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Peace with Painful Memories

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Peace with Painful Memories



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Preface

This Book helps you identify and heal from childhood emotional neglect so you can be more connected and emotionally present in your life.

Do you sometimes feel like you're just going through the motions in life? Do you often act like you're fine when you secretly feel lonely and disconnected? Perhaps you have a good life and yet somehow, it's not enough to make you happy. Or perhaps you drink too much, eat too much, or risk too much to feel something good. If so, you are not alone and you may be suffering from emotional neglect.

Are you one of the countless people who grew up with emotionally immature parents? If you suffer from this troubling parent/child dynamic, you may still recall painful moments from your childhood when your emotional needs were not met, when your feelings were dismissed, or when you took on adult levels of maturity to "compensate" for your parents' behavior. And while you likely cultivated strengths such as self-reliance and independence along the way strengths that have served you well as an adult having to be the emotionally mature person in your relationship with your parent is confusing and even damaging.

If you are ready to gain the insight you need to move on from feelings of loneliness and abandonment and find healthy ways to meet your own emotional needs, this book will help light the way.

Post-traumatic stress, anxiety, low self-esteem, substance abuse, depression, a lack of confidence and many other mental and physical ailments may be a result of childhood trauma you have endured. Uncovering, accepting, and healing this childhood trauma will allow you to let go of the pain, releasing yourself from the guilt, shame, and self-destruction you have been living with. This book will provide you with tools and strategies to heal your childhood trauma allowing you to live fully.

- Pinpoint the areas of struggle in your life now that reflect the childhood trauma you endured
- Tackle limitations by learning how childhood trauma can be healed and forgiven
- Strategize an effective plan that will take you from struggle to success
- Discover hands-on strategies and plans to heal, recover, and let go of the limits imposed on your daily living due to childhood trauma

This innovative volume is an important contribution to the literature on the impact of violence and abuse on the lives and health of its survivors. It will be of interest to students and researchers from a range of disciplines and professions, including social work, gender studies, sociology, social policy, psychology, counselling, mental health, public health, medicine and nursing.

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Chapter 1

Signs of Emotional Abuse from Parents

Emotional abuse, also known as psychological abuse, is a pattern of behavior perpetuated by a parent that causes a child to experience emotional distress, harms their sense of self-worth, and affects their emotional development. It can include rejection, constant criticism, threats, or emotional neglect.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), child abuse and neglect are entirely too common in the United States, with 1 in 7 children being a victim. While any child can be a victim of emotional abuse, the CDC notes that children living in poverty are at greater risk of abuse.

While emotional abuse doesn't leave scrapes or bruises, it can leave severe emotional scars and be just as damaging to a child as physical or sexual abuse. However, because it doesn't leave physical marks, it can be harder to recognize and more difficult to prove, so people and law enforcement authorities may be less likely to intervene and help the child.

Nonetheless, it's important to note that child abuse by parents or legal guardians of children below the legal of 18 is a crime, punishable under the Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act.

This Book discusses the types, signs, and impacts of emotional abuse by parents.

If you are a victim of child abuse or know someone who might be, call or text the Child help at **1-800-422-4453** to speak with a professional crisis counselor.

For more mental health resources, see our [National Helpline Database](#).

Types of Emotional Abuse by Parents

These are some of the types of emotional abuse children may experience from their parents:

- Constantly criticizing the child
- Blaming the child for adult problems
- Rejecting the child repeatedly
- Dismissing the child's feelings
- Deliberately causing the child emotional pain
- Ridiculing the child or mocking them
- Humiliating or publicly shaming the child
- Talking down to the child
- Calling the child names
- Getting angry at the child often
- Yelling or swearing at the child
- Threatening to abandon the child
- Threatening to harm the child or their family members, friends, or pets
- Intimidating or scaring the child
- Coercing or manipulating the child
- Gaslighting the child
- Frequently harassing or picking on the child
- Ignoring the child or using silence to control their behavior
- Withholding love, support, and guidance
- Neglecting to care for the child and their needs
- Allowing the child to witness domestic violence and abuse

Emotional abuse can be perpetuated in person or online, through text messages, emails, social media, and other digital apps or platforms.

Common Signs

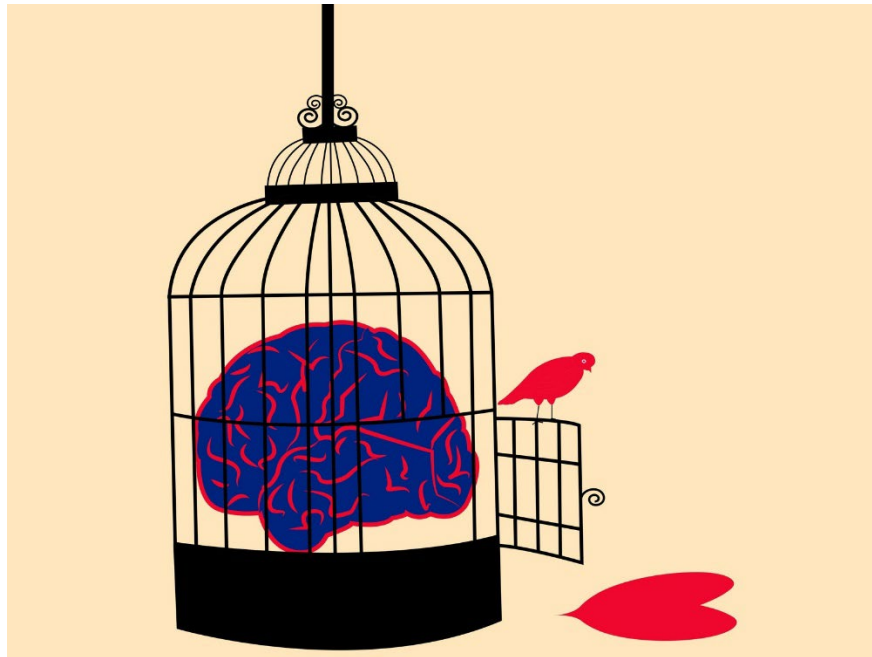
These are some common signs that a child might be experiencing abuse:

- Sudden changes in behavior or academic performance
- Watchful demeanor, as though waiting for something bad to happen
- Nervousness around certain people
- A tendency to avoid being around certain people
- Withdrawn or unresponsive demeanor
- Overly passive or compliant behavior
- Early arrival and late departure from school or other activities
- Reluctance to go home

- Lack of adult supervision
- Emotional distress or agitation
- Aggression or rage

These are some of the signs of emotionally abusive parents:

- Rarely touching the child or showing affection
- Stating that they do not like the child
- Describing the child as a burden
- Showing little concern for the child and refusing others' help
- Demanding academic results and sporting performances the child cannot achieve
- Berating the child in front of their friends, teachers, or neighbors
- Denying that there are any problems at home or at school
- Telling teachers and other caregivers to discipline the child harshly if they misbehave



Impact of Emotional Abuse by Parents

Emotional abuse can make a child feel unwanted, unloved, worthless, and flawed.

Children who grow up with abusive parents may not be able to recognize the abuse, since that's all they know. They may blame themselves for their parents' actions and grow up believing that they are not worthy of love or respect.

Emotional abuse can be deeply damaging to children and have lifelong consequences that persist well after the abuse stops. These are some of the negative effects a child may experience as a result of emotional abuse:

- **Cognitive difficulties**, such as difficulty paying attention, learning, and remembering
- **Academic issues**, such as lower attendance in school, poor academic performance, and disciplinary issues
- **Mental health conditions**, such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and low self-esteem
- **Emotional difficulties**, including difficulty interpreting, communicating, processing, and regulating emotions
- **Substance use**, such as doing alcohol, nicotine, or drugs at an early age
- **Behavioral issues**, such as acting out, behaving bizarrely, or trying hard to please others
- **Changes in weight and appetite**, which could result in eating disorders, nutrition deficiencies, and malnourishment
- **Sleep issues**, such as insomnia or nightmares
- **Physical aches and pains**, that have no other discernible cause and don't seem to get better with treatment
- **Career issues**, because of lower educational attainment, limited employment opportunities, and an increased risk of delinquency
- **Relationship issues**, due to mostly unhealthy dynamics being modeled

Children who have been emotionally abused are more likely to be abusive to others or to seek out people who are abusive, because this is the relationship dynamic, they grew up with. Therefore, they may become victims or perpetrators of abuse in the future. This is known as the intergenerational cycle of violence.



What Is Emotional Abuse from A Parent?

Emotional abuse from parents can take many forms, including verbally abusing, terrorizing, exploiting, isolating, rejecting, neglecting, and prettifying. It occurs when parents repeatedly interact with their children in a harmful way. The parent's abusive behavior can be chronic or only when triggered by alcohol or other potentiating factors.



Types Of Emotional Abuse by Parents

Emotional abuse is hard to identify because, in most cases, it occurs behind closed doors and does not have obvious physical signs, as opposed to physical abuse or sexual abuse.



It is not always clear to what extent abusive behaviors are considered emotional abuse, as they are sometimes seen as bad parenting skills.

Here are some types of abuse from childhood that can leave emotional scars:

Verbal Abuse

Verbal abuse from parents includes belittling, name-calling, degrading, shaming, ridiculing, singling out a child to criticize or punish, and humiliating a child in public. It includes openly telling children they are worthless or calling them derogatory names.

Terrorizing

Terrorizing is life-threatening, making a child feel unsafe, setting unrealistic expectations with the threat of harm if they are not met, and threatening or inflicting violence on the child or their loved ones.

Exploiting

Exploiting or mis-socializing a child encourages them to develop inappropriate behavior that interferes with their development. For example, the parent may instruct their child to commit crimes or other antisocial activities.

Rejecting

The parent refuses to acknowledge the child's worth and the legitimacy of their physical and emotional needs.

A child is also rejected when their parent defines them as failures, refuses to acknowledge their accomplishments, refuses to show affection to them, and pushes them away.

Isolating

The parent cuts off the child from normal social interactions.



They may confine the child, preventing them from participating in social activities such as family gatherings and school functions.

Child Neglect

The parents fail to provide basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing. They may leave a child mentally, physically, or emotionally ill or prevent them from receiving treatment.

Parentification

The parent forces their child to grow up and take on responsibilities they are not ready for.



The child is criticized and punished for their age-appropriate behavior if they do not meet these expectations.

Domestic Violence

The mental well-being of children who witness domestic violence is undeniably compromised, regardless of whether they are physically harmed.

Causes Of Emotional Abuse

Some common risk factors of emotional mistreatment are:

- Abusive parents suffered from parental abuse in their own childhood
- Affective disorders, depression, etc.
- Substance abuse such as alcohol and drug use
- Contentious divorce
- Poor or lack of parenting skills
- Children who are unwanted or unplanned
- Children who are socially isolated
- Children who are intellectually or emotionally handicapped

Effects Of Having Emotionally Abusive Parents

Maltreatment of any kind creates emotional harm.

However, research has indicated that emotional maltreatment is particularly harmful, possibly the most damaging form of abuse.

Psychological abuse may have many long-term consequences for the child victim, such as the following.

Low Self-Esteem

Emotional maltreatment is particularly detrimental to a child's self-esteem.

The demeaning nature of abuse toward children directly targets their self-worth.

Low self-esteem results from constant criticism internalized by them.

Low self-esteem, in turn, causes a strong sense of shame, feelings of worthlessness, inadequacy, self-dissatisfaction, and disempowerment

Emotional Development

Emotional maltreatment impacts emotional health and development in children.

Abused children may develop emotional instability, borderline personality disorder, or emotional unresponsiveness as a result.

They are also more prone to withdrawal, self-directed anger, and pessimism about the future.

Social Skills

Emotional maltreatment is particularly destructive for a child's competence in verbal and non-verbal communication skills, **social skills**, **empathy** and negotiation⁶.

As a result of childhood abuse, children have a distorted sense of relationships, making it difficult for them to form friendships or develop close relationships.

Externalizing Behaviors

Other effects include externalizing behavior such as physical aggression, relational aggression, and impulsivity

Relationship Aggression

Children are more likely to become victims or perpetrators of abuse in adulthood

Mental Health Issues

Emotionally abused individuals are at a three-fold higher risk of developing mental health conditions such as depressive disorder or eating disorders than non-abused individuals⁹. In addition, emotional abuse from parents can lead to obsessive-compulsive symptoms and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

They are also three times more likely to show suicidal behavior and suicidal ideation.

Academic Performance

Abused children are more likely to show lower academic achievement.

Sexually Transmitted Infections and Risky Sexual Behavior

Emotionally abused have a significantly higher risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and sexually **risky behavior**

HIV infection is twice as likely to be found in those who have been emotionally abused as kids.

Physical Health and Lifestyle

Child emotional abuse has adverse effects on health and lifestyle.

It is associated with smoking, alcohol problems drinking, obesity, and health-related problems such as failure to thrive, somatic complaints, poor adult health, and high mortality

How To Deal with Emotionally Abusive Parents As A Child

If you are a child facing an emotionally abusive adult, ask for help from a school counselor or trusted adult. If they don't believe you or listen to you, try another one.

Keep telling someone until you find someone who can help or support you emotionally.



Most likely, they won't be able to do anything about it, but they may help you connect with mental health professionals, convince your parents to seek help, or be a caring adult who listens to you to help lessen your pain.

How To Deal with Emotionally Abusive Parents as An Adult

Distancing

The best way to prevent abuse in adulthood is to keep a physical and emotional distance from the abusers.

The decision to **cut off contact** with one's parents is not an easy one.

You must weigh what you can gain from staying in an abusive relationship against the risks to your health.

Professional Help

It is best to seek professional help whether you want to stay away or be in touch with your abusive parents.

To remain in contact with your parents, you will need the help of a family therapist.

When they are repeated frequently, parents' abusive behaviors and your responses may have become normalized over time.

They are difficult to change without outside help.

If you decide to cut ties, a therapist or clinical psychologist can help you regain your sense of self-worth and address the negative impacts of your past.

Healthy relationships can also be formed and maintained with the help of mental health professionals.

Social Support

Build a network of supportive friends and families. Support yourself emotionally by surrounding yourself with people who understand you.

Emotional abuse during childhood is highly predictive of adult depression. Research has found that social support is protective against depression for abused females.



Chapter 2

How Emotional Abuse in Childhood Changes the Brain

Childhood emotional abuse and neglect can result in permanent changes to the developing human brain. These changes in brain structure appear to be significant enough to potentially cause psychological and emotional problems in adulthood, such as psychological disorders and substance misuse.

Around 14% of Americans report experiencing emotional abuse or neglect during their childhood. Emotional abuse can include:

- Insulting, name-calling, or swearing at a child
- Threatening to physically harm the child
- Terrorizing or otherwise making the child feel afraid

Emotional neglect involves failing to meet a child's emotional needs. This can include failing to:

- Believe in the child
- Create a close-knit family
- Make the child feel special or important
- Provide support
- Want the child to be successful

If you are a victim of child abuse or know someone who might be, call or text the Child help at **1-800-422-4453** to speak with a professional crisis counselor.

For more mental health resources, see our [National Helpline Database](#).

How Abuse Alters Brain Structure

As children grow, their brains undergo periods of rapid development. Negative experiences can disrupt those developmental periods, leading to changes in the brain later.

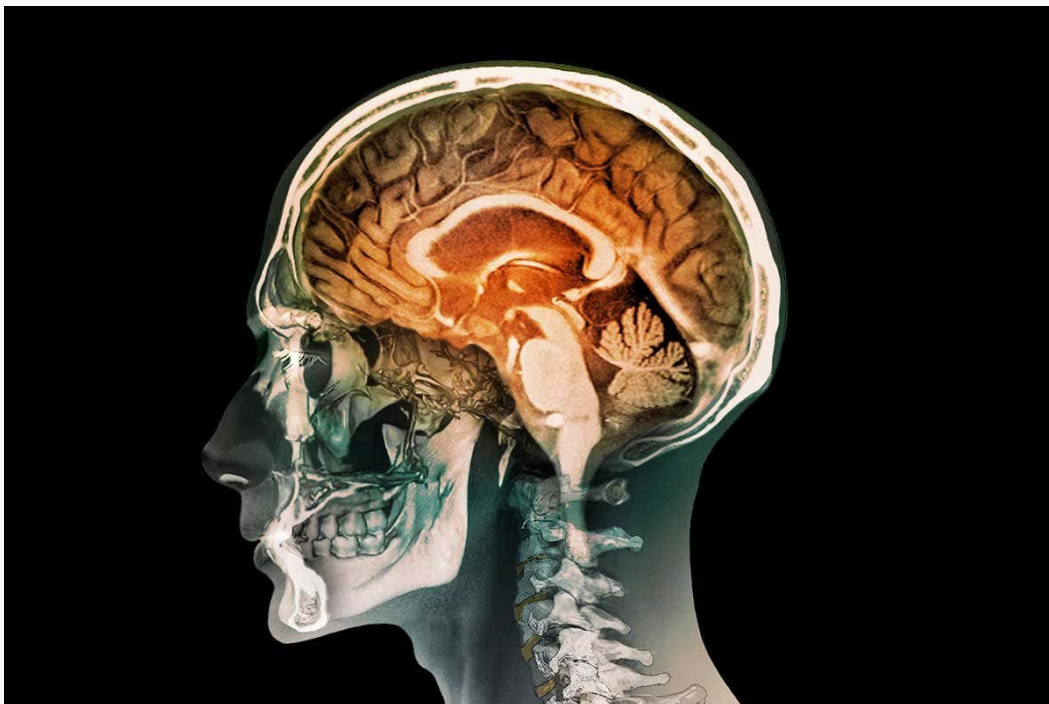
Research supports this idea and suggests that the timing and duration of childhood abuse can impact the way it affects those children later in life. Abuse that occurs early in

childhood for a prolonged period, for example, can lead to particularly negative outcomes.

Dr. Martin Teicher and his colleagues at McLean Hospital, Harvard Medical School, and Northeastern University studied this relationship between abuse and brain structure by using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) technology to identify measured changes in brain structure among young adults who had experienced childhood abuse or neglect.

They found clear differences in nine brain regions between those who had experienced childhood trauma and those who had not. The most obvious changes were in the brain regions that help balance emotions and impulses, as well as self-aware thinking. The study's results indicate that people who have been through childhood abuse or neglect do have an increased risk of developing mental health issues later on.

Childhood maltreatment has also been shown to increase the risk of anxiety disorders, bipolar disorder, major depression, personality disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and psychosis. The experience may also translate into a higher risk of substance misuse because of changes in their brain associated with impulse control and decision-making.



Effects on Brain Structure

Childhood abuse and neglect can have several negative effects on how the brain develops. Some of these are:

- Decreased size of the corpus callosum, which integrates cortical functioning motor, sensory, and cognitive performances between the hemispheres
- Decreased size of the hippocampus, which is important in learning and memory
- Dysfunction at different levels of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, which is involved in the stress response
- Less volume in the prefrontal cortex, which affects behavior, emotional balance, and perception
- Overactivity in the amygdala, which is responsible for processing emotions and determining reactions to potentially stressful or dangerous situations
- Reduced volume of the cerebellum, which can affect motor skills and coordination

Effects on Behavior, Emotions, and Social Function

Because childhood abuse, neglect, and trauma change brain structure and chemical function, maltreatment can also affect the way children behave, regulate emotions, and function socially. These potential effects include:

- Being constantly on alert and unable to relax, no matter the situation
- Feeling fearful most or all the time
- Finding social situations more challenging
- Learning deficits
- Not hitting developmental milestones in a timely fashion
- A tendency to develop a mental health condition
- A weakened ability to process positive feedback

These effects can continue to cause issues in adulthood if they're not addressed. Adults who experienced maltreatment during childhood may have trouble with interpersonal relationships or they may avoid them altogether.

This outcome could be related to attachment theory, or the idea that our early relationships with caregivers influence the way we relate to people later on in life. Emotional abuse and neglect don't allow for a secure attachment to form between a child and the caregiver, which causes distress for the child and influences the way they see themselves and others.

Adults who went through childhood emotional abuse or neglect may also experience:

- Emotional dysregulation
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Low self-esteem
- Negative automatic thoughts
- Problems coping with stressors

How childhood abuse or neglect affects children later in life depends on a variety of factors:

- How often the abuse occurred
- The age the child was during the abuse
- Who the abuser was
- Whether or not the child had a dependable, loving adult in their life
- How long the abuse lasted
- If there were any interventions in the abuse
- The kind and severity of the abuse
- Other individual factors

Treatment

Through treatment, it is possible to address the effects of childhood emotional abuse and neglect. Treatment in these cases is highly individual since maltreatment can take many forms and each person's response to it may differ.

Any form of treatment would likely include therapy and, depending on whether or not any other mental health conditions are present, may include medication as well. Some effective forms of therapy are:

- **Exposure therapy:** Exposure therapy involves interacting with something that typically provokes fear while slowly learning to remain calm. This form of therapy may improve neural connections between several regions in the brain.
- **Family therapy:** Family therapy is a psychological treatment intended to improve relationships within the entire family and create a better, more supportive home environment. This type of treatment may improve HPA axis functioning and lead to a healthier stress response.
- **Mindfulness-based approaches:** Mindfulness-based therapy focuses on helping people develop a sense of awareness of their thoughts and feelings so they can understand them and better regulate them. These approaches may help improve

resiliency against stress by benefiting several brain regions and improving neural connections.

- **Trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy (TF-CBT):** TF-CBT focuses on helping people learn new coping skills, restructure negative or unhelpful thoughts, regulate their moods, and overcome trauma by crafting a trauma narrative. This form of therapy may help reduce overactivity in the amygdala.

Emotional Abuse:

The Damaging Long-Term Effects

Emotional abuse occurs in interpersonal relationships as well as in professional relationships. The effects of emotional neglect or mistreatment are extremely damaging to one's psychological and personal well-being.

It is imperative to identify warning signs and symptoms of emotional abuse from the onset to avoid the long-term effects thereof.

When dealing with emotional manipulation from a parent or an emotionally abusive husband or wife, identifying the signs can be challenging as you may excuse or justify toxic behavior out of love. However, this causes further complications within the relationship as well as individualistically.

It is important to note that emotional violence, whether from childhood experiences or current personal relationships, can cause severe damage. Which is known to complicate and develop into psychological and mental health disorders, such as PTSD, C+ PTSD, depression, and anxiety. These are a mere few challenges as an effect of emotional mistreatment among various others.



BetterHelp online emotional abuse therapists aim to educate, support, and heal those who have been emotionally mistreated at any stage of their lives.

Connecting with a domestic abuse therapy specialist from BetterHelp can alleviate the burden of long-term negative impacts of emotional child abuse.

Take note of the mentioned indicators in the following post and ensure that you can identify and recognize indicators of emotional mistreatment.

Long-Term Emotional Child Abuse

Emotional child abuse is common. It happens both intentionally or unintentionally from a parent or caregiver to a child.

Emotional child abuse is reported as one of the most common forms of domestic violence. At times parents or caregivers may not be aware of their emotionally abusive behaviors or actions. This causes deeply rooted stress, fear, anxiety, and an extensive list of psychologically damaging impacts on a child.

When a child is emotionally or physically neglected or abused, it directly affects their development. What this means is that emotionally abusive parents consequently cause a child to develop negative attachment styles such as anxious attachment, avoidant attachment, or dismissive attachment.

Additionally, the effects of emotional child harm make a child predisposed to developing personality disorders, mental health disorders, or stress disorders. In domestic abuse therapy, families and individuals are taught to identify the signs of an emotionally

abusive parent, how to understand what emotional child maltreatment is as well as the potential impacts.

