

"BUT I HAVEN'T BEEN HIT..."

a resource on emotional abuse

EMOTIONAL ABUSE IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behaviors to gain power and control over another. It happens in family or interpersonal relationships, such as:

- dating relationships • significant others • partners
- spouses • parents & children • caregiver relationships

IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE JUST HITTING?

No. Domestic violence is a wide range of behaviors that can include emotional abuse. Emotional abuse can include:

- "I'll hit you." (Threats)
- "I didn't say that." (Gaslighting)
- "You look ugly." (Criticism)
- "Idiot." (Name-calling)
- "Don't talk to her." (Isolation)
- "I'm going to tell everyone you're trans." (Threatening to "out" you.)
- The silent treatment

HOW CAN EMOTIONAL ABUSE AFFECT ME?

You may feel:

- Fearful • Tired • Bad about yourself • Dependent • Crazy • Tense or anxious • Drained • Alone • Angry

Some of the above symptoms can also affect you physically. Many experts believe that emotional abuse may have longer-lasting effects than physical abuse, such as depression, PTSD, and other physical and mental health problems.



WHY IS THIS HAPPENING?

- People use abuse to gain power and control. Stress does not cause the abuse. Alcohol does not cause the abuse. You do not cause the abuse.
- You cannot change the person. The person using emotional abuse is responsible for their actions, not you.
- Once they can no longer maintain control with words, they might escalate to using physical abuse.

WHY AM I CONFUSED?

You may be facing pressure from family, friends, community, or your culture to stay in an abusive situation, or to leave. We know it can be a difficult decision, and there are many circumstances that can make it even harder. You know what's best for you and your family. Whatever decision you make is okay.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Know that abuse is not your fault. No one deserves to be abused. Find support by talking to others who will listen and support you. If it is safe to do so, talk to family, friends, or other trusted community members. You can also contact your local Domestic Violence Program, who can offer help and support.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

You deserve loving and safe relationships. Advocates are here to support you. Call the Virginia Statewide Hotline at 1.800.838.8238 (text 804.793.9999) or a local resource listed below:

RESOURCES: