioner,  
Appellant,

vs.

State of Minnesota,  
Respondent.

**Filed April 13, 2026  
Affirmed  
Bentley, Judge**

Sherburne County District Court  
File Nos. 71-CR-24-270, 71-CR-24-1078

Cathryn Middlebrook, Chief Appellate Public Defender, Chelsie M. Willett, Assistant Public Defender, St. Paul, Minnesota (for appellant)

Keith Ellison, Attorney General, St. Paul, Minnesota; and

Dawn R. Nyhus, Sherburne County Attorney, George R. Kennedy, Assistant County Attorney, Elk River, Minnesota (for respondent)

Considered and decided by Ede, Presiding Judge; Bentley, Judge; and Jesson, Judge.\*

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\* Retired judge of the Minnesota Court of Appeals, serving by appointment pursuant to Minn. Const. art. VI, § 10.

## **NONPRECEDENTIAL OPINION**

**BENTLEY**, Judge

In this appeal from the denial of a postconviction petition, appellant argues that he should be allowed to withdraw his guilty plea to misdemeanor domestic assault—committing an act with intent to cause fear of immediate bodily harm or death. Specifically, he maintains that his plea was inaccurate because he did not admit that he had the intent to commit that offense. Because we conclude appellant admitted facts sufficient to permit a reasonable inference that he had the requisite intent, we affirm.

### **FACTS**

In March 2024, respondent State of Minnesota charged appellant Alexis Suggs with three counts of threats of violence—reckless disregard of risk, in violation of Minn. Stat. § 609.713, subd. 1 (2022); three counts of misdemeanor domestic assault—committing an act with intent to cause fear of immediate bodily harm or death, in violation of Minn. Stat. § 609.2242, subd. 1(1) (2022); and one count of obstructing legal process—interfering with peace officer, in violation of Minn. Stat. § 609.50, subd. 1(2) (Supp. 2023). After the charges were filed, the district court entered a domestic abuse no contact order (DANCO) that prohibited Suggs from having contact with the three alleged victims of the offenses for the duration of proceedings. Suggs was later charged with violating the DANCO. At the time, Suggs was on probation for an unrelated offense so the state also filed a probation-violation report alleging that he failed to remain law-abiding.

The parties reached a plea agreement in which Suggs would plead guilty to the DANCO violation, and one count of misdemeanor domestic assault against one of the

victims, his girlfriend, as well as admit to the probation violation in exchange for the dismissal of the remaining charges. During the plea hearing, after explaining to Suggs his constitutional rights, the district court found that he had knowingly, voluntarily, and intelligently waived those rights.

When establishing the factual basis for his guilty plea to domestic assault, Suggs admitted that he and his girlfriend were living together and got into an argument. The prosecutor asked Suggs if it was fair to say that, during the argument, he was asking his girlfriend “for a photograph and [she] was trying to tell [him] she didn’t have it anymore.” Suggs answered, “Yes.” He also acknowledged that he had been drinking and was very upset with his girlfriend. The prosecutor then asked, “[S]o did you then threaten that you were going to break [her] neck?” This exchange followed:

SUGGS: I don’t think I said that. . . . [W]hat I would say is like I’m going to beat the sh-t out of you, like you better give it to me or probably something like that, but not break a neck. Break a neck is kind of harsh. I don’t think I’ve ever said break your neck, but I know I said man you better give me the picture or I’ll beat the sh-t out of you, something like that in those terms, something like that.

STATE: Maybe if she didn’t give it to you, you would beat her a-s?

SUGGS: Yes.

When the prosecutor asked if Suggs believed “that [his girlfriend] had a fear that [he] would cause her immediate bodily harm,” based on his threats and him being upset, Suggs initially answered, “Probably not—yes.” The following exchange occurred:

STATE: So you said probably not and then yes. You know, [Suggs], . . . we don't take pleas of guilty from people that don't believe they're guilty.

SUGGS: Okay.

STATE: And so . . . like I said given your state of mind, how upset you were, and that sort of thing, what you stated you were going to beat her a-s, and I'm sure it wasn't just that one, you know, statement, perhaps you said it multiple times, is that possible?