What is emotional child abuse? Emotional child abuse is a pattern of negative behaviors and mannerisms that damage a child's emotional and psychological well-being. Whether in the act of withholding love and affection, or continuous criticism, rejection, or threats. Emotional child abuse is more challenging to identify as it is more subtle and covert than physical mistreatment. However, emotional child neglect is as damaging, if not more damaging.

Identifying indicators of child abuse as an adult may be a complex, painful, and revealing journey.

Think back to your childhood, these are the signs of an emotionally abusive parent.

1. Constantly criticizing
2. Rejecting the child
3. Withholding food or clothes as punishment
4. Ridiculing, mocking, or humiliating the child
5. Blaming the child for personal problems
6. Intentionally causing emotional pain
7. Intimidating the child
8. Threatening to hurt or abandon the child
9. Name-calling
10. Frequently getting angry
11. Dismissing their feelings and ignoring them
12. Neglecting the child's physical and emotional needs

Emotional child abuse is severely damaging to a child's emotional and psychological development.

The effects of childhood emotional mistreatment from a parent may only arise later during adolescence or adulthood.

As an effect of experiencing emotional abuse from a father or an emotionally abusive mother, you may experience low self-esteem, distrusting others, anxiety, depression, PTSD symptoms, and various further challenges.

Adult survivors of emotional neglect or ill-treatment commonly ask the question, "*Can an emotionally abusive parent change?*".

The reality of emotionally neglectful parents is that most times they are unaware of their toxic and damaging behavior towards a child. Addressing and overcoming emotional

child manipulation may require you to confront an emotionally abusive parent about the trauma they've caused you.

When confronting and overcoming childhood emotional distress trauma, the option of connecting to a professional abuse therapist can be helpful.

Childhood abuse therapists from BetterHelp offer support, educated and effective advice, as well as guidance on how to overcome and heal from emotional neglect trauma.

Long Term Effects of Emotional Abuse

The long-term effects of emotional abuse are severely damaging. Negatively impacting the psychological, emotional, and physical well-being of the victim.

When someone experiences emotional mistreatment from a partner, parent, friend, or even a boss, over time, they start to internalize and suppress negative emotions. This consequently results in the development.

1. Cognitive challenges. Difficulty with memory or concentrating.
2. Mental health conditions and disorders. Depression, anxiety, or PTSD.
3. Emotional distress. Challenges with processing, expressing, or regulating emotions.
4. Substance abuse.
5. High-risk behavior. Unprotected sex or dangerous and impulsive behavior.
6. Career challenges. Unable to thrive in a work environment.
7. Interpersonal relationship issues. Difficulty connecting with others or maintaining healthy relationships.
8. Sleep and appetite disturbances.

Emotional abuse is a form of psychological abuse that is used to control or manipulate another person. It is commonly covert and only happens in a private setting. When you experience emotionally offensive relationships or marriages, you become at risk of the short and long-term effects of abuse trauma.

The immediate psychological effects of emotional abuse are not always visible, but they are known to escalate into further complications. It is crucial to learn how to identify the warning signs of emotional mistreatment and relieve yourself of the situation. Someone who is emotionally abusive will.

1. Humiliate you in front of others.
2. Intimidate you with anger.
3. Threaten to hurt you or themselves to manipulate you.

4. Bizarre acts of jealousy.
5. Gaslight you or twist your words to confuse you.
6. Isolate you from friends or family. They may make you feel guilty.
7. Threaten to hurt a pet out of anger.
8. Change the conversation to avoid being confronted.
9. Constantly makes you feel unworthy.
10. Accusing you of cheating.

Recognizing and identifying signs of emotional abuse is a confusing and difficult task. You may feel shameful about what is happening or even begin to doubt yourself. This is a common side effect of an emotionally hurtful relationship.

Cases of emotional abuse during pregnancy can have devastating effects on the developing baby and the mother. When the pregnant woman responds to trauma, they may experience severe complications such as high blood pressure, miscarriage, premature labor, stillbirth, broken bones, or hemorrhage in the fetus.

When a woman experiences abuse during pregnancy, the abuser might.

1. Force her to have an abortion.
2. Continue or change the cycle of abuse.
3. Refuse to support her emotionally during pregnancy.
4. Withhold or limit her prenatal care.
5. Threaten to abandon her and the unborn baby.
6. Become increasingly controlling.
7. Deny the child as theirs.

These emotionally manipulative tactics have severe consequences on a pregnant woman. If you or anyone you know is experiencing emotional abuse, it is extremely important to seek professional help and support immediately.

Consider connecting to a specialist in [therapy for emotional abuse](#) for personal guidance, support, and professional advice on how to cope and overcome emotional neglect trauma. BetterHelp counseling for emotional abuse offers victims the chance to heal and understand the psychological, emotional, and physical effects of emotional abuse. BetterHelp offers affordable, convenient, and effective methods of online therapy.

Emotionally Abusive Relationship



“How do I know if I’m in an emotionally abusive relationship?”. If you are in a relationship with an emotionally harmful boyfriend or girlfriend or Husband, you may find yourself having depressive episodes, feeling on edge, or anxious. In emotionally toxic relationships, you might experience covert or overt emotional abuse.

Covert emotional abuse is subtle and usually happens in private. Overt abuse is obvious and easily identified, and physical abuse is overt abuse.

In an emotionally disruptive relationship, seeing the signs may be a challenge, many times victims of emotional abuse ask the question, *“Is my husband or boyfriend emotionally abusive? How do I know?”*. It is important to educate yourself about the signs of emotional mistreatment in a relationship that may look like this.

Controlling behavior.

Your partner may seem as though they are overly invested in your social life. They monitor your daily routine, and you don’t have the freedom to make your own decisions. They might make small comments to undermine your independence.

Violently shouting or screaming.

Raising your voice occasionally in a disagreement is normal. However, an emotionally abusive partner will regularly shout at you to intimidate or frighten you.

Contempt

What happens when one partner is contempt, it makes it hard for the other to express their feelings.

Overly defensive

If you must constantly defend yourself during meaningful conversations, it makes it challenging to have positive communication. You feel as though you're in a battle and you always must have a shield up.

Threatening.

Emotional manipulation is a form of psychological control. A partner will threaten to hurt you, people you love, or themselves. This frightens you from leaving.



Stonewalling

This happens when a partner refuses to communicate and shuts down during important or uncomfortable conversations. This can feel like emotional abandonment.

Blame or guilt

Emotionally mistreated victims are made to feel guilty and deserving of ill-treatment. This makes a victim unable to break the abuse cycle.

Isolation

Emotional manipulation affects all areas of your life. **Abusive partners will convince you that no one cares** and try to remove and isolate you from your friends and family. The consequences of an emotionally destructive relationship are long-lasting and extremely devastating. It affects your psychological and emotional well-being. When trying to fix an emotionally abusive relationship, it requires you to acknowledge **the risk of staying in the relationship as well as understand the effects.**

An emotionally manipulative partner can change in some circumstances; however, it is not always guaranteed.

With 24-hour access to an abuse therapist of your choice, **BetterHelp** online counseling for emotionally abusive relationships is far more convenient, affordable, and effective in comparison to traditional methods of therapy and counseling.

Avoiding, addressing, and overcoming an emotionally traumatic relationship. It is possible to heal from an emotionally toxic relationship. It does, however, **require persistent hard work and emotional support.** It is not an easy journey to identify being emotionally abused, particularly by someone you love and trust.

These are therapist-approved methods to help you overcome the effects of an emotionally stressful relationship.

1. Acknowledge and accept the abuse has happened.
2. Change your thought patterns. Reduce negative self-talk and blame yourself for the abuse.

3. Start self-care. Self-care helps to maintain a stable emotional balance and healthy mental and emotional well-being.
4. Make yourself a priority. Engage in fun social activities or new hobbies. This is a form of stress relief.
5. Take care of your health.
6. Practice mindful meditation.
7. Create a strong and positive support system for friends and family.

Connecting to a **specialist** in emotional abuse therapy has been helpful for **trauma victims**. Should you need professional and effective guidance or support, seek assistance from an emotional abuse therapist.

Victim of Emotional Abuse

The effects of emotional abuse drastically impact a victim's life. From psychological damage to physical illness and mental health disorders, emotional abuse is dangerous. The behaviors of an emotionally traumatized victim **will look different in each circumstance**. The aftermath of any form of abuse depends on the severity and longevity of the abuse incident. For someone that has experienced emotional **neglect during childhood**, in comparison to someone who experienced emotional **manipulation in a workplace or in friendship** – their behaviors might differ. **These are the common indicators to look for:**

1. Constantly apologizing. Due to emotional abusers blame victim, this leads victim to feel responsible for everyone's wrong-doings.
2. Low self-esteem, confidence, and negative self-image.
3. Depression and anxiety.
4. Symptoms of PTSD.
5. Constantly feeling on edge or hypervigilant.
6. You feel as though you're constantly walking on edge to avoid conflict.
7. Isolation from enjoyable activities.
8. Lack of sleep and changes in appetite.
9. Substance use or abuse.
10. Overly compliant.
11. Cognitive impairment, confusion, or memory loss.

As every emotional mistreatment situation is different, the aftermath and effects will vary. However, it is crucial to educate yourself on the behavioral indicators of emotional

neglect. If you or anyone you know might be a victim of emotional mistreatment, the above-mentioned indicators are warning signs.



BetterHelp online abuse therapy has been carefully structured to support, guide, and advise emotional abuse victims. With direct access to your chosen abuse specialist, you have the advantage of conducting therapy on your terms.

Online therapy for emotional abuse victims is Affordable, effective, and convenient.

The **consequences and long-term effects of emotional neglect** can affect various areas of a victim's life. The consequences are known to cause challenges in;

1. Interpersonal relationships.
2. Emotional well-being.
3. Anxiety and depression.
4. Psychological trauma.
5. Shame, fear, and guilt.
6. Feeling hopeless.
7. Lack of self-worth.
8. Trust issues.

The consequences of emotional abuse can result in becoming increasingly vulnerable and prone to depression. In the future, this can cause challenges when developing and maintaining relationships.

As an effect of emotional mistreatment, victims often **begin to feel insecure and unworthy of healthy love**. This negatively impacts developing healthy friendships and relationships. Additionally, you may experience severe psychological damage.

If you know of someone that is a victim of emotional abuse, it can be helpful to know how to help them. Emotional abuse therapists advise people to;

1. Listen to them. Emotional mistreatment can be disorienting and confusing. Offering a listening ear can help them share their experience.
2. Don't judge, criticize or blame them.
3. Believe them when they share their experience.
4. Don't make excuses for the abuser's behavior.
5. Share your honest concerns.
6. Don't make it about yourself or force your opinions and feelings on them.
7. Research helpful resources.

The information listed above can help you protect yourself from emotional violence. Connecting to an emotional abuse specialist can help you alleviate and overcome emotional abuse.

Emotional Abuse from a Spouse

Emotional abuse from a spouse is traumatic. It causes strenuous effects on both spouses and the marriage.

In a marriage where there is emotional mistreatment from a husband or from a wife, the other spouse will start to feel abandoned, isolated, and unloved. Consequently, the result of this causes underlying challenges in marriage which can be damaging in future.



How does emotional abuse from a spouse happen? In any marriage it is common to have challenges and conflicts. However, there is a significant difference between emotional abuse and common conflict.

If you have experienced any type of hurtful verbal attack from a partner who is threatening to divorce as emotional abuse, this is a sign of spousal abuse.

Covert abuse is a form of psychological manipulation that is used to control, intimidate and overpower another person. Covert abuse means hidden, insidious or indirect. It is extremely difficult to identify the signs as they come across as normal.

Example of covert abuse can seem like:

1. Being blamed for a spouse's wrongdoings.
2. Experiencing your words being twisted and confused. Also known as gaslighting.
3. Posing physical threats to you.
4. Being belittled or constantly criticized and patronized.
5. Having to apologize when you are not wrong.
6. Fake empathy.
7. Various forms of controlling and monitoring your movements.
8. Makes you question yourself and your sanity.
9. Constantly putting you down.
10. Changing history or denying a situation.
11. Speaking to you in a condescending manner. Or a sarcastic and dismissive tone.

