

Emotional / Psychological Violence

FACT SHEET

“The abusers feel a lack of control and power in their own lives. It makes things different from routine for them and it’s something that goes against the grain of society.”

Age 19, Ontario



Emotional / Psychological Abuse

Some of the *Criminal Code* provisions that may apply in cases of psychological abuse include:

- criminal harassment – s.264
- uttering threats – s.264 .1(1)
- harassing telephone calls – s.372 (3)
- intimidation – s.423.

Emotional Battering through Psychological and Verbal Abuse

- **Discounting:** Does the abuser ignore or disparage your feelings? Do they put down your feelings? Do they dismiss you with statements such as, "you're too sensitive" or "you don't have a sense of humour" or "you're just taking it wrong"?
- **Withholding:** Does the abuser stop speaking to you when they're displeased? Do they ignore you? Do they withdraw affection in order to punish you?
- **Countering:** Does the abuser tell you you're wrong if you don't agree with them? Do they argue against your every thought? Do they tell you your feelings are wrong? Do they tell you that you don't know what you're talking about? Do they forbid you from having your own opinions?
- **Ridicule [Verbal Abuse Disguised as Jokes]:** Does the abuser make fun of you? Do they ridicule you regarding subjects about which you are particularly sensitive? Do they seem to enjoy it? Do they accuse you of not being able to take a joke? Do they use sarcasm to put you down?
- **Blocking and Diverting:** Does the abuser change the subject when you try to bring something up? Do they divert serious discussions by accusing you of various things?
- **Accusing and Blaming:** Does the abuser blame you for everything that goes wrong? Do they accuse you of hurting them when you tell them your feelings? Do they accuse you of having affairs? Are they jealous?



- **Trivializing:** Does the abuser belittle what you say? Do they dismiss your feelings or accomplishments? Do they insult you when you express pride in your own abilities? Do they act as if your work is no big deal?
- **Undermining:** Does the abuser squelch your enthusiasm with insensitive comments such as, "You wouldn't understand", or "You'll never make it"? Do they sabotage your ideas by pointing out all the ways in which they might fail? Do they interrupt you when you need time alone?
- **Threatening:** Does the abuser threaten you, overtly or covertly? Do they threaten you with violence? Do they threaten you with emotional pain? Do they threaten you with knives, guns or some other weapon?
- **Name-calling:** Does the abuser use vulgarities to insult you? Do they call you cruel names? Do they use terms of endearment with intense sarcasm?
- **Forgetting:** Does the abuser make a promise and then "forget" to keep it? Do they pretend not to remember certain incidents or discussions? Do they pretend not to remember prior agreements?
- **Ordering:** Does the abuser order you to do something instead of asking? Do they demand things?
- **Judging and Criticizing:** Does the abuser find fault with everything you do? Do they tell you that you "ought to" or "should" do things a certain way?
- **Denial:** Does the abuser deny that certain things happened? Do they tell you that they didn't say something, or that you never saw something occur?
- **Abusive Anger:** Does the abuser erupt into a rage when they are angry? Do they scream, yell, or shout? Do they hurl obscenities? Does their body language become more aggressive? Do they stomp, strut, hit things, or hit you? Do they become red in the face? Do they throw things?
- Do they physically get in your way, or follow you from room to room? Do they snap at you? Are they usually irritable? Does all of this usually take place in private, when you are alone? [It's a sure sign things are escalating if the abuser attacks you in public.] Does the abuser blame you for their anger?



Other Abusive Acts and Behaviours:

- **Financial Abuse or Exploitation:** Does your abuser control how you spend money, where you work and what property you buy? Spend all family income including your money or savings? Use credit cards without your permission; destroying your credit rating? Force you to turn over your benefit payments?
- **Spiritual Abuse:** Does your abuser put down or attack your spiritual beliefs? Not allow you to attend the church, synagogue or temple of your choice? Force you to join or stay in a cult?
- **Sexual Abuse:** Does your abuser touch you or act in a sexual way that you don't want? Force or pressure you into sexual acts? Force you to get pregnant, have an abortion, or have an operation so you can't have children? Force you to be a prostitute? Not let you have information and education about sexuality? Infect you with HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases?
- **Neglect and Isolation:** Does your abuser not let you see a doctor or dentist? Take away TTY, hearing aids or a guide dog? Lock you in the house without a phone? Not allow you to take courses such as ESL (English as a Second Language) or other educational classes?

(from <http://www.heart-2-heart.ca/women/page1.html> and Psychological & Emotional Battering from Maia's abuse survivor site <http://www.hhhh.org/maia/>)

What you can do:

- deliver NWAC Youth Violence Prevention Workshop in your community
- look into community resources that offer traditional approach to addressing these types of violence
- talk to other youth about their experiences with emotional abuse and harassment and ask what they did about it
- raise awareness on this issue
- inform youth on their rights
- organize community meetings or sharing circles to talk about these types of violence

