

# **Types of Abuse**

## **Verbal Abuse**

Verbal abuse is a form of abusive behavior involving the use of language (criticizing, name-calling, put downs threatening, blaming). It differs from profanity in that it can occur without the use of expletives. Verbal abuse is a pattern of behavior that can seriously interfere with one's positive emotional development and over time, can lead to significant detriment to one's self-esteem, emotional well-being and physical state. Verbal abuse, although not visibly apparent, is damaging nonetheless.

## **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse is easier to recognize and understand than other types of abuse. It can be indicated when the abuser:

- Scratches, bites, grab or spits at a current or former intimate partner.
- Shakes, shoves, pushes, restrains or throws her.
- Twists, slaps, punches, strangle or burn the victim.
- Throws objects.
- Subjects victim to reckless driving.
- Locks victim in or out of the house.
- Refuses to help when victim's sick, injured or pregnant, or withholds medication or treatment.
- Withholds food as punishment.
- Abuses victim at mealtimes, which disrupts eating patterns and can result in malnutrition.
- Abuses victim at night, which disrupts sleeping patterns and can result in sleep deprivation.
- Attacks victim with weapons or kills victim.

## **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse can be extraordinarily difficult for victims to talk about because of the unimaginable ways in which this type of violence often is perpetrated. Sexual abuse can be indicated when the abuser:

- Is jealously angry and assumes the victim will have sex with anyone.
- Withholds sex and affection as punishment.
- Calls the victim sexual names.
- Pressures the victim to have sex when they don't want to.
- Insists that the victim dress in a more sexual way than they want.
- Coerces sex by manipulation or threats.
- Physically forces sex or is violent during a sexual assault.
- Coerces the victim into sexual acts that they are uncomfortable with, such as sex with a third party, physically painful sex, sexual activity the victim finds offensive or verbal degradation during sex.
- Denies the victim contraception or protection against sexually transmitted diseases.

## **Emotional/Psychological Abuse**

Psychological abuse becomes an effective weapon in controlling a victim because they know through experience that their abuser will at times back up the threats or taunts with physical assaults.

Psychological abuse can be indicated when the abuser:

- Breaks promises, doesn't follow through on agreements, or doesn't take a fair share of responsibility.
- Verbally attacks and humiliates the victim in private or public.
- Attacks their vulnerabilities, such as their language abilities, educational level, skills as a parent, religious and cultural beliefs or physical appearance.
- Plays mind games, such as when they deny requests their abuser has made previously or when their abuser undercuts their sense of reality.
- Forces the victim to do degrading things.
- Ignores the victim's feelings.
- Withholds approval or affection as punishment.
- Regularly threatens to leave or tells the victim to leave.
- Harasses the victim about affairs the abuser imagines the victim to be having.
- Always claims to be right.
- Is unfaithful after committing to monogamy.

### **Isolation**

This type of abuse occurs when you are isolated from your family, friends, and community as a way for your partner to stay in control. Your partner may be extremely jealous of any contacts you have, forbid you to have contact with anyone, or monitor your phone calls, mail or daily activities. Sometimes your partner may use intimidation or threats to control you. You may have to be accountable for your time away or have to make excuses for leaving the home. You may have to communicate secretly when your partner is absent.

### **Economic/Financial Abuse**

Can be indicated when the Abuser:

- Controls all the money.
- Doesn't let victim work outside the home or sabotages victim attempts to work or go to school.
- Refuses to work and makes victim support the family.
- Ruins victim's credit rating.

### **Spiritual Abuse**

There are many different types of abuse, but one you may not be aware of is spiritual (or religious) abuse. If it's discussed at all, most examples of spiritual abuse refer to a church elder or faith leader inflicting abuse on congregation members, often by creating a toxic culture within the church or group by shaming or controlling members using the power of their position. However, spiritual abuse can also occur within an intimate partner relationship. Spiritual abuse is not limited to a certain religion or denomination. Signs of spiritual abuse between intimate partners include when an abuser:

- ridicules or insults the other person's religious or spiritual beliefs
- prevents the other partner from practicing their religious or spiritual beliefs
- uses their partner's religious or spiritual beliefs to manipulate or shame them
- forces the children to be raised in a faith that the other partner has not agreed to
- uses religious texts or beliefs to minimize or rationalize abusive behaviors (such as [physical](#), [financial](#), [emotional](#) or [sexual abuse](#)/marital rape)

Spiritual abuse is no less harmful or difficult to endure than any other kind of abuse, as a person's spiritual life is deeply personal. However, it can be very difficult to identify, as many victims may not recognize they are being abused. In addition, the abusive partner may claim that any challenge to the abuse is an assault on their own religious freedom. Regardless of either partner's religious or spiritual beliefs, abuse of any kind is never acceptable or justified.

### **Academic Abuse**

The following are examples of academic abuse:

- Preventing you from working on papers or studying for tests
- Saying you don't love your partner if you spend time on work instead of spending time together
- Calling you at all hours, especially before tests and other important academic assignments
- Monitoring your behavior during class or taking all of the same classes as you
- Belittling your academic focus/choice
- Making fun of you for studying too much

### **Technology Abuse**

The following are ways in which an abuser can use technology to abuse or harass a partner:

- Monitoring your e-mail communication
- Sending you repeated e-mail or instant messages
- Using your online identity to post false information or to send your demographic information and/or picture to sexually oriented or pornographic sites
- Using social networking sites, like Facebook and Twitter, to get information about you and to monitor who sends you messages and who your friends are
- Sending you repeated text messages
- Using GPS devices to monitor your location

### **Immigration Abuse:**

- Lying about her immigration status
- Telling them that they have abandoned their culture and have become "white" or "American"
- Lying about ability to have the immigration status of lawful permanent resident changed for his partner
- Forcing the victim to work "illegally" when she does not have a work permit
- Threatening to report to INS if they work "under the table"
- Forcing the victim to sign papers in English that they do not understand — court papers, IRS forms, immigration papers
- Harassing them at the only job they can work at legally in the U.S., so that they lose that job and is forced to work "illegally"
- Calling her a prostitute or a "mail order bride"
- Alleging that she has a history of prostitution on legal papers
- Telling her that "as a matter of law" in the United States that she must continue to have sex with him whenever he wants until they are divorced

#### *Immigration Abuse – Using coercion and threats*

- Threatening to report the victim to the INS and get them deported

- Threatening that he will not file immigration papers to legalize their immigration status
- Threatening to withdraw the petition that was filed to legalize their immigration status

*Immigration Abuse – Using children*

- Threatening to remove the children from the United States
- Threatening to report their children to the INS
- Telling her he will have her deported and he will keep the children with him in the U.S.
- Convincing her that if she seeks help from the courts or the police the U.S. legal system will give him custody of the children. (In many countries, men are given legal control over the children and he convinces her that the same thing will occur here.)

*Immigration Abuse – Using citizenship or residency privilege:*

- Failing to file papers to legalize her immigration status
- Withdrawing or threatening to withdraw immigration papers filed for their residency
- Using the fact of their undocumented immigration status to keep them from reporting abuse or leaving with the children
- Telling them that the police will arrest them for being undocumented if they call the police for help because of the abuse

**HIV Status Abuse**

Abusers whose partners are HIV positive may use their partner's status as a tactic of abuse:

- Threats to reveal HIV positive status to children, family, friends, employer.
- Threatening to use victim's HIV positive status as grounds for parental custody.
- Reinforcing a victim's guilt about the HIV positive status of children.
- Sexually humiliating or degrading the victim for having HIV.
- Isolating the victim on the basis that s/he poses a threat of infection to others.
- Threatening or refusing to assist the victim when s/he is sick.
- Abusers who are HIV positive may use their own status as a tactic of abuse:
- Abusers may use victim's HIV positive status as an excuse for perpetrating violence against them.
- Abusers who are HIV positive may fake illness in order to convince victims not to leave or to convince them to come back if they have left.
- Abusers who are HIV positive and who require care giving may be successful at manipulating victims into providing care.