These are all common indicators of covert manipulation which is a form of emotional abuse. Confronting a spouse who is emotionally abusive can either cause further conflict or be positive and progressive. It is common for emotional manipulators to deny their actions and become extremely defensive. The long-term effects of marital emotional abuse can be particularly damaging to a spouse's overall well-being.

As a consequence of an emotionally abusive wife or husband, you are susceptible to experience;

1. Mental illness and anxiety disorders.
2. PTSD.
3. Uncertainty and confusion.
4. Lack of emotional availability or emotional 'numbness'.
5. Loss of motivation.
6. Anger, resentment and frustration.
7. Sleep disorders and chronic nightmares and flashbacks.
8. Substance abuse and addiction.
9. Trust issues.
10. Constantly seeking approval.
11. Self-harming or pain-inflicting behavior.
12. Challenges with completing daily tasks or responsibilities.

As a result of an emotionally abusive spouse, you may experience these effects within the marriage and long after you've left.

Unfortunately, many spouses do not take immediate action towards fixing an emotionally abusive marriage. This results in either divorce or a continued cycle.

Faithful Counseling, online [Christian counseling for emotional abuse](#) in a marriage, has successfully helped couples conquer the damages and effects of emotional mistreatment.

To maintain a happy and healthy marriage, we encourage couples to seek professional help from a Christian marriage counselor. In doing so, you will be able to clearly identify and address the challenges in your marriage.



Family Emotional Abuse

Family emotional abuse is a common form of abuse that happens between family members. At times, it goes unnoticed or even ignored. This can cause tremendous damage to a family unit.

What is family emotional abuse? Emotional abuse can happen between siblings, between a parent and a sibling or between parents. Witnessing verbal abuse attacks, name calling or constant covert methods of emotional abuse can cause psychological and emotional trauma.

If you have experienced or witnessed family emotional abuse , you may have noticed incidents as listed below.

1. Patronizing and disrespectful verbal disagreements between parents.
2. Experienced name-calling, insults or humiliation.

3. Emotional bullying or guilt from a sibling or parent.
4. Being a witness to favoritism between siblings.
5. Having to fight for attention, love, or acknowledgement.
6. Being compared to another sibling or family member of a similar age group.
7. Made to feel insignificant or unnoticed.
8. Having necessities such as food or clothes withheld as punishment.
9. Given silent treatment or being ignored.
10. Being threatened with abandonment.

Family emotional abuse is known to result in individual consequences that can be long-lasting if not effectively addressed. The causes of family emotional abuse are varied and vast. In some circumstances parents might be experiencing external pressure such as finances or work. Additionally, another common cause of family emotional abuse is unresolved childhood trauma.

Regardless of the causes, emotional abuse victims suffer from long and short-term effects.

1. Psychological challenges such as, mental illness, anxiety, eating or sleeping disorders.
2. Social disorders, withdrawal, and Loneliness.
3. PTSD.
4. Physical regression or illnesses.
5. Unexplained chronic pain.
6. Traumatic flashbacks and memories.
7. Anger management challenges.
8. Lack of emotional understanding and effective expression.
9. Poor communication styles.
10. Negative or dangerous coping mechanisms.
11. Prone to getting involved with an emotionally abusive partner.

Healing from family emotional abuse is a long journey. It requires victims to identify and acknowledge the abuse, revisit painful memories and confront the incidents. At times this may cause conflict between family members, thus- it is always suggested for families to consult and involve a family emotional abuse therapist.

Faithful Counseling, family counseling to address emotional abuse, offers struggling family members professional support and guidance.

[Christian family therapy near me](#) or online is our best recommendation.

Abuse therapist approved healing methods.

1. Communicate your experience, feelings, and thoughts about the incident to your family.
2. Be open to listening to their explanation respectfully.
3. Distance yourself healthily to heal.
4. Acknowledge that the abuse has happened, and it is not your fault.
5. Practice methods of self-regulation or self-soothing.
6. Keep track of your triggers, feelings and thoughts.
7. Slowly rebuild a healthier relationship with family members.
8. Learn to let go and forgive.

When addressing and confronting family emotional mistreatment, an impartial third party therapist can make the journey more effective and healing for everyone.

Emotional Abuse from Friends

How do you know if a friend is being emotionally abusive? Do you know how to tell the signs?

“What is narcissistic friend abuse and how do I know if I am a victim?”

When friendships develop, at times there may be conflict that arises and causes a few disagreements. However, in circumstances of narcissistic friend abuse, one friend may start to feel as though they are always having to change their plans or are made to feel guilty for having other obligations. This is a sign of narcissistic friend abuse.

What is a narcissist? By definition, a narcissist is someone who has an extensive interest in themselves. They believe that they are and always need to be the best at any cost.

Narcissists lack compassion, empathy, and genuine interest in anyone or anything other than themselves.

Narcissism is a personality disorder developed from a deep sense of insecurity and low self-esteem.

The experience of a narcissistic friend may present itself as normal. Narcissistic abuse will be subtle, they will make it seem as though you owe them your time and effort.

However, in some cases narcissistic **abuse becomes toxic and dangerous**.

Take note of these warning signs.

1. They consistently seek approval and admiration from you or others.

2. They are extremely possessive and territorial.
3. They might guilt you or blackmail you into doing things you're not comfortable with.
4. Their needs always come first.
5. They lack empathy or genuine concern.
6. When you really need a friend, they are there, however, expect you to be there all the time.
7. They will put you down to make themselves feel good.
8. They exploit you or use you.
9. They are extremely jealous of your other relationships.
10. You feel emotionally and mentally drained when you spend time with them.
11. The friendship will end when it stops serving them and they will seek out better friends.

The warning signs of narcissistic friend manipulation should be taken seriously. Over time, these toxic relationships can cause tremendous emotional and mental distress. In addition, narcissistic emotional abuse can become physically dangerous and impossible to relieve yourself of.



It is common for individuals who are experiencing narcissistic manipulation to forgive and attempt to understand their narcissistic friends' demands, however, this **becomes a toxic cycle and a burden**, instead of a healthy and mutual friendship.

Addressing emotional mistreatment from friends can either be productive and positive, or, become an impossible circumstance. Attempting to address a friend that is emotionally abusing you may experience emotional manipulation and denial of their behavior.

Here are steps to take to ensure your safety and a productive confrontation.

1. Do thorough research and make sure you understand narcissistic abuse. This puts you in a better position to understand their strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, allows you to not succumb to abuse tactics.
2. Build yourself up. Having positive self-esteem and confidence is helpful when protecting yourself from narcissistic abuse.
3. Create firm boundaries. Should you want to continue the friendship, make sure you get clear boundaries to avoid any further unhealthy and toxic behavior.
4. Communicate and speak up for yourself. If something doesn't align with you or causes you any form of discomfort – don't be afraid to mention it.
5. Demand immediate action and not empty promises. Set timelines for the things that you need to seek change in.
6. Practice methods to stay calm. Breathing exercises and mindful meditation are helpful.
7. Be aware and understand that the other person may need professional help.
8. Acknowledge when you need to get help.
9. Know when it's time to let go and move on.

When detoxing from narcissistic manipulation, **creating distance and altogether stopping communication** with them is the best option.

This may be challenging as they **will continue to try to contact you** or your circle of friends and family. It is advised to create a support system of loved ones and make them aware of the situation.

BetterHelp counselors have extensive experience in helping victims of narcissistic friend abuse not only by educating them about the dangers of emotional distress- but also how to protect themselves and heal from narcissistic friend mistreatment.

We strongly recommend [narcissistic abuse therapy online](#) from **BetterHelp**.

Depression Due to Long Term Emotional Abuse

BetterHelp online emotional trauma therapists are conveniently available to you 24 hours a day. You have direct access to an experienced, professional and certified specialist in emotional abuse therapy whenever you need. Affordable, convenient, and effective methods of therapy.

Emotional mistreatment in any capacity or setting is known to cause depression alongside various other psychological and emotional challenges. In severe cases of emotional abuse, victims are proven to **develop PTSD, personality traits, eating and sleep disorders.**

As a long-term consequence of emotional distress, victims will be challenged with negative impacts on interpersonal relationships, productivity, and personal well-being. Emotional neglect can happen during childhood in a household, within a friendship, relationship or even with a co-worker.

Forms of emotional abuse.

1. Verbal abuse.
2. Covert emotional abuse.
3. Financial abuse.
4. Racial discrimination.
5. Intimidation and manipulation.
6. Forceful Isolation.
7. Monitoring or controlling behaviors.
8. Gaslighting.
9. Withholding necessities.
10. Passive aggressive or backhanded comments/compliments.

Because emotional abuse is not physical, it makes it more challenging to identify and confront. It is a form of psychological manipulation and control. Consequently, this leads to negative impacts.

Abuse victims regress slowly, the abuse begins to cause anxiety, depression, and cognitive impairments. It is common among emotional neglect victims to **experience symptoms of PTSD** during and after the abuse.

What happens when someone is emotionally abused is that they **start to acquire negative coping mechanisms to avoid the effects of emotional mistreatment** as a form of self-protection. As a result, this will lead them to blame themselves for the abuse, causing low self-esteem, negative self-talk, and lack of self-worth. In the long run, this is how depression due to abuse will begin.

Identifying the signs of emotional abuse due to depression.

When you are involved in a situation where you are an emotional neglect victim, it is challenging to objectively assess the other person's behavior. Particularly in family relationships and romantic relationships.

Emotional trauma victims will **deny and excuse the toxic behaviors** or mannerisms of a loved one to protect them and avoid conflict. It is crucial to educate yourself on the warning signs of emotional manipulation to avoid irreversible long-term consequences.

"How do I recover from depression when leaving an emotionally abusive relationship?".

Unfortunately, because emotional mistreatment directly affects a victim's psychological well-being, they are at risk of long-term effects.

We encourage emotional trauma victims suffering from depression to take note of these self-help methods as well as to seek professional support.

1. Educate yourself on what emotional abuse is and why it happens.
2. Take note of what a healthy relationship looks like.
3. Understand that you are not to blame, and the abuse is not okay.
4. Realize that emotional abuse is a cycle and it's not your fault for getting stuck.
5. Reach out to close friends and family for support.
6. Reclaim your life and make it your own.
7. Pay attention to your logical thoughts instead of your emotional feelings.
8. Don't be afraid to hurt and accept the pain.
9. Constructively release the anger and frustration.
10. Rebuild your self-esteem and confidence through new adventures, hobbies or activities.
11. Take the initiative to seek professional help for depression and anxiety. Don't let it weigh you down.

The **effects of emotional mistreatment** are devastating and extremely damaging, more importantly, it can control your life.

Understand that **depression due to emotional abuse** is manageable and you are able to conquer it!

Psychological abuse (PA)

Psychological abuse (PA) is underrecognized and under reported phenomena especially in the adolescents by their own parents. It has been described as the most challenging as well as the most prevalent form of child abuse. PA is rather difficult to define and assess as compared to physical abuse and may be described as verbal abuse, harsh nonphysical punishments, or threats of abuse. It describes a repeated pattern of adult-to-child behavior (usually a parent) that makes the child feel worthless, flawed, unloved, unwanted, endangered, or only of value in meeting another's needs.

In many cases PA is the most developmentally damaging dimension and has been linked with negative outcomes such as impaired emotional, social, and cognitive development, including helplessness, aggression, emotional unresponsiveness, and neuroticism. Research consistently suggests that PA and neglect in childhood have negative effects on normal development. The experiences of abuse and neglect not only put adolescents at risk for immediate adverse consequences such as poor school performance and increased psychological distress but may also have long-term serious health outcomes such as delinquency, aggression, low self-esteem, anxiety, substance abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and depression. PA is also explained in terms of abuse of adolescents' mental and emotional process which has been linked with psychiatric disorders in childhood such as major depression and dysthymia. Of the few studies documenting its long-term effects, childhood PA relates to eating disorders, depressive illness, and suicidal behaviors in adulthood.

