

Women's

SAID

North Ayrshire

FOCUS ON EMOTIONAL ABUSE

If you feel wounded, frustrated, confused, misunderstood, depressed, anxious, or worthless any time you interact with your partner, your relationship might be emotionally abusive. Over time, emotional abuse can wear down a person's self-worth, confidence, and their mental and emotional strength.



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WHAT IS EMOTIONAL ABUSE?

Emotional abuse uses non-physical behaviours that are meant to control, isolate, or frighten someone. This might look like threats, insults, constant monitoring, excessive jealousy, manipulation, humiliation, intimidation, and dismissiveness, among others. Sometimes emotional abuse is obvious, like a partner yelling at you or calling you names. Other times it can be more subtle, like your partner acting jealous of your friends or not wanting you to spend time with other people. Emotionally abusive behaviours might not leave physical marks, but they do hurt, disempower, and traumatize the person who is experiencing the abuse.

SPOTTING EMOTIONAL ABUSE

it can be tough to detect emotional abuse and see it as dangerous.

It's difficult to feel sure of yourself when a partner is demeaning, dismissing, and second-guessing you. It is often easier to tell yourself that you were overreacting in how you interpreted their actions or words. An emotionally abusive partner may try to gaslight you by telling you that you are overreacting, being dramatic, being too emotional, or that you can't take a joke.

People who experience emotional abuse often hesitate to seek help or tell friends and family about it because they think they won't be believed. But **emotional abuse is serious**, and it is common for emotional abuse to escalate to physical violence. Sometimes this escalation to physical abuse is slow, other times it can happen quickly.

Bombarding you with compliments and gifts (love bombing).

Punishing you by withholding attention or affection.

Making you feel stupid.

Threatening breaking up to win an argument.

Controlling you, your time, and your actions.

Monitoring where you go.

Calling you names.

Wanting access to your phone, your passwords, or your social media.

Not wanting you to work.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE CAN LOOK LIKE

Blaming you for their behaviour.

Threatening suicide during arguments.

Telling you what to do and what to wear.

Embarrassing you.

Saying that things that you know happened didn't happen.

Getting jealous of time spent with your friends or family.

Not trusting you and acting possessive.

Making you feel guilty for not wanting to have sex.

Not wanting you hanging out with other people.

Making you ask for permission before doing something with other people.

Accusing you of cheating.

Threatening to hurt you or others to get what they want.

Criticising your appearance.



EMOTIONAL TURBULENCE

Emotionally abusive people
tend to create chaos.

Some examples of this include:

Starting
arguments for
the sake of
arguing

Sometimes
being really
nice to you,
sometimes
being
horrible

Nitpicking at
your clothes,
hair, work, and
more

Behaving so
erratically
and
unpredictably
that you feel
like you are
"walking on
eggshells"

Having drastic
mood
changes or
sudden
emotional
outbursts

Saying
contradictory
or confusing
things

WHAT TO DO IF YOU EXPERIENCE EMOTIONAL ABUSE

1

Acknowledge the abuse. This can be difficult, especially if you have been in denial or if the abuse was subtle.

2

Talk to someone you trust: a friend, family member, or an organisation like Women's Aid.

3

Record details about what happened. Include dates, times, locations, if you can. This can be helpful if you decide to report it, but it's also useful for you to see patterns of abuse.

5

Seek help from a professional who specialises in domestic abuse to help you through the healing process.

4

Consider reporting the abuse. This is entirely your choice, and you can change your mind later.

WILL AN EMOTIONAL ABUSER CHANGE?

It is natural to hope that your partner will change, or that the abuse will stop. Often, an abusive partner will be very sorry after an incident of abuse. He might beg for forgiveness or shower you with gifts or messages of apology. If you have left him, he might become very charming and convince you to return. He may be on his best behaviour for weeks, or even months, before he becomes abusive again.

The truth is that domestic abuse usually gets worse over time. There are perpetrator programmes for men who want to take responsibility for their abuse and change their behaviour for good. However, it is important that you prioritise your safety and wellbeing, and that of your children.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE STATISTICS

- 91% of survivors of domestic abuse experienced some form of psychological abuse in their relationship
- 47% of survivors reported having suicidal thoughts due to the emotional abuse.
- 85% of survivors said the perpetrator used the children to threaten and control them
- 49% experienced severe psychological manipulation with a partner threatening to take their own life following an abusive incident, or them trying to end the relationship