

Little Book Of Life Advice – identifying Domestic Abuse

This guide is intended for anyone who is exposed to domestic abuse, which unfortunately affects more people than statistics indicate – from running various anti-abuse projects over the last ten years and from community outreach it's become clear that everyone has been impacted in some way by domestic abuse and that most people don't have the tools to identify it, which I hope to rectify.

The topics covered here are, understandably, potentially very triggering. While all the information is useful, readers may wish to be selective about how much or which sections they read. This guide is intended not just for those who are experiencing direct abuse, but also for those looking to support loved ones who may be undergoing it, for those who work with people who are vulnerable, and for those who *are* vulnerable to educate themselves on potential warning signs, and safeguard themselves from getting hurt.

Domestic abuse is often thought to be something that takes place between two romantic partners, and usually between people who are middle aged, but this is far from the truth. It can happen between siblings, housemates, parents and children, friends, co-workers, or any other type of personal relationship. It's also a common belief that some people are immune to abuse, but anyone can be vulnerable regardless of age, gender, or other life factors. It's a heavy and complicated subject to cover, if you are concerned that you might be involved in an abusive situation seek help from the services signposted at the end of this book. If you like, use this guide as a rough checklist.

Keep in mind that some relationships will have a natural power imbalance, such as with carers and the vulnerable person they help, or young people and their guardians. A power imbalance isn't always a problem – it's when that imbalance is abused that the situation should be addressed and changed.

Just as this booklet is not exhaustive, it is also just a guide. Everyone engages in a problematic behaviour from time to time, often unintentionally, and if you recognise one or two of these behaviours – *depending on what they are* – firmer boundaries, honest conversation, and/or professional assistance can resolve the situation with a stronger relationship at the end of it.

If the situation is severe or continues without improvement seek help as soon as you are able.

Topics covered in this booklet:

- Grooming
- DARVO
- Red Flags
- Challenges you might face
- Enablers
- Mirroring
- Bread crumbing
- Gender abuse
- Housing abuse
- Financial abuse
- Neglect
- Gaslighting
- Obligation or duty
- Verbal abuse
- Psychological/emotional

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- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Digital abuse
- Drug abuse
- Racial abuse
- Parental abuse
- Educational
- Medical abuse
- Celebrity/public figure abuse
- Coercive control
- Cultural abuse
- Religious abuse
- Cult abuse
- What to do if someone's being abused
- What to do if someone's an abuser
- What to do if you've been abusive
- Where you can get help
- What to do if you're thinking of reporting to the police
- Alternatives to the police
- Post abuse care

Remember anyone can be a victim or an abuser, regardless of any demographic.

Grooming

Perhaps the most fundamental aspect of an abusive relationship is the build up to it, since it's the grooming that makes most abuse possible it's important to know the kinds of ways someone might make it easier to get what they want from you. Grooming is traditionally thought of as only affecting children, but the techniques can be applied to anyone vulnerable. Victims might not be aware that they are being groomed and could be reluctant to accept the truth when confronted.

Abuser behaviours

- Being excessively affectionate, especially when it wouldn't seem appropriate
- Attempting to touch you, makes frequent attempts, and keeps doing it after having been told "Stop."
- Telling you, advising you, or convincing you to trust them and keep secrets from others
- Attempts to place themselves in a position of trust in preparation
- Ingratiating themselves with people close to an intended victim

Victim behaviours

- Sudden changes of behaviour or appetite
- Suddenly spending more or less time with others or online
- Secretive about their movements or activities
- Self blame, guilt, or shame about what's happening that can make them reluctant to come forward
- Believe that they caused it or asked for it
- Might be scared of repercussions or punishment for minor things, or things they haven't done
- Receiving unexplained or big gifts

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- Mental health problems or distress
- Health, sexual health, financial, or housing problems
- Apologises frequently, often for just existing
- Volatile reactions to minor stimuli
- Flinching
- Withdrawal
- Refusal to show any skin
- Sudden secrecy
- Less confident, especially around particular people
- Quiet, or quieter than usual
- Cancelling plans or spending much less time with others
- Leaving suddenly after getting a call or text
- Unexplained injuries, obvious untrue excuses
- Excessive drug usage, such as alcohol
- Becoming more of a risk taker or showing less value for their well-being

Factors of vulnerability

- Being young
- Being older
- Being disabled, sick, neurodivergent, or experiencing mental health problems
- Having experiences abuse or trauma in the past
- Being on a low income
- Having savings or high price items to take
- Not being tech savvy
- Poor understanding of appropriate behaviour
- Large age gaps between them and their partner*

*Age gaps are not inherently negative, the problems rise when one partner is young and/or inexperienced enough to be open to manipulation and the other old enough to have learned how to manipulate and/or has gathered resources to maintain control over their partner. Likewise it isn't uncommon for older people to be drawn into a