



Abuse

Awareness

Abuse is any kind of behaviour that causes pain to another person through fear, humiliation, and disempowers them. Abuse happens in many relationships and is always destructive. If you recognise the signs of abuse, you can help someone who is in an abusive relationship.

Physical abuse is unwanted, intentional physical contact of a harmful nature intended to intimidate and dominate. It may not cause pain or leave a mark but it can include:

- Scratching, punching, slapping, and kicking.
- Pushing, pulling, or grabbing.
- Assault with weapons.
- Rape or sexual assault.

Emotional, psychological, or verbal abuse belittles, intimidates, or manipulates. It causes loss of self-confidence and self-image. Emotional or verbal abuse involves:

- Swearing and shouting.
- Degrading language, publicly and privately.
- Restricting involvement with persons.
- Jealousy or possessiveness.
- Threats of violence.

How to recognise the signs of abuse

Many abusers are good at hiding the signs of abuse and making their victims feel guilty. Often, if you ask about abuse, the victim will deny it and may begin avoiding you for fear of the consequences of admitting to the abuse.

Visible injury is an obvious sign of physical abuse. The victim may tell an inconsistent story about how they got the injury. The story may change if they are pressed. Further signs of emotional abuse include:

- Being very jumpy and fearful.
- Not wanting to be touched.
- Frequently missing work or school.
- Frequent hospital admissions.
- The appearance of being in pain.

Signs of emotional abuse include unexpectedly cutting ties with someone with no explanation. They may also stop taking part in activities they previously enjoyed or quit work. Other signs include being withdrawn and not attending social events.

How to help someone who is being abused

- 01** Make yourself available. If you suspect someone close to you is being abused, make them feel loved and help them trust you by making yourself emotionally and practically available.
- 02** Help them feel powerful. This is an important stage in helping to make the necessary changes. Help them feel that they can take control of their lives by building their self-confidence.
- 03** Be prepared to intervene. Often, a victim of abuse will not feel empowered to take action. If they confide their fears in you, or their life is in danger, make sure you know where to go and how to act to help them get out of their situation. At this point, you will have to take action immediately.
- 04** Stick it out. The victim of abuse may be vulnerable after getting out of the abusive situation and may feel regretful about leaving. It's important that they feel supported throughout this time. Abuse has many forms and is often hard to recognise. Victims are made to feel powerless and lack self-confidence to make a change. As a loved one, friend, family member, or colleague, your role is crucial in helping the victim become a survivor.

