

Are you in an emotionally abusive relationship?

Does your partner *consistently*:

- | | Yes | No |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Try to stop you seeing your family or friends? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Physically isolate you from other people? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Control or limit your access to money, the car or telephone? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Check up on what you have been doing or who you have seen? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Try to stop you going where you want to go or what you want to do? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Verbally abuse you? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Humiliate or criticise you in front of other people? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Ignore your opinions or discount them? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • See you as property or a sex object? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Act excessively jealous and possessive? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Blame you for their own violent or jealous behaviour? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Give you the 'silent treatment' if you disagree with them? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Withhold affection or attention if you don't go along with their demands? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If you have answered 'yes' to any of these questions, you may be in an emotionally abusive relationship. Emotional abuse is not only made up of negative behaviours but also negative attitudes. An emotionally abusive person need not take any overt action just display an abusive attitude e.g. a belief that they are always right and everyone else should do as they say.

Are you in an emotionally abusive relationship?

Obviously most physically abusive relationships are also emotionally and psychologically abusive, however, some types of physical behaviour can be regarded as mainly emotionally abusive:

- Destroying or damaging household property or their partner's belongings
- Threatening to hurt or kill their partner or their children
- Threatening to commit suicide in order to stop their partner leaving
- Driving recklessly when their partner is in the car
- Forcing their partner to have sex against their will
- Intimidating behaviour such as kicking walls, slamming doors or throwing dishes
- Shaking a fist or making threatening gestures at their partner

While physical abuse may appear to be worse than emotional and verbal, studies have shown that this is not necessarily true and the emotional damage caused by this type of relationship, is often long term. Some of the more common effects on the victim are depression, low self-esteem, inability to make decisions or concentrate, self-destructiveness and hopelessness. It can be seen as a type of brainwashing, as it systematically destroys the victim's sense of self-worth and trust in their own perceptions or beliefs. Over time, emotional abuse may also lead to physical abuse.

Emotional abusers may be male or female; sometimes both partners are guilty of this behaviour and a self-destructive cycle is created. As each partner becomes more abusive, the more that they each cling to the relationship as they become less self-confident and the relationship becomes even more abusive.

What makes a person into an emotional abuser? They will often display the following characteristics:

- Inability to maintain relationships with other people, except in a very superficial manner
- They have very intense relationships with their partners
- They have very rigid expectations of marriage or intimate relationships and do not compromise
- Their partners are expected to change to fit their expectations
- Low self-esteem and feelings of insecurity
- An intense temper
- They often experience mood shifts, in a short space of time
- They were often verbally and emotionally abused as a child

To break the pattern of emotional abuse, both partners need to be aware of why it is happening. This means **counselling for them both**. The victim needs to examine the reasons why they stay in such a dysfunctional relationship and sometimes, start to become an abuser themselves. The abuser will need to examine their underlying issues of low self-esteem, a need to control and unacknowledged anger, often related to childhood experiences.

Partners may choose to change some of their habits to please each other, but no-one should be asked to change their personality, hobbies and career or to make choices between their family and their partner. Everyone has the right to be loved, for the person that they are.