SUGGS: Yes ma'am.

STATE: Okay. And so given all of that, do you think that she had a reasonable fear of immediate bodily harm from you?

SUGGS: Yes ma'am.

Suggs also admitted to the factual basis underlying the DANCO violation and to the probation violation. The district court accepted Suggs's guilty pleas and admission to the probation violation.

Before announcing its sentencing determinations, the court questioned Suggs's girlfriend who had been in contact with the state and attended the hearing. She mentioned that she was not afraid that Suggs would break her neck and explained, "[T]hat's what [Suggs's] mouth would run off with and . . . it would raise our eyebrows or whatever." She elaborated: "[T]o be fair he probably shouldn't talk like that, and he shouldn't scare people like whatever. I mean, I know he wouldn't do it but, you know, I guess I really can't say for the other[] [victims], but I'm sure they would agree too."

In accordance with the plea agreement and at Suggs's request, the district court executed Suggs's sentences and ordered him to serve 90 days in jail for the domestic-

assault charge, 90 days in jail for the DANCO violation, to run consecutively to the domestic-assault sentence, and 90 days in jail for the probation violation to be served concurrently with the domestic-assault sentence. All other pending charges were dismissed in accordance with the plea agreement.

Suggs later filed a petition for postconviction relief seeking to withdraw his guilty plea. The district court held a hearing on the petition, and Suggs testified. By that time, he had served his sentences.

Following the hearing, the district court denied Suggs's petition. In its order, the district court noted that intent to cause immediate fear of bodily harm or death may be inferred and concluded: "Suggs's intent can be drawn from the surrounding circumstances. Because [Suggs] wanted [his girlfriend] to return a picture, he made a statement with the intention and belief that statement would cause fear of immediate bodily harm in [her] and that fear would result in [her] returning the picture."

Suggs appeals.

## **DECISION**

Appellate courts review the denial of a petition for postconviction relief under an abuse-of-discretion standard. *Erickson v. State*, 842 N.W.2d 314, 318 (Minn. 2014). "In doing so, we review findings of fact for clear error and questions of law de novo." *Id.* The validity of a guilty plea is a question of law that appellate courts review de novo. *State v. Raleigh*, 778 N.W.2d 90, 94 (Minn. 2010).

The district court must allow a defendant to withdraw a guilty plea "upon a timely motion and proof to the satisfaction of the court that withdrawal is necessary to correct a

manifest injustice.” Minn. R. Crim. P. 15.05, subd. 1; *see State v. Ecker*, 524 N.W.2d 712, 715-16 (Minn. 1994) (applying Minn. R. Crim. P. 15.05, subd. 1, to a postconviction challenge). “A manifest injustice exists if a guilty plea is not valid. To be constitutionally valid, a guilty plea must be accurate, voluntary, and intelligent. A defendant bears the burden of showing his plea was invalid.” *Raleigh*, 778 N.W.2d at 94 (citations omitted).

Suggs argues that his guilty plea to domestic assault was inaccurate and, therefore, invalid.<sup>1</sup> For a plea to be accurate, it must be supported by a proper factual basis, with “sufficient facts on the record to support a conclusion that defendant’s conduct falls within the charge to which he desires to plead guilty.” *State v. Iverson*, 664 N.W.2d 346, 349 (Minn. 2003) (quotation omitted). “It is the responsibility of the trial judge . . . to ensure that an adequate factual basis has been established in the record.” *Ecker*, 524 N.W.2d at 716. This duty “protect[s] a defendant from pleading guilty to a more serious offense than he could be convicted of were he to insist on his right to trial.” *State v. Trott*, 338 N.W.2d 248, 251 (Minn. 1983).

