

# Focus on Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is a way of hurting someone without necessarily being physical. It's when one person in a relationship tries to control the other person's feelings or thoughts in order to gain power over them. Some examples of emotional abuse (also called mental, verbal, or psychological abuse) are listed below. Think about these in considering any relationships you're involved in now. Have you done these things, or have they been done to you?

- 1 Put-downs; calling names, telling them they're stupid or ugly, telling them they're not good enough or no one could ever love them.
- 2 Frequently cursing or yelling at the other person.
- 3 Threatening or intimidating – making the other person feel nervous or scared for themselves or someone they care about.
- 4 Frequently criticizing or correcting the other person – the way they look, talk, act, etc.
- 5 Lying or cheating.
- 6 Playing mind games or making the other person think they're crazy.
- 7 Putting responsibility for your behavior on the other person.
- 8 Making fun of or putting down the other person's family, culture, religion, race, or heritage.
- 9 Embarrassing or humiliating the other person, especially in front of other people.
- 10 Withholding affection as punishment – not giving them love if they don't do what you want them to do.
- 11 Controlling behavior – telling the other person what to do, what to wear, who to hang out with, etc.
- 12 Making all the decisions in the relationship and ignoring the other person's feelings.
- 13 Guilt trips – trying to make the other person feel guilty when you don't get your way, especially by threatening to hurt yourself or commit suicide.
- 14 Keeping the other person from spending time with their friends or family members, or from work or other activities that are important to him/her.
- 15 Using the children to get the other person to do what you want.
- 16 Being extremely jealous, and using jealousy to justify controlling behavior.
- 17 Threatening to break up with the other person if you don't get your way.
- 18 Saying you don't love the other person just to get him/her to do what you want.

- 19 Accusing the other person of cheating on you as a way of manipulating him/her to do what you want.
- 20 Keeping constant tabs on a person, expecting to know his/her every move.

Have questions? Need to talk to someone confidentially about abuse?  
Call us.

Rape & Abuse Crisis Service: 634-4911 or 1-800-303-0013.

## Real Teens Talk

(Taken from [www.loveisnotabuse.com](http://www.loveisnotabuse.com))

"I think dating violence is starting at a younger age. It happened to me when I was 14 and I didn't know what to do. We were friends, and then we started becoming closer. One day, he tried to push himself onto me physically. I didn't tell anyone for months. I was embarrassed. When I finally told people, the more I talked about it, the better I felt. My friend said, 'You have to remember that you don't deserve people taking advantage of you.' A lot of my friends said stuff to him, and it made him feel really stupid about what he had done. The more I talked about it, the more I heard that this stuff happens but it's not your fault." -A.R., age 17

"I've had friends that have had problems, more mental than physical. Like the guy will try to brainwash her, make her think she's not going to be anything without him, or if he's not in her life, she won't have anybody. He won't let her think of any other person, she can't talk to or barely look at other guys or he'll get mad. Manipulating. I tried to talk to my friend in this situation. She would just say it's not a big deal, but she'd say, 'We were fighting, messing around,' and she'd show me bruises. She laughs about it. She doesn't go out with us anymore, always with him. We get mad at her about it, but you know, she thinks if she had to have him or us be mad at her, she knows we'll forgive her more." - Kati, age 15

"My friend was in an abusive situation. I told her she should think about getting out. *He* made all the decisions for her, told her she couldn't go out with her friends anymore. It isn't healthy to have someone controlling you. If you know someone in a situation like that, instead of telling them what they *should* do, give them advice on what they *could* do. Give them a number for a hotline or agency. My friend got out when she realized it wasn't going to get any better. Power and control usually lead to physical violence." - William, age 18

"My mother left my father when I was 3, after he was physically abusive to her. Now she works at a battered women's shelter. I feel that when my mom was my age, before she got into an abusive relationship with my dad, if she had heard a group of teens her age talking about abuse, maybe it would have prevented her from getting into that situation." - Alicia, age 16

"When I was in high school, I found out my best friend was mistreating his girlfriend. I was friends with them both. Once, we were at a party and he was insulting her, embarrassing her in front of other people. I let him know it wasn't the way to act. He was defensive, kind of aggressive. He didn't appreciate it. Later, I talked to him one-on-one, and told him that he needed to be a better boyfriend. He denied everything his girlfriend had told me - accused her of being crazy and making things up. It was hard. I didn't know who to believe. Knowing what I know now, I just think that if you have an abuser and an abused person, rather than trying to decide who's telling the truth, just believe the abused person - and if you're wrong, so be it. Today, I'm still friends with her. And after all these years, she still remembers what I did and appreciates the support

that I gave her, even though I wished that I had done more. I think the most important thing that I did was believe her." - John, age 31