Recent research has also shown that children who have experienced PA exhibit common mental health problems including depression, anxiety, low-self-esteem, and eating disorders. In turn, these problems are associated with physical health problems, including overall poor physical health, increased risk of heart disease, and self-injurious behaviors. This type of abuse can be extremely destructive and has been associated with a range of adverse child outcomes including emotional maladjustment, depression, poor self-esteem, conduct problems, aggression, inability to trust, and underachievement.

In Pakistani context child abuse remains a taboo subject and most of the cases at home go unreported therefore, help from a mental health expert neither recognized nor accepted rather still is a social stigma. In last few years, some attempts have been made to study different dimensions of mental health problems among school children in Pakistan. Hussein indicated that 42.30% were rated having conduct problems based on parental report. In another study parents reported 34.40% on prevalence of emotional and behavioral problems of children, whereas teacher reported 35.80% on "Abnormal category". Keeping in view the fact that there are life-long consequences of child abuse, the present investigation aimed to identify mental health problems of abused adolescents.



Significance of the study: Child's protection rights include protection from psychological abuse because PA is considered less serious and significant as compared to physical and sexual abuse. With observations that its prevalence is increasing, and a growing understanding of its profound serious effects on healthy development, PA has become an issue of concern globally. The results of the present research will address the existing unknown, and suspected cases of psychological abuse by parents and behavioral problems.

Chapter 3

Mental health of adolescents

- Globally, one in seven 10-19-year-olds experiences a mental disorder, accounting for 13% of the global burden of disease in this age group.
- Depression, anxiety, and behavioral disorders are among the leading causes of illness and disability among adolescents.
- Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among 15–29-year-olds.
- The consequences of failing to address adolescent mental health conditions extend to adulthood, impairing both physical and mental health and limiting opportunities to lead fulfilling lives as adults.

One in six people are aged 10–19 years. Adolescence is a unique and formative time. Physical, emotional, and social changes, including exposure to poverty, abuse, or violence, can make adolescents vulnerable to mental health problems. Protecting adolescents from adversity, promoting socio-emotional learning and psychological well-being, and ensuring access to mental health care are critical for their health and well-being during adolescence and adulthood.

Globally, it is estimated that 1 in 7 (14%) 10–19-year-olds experience mental health conditions (*1*), yet these remain largely unrecognized and untreated.

Adolescents with mental health conditions are particularly vulnerable to social exclusion, discrimination, stigma (affecting readiness to seek help), educational difficulties, risk-taking behaviors, physical ill-health, and human rights violations.



Mental health determinants

Adolescence is a crucial period for developing social and emotional habits important for mental well-being. These include adopting healthy sleep patterns; exercising regularly; developing coping, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills; and learning to manage emotions. Protective and supportive environments in the family, at school and in the wider community are important.

Multiple factors affect mental health. The more risk factors adolescents are exposed to, the greater the potential impact on their mental health. Factors that can contribute to stress during adolescence include exposure to adversity, pressure to conform with peers and exploration of identity. Media influence and gender norms can exacerbate the disparity between an adolescent's lived reality and their perceptions or aspirations for the future. Other important determinants include the quality of their home life and relationships with peers. Violence (especially sexual violence and bullying), harsh parenting and severe and socioeconomic problems are recognized risks to mental health.

Some adolescents are at greater risk of mental health conditions due to their living conditions, stigma, discrimination or exclusion, or lack of access to quality support and services. These include adolescents living in humanitarian and fragile settings; adolescents with chronic illness, autism spectrum disorder, an intellectual disability or other neurological condition; pregnant adolescents, adolescent parents, or those in early

or forced marriages; orphans; and adolescents from minority ethnic or sexual backgrounds or other discriminated groups.



Emotional disorders

Emotional disorders are common among adolescents. Anxiety disorders (which may involve panic or excessive worry) are the most prevalent in this age group and are more common among older than among younger adolescents. It is estimated that 3.6% of 10–14-year-olds and 4.6% of 15–19-year-olds experience an anxiety disorder. Depression is estimated to occur among 1.1% of adolescents aged 10–14 years, and 2.8% of 15–19-year-olds. Depression and anxiety share some of the same symptoms, including rapid and unexpected changes in mood.

Anxiety and depressive disorders can profoundly affect school attendance and schoolwork. Social withdrawal can exacerbate isolation and loneliness. Depression can lead to suicide.

Behavioral disorders

Behavioral disorders are more common among younger adolescents than older adolescents. Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), characterized by difficulty paying attention, excessive activity and acting without regard to consequences, occurs among 3.1% of 10–14-year-olds and 2.4% of 15–19-year-olds (1). Conduct disorder (involving symptoms of destructive or challenging behavior) occurs among 3.6% of 10–14-year-olds and 2.4% of 15–19-year-olds (1). Behavioral disorders can affect adolescents' education and conduct disorder may result in criminal behavior.

Eating disorders

Eating disorders, such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa, commonly emerge during adolescence and young adulthood. Eating disorders involve abnormal eating behavior and preoccupation with food, accompanied in most instances by concerns about body weight and shape. Anorexia nervosa can lead to premature death, often due to medical complications or suicide, and has higher mortality than any other mental disorder.



Psychosis

Conditions that include symptoms of psychosis most commonly emerge in late adolescence or early adulthood. Symptoms can include hallucinations or delusions. These experiences can impair an adolescent's ability to participate in daily life and education and often lead to stigma or human rights violations.

Suicide and self-harm

Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death in older adolescents (15–19 years) (2). Risk factors for suicide are multifaceted, and include harmful use of alcohol, abuse in childhood, stigma against help-seeking, barriers to accessing care and access to means of suicide. Digital media, like any other media, can play a significant role in either enhancing or weakening suicide prevention efforts.

Risk-taking behaviors

Many risk-taking behaviors for health, such as substance use or sexual risk-taking, start during adolescence. Risk-taking behaviors can be an unhelpful strategy to cope with emotional difficulties and can severely impact an adolescent's mental and physical well-being.

Worldwide, the prevalence of heavy episodic drinking among adolescents aged 15–19 years was 13.6% in 2016, with males most at risk.

The use of tobacco and cannabis are additional concerns. Many adult smokers had their first cigarette prior to the age of 18 years. Cannabis is the most widely used drug among young people with about 4.7% of 15–16-years-olds using it at least once in 2018.

Perpetration of violence is a risk-taking behavior that can increase the likelihood of low educational attainment, injury, involvement with crime or death. Interpersonal violence was ranked among the leading causes of death of older adolescent boys in 2020.



Promotion and prevention

Mental health promotion and prevention interventions aim to strengthen an individual's capacity to regulate emotions, enhance alternatives to risk-taking behaviors, build resilience for managing difficult situations and adversity, and promote supportive social environments and social networks.

These programs require a multi-level approach with varied delivery platforms – for example, digital media, health or social care settings, schools, or the community – and varied strategies to reach adolescents, particularly the most vulnerable.

Early detection and treatment

It is crucial to address the needs of adolescents with mental health conditions. Avoiding institutionalization and over-medicalization, prioritizing non-pharmacological approaches, and respecting the rights of children in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and other human rights instruments are key for adolescents' mental health.

WHO response

WHO works on strategies, programs, and tools to assist governments in responding to the health needs of adolescents.

For example, the Helping Adolescents Thrive (HAT) Initiative is a joint WHO-UNICEF effort to strengthen policies and programs for the mental health of adolescents. More specifically, the efforts made through the Initiative are to promote mental health and prevent mental health conditions. They are also intended to help prevent self-harm and other risk behaviors, such as harmful use of alcohol and drugs, that have a negative impact on the mental and physical health of young people.

WHO has also developed a module on Child and Adolescent Mental and Behavioral Disorders as part of the MH GAP Intervention Guide 2.0. This Guide provides evidence-based clinical protocols for the assessment and management of a range of mental health conditions in non-specialized care settings.

Furthermore, WHO is developing and testing scalable psychological interventions to address emotional disorders of adolescents, and guidance on mental health services for adolescents.

WHO's Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean has developed a mental health training package for educators for improved understanding of the importance of mental

health in the school setting and to guide the implementation of strategies to promote, protect and restore mental health among their students. It includes training manuals and materials to help scale up the number of schools promoting mental health.

- (1) Institute of health Metrics and Evaluation. Global Health Data Exchange (GHDx)
- (2) WHO Global Health Estimates 2000-2019
- (3) Global status report on alcohol and health 2018
- (4) World Drug Report 2020
- (5) 2019 Global Health Estimates (GHE), WHO, 2020

Chapter 4

Effects of emotional abuse

Emotional abuse can affect people in different ways. It can have several long- and short-term effects. These might be physical, psychological, or both. Some of the effects may linger, becoming long-term. Keep reading for more information on the different types of emotional abuse, its short- and long-term effects, and tips for healing and recovery. This article also discusses how to seek help.

Types of emotional abuse



The effects of emotional abuse can be both long and short term. A person may face emotional abuse from several different people throughout their life. Emotional abuse has numerous potential sources. These include:

- Parents
- Romantic partners
- Colleagues
- Friends

The sections below cover these sources of emotional abuse in more detail.

Parental emotional abuse



People of all ages can face emotional abuse, including children. According to [Childhelp](#), some signs of emotional abuse toward children include:

- Rejecting or ignoring a child
- Telling a child, they are unloved or unwanted

- Not showing or returning affection
- Shaming, belittling, or humiliating a child
- Bullying or threatening a child
- Yelling or screaming at a child
- Isolating or confining a child from positive experiences
- Engaging a child in illicit or criminal acts
- Calling a child name
- Negatively comparing a child with others

Relationship emotional abuse

A relationship is still abusive if people face emotional abuse rather than physical abuse. People may be facing emotional abuse if they feel as though something in their relationship is not right, feel scared, or think nothing they do is right in the eyes of their partner.

Signs that a person may be emotionally abusive include:

- Belittling a partner, calling them names, or putting them down.
- Humiliating or intentionally embarrassing a partner.
- Threatening to harm their partner or themselves if a partner leaves.
- Stalking.
- Gaslighting.
- Controlling their partner's actions or monitoring their phone and emails.
- Pressuring a person into sexual activity.
- Being upset when a partner spends time alone or with other people.
- Being overly jealous or possessive.

- Blaming their abusive behavior on their partner.

Marital emotional abuse

Marriage does not give anyone the right to abuse their partner physically, sexually, emotionally, or in any other way. The signs of emotional abuse within marriage are similar to those of emotional abuse within a nonmarital relationship and may include:

- Isolating a person from friends and family
- Not wanting their partner to work
- Controlling finances or refusing to share or give shared access to the other person
- Withholding affection as punishment
- Expecting their partner to ask permission
- Threatening harm to their partner, any children, other family members, or pets

Emotional abuse within a marriage may make a person feel that they need to change their behavior to stop the abuse or that they must avoid conflict and do as their partner says to stay safe.



Emotional abuse in the workplace

Emotional abuse in the workplace, or workplace bullying, can involve intimidating, undermining, or humiliating a person in the workplace. This may occur in front of other employees or customers.

Emotional abuse in the workplace may include:

- Criticizing or blaming someone for something invalid
- Treating an individual differently than others
- Swearing, shouting at, or humiliating a person
- Excluding or isolating someone
- Excessively monitoring a person, micromanaging them, or setting unrealistic deadlines

It is illegal in the United States to harass anybody based on gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, or disability.

Emotional abuse in the workplace may result in poor performance and have deeper emotional effects on a person's self-esteem and self-worth.

