

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse does not always lead to physical violence, however almost all physical or sexual violence does include emotional abuse. It is a powerful tool used by one person to maintain a feeling of power and control over another person.

This type of abuse is intended to instill negative feelings such as shame, embarrassment, guilt and fear. It can include belittling or humiliating a partner in public or in private, isolation, name-calling, making a partner feel ashamed, controlling the money, criticism, threats to harm the partner/children/pets, and the silent treatment.

Emotional Abuse is often hard to recognize. The victim may not even realize it is happening because the abuse is often disguised as "love" or a way of "teaching them to be a better person." This can make it difficult to take steps to stop the abuse. The longer emotional abuse continues, the more harmful it can be.

What Are the Signs?

The Abuser

Wants all the control

- Makes all the decisions
- Acts very possessive
- Needs to win every argument
- May demand sex after an argument to "make up"

Discounts feelings and views

- Puts down, makes fun of or embarrasses the abused partner
- Says the partner's opinions are "stupid"
- Is jealous or critical of the partner's friends and family
- Says the partner is "too sensitive" if she or he complains

Confuses and frightens the partner

- Blames the partner or others for his or her anger
- May be tender one moment and mad the next
- Uses threats or physical force
- May be reckless with alcohol, other drugs, or driving

The Abused

Often can't name or talk about the problem

- Blames herself or himself
- Makes excuses for the abusive partner's behavior
- Believes the partner's actions are signs of love

May lose confidence or feel afraid

- Questions her or his own perceptions or feelings
- Often tries to explain what she or he meant
- Feels depressed, stressed, or isolated
- Spends less and less time with other people or doing activities
- Changes how she or he acts to avoid making the partner angry
- Can experience chronic headaches, fatigue, eating disorders, and alcohol and/or drug abuse
- Experiences a loss of self-respect and feelings of self-worth
- May give up on school, a job, or other life goal