

# Emotional Abuse and Body Image

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Emotional abuse is a form of trauma that can be degrading to a person's self-esteem, confidence and self-worth. Unlike physical abuse, the scars of emotional abuse are much less noticeable, and a person suffering with emotional abuse can hide their struggles for some period of time.

Because of the elusiveness of emotional abuse, a victim may not even be fully aware of how they are being traumatized or realize the extent of abuse they may be enduring.

## Identifying Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse commonly happens within relationships, such as between spouses, friends, relatives, or other family members. While it may be difficult to identify emotional abuse, there are characteristics of unhealthy relationship behaviors that may be revealing of a deeper problem. This might include:

- Humiliation
- Criticizing and degradation
- Controlling and dominating behaviors
- Unreasonable demands and expectations
- Emotional abandonment or neglect
- Disrespect of individuality and boundaries

Emotional abuse can involve consistent patterns of threatening, bullying, shaming, manipulation, intimidation, and verbal offenses.

## Minimizing the Problem to Cope with It

A person suffering with emotional abuse may minimize the mistreatment they are enduring as a means of coping with the pain and stress that results from this trauma. A victim of emotional abuse may also feel threatened to share of their struggles for fear of the abuser may do them if exposed.

Enduring emotional abuse for any length of time can only lead to more complicated issues for the victim, including:

- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Severe anxiety
- Depression

- Low-self esteem



## The Direct Image to Body Image and Mental Wellness

Emotional abuse can **directly impact how a person feels about their body**, confidence levels, and overall physical and mental wellness. This may be especially true if emotional abuse directly involves humiliation of appearance, body shape and size, and negative remarks made directly about one's body.

A person who is enduring emotional abuse may find that their sense of self-worth is utterly destroyed, and this can create severe psychological and emotional pain.

## Things to Keep in Mind



If you have found yourself the victim of emotional abuse and subsequent poor body image, it is necessary that you reach out for the help you need to remove yourself from this situation. If you feel that you cannot immediately seek out help from the emotional abuse you are experiencing, it may be helpful to keep these aspects in mind:

### Realize You Are Not to Blame:

Emotional abuse arises from complex situations. The abuser may begin to cause you to feel **as though something is seriously wrong with you**, however this is not the case. Abusers have likely experienced some form of trauma that may be projected on to you. Understanding that you are not the cause of blame for the abuse you are enduring is an important step to rebuilding self-esteem.

### Learn How to Set Boundaries:

If you have found yourself in an emotionally abusive relationship, it is necessary to set firm rules. Specify with the abuser that they cannot be rude to you, yell at you, call you names, etc. or a consequence will occur. If the abusive behavior

continues, do everything you can to remove yourself from the situation. Continual exposure to belittling will only inflict further hurt and damage.

## Have an Exit Plan:

Many victims of emotional abuse likely find themselves in a complicated relationship that makes it difficult to escape a hurtful and harmful situation. Whatever your reason may be, **it is crucial to begin planning on how you can remove yourself from an ongoing emotionally abusive relationship.** Whether this involves saving money, finding an alternative place to live, or seeking out a support system, find ways to empower your independence.



Emotional abuse can be destructive to self-esteem, confidence, and more. If you are suffering from emotional abuse, reach out to someone you trust to confide in about your difficulties. You deserve to be treated with respect, and removing yourself from an emotionally abusive situation will allow yourself the opportunity to heal and rebuild your body image.