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Different Types Of Abuse And Their Impact On You

By: [Stephanie Kirby](#)

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Medically Reviewed By: [Tiffany Howard, LPC, LCADC](#)



Abuse is a traumatic situation. Even the word abuse has a bad connotation. It doesn't matter if you're abused by an intimate partner, parent, or anyone else. Most people are familiar with physical abuse, the scars of domestic abuse, and the pain that it causes, but not as many people are familiar with the emotional pain and mental health challenges that result from other types of abuse. But, just because you can't see the mental and emotional scars of abuse doesn't mean they don't exist. In other words, just because someone doesn't need to seek medical attention after being abused, doesn't mean they aren't being abused.

When it comes to **domestic violence**, the statistics on abuse are alarming. One in nine men and one in four women have been victims of abuse from an intimate partner. So, when you add in the number of children that are abused by parents or people abused by family members or others, the number increases dramatically. If you are a victim of abuse, you are not alone, since so many people are affected by an abusive partner. So many youth and families are affected by this issue, which is alarming.

The first thing to do if you are in an abusive situation is to get away. If you are a child, people with disabilities, or an elderly person who is being abused by a caregiver, you need to tell someone right away. There are alternatives and you have options even if your abuser tells you that you do not. That is what they do; they use their power and control to brainwash you into believing that you have no place to go and that nobody will believe you or help you. This is absolutely false in all cases. Some people stay

in abusive relationships because they believe that there is no help out there, but this is not the case at all. There is help for anyone that wants it.

No matter what, if you are being abused, someone will help you. If you cannot get away from the person long enough to get help, you can contact someone online that can help. There are professionals that can get you the help you need no matter what is going on. You can work with individuals from the National Domestic Violence Hotline to create a safety plan for yourself. Safety planning allows you to identify ways to protect yourself in your relationship or as you leave it. A safety plan is also necessary if you have kids and need to figure out a way to get everyone away from an abuser. If you are afraid your internet is being monitored, you can still reach out to the national domestic violence hotline as well. They will be able to help you stay protected even if someone is checking up on your social media usage. It is important to be aware of what you do online in general, since it is hard to erase each search term or website that you visit. Be aware of this when you are browsing through social media sites and as you surf the internet, especially when you are afraid your internet is being regularly spied on, or if there was a period of time when it was.

And, it doesn't matter if you were recently abused or if the abuse happened decades ago. The scars of domestic abuse can affect you for many years, even after the abuse has stopped. There are treatments that can help you overcome the trauma that you experienced. Below we'll go over common forms of abuse.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is the form of domestic violence that most people are familiar with. It can include any type of physical harm to another person such as:

- Kicking, punching, slapping, hitting
- Forcing a partner to use substances
- Controlling medication or refusing medical care
- Strangulation
- Burning
- Using weapons on such as knives, guns, or other weapons

Mental Abuse

Mental or emotional abuse is a form of domestic violence when a partner uses mind games to control their loved one. Some of the tactics used include:

- Degradation
- Causing undue fear
- **Stalking** (when someone is always following and tracking a victim)
- Isolation or refusing to let the person go anywhere
- Humiliating or shaming the person
- Intimidating the person
- Showing extreme jealousy
- Blaming your partner for everything
- Insulting or calling names
- Making the person feel bad about themselves

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is not really about sex but about power and control. When a person forces their partner to perform any kind of sexual acts or sexual behavior without their consent, it is domestic violence in the form of sexual abuse. Some of these are:

- Convincing the person to have sex without birth control
- Physically hurting the person while having sexual relations
- Having sexual activity with someone who is not coherent, **intoxicated**, or afraid to say no
- Making a person have sex with others against their will

Child Abuse

Child abuse is also a form of domestic violence. It can include psychological, sexual, or physical mistreatment of a child. This can be done by the parent or any caregiver of the child. It may be something that is done to or something withheld from the child that can cause some type of harm. Any child could be the victim of abuse. Children that are hard of hearing have been found to be at higher risk of abuse. People with disabilities may also be at a greater risk.

