

## EMOTIONAL ABUSE



Photo credit: Marcos Calvo

A relationship is emotionally abusive when there is a consistent pattern of abusive words and bullying behaviors that wear down a person's self-esteem and undermine their mental health. This is most common in dating and marriage relationships, but can occur in any relationship between friends, family members, and coworkers, irrespective of gender.

Emotional abuse is one of the hardest forms of abuse to recognize. It can be subtle and insidious or overt and manipulative. Either way, it chips away the victim's self-esteem and they begin to doubt their perceptions and reality. The underlying goal in emotional abuse is to control the victim by discrediting, isolating, and silencing. This results to the victim feeling trapped, wounded, yet too afraid to leave the relationship.

According to (Verywell mind, 2020), when emotional abuse is severe and ongoing, the victims may lose their entire sense of self, sometimes without a single mark or bruise. Instead, the wounds are invisible to others, hidden in the self-doubt, worthlessness and self-loathing the victim feels. In fact, research indicates that the consequences of emotional abuse are just as severe as those from physical abuse.

Over time, the accusations, verbal abuse, name-calling, criticisms, and gaslighting erode a victim's sense of self so much that they can no longer see themselves realistically. Consequently, the victim begins to agree with the abuser and becomes internally critical. Once this happens, most victims become trapped in the abusive relationship believing that they will never be good enough for anyone else. Emotional abuse can cause a number of health problems including everything from depression and anxiety to heart palpitations, eating disorders, and insomnia.

It is highly recommended that you speak out and get help when you notice any form of emotional abuse, as staying mute may have negative effect on the victim's personality and perspectives over time.

At Centre for Family Health Initiative, we are willing to hear your story and proffer solution.