



# DEFINITIONS of abuse

## **Abuse:**

Systematic pattern of behaviors in a relationship that are used to gain and/or maintain control and power over another.

## **Types of Abuse**

### **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse includes hurting another person's feelings by making cruel, unfair comments or name-calling.

Examples include:

- cursing, swearing and/or screaming at you
- repeated harassment, interrogation or degradation
- attacks on self-esteem and/or insults to your person (name-calling, put-downs, ridicule)
- attacks on and/or insults about people you care for, your family and friends
- threatening to "come out for you" at work or to your family
- controlling and/or limiting your behavior (e.g.: keeping you from using the phone or seeing friends; not letting you leave the room or the house; following you; monitoring or limiting your phone conversations; checking the mileage on your car; or keeping you from reading material, ideas, activities and places that he does not like)
- interrupting you while you are eating, forcing you to stay awake or to get up from sleep
- blaming you for everything that goes wrong
- forcing you to do degrading things (e.g.: making you kneel, making you beg for money)
- using the difference in physical size to intimidate you
- criticizing your thoughts, feelings, opinions, beliefs and actions
- treating you like a servant or "underling" in matters of household chores and decisions
- being extremely jealous, constantly accusing you of flirting or cheating
- spitting at or near you
- using money to control you (e.g.: taking money from you; giving you an allowance; controlling how extra money is spent; forcing you to ask for and account for any money you get; or acting like the work you do at home is of no economic value to the family)
- telling you that you are "sick" and need therapy
- using physical disabilities against you or putting you down for your disability

### **Psychological Abuse:**

Psychological abuse is any threat to do bodily harm to a partner, a child, a family member, friends, pets, or one's self (suicide). Psychological abuse involves not only hurt and anger, but also fear and degradation. The purpose of psychological abuse is to render you emotionally insecure about your own self-worth and to render you helpless and/or not able to escape further physical, sexual and/or psychological abuse.

Examples include your partner:

- threatening to punch, hit, slap or kick
- threatening to use a weapon
- threatening to harm him/her-self if you leave
- threatening to punish children to "get back" at you
- threatening to harm pets
- throwing objects in your direction
- vague threats such as: "You're going to get it," or "I'm really going to let you have it"
- harming a pet to "get back" at you
- smashing and breaking things

- throwing objects around the room
- punching walls, slamming doors
- hiding, stealing or destroying your possessions
- sabotaging your car
- any emotional abuse which in the past was a prelude to physical or sexual abuse

### **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse is any non-consenting sexual act or behavior.

Examples include your partner forcing sexual activity when:

- you indicate "no" and your limits are not respected
- you are sleeping
- you are drunk or high and are unable to say "no"
- you are afraid to say "no"

or when your partner:

- insists that you dress in a more sexual way than you wish to dress
- makes demeaning remarks about how you dress
- makes demeaning remarks about your body and/or body parts
- minimizes your feelings about sex
- berates you about your sexual history; blames you if you were sexually abused in the past or as a child
- criticizes you sexually (calling you "frigid," for example)
- insists on touching you sexually when you do not want to be touched, either when the two of you are alone or in the presence of others
- calls you a whore or a slut
- has affairs with other women (often flaunting them) after agreeing not to have sex with anyone but you
- physically attacking sexual parts of your body (grabbing your breasts, pinching your buttocks, any touch that is unwanted)
- forcing you to perform any specific sexual act that you do not wish to do (for example oral sex, or acting out pornography)

### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse is any forceful or violent physical behavior.

Examples include:

- |            |               |            |                   |
|------------|---------------|------------|-------------------|
| • slapping | • choking     | • punching | • kicking         |
| • pinching | • pushing     | • shoving  | • biting          |
| • spanking | • scratching  | • grabbing | • throwing bodily |
| • burning  | • restraining | • spitting |                   |

Other behaviors in this category include throwing objects at the partner, or using or threatening to use a weapon of any kind (stick, ruler, belt, whip, knife, spoon, gun...)