Suggs argues that his plea was inaccurate because he did not admit that he had the necessary intent under the domestic-assault statute. Minnesota Statutes section 609.2242, subdivision 1(1), provides that, whoever “commits an act with intent to cause fear in another of immediate bodily harm or death” against a household member, “commits an assault and is guilty of a misdemeanor.” Suggs did not expressly admit that he intended to

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<sup>1</sup> Suggs also argues that, if he is permitted to withdraw his plea to the domestic-assault charge, he should also be allowed to withdraw his plea to the DANCO violation because it was part of the same global plea agreement. Because we determine that Suggs is not entitled to withdraw his plea to domestic assault, we decline to reach this argument.

cause his girlfriend to fear “immediate bodily harm or death.” Minn. Stat. § 609.2242, subd. 1(1). But caselaw does not require a defendant to admit every element of the charged crime so long as “facts exist from which the defendant’s guilt of the crime charged can be reasonably inferred.” *Nelson v. State*, 880 N.W.2d 852, 861 (Minn. 2016) (quotation omitted); *see also Rosendahl v. State*, 955 N.W.2d 294, 299 (Minn. App. 2021) (“Even if an element to an offense is not verbalized by the defendant, a district court may nevertheless draw inferences from the facts admitted to by the defendant.” (emphasis omitted)).

Considering the facts that Suggs admitted, we conclude that they are sufficient to create a reasonable inference that he intended to cause his girlfriend fear of immediate bodily harm. “Intent can be inferred . . . from the idea that a person intends the natural consequences of his or her actions.” *Nelson*, 880 N.W.2d at 860 (quotation omitted). The natural consequence of Suggs’s threat was that his girlfriend would fear immediate bodily harm and give in to his demand. Suggs admitted at the plea hearing that he believed his girlfriend had a reasonable fear of bodily harm from him as a result of his threat. Therefore, it may reasonably be inferred that Suggs intended that consequence. *Id.* We agree with the district court that the facts established at the plea hearing support a reasonable inference that Suggs acted with the intent to cause his girlfriend to fear immediate bodily harm so that she would give him the photo.

To convince us otherwise, Suggs points to his girlfriend’s statements that she was not actually afraid and did not think Suggs was going to beat her. But whether his girlfriend was, in fact, afraid is not the issue. For domestic assault–fear, “the intent of the defendant,

as contrasted with the effect upon the victim, becomes the focal point for inquiry.” *State v. Fleck*, 810 N.W.2d 303, 308 (Minn. 2012) (quotation omitted). Thus, even if his girlfriend did not actually fear immediate bodily harm or death from Suggs, that fact does not negate that Suggs admitted to facts sufficient “to support a conclusion that defendant’s conduct falls within” the crime of domestic assault. *Iverson*, 664 N.W.2d at 349 (quotation omitted).

In denying Suggs’s postconviction petition, the district court analogized this case to *Ibrahim v. State*, 14 N.W.3d 294 (Minn. App. 2024). In *Ibrahim*, this court concluded that the defendant’s guilty plea to second-degree assault–fear was accurate because it was reasonable to infer from the facts admitted by the defendant—including that the defendant brandished a weapon with intent to cause fear—that the defendant intended to cause fear of *immediate bodily harm or death*. 14 N.W.3d at 303-05. Suggs seeks to distinguish his case from *Ibrahim* because, unlike the defendant in *Ibrahim*, he did not have a weapon. *Id.* at 304. We are not persuaded that this factual difference is material. In *Ibrahim*, the brandishing of a weapon was only one factor that the court considered in determining whether the defendant had admitted sufficient facts to infer that the defendant intended to cause fear of immediate bodily harm or death. *Id.* at 303-05. The court also considered admissions that the defendant disagreed with a decision to remove him from a bar and was tackled after the assault and held down until police arrived. *Id.* Similarly here, for the reasons articulated, the facts admitted in their totality are sufficient to infer that Suggs had the requisite intent for a domestic assault–fear conviction.

Because Suggs admitted facts permitting a reasonable inference that he intended to cause his girlfriend to fear immediate bodily harm or death and also admitted facts



establishing all other elements of domestic assault, his plea was accurate and valid. *See Raleigh*, 778 N.W.2d at 94 (stating that to be valid, a plea must be, among other things, accurate). As such, withdrawal is not necessary to correct a manifest injustice under Minnesota Rule of Criminal Procedure 15.05, subdivision 1. The district court did not abuse its discretion in denying the postconviction petition.

**Affirmed.**