Recognizing the signs of emotional abuse

There are several signs of emotional abuse to look out for. According to the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#), some signs of emotional abuse within a relationship include:

- Using weapons as a means of threatening
- Withholding affection as a punishment
- Calling someone names, insulting them, and continually criticizing them

trapping a partner at home or preventing them from leaving

- Threatening to hurt children, pets, or other members of a partner's family
- Demanding to know where a partner is at every minute
- Refusing trust, such as by acting jealously or possessively
- Trying to isolate a partner from their family or friends
- Destroying a partner's property
- Gaslighting
- Monitoring where a partner goes, whom they call, and whom they spend time with
- Humiliating a partner
- Making accusations of cheating
- Being jealous of outside relationships
- Serially cheating on a partner and then blaming them for the behavior
- Attempting to control a partner's appearance
- Cheating to "prove" that they are more desirable than a partner
- Telling a partner that they are lucky to be with them
- Telling a partner that they will not find anyone better

If a person spot any of these signs within their relationship, they can seek help as soon as they are ready.

If a person suspects that a friend or family member is facing emotional abuse, they can consult a healthcare professional or [hotline](#) for advice on how they can help.



Short-term effects on the brain and body

The short-term effects of emotional abuse can impact mental and physical health.

People may feel:

- Anxiety
- Shame
- Fear
- Confusion
- Guilt
- Powerlessness or hopelessness

As a person deals with the emotional effects, they may also feel some physical effects of the abuse. These effects can include:

- Frequent crying
- Moodiness
- Aches and pains
- Difficulty concentrating
- Muscle tension

The longer emotional abuse continues, the more prolonged these effects may become.

Long-term effects on brain and body

Emotional abuse, like physical abuse, can have long-term effects on the brain and body. These may include:

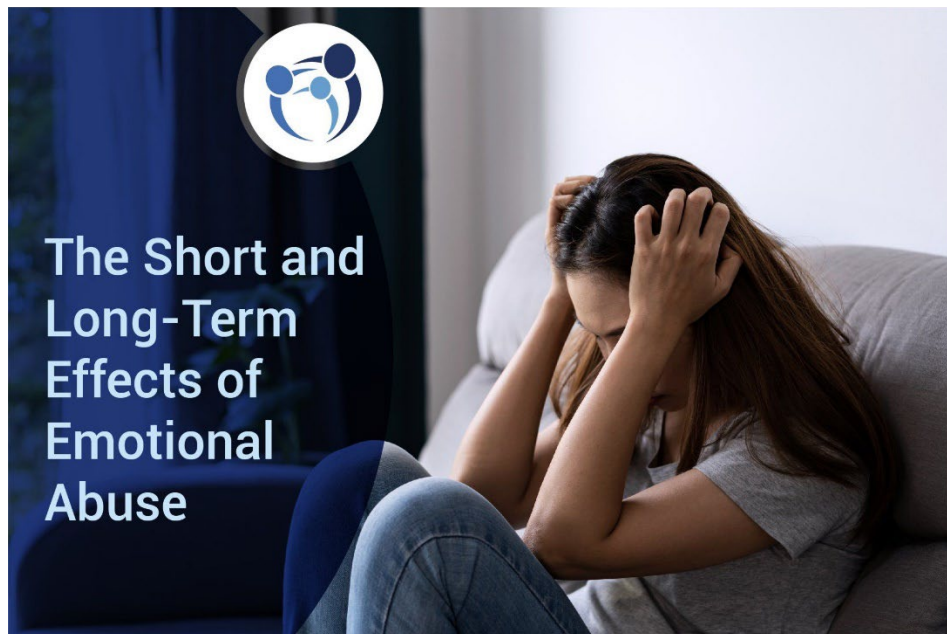
- Loss of sense of self
- Doubting self-worth and abilities, which may make it harder to leave a relationship
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Substance misuse
- Chronic pain

Emotional abuse in children may lead to:

- Developmental delays
- Learning disabilities
- Wetting pants or bed (enuresis)
- Speech disorders
- Health problems, such as ulcers or skin conditions

- Weight fluctuation or obesity
- Extreme emotions
- Anxiety
- Sleep problems
- Social withdrawal
- Becoming overly compliant or defensive
- Inappropriate behavior for their age
- Destructive or anti-social behavior
- Suicidal thoughts or behaviors

Emotional and psychological abuse have serious effects, and it is common for these types of abuse to turn into physical violence.



Effects on personal relationships

A person who faces emotional abuse as a child or in a relationship may have difficulties in other relationships. People who have experienced abuse in childhood may develop attachment disorders. This can make it difficult for them to create positive social and romantic relationships in later life.

Risk factors

Risk factors Trusted Source for childhood abuse include:

- Being under the age of 4 years, although abuse can affect children of any age
- Having special needs that may increase the required amount of care
- Having a caregiver with substance misuse issues
- Having a caregiver with mental health issues
- Having a caregiver who experienced abuse as a child
- Having a caregiver facing financial stress
- Having a caregiver who justifies violence or aggression
- Living in a household with high levels of conflict and negative communication methods
- Living in a household that is isolated from friends and family
- Living in a community with high levels of poverty, violence, or crime

Certain risk factors, or red flags, in a relationship may indicate that a relationship is or could turn abusive. These include:

- A partner behaving in a way that scares them
- A partner who is controlling
- Taking money or refusing to share money

- Embarrassing or putting the other person down
- Preventing independent decisions
- Making threats
- Preventing the other person from working or attending school
- Pretending that frightening or abusive behavior is not happening
- Being physically violent
- Intimidating the partner
- Threatening self-harm
- Pressuring a partner into sexual activity, preventing birth control use, or pressuring them to take drugs or alcohol

If people are experiencing one or more of the above red flags, they can contact a hotline or speak with a healthcare professional for advice.



Seeking help

People seeking help for emotional abuse can contact a healthcare professional, such as a therapist. People can search for a therapist dealing with emotional abuse through the American Psychological Association (APA) psychologist locator.

Some ways to get help without professional intervention include seeking advice from trusted family members or friends. For children, a trusted teacher or school counselor may be able to help. They can also contact the [Childhelp](#) hotline.

Support organizations or hotlines are also available. The National Domestic Violence Hotline is available to help those experiencing emotional abuse and other types of abuse.

There may also be other local organizations available in a person's community, such as a place of worship or a community center. People can search for programs, support groups, or shelters in their state [here](#).

Tips for healing and recovery

It may take time to recover from emotional abuse, but by prioritizing self-care and getting support, recovery is possible. Some tips for healing and recovery include:

- Getting adequate rest
- Eating a balanced diet
- Getting regular exercise
- Finding ways to relax, such as taking a walk-in nature or listening to music
- Reaching out for help from family members, friends, or a health professional
- Reaching out socially to others, such as friends or coworkers
- Volunteering or starting a new hobby
- Finding a support organization to reach out to, such as texting "HOME" to 741741 or connecting with a Crisis Counselor from [Crisis Text Line](#)



Stop blaming yourself

It is important for a person who is experiencing or has experienced emotional abuse to know that the abuse is never their fault and that no type of abuse is acceptable.

If a person feels any shame or confusion over emotional abuse that has affected them, seeking help from an organization or counselor is important to get support and overcome any feelings of self-blame.

Avoid engaging

If a person cannot immediately remove themselves from the situation, it may help to avoid engaging with an abusive person if possible. An abusive person may want to provoke the other person into responding.

This includes keeping a neutral facial expression and neutral body language and not responding to any goading. If possible, a person should try setting boundaries that make it clear that the other person will not get a response to that kind of language or behavior.

Where possible, avoiding communicating with the abusive person may help create some distance. This may include not responding to telephone calls or messages from the person on social media.



Chapter 5

Controlling Behavior

Some signs of abuse, such as marks on the body from physical harm, are easy to notice. Other forms of abuse may be more difficult to see or understand. Some signs of emotional abuse can be obvious from outside the situation, but a person in that situation may miss them or be unaware that the situation is abusive at all. Emotional and mental abuse involves a person acting in a way to control, isolate, or scare somebody else. The form of abuse may be statements, threats, or actions, and there may be a pattern or regularity to the behavior.

Learning more about the signs and situations in which emotional abuse may occur can help people identify their situation and seek the help they need.

Where does it happen?



Emotional abuse can take place in several different relationships, including in business partnerships or families. Abusive people tend to abuse those they are very close with. For example, it may be their partner that they are abusing. However, emotional abuse may also take place in other types of relationships. These include:

- With a business partner or close team member
- With a parent
- With a caretaker
- With a close friend a person relies on

As the National Association of Adult Survivors of Child Abuse note, emotional and mental abuse can be very subtle at times. The person may not even notice that someone is manipulating them. It is essential to identify these patterns and try to put an end to them.

Emotional abuse takes many shapes but may fall into one of several categories depending on what the abusive person is attempting to do.

Control

Controlling behavior is a red flag in any relationship. Examples of controlling behavior include:

- Making demands or orders and expecting them to be fulfilled
- Making all decisions, even canceling another's plans without asking
- Continually monitoring another person's whereabouts
- Insisting on regular calls, texts, or pictures detailing where the person is, and even showing up to these places to make sure they are not lying
- Requiring immediate responses from calls or texts
- Exerting financial control over the other, such as by keeping accounts in their name or only giving the other person an allowance
- Spying by going through the person's phone, checking their internet history, or looking through their communications with others
- Having a rule in place demanding the person's passwords for their phone, social media accounts, and email at any time
- Treating the person as though they are a child, including telling them what to eat, what to wear, or where they can go
- Yelling, which is frequently a scare tactic and can be a way for an abusive person to let the other know who is in control
- Using the other's person's fears; abusive people will often manipulate a person's fears to control them
- Withholding affection; abusers may punish a person for "bad" behavior by withholding affection or making them feel they are undeserving of love

- giving excessive gifts with the implication that these gifts may disappear at any time, or as a reminder of what they would lose if they left the relationship

Shame



An Emotionally abusive person may try to shame the other person about their behavior. Abusive people may try to make a person feel shame for their shortcomings or feel as though they are much worse for these shortcomings.

This takes many forms, including:

- **Lectures:** The abusive person may give lectures about the other person's behavior, in a way to make it clear that the other person is inferior.

- **Outbursts:** This involves aspects of control, as well. Not doing what an abusive person wants may result in an outburst of angry behavior from them. It is both a way to control the person and make them feel shame for “not listening.”
- **Lies:** Abusive people may blatantly lie, telling the person false opinions from their friends about their “bad” behavior.
- **Walkouts:** Abusive people may leave a situation rather than resolve it. In a disagreement at home, for example, they may remark about how the other is “crazy.” This can put all the blame on the other person and make them feel ashamed while also never solving the issue.
- **Trivializing:** If the other person wishes to talk about their issues or problems, the abusive person may criticize them for even having the issue or tell them that they are making a big deal out of nothing.

Blame

Blame typically stems from the abusive person’s sense of insecurity. By blaming others, they do not have to feel their shortcomings.



This may take many forms, such as:

- **Jealousy:** Jealousy can be an abuse tactic. The abusive person may regularly confront the other for talking to or “flirting with” other people. They may accuse the other person of cheating on them regularly.
- **Playing the victim:** The abusive person may try to turn the tables on the other person by blaming them for the issues the abusive person has not dealt with. They may even accuse the other person of being the abusive one in the relationship.
- **Egging the person on:** The abusive person typically knows how to get the other one angry. They may irritate them until the person becomes upset, and then blame them for getting upset.

Humiliation

Much of the time, an abusive person’s actions or words seem to serve no purpose other than to humiliate the other. This type of behavior includes:



- **Blatant name calling:** Abusive people may blatantly call the other stupid, “an idiot,” or other harmful names. If confronted, they may try to pass it off as sarcasm.
- **Joking or sarcasm:** Although sarcasm can be a tool for comedic release if both people enjoy the joke, sometimes, abusive people disguise their derogatory remarks as sarcasm. If the other person feels offended, the abusive one may make fun of them further for “lacking a sense of humor.”
- **Harmful nicknames:** Nicknames or pet names may be normal in relationships. However, a name that hurts is unacceptable.
- **Public displays:** Abusive people may openly pick fights in public, only to blame the other person if they become angry. They may also pick on the other person or openly make fun of them in a social setting.
- **Patronizing:** This may include talking down to another person for trying to learn something new or making it obvious that the person is “not on their level.”
- **Insults on appearance:** An abusive person may insult the other’s appearance around others.
- **Cheating:** Abusive people may cheat on their partners to hurt or humiliate them, or to imply that they are highly desirable.

Unpredictability

Abusive people may seem to make situations chaotic for no other reason than to keep the other in check. Unpredictable behaviors may include:

- Drastic mood swings, such as from being very affectionate to full of rage and breaking things
- Emotional outbursts
- Starting arguments for seemingly no reason
- Self-contradiction, such as making a statement that contradicts the one they just said
- Gaslighting, such as denying facts or making the other feel as though they do not remember the situation correctly
- Acting two faced, such as being charming in public but completely changing the minute they get home

Isolation



Abusive behavior may include isolating a person or preventing them from leaving the house. Abusive people also act in many ways to make the other feel isolated from others, including:

- Telling another person, they cannot spend time with friends or family
- Hiding the person's car keys
- Stealing, hiding, or even destroying the person's cell phone or computer
- Making fun of or belittling the person's friends or family, making the other person feel bad for spending time with them
- Taking up all the person's free time
- Locking the person in a room or the house

What to do

Anyone who feels that they are in immediate danger of physical harm should try to call 911.

Anyone who is seeing signs of emotional abuse but is not in immediate danger should seek help. The National Domestic Violence Hotline offers anonymous help by phone, text, or even online chat.

The hotline is available 24/7 and can help a person find a shelter or other services.

If a person feels uncomfortable reaching out to services such as these immediately, they can reach out to a friend or family member. Telling a trusted person may help them feel supported and less isolated.

Some people feel that they can deal with the abuse, or they may try to justify it by saying that it is not as bad as physical abuse. However, as the Office on Women's Health Trusted Source note, emotional abuse has its own long term effects, and it is also often a sign that physical abuse will follow.

Because of this, it is important to act toward stepping away from an emotionally abusive situation.

This includes steps such as:

- **Setting boundaries** with the abusive person: This includes standing up for oneself to any degree necessary to get the abuse to stop. In many cases, this includes ending a relationship or cutting ties with a partner and never speaking to them again.
- **Changing priorities:** Abusive people manipulate a person's sense of sympathy, often to the point that they are neglecting themselves while taking

care of the abusive person. It is important to end this habit and begin putting one's own priorities first.

- **Get professional help:** Seeking long term professional help in the form of therapy and support groups can strengthen a person's resolve and help them believe that they are not alone in recovering from abuse.
- **Exit plan:** Anyone who feels that they are in an emotionally abusive situation should also have a plan for getting out of the situation when the time comes. Working with those that love and support them may help this plan feel stronger, and it may help the person take action when the time is right.

Emotional abuse takes many forms and can be much more subtle than other forms of abuse. Anyone seeing the signs of emotional abuse should seek help in any manner they feel comfortable with. Confiding in a professional or a close friend may help them move toward a future in which they can step away from the situation.



long-term effects of gaslighting

The long-term effects of gaslighting include trauma, anxiety, and depression. Gaslighting is a form of abuse that involves a person deliberately causing someone to doubt their sanity. This may cause feelings of confusion or powerlessness.

In this Chapter, we look at examples of gaslighting, the long-term effects of gaslighting, and what to do if it is happening.

What is gaslighting?



Support from a therapist may help a person recover from gaslighting. The term “gaslighting” comes from the 1944 movie *Gaslight*. In the movie, an abusive husband brightens, and dims gas powered lights, then insists that his wife is hallucinating. This causes her to doubt her sanity.

Today, gaslighting describes any interaction where a person or entity manipulates someone into feeling they cannot trust their own memories, feelings, or senses.

A person on the receiving end of gaslighting may truly believe that they are not mentally well, that their memories are not accurate, or that their mind is playing tricks on them. This makes them feel dependent on the abusive person.

Examples of gaslighting

Some examples of common gaslighting tactics include:

- **Countering:** This tactic involves an abusive person questioning someone's memory of events, even though they have remembered them correctly.
- **Withholding:** This describes someone who pretends not to understand something, or who refuses to listen.
- **Forgetting:** This involves an abusive person pretending they have forgotten something, or denying that something happened.
- **Trivializing:** This refers to an abusive person making someone's concerns or feelings seem unimportant or irrational.
- **Diverting:** This technique occurs when an abusive person changes the subject, or focuses on the credibility of what someone is saying rather than the content. Some people also call it "blocking."

In abusive relationships, gaslighting often occurs gradually. Initially, a person may not seem abusive. But, over time, they may use statements, such as:

- "You are wrong, you never remember things correctly."
- "You are imagining things."
- "Stop overreacting," or "you are too sensitive."
- "I do not know what you are talking about."
- "I do not understand, you are just trying to confuse me."

Long-term effects of gaslighting

Over time, a person who is a victim of gaslighting may start to believe that they cannot trust themselves, or that they have a mental health disorder. This gaslighting may lead to:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Isolation
- Psychological trauma

All of these can have a long-term impact on someone's mental health and self-esteem. They may also make it more difficult for the individual to leave an abusive situation.

If the gaslighting takes place in a relationship, it could become part of a broader pattern of coercive control. Coercive control is emotional abuse that gives the abuser control over their partner's life.

According to the Crown Prosecution Service in the United Kingdom, other elements of coercive control include:

- Monitoring someone's activities, mobile phone, or emails
- Controlling all of the finances
- Using insults and threats to scare another person
- Manipulating someone into unwanted sexual activity

Coercive control is not illegal in the United States. However, emotional abuse often escalates to physical abuse, so a person experiencing gaslighting early in a relationship might be at risk of physical violence later.

What to do

Establishing proof of gaslighting can help a person identify that their memories and feelings are real, and that someone is manipulating them.

According to the National Domestic Violence Hotline, there are a few ways a person can collect proof:

- **Journaling:** A person who suspects gaslighting can keep a journal in a secure location and record the date and time events occur.
- **Voice memos:** Recording incidents with a cell phone or other device can help keep track. If a person's device is not safe to use, they can consider purchasing a separate voice recorder and concealing it somewhere safe.
- **Photographs:** Taking photographs provides someone with visual proof. For example, they can take a picture of where they leave their keys so that they know if a partner is hiding them to make them late. If a cell phone is not safe, a person can purchase a disposable camera and hide it instead.
- **Email:** If it is not safe for a person to keep proof of gaslighting in their home, they could ask a trusted friend or family member if they can store it. After gathering the proof, a person can send it via email and then delete it from their own devices.

Recovery from gaslighting

Gaslighting may take place for years or decades before a person realizes what is happening. As a result, recovering from gaslighting takes time. A person may need to try several approaches to rebuild their sense of self.

The National Domestic Violence Hotline advise that people:

- remember they are not responsible for the abusive behavior
- avoid arguing about what is true with the abusive person
- practice listening to their thoughts, feelings, and instincts again

It may be difficult to do this to begin with. People may benefit from having support from a therapist with training on abuse recovery and trauma.

Rebuilding relationships with family and friends may also become part of recovery. This step can be difficult if an abusive person tells others lies to discredit or isolate someone. However, it may help with recovery to have social support.

Support groups may also help with this process of recovery.

When to seek help

If someone frequently feels confused or questions their sanity because of the comments someone makes, it is probably time to seek help. These feelings could be signs of psychological abuse.

People in gaslighting relationships can call domestic abuse helplines to get advice and to determine if what they are experiencing is abuse.

A doctor or therapist will also be able to help someone with the mental impact of gaslighting.

Help is available

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger of domestic violence, call 911 or otherwise seek emergency help. Anyone who needs advice or support can contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline 24/7 via:

- phone, at 800-799-7233
- live chat, at thehotline.org
- text, by texting LOVEIS to 22522

Many other resources are available, including helplines, in-person support, and temporary housing. People can find local resources and others classified by demographics, such as support specifically for People of Color, here:

- [The Office on Women's health](#) Trusted Source
- [The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#)

Was this helpful?

Gaslighting is an abusive practice that causes someone to distrust themselves or to believe they have a mental illness. The long-term effects of gaslighting may include anxiety, depression, trauma, and low self-esteem.

Gaslighting often appears in abusive relationships but also takes place in other contexts. People from marginalized groups are especially vulnerable.

If a person believes their partner is gaslighting them, they can take steps to record evidence and seek help from domestic abuse organizations.

verbal abuse

Verbal abuse occurs when someone repeatedly uses negative or demeaning words to gain or maintain power and control over someone else.

Verbal abuse may not involve physical contact, but it can still cause emotional or psychological harm and progress toward violence.

Keep reading to learn more about verbal abuse, including the different types, how to recognize it, the relationships, and environments it can affect, and how to face it.



Verbal abuse is a form of emotional abuse in which a person uses words or threats to gain or maintain power and control over someone Trusted Source. Being on the receiving end of verbal abuse can cause a person to question their own intelligence, value, or self-worth.

Verbal abuse normally occurs when two people are alone, or when others cannot see or stop the abuse. Verbal abuse can occur in any kind of relationship, and it is generally a calculating, insidious process that intensifies over time. Sometimes, there may be no warning signs.

Once it begins, it tends to become a common form of communication in the relationship. Verbal abuse may also accompany or progress toward other kinds of emotional or psychological abuse.

Types of verbal abuse

Verbal abuse exists in several forms. However, it can be harder to spot than other types of abuse because it leaves no visible signs of damage and can be very subtle.

In many cases, perpetrators of verbal abuse will raise or recondition the other person. This may lead to the person on the receiving end believing that these behaviors are normal, which may also make it difficult to recognize.

Some common types of verbal abuse include:

Discounting and gaslighting

“Discounting” means denying someone else’s rights to their own thoughts, emotions, or experiences. This usually involves repetitively discounting and dismissing someone’s feelings.

This could mean telling someone that they:

- Are too sensitive
- Are childish
- Don’t have a good sense of humor
- Are being dramatic

Discounting can therefore cause someone to question their own version of reality and be unsure of whether what they feel is right or wrong.

It may also involve gaslighting, wherein the perpetrator denies events or describes them in a way so different to reality that the person on the receiving end starts to think that they are losing their memory or their mind.

Judging

This involves repetitive negative and judgmental evaluations that challenge someone’s sense of self-worth.

Typically, judging behavior involves the perpetrator using “you” statements such as:

- “You’re never happy.”
- “It’s never enough for you.”
- “You’re always upset for no reason.”
- “You’re so negative.”
- “People don’t like you.”

The use of the word “you” in this context can isolate a person and be very emotionally damaging.

Blaming

A person who uses this type of verbal abuse focuses on blaming someone for things they can’t reasonably control. Blaming as a form of abuse may manifest in one of several ways.

For example, a person might blame their partner for them:

- Not getting a raise
- Forgetting things
- Ruining their reputation
- Not finishing university

Name-calling

This type of verbal abuse involves someone calling someone else names that are negative, demeaning, or belittling, such as:

- Stupid

- Idiot
- Worthless
- Dumb

The perpetrator might try to disguise this abuse as “teasing” or “using pet names.”

A person might also use name-calling to negatively refer to someone’s ethnicity, gender, race, religion, or state of medical health.

For example, they may say, “Women are always so emotional,” or, “You’re old, who cares about you?”

Unhealthy arguments

Everyone disagrees or argues from time to time.

However, in verbally abuse relationships, arguments or disagreements usually progress toward shouting and involve aggressive comments. One person may also yell, threaten, or demean another until they get their own way or feel that they have “won.”

Withholding

Withholding occurs when someone refuses to share their thoughts, feelings, or important or personal information with another, often in order to gain more attention.

It can also involve the “silent treatment,” wherein someone walks away from an argument or disagreement and refuses to answer calls or texts, ignoring someone over minor issues.