Some of the examples include:

- Beating, hitting, kicking, slapping
- Choking, strangling
- Burning
- Pulling hair
- Shaking
- Throwing, dropping
- Biting
- Scratching or pinching
- Forcing the child to eat or swallow dangerous things (spices or soap)

Child Neglect

Child neglect can be complicated and has different categories. They include:

- Lack of education; keeping a child home from school
- Emotional neglect by not providing support and nurturing
- Lack of medical care
- Physical neglect includes not providing basic necessities like a safe home and healthy food
- Supervisory neglect is when the parent ignores things their child is doing that can cause them harm
- Abandoning or leaving your child alone for long periods of time

Adult Abuse

Elder or adult abuse is usually done by family members but can also be done by any caregiver. Similar to children, many elderly are helpless and susceptible to physical, mental, financial, and sexual abuse or neglect. The abuse can include things like:

- Physical abuse - inflicting pain or physical restraint
- Mental or emotional abuse - causing humiliation, degradation, or other emotional trauma
- Financial or material abuse - withholding or taking funds from the elderly person
- Sexual abuse - any type of sexual contact with the elderly person that is not consensual
- Neglect - withholding care or medication

Financial Abuse

If your partner has control over your finances and withholds money needed or causes you to lose your job, this is financial abuse which can be a form of domestic violence. When one person has control of all the bank accounts and their usage, this can be considered abuse. Some of the examples include:

- Deliberately making a person's credit score go down
- Controlling all the household finances and not allowing you to use your own money
- Harassing your partner at work
- Hurting your partner so they cannot work

Bullying

Bullying is mean or aggressive behavior that involves being overpowered. This can be when a single person picks on another or when a group picks on one or more individuals. It usually happens on a regular basis and causes the bullied child or adult to be afraid. There are many groups for youth services that actively work against bullying, and the Administration on Children Youth and Families may be able to help with this as well. Some examples of bullying are:

- Name-calling
- Pushing or hitting
- Inciting others to pick on the individual
- Constant ridicule
- Intimidating

Who Are the Abusers?

The abuser may be a loved one such as a husband, wife, or intimate partner. Or they could be a parent or grandparent, a sibling, or another relative. It may also be a teacher, coach, or family friend. It is impossible to tell who an abuser may be because many times they are just like anyone else.

However, there are some risk factors that you can watch for. Many times, abusers are people that have suffered from people abuse in their own past. They may have been cruel to animals or other children when they were young. And, they can have unpredictable behavior. Abusers might believe that they are better than others and suffer from extreme jealousy. They can be known for having a bad temper and being very controlling. They are likely to be bad at conflict resolution.

It's important to remember that it can happen in any relationship and that healthy relationships do not include abuse. Do not allow your abuser to convince you that it's OK or normal, or your fault. When you start a relationship, it is fine to begin setting boundaries and be completely clear on what you need and want out of your relationship. An abuser will need to learn proper conflict resolution and violence prevention, if they want to overcome being an abuser. There is help for them as well, as anyone can reach out for therapy, so they no longer abuse people.

The Effects of Abuse

The effects of abuse vary depending on the type, length, and severity of the abuse. It can also vary based on the person that was abused. Different people have different reactions. Some people may come through abuse with very little effects at all, but most have mental scars and possibly physical scars as well. The physical scars of domestic violence are usually visible right away such as:

- Bruises, cuts, burns
- Broken bones
- Black eyes
- Tooth loss
- Head trauma or brain damage
- Blindness

The psychological scars of abuse may take longer to manifest and may last forever if treatment is not received. Some of the most common psychological scars from domestic violence include:

- Anxiety disorder
- Depression
- Acting out (misbehaving, getting in trouble with police)
- Risky behavior and/or sexual promiscuity
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
- Mood or personality disorders
- Fear of relationships
- Lack of self-esteem

Many victims of domestic violence and abuse have post-traumatic stress disorder and do not even know it. The signs of this disorder include:

