

Counseling Capsules

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Violence in Relationships

Do you think you might be in a destructive relationship? If your relationship hurts or scares you, it is not healthy. Relationships should make both partners feel good about themselves and about each other.

WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

Generally, there are three types of abuse associated with domestic violence: physical abuse, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse. Domestic violence may include one or more of these types of mistreatment:

PHYSICAL ABUSE: This is the most obvious type of abuse. It includes kicking, hitting, biting, choking, pushing, hair-pulling, throwing someone across the room or down on the floor, preventing someone from seeking health care or taking medications, and assaults or threats with weapons.

Physical abuse can also include the use of objects such as throwing objects, breaking personal items, punching walls, tearing clothes and violence to pets. Destruction of property or pets should be taken seriously. It is symbolic. It is a threat. It is violence.

SEXUAL ABUSE: Sexual abuse occurs when a person is forced to participate in sex (or specific sexual acts) against his or her will, forced or pressured to participate in sex with others or in the presence of others, subjected to the use of weapons or objects during sex, pressured or prevented from using birth control, or when sex and affection is withheld to manipulate or control.

Sexual abuse is primarily an act of aggression in which sex is used to humiliate, hurt, degrade, and dominate the partner. The violence in the sexual relationship escalates with time.

EMOTIONAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE: This type of abuse, though not as obvious as the previous two, is equally traumatic and its effects are long lasting. Emotional/psychological abuse is often easier to deny, but may involve the most difficult recovery. This abuse is more than verbal arguments: it is the systematic destruction of an individual's self-esteem. Emotional and psychological abuse may involve the following practices.

- **Economic Domination:** Frequently, the abuser tries to control their partner by having complete control over the finances.
- **Using Children:** Abusers may use the children to maintain their power and control. They may belittle or degrade children as a way to harass the adult victim.
- **Intimidation:** Abusers may intimidate their victims by using looks, actions, gestures, or loud voices, by smashing things, or by destroying property.
- **Verbal degradation:** Cursing and name-calling can contribute to the humiliation.
- **Abusers may make threats:** These threats may range from harming the children to committing suicide. These threats add to the anxiety and fear experienced by the victim.
- **Extreme Controlling Behavior:** Abusers may control their partner's activities, companions, whereabouts, etc. They are intrusive, needing to know everything.
- **Isolation:** This expression of jealousy serves to limit the partner's contact with others.

HELP! WHERE TO FIND IT:

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