Condescension

Condescension occurs when someone repeatedly makes hurtful statements that they claim are simply “jokes” or “sarcasm.” Sometimes, these “jokes” may even start out as funny but become demeaning as time goes on.

Examples include statements such as, “You’re always such a mess ... I’m kidding!” or, “Oh wow, that looks great on you, it really accentuates your big hips.”

Manipulation

Manipulation occurs when a person repeatedly puts pressure onto someone else, often subtly. This, they may feel, allows them to order someone to do something without directly saying it.

Examples of manipulative statements include, “If you really cared about me, you would do this,” and, “If you do that, everyone will think you’re a bad person.”

Threats

Threats are a more direct form of verbal abuse. Often, threats are a way of getting someone’s attention or controlling their behavior.

Some examples of threatening statements include:

- “If you ever leave me, I will hurt myself or take the kids.”
- “I will give your dog away if you do that.”
- “You will be out of a job if you keep getting so emotional over nothing.”

False accusations

False accusations occur when a person repeatedly accuses someone of things they did not do. The perpetrator may also bring up situations that were resolved a long time ago.

For example, they may say:

- “You’re probably staying late because you’re having an affair.”
- “You’re always off having fun without me.”
- “I bet you wore that just to get attention.”

Trivializing and undermining

This occurs when a person repeatedly makes statements or comments that trivialize and undermine someone else’s:

- Opinions
- Interests
- Occupation
- Style
- Personal preferences

This may also involve the perpetrator undermining or disagreeing with practically everything the other person says, suggests, does, or feels. For example, they may say things like, “Your job doesn’t really matter, so who cares if you’re late?” or, “You like that? You have such bad taste.”

Over time, statements such as these can cause someone to question their own ability to make good choices. This may cause them to feel as though they should resort to accepting the other person’s decisions.

Denial or justification

The perpetrator may also continuously deny, justify, or rationalize their abusive behavior. They may even refuse to acknowledge that their behavior is abusive, harmful, or within their own control.

For example, they may say, “I have a short temper, I can’t help getting so angry,” or, “I’m not being abusive, I just love you too much.”



Circular arguments

Sometimes, arguments can take a little while to resolve. However, in verbally abusive relationships, they can go round in seemingly endless circles, with no resolution in sight.

These arguments can be exhausting and cause a person to worry that any action or event could restart the whole process. This may change how they act or cause them to agree with everything the other person says or does to avoid further conflict.

Relationships wherein verbal abuse can occur

Verbal abuse can occur in just about any type of relationship. For example, it can occur in the home and in workplace, educational, and social settings. That said, verbal abuse seems most common in romantic relationships with an imbalance of power.

Relationships commonly affected by verbal abuse include those between:

- Parents and their children
- Romantic partners
- Bosses and employees
- Coworkers
- Relatives
- Medical professionals and their patients or clients
- Teachers or professors and their students
- Friends
- Roommates

Signs of verbal abuse

Verbal abuse can be hard to detect for several reasons.

For example, most types of abuse occur behind closed doors and involve strategies that hide or discredit the abuse by encouraging the person on the receiving end to feel that the abuse is their fault, deserved, or out of the perpetrator's control.

The discrediting and hiding of the abuse may even cause the person receiving it to feel as though it never happened at all.

Generally, however, a person who repeatedly uses words to scare, undermine, belittle, humiliate, or discredit someone is being verbally abusive.

Some common signs of verbal abuse include:

- Telling someone that they are “always wrong,” or disagreeing with everything they say or do
- Repeatedly making negative comments about or belittling someone’s personal preferences, feelings, or thoughts
- Blaming another person for their own behavior or actions or things that they cannot control
- Repeatedly accusing someone of things they have not done
- Starting arguments or conversations that never seem to have a resolution, which may linger and create tension
- Threatening someone
- Telling someone what they can and cannot do, whether directly or indirectly
- Calling someone negative names or using put-downs or insults, sometimes based on factors such as gender, age, or education level
- Trying to control another person’s decisions, actions, or other elements of how they live their life
- Causing someone to question their own self-value, thoughts, and beliefs

Although these behaviors tend to occur behind closed doors, some may also manifest in the open, though they may be very subtle.

Ways to overcome verbal abuse

Verbal abuse can be hard to address. Once it begins, it tends to become a pattern in the relationship, and most perpetrators will discourage, physically prevent, or threaten someone to stop them talking with others about the problem.

Over time, verbal abuse can affect someone's self-esteem and isolate them, making it harder for them to reach out for help.

It is important to remember that the best way to overcome verbal abuse will depend on a variety of individual and situational factors. For example, if a coworker seems verbally abusive, someone could report it to their company's human resources department for counsel on how to handle the situation.

Typically, however regardless of the circumstances once verbal abuse has begun, it becomes worse over time. Sometimes, it can escalate into physical abuse or other types of emotional abuse. It is also important to remember that people who verbally abuse others generally do so to gain power or control over them.

People who are verbally abusive also tend to experience multiple feelings in the form of anger. They often deny or suppress their true feelings, so confronting them about their behavior will rarely work.

A pattern of verbal abuse can be very difficult to break without outside help or limiting contact. People who experience any type of verbal abuse should try to get help as soon as possible in order to stop the pattern and prevent it from progressing toward other forms of abuse and the development of conditions such as depression or anxiety.

This may include setting clear boundaries, such as refusing to engage in abusive arguments or reducing contact with the person. People planning to address verbally abusive relationships should also make a safety or exit plan with someone they trust who

fully understands the situation, especially in cases involving children and domestic partners.

People who experience verbal abuse can often also benefit from therapy conducted by a certified counselling psychotherapist especially one who specializes in trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, or emotional abuse.

There are also many organizations dedicated to guiding people through the process of handling a verbally abusive relationship. For help, people can contact the:

- National Domestic Violence Hotline (for partner abuse): call 1-800-799-7233 or 1-800-787-3224, or use the LiveChat
- loveisrespect.org (for youth empowerment): call 1-866-331-9474, text LOVEIS to 22522, or use the 24/7 chat
- Workplace Bullying Institute
- Prevent Child Abuse America (for parents and caregivers): call 1-800-244-5373
- Childhelp (for children): call 1-800-422-4453

Verbal abuse occurs when a person uses words to scare, demean, humiliate, or isolate someone else, usually in an attempt to gain or maintain control or power over them.

It can cause psychological harm and tends to manifest in less obvious ways than other forms of abuse.

People who think that they are experiencing verbal abuse should try to safely seek help to stop the pattern of abuse and prevent it from progressing.

This may involve talking to a trusted adult or authority, seeking counseling, setting relationship boundaries, or utilizing abuse support networks or organizations.

signs of coercive control

Coercive control refers to a pattern of controlling behaviors that create an unequal power dynamic in a relationship.



Coercive control is a form of domestic abuse, or intimate partner violence. It describes a pattern of behaviors a perpetrator uses to gain control and power by eroding a person's autonomy and self-esteem. This can include acts of intimidation, threats, and humiliation.

Research into coercive control suggests that this type of abuse often predicts future physical violence.

Anyone in any type Trusted Source of intimate relationship can experience coercive control. Some research suggests that it is mainly women who experience it, while other studies suggest that the rates for men and women are similar.

In 2021, the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey Trusted Source found that 36.6 million women and 33.1 million men in the United States will experience some form of coercive control by an intimate partner during their lifetime.

A 2019 study Trusted Source found that emotional abuse can lead to negative mental health consequences, such as post-traumatic stress disorder and depression.

Signs of coercive control

Monitoring activities

A person may exert control by deciding what someone wears, where they go, who they socialize with, what they eat and drink, and what activities they take part in. The controlling person may also demand or gain access to the partner's computer, cell phone, or email account.



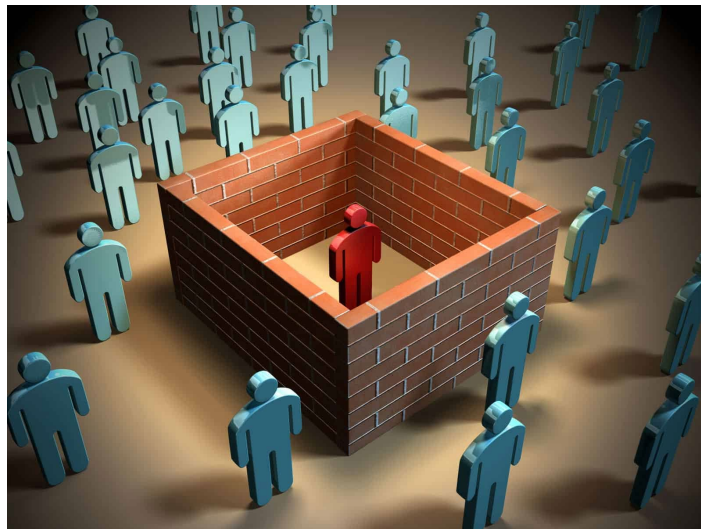
The perpetrator may also try to convince their partner that they want to check up on them because they love them. However, this behavior is not part of a healthy or loving relationship.

Exerting financial control

This occurs when a person controls someone's access to money and does not allow them to make financial decisions. This can leave a person without food or clothing and make it harder for them to leave the relationship.

Isolating the other person

A controlling person may try to get their partner to cut contact with family and friends so that they are easier to control.



They may also prevent them from going to work or school.

Insulting the other person

Insults serve to undermine a person's self-esteem. This may involve name-calling, highlighting a person's insecurities, or putting them down.

Eventually, the person experiencing this abuse may start to feel as though they deserve the insults.

Making threats and being intimidating

Threats can include threats of physical violence, self-harm, or public humiliation. For example, a person trying to control their partner may threaten to hurt themselves if their partner tries to leave or release sexually explicit images or personal data online.



The controlling person may also break household items or their partner's sentimental belongings in an attempt to intimidate and scare them.

Using sexual coercion

Sexual coercion Trusted Source occurs when the perpetrator manipulates their partner into unwanted sexual activity. They may use pressure, threats, guilt-tripping, lies, or other trickery to coerce them into having sex.

Involving children or pets

The controlling person may use children or family pets as another means of controlling their partner. They may do this by threatening the children or pets, or by trying to take sole custody of them if their partner leaves.

They may also try to manipulate children into disliking the other parent.

Signs of danger

Domestic abuse can escalate into physical abuse and, in some cases, homicide. Signs that an abusive relationship is becoming dangerous include regular physical abuse and murder threats.



If a person feels that they are in physical danger or fears for their life, they should dial 911 or their local emergency department immediately. Neighbors, friends, and family can also do this if they know someone who is in danger.

Is coercive control illegal?

In some countries, such as England and Wales, coercive control is a criminal offense. In the U.S., however, coercive control is not currently illegal unless it escalates to physical violence.

Some academics argue that criminalizing coercive control is not a complete solution to domestic abuse, because many criminal justice systems are not equipped to make judgments on it.

Most justice systems rely on physical evidence to charge people with specific criminal acts, such as assault or rape. However, coercive control is not a specific act. It is a pattern of behaviors. It also tends to leave less physical evidence than violence.

Despite this, coercive control is still abuse, and it can cause long lasting psychological trauma for those who experience it.

How to get help

Although police officers cannot currently charge someone for coercive control in the U.S., there are many organizations that can offer support, advice, and resources to those experiencing it.

Some examples include:

- Battered Women's Justice Project
- National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
- National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health

These organizations can help someone create a safety plan. A safety plan outlines some ways a person can stay safe while they are still in the relationship, while they are in the process of leaving the relationship, and after they have left it.

It can also include advice for coping emotionally, informing friends and family, and, if necessary, taking legal action.

If someone's partner monitors their online activity, the person may want to delete the search browser history on their phone or laptop after looking for domestic abuse resources.

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger of domestic violence, call 911 or otherwise seek emergency help. Anyone who needs advice or support can contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline 24/7 via:

- phone, at 800-799-7233
- live chat, at [thehotline.org](https://www.thehotline.org)
- text, by texting LOVEIS to 22522