- Flashbacks and nightmares
- Guilt and shame
- Headaches and memory loss
- Insomnia and extreme fatigue
- Feelings of extreme anger or irritation
- Avoiding people and public places along with an inability to trust anyone
- Depression, anxiety, and stress
- Fear of the unknown
- Unexplained bouts of crying
- Nausea
- Nervousness, shaking, trembling, heart palpitations, and chest pain
- Dizziness or fainting
- Chronic pain

Most victims of abuse will tell you that the psychological scars of abuse are worse than the physical scars because they never go away and even though they are unseen to the naked eye, they are just as painful. If you have experienced abuse in your life or are currently experiencing it, you can contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at any time. You can also see how family and youth services in your area can support you. Law enforcement can also be contacted, in an emergency situation. Any abuse you are experiencing is abuse that needs to stop. Online therapy has been proven to reduce symptoms of trauma caused by abuse.

Treatment for Abuse Victims

There is counseling for every type of abuse from physical, sexual, psychological, and even financial abuse. The best way to help is to talk about it to a caring professional, but that is not easy for many victims of abuse. It may take years before a victim is able to talk about what happened to them. In fact, even if the abuse happened 10 or 20 years ago, it may seem like it is still going on for them if they have not gotten treatment. There's no period of time where the effects of abuse will simply go away. For many people, they will feel the effects for the rest of their lives. This is true for youth and families, as well as individuals. Remember that you can contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline, even if you have gotten out of an abusive situation, since there are still resources available to you.

If you're still in the abusive relationship, an important first step can be creating a **safety plan**. This can help you to know what steps you can take to remain safe while addressing your situation. Safety planning can help you to feel empowered to protect yourself and take the necessary steps to end the abusive relationships. Whether you're experiencing domestic violence in your marriage which resulted in needing medical attention, dating violence, or abuse in a different relationship, the National Domestic Violence Hotline can help you to create a safety plan that you can follow. They can also inform you about the relationship spectrum, which explains the difference between healthy and abusive relationships and how to tell the difference.

Before you talk to a therapist, it may be beneficial to be completely clear about what you want out of your therapy. One of the most effective treatments for abuse is cognitive behavioral therapy. This is a form of talk therapy that helps you deal with depression and anxiety by interrupting the link between the mind and the body when you are under stress. In other words, it is psychotherapy that teaches you how to focus on your thoughts and behaviors so you can take control of them. It is a way of breaking the connection between your bad memories of the past and the feelings and behaviors of the present and future. It may not be able to help with violence prevention but can help you determine when abuse domestic violence is occurring.

One important fact about abuse victims is that many do not want to leave the safety of their homes. After being in an abusive situation and finally finding a place where they feel safe, many victims have a hard time going outside that space. The type of abuse people endure can have a long-lasting effect on how they behave. Therefore, online therapy can be a major blessing for them. Being able to talk to a therapist from the safety of their own home gives people more security, and the chances of their treatment being successful is much higher. Online therapy can help families family and youth, and is suited for anyone to utilize. It has the same informed consent principles present with face-to-face therapy. Informed consent refers to information, in the form of a document, that is given to someone before they take part in therapy, before they are given a prescription to take, before a medical

procedure is done, or when they are taking part in an experiment or study. It explains the risks and purposes of what is being done.

In fact, many victims of abuse cancel their appointments over and over again if they are seeing a therapist outside their home. This is true for many patients with mental health disorders. Online therapy has become a lifesaver to these people and many others like them because they would not have gotten therapy otherwise. You can take advantage of online chat, text messages, or other ways to connect with a professional counselor. BetterHelp is the largest mental health provider in the world and has more than 10,000 licensed professional therapists who can help you.

Check Your Understanding Questions:

1. How common is domestic violence in the US?
2. Briefly summarize the 8 types of abuse. For each, explain what it is and give a couple examples.
3. What are some signs that someone is an abuser?
4. What are some physical and mental signs that someone is a victim of abuse?
5. What can victims of abuse do to get better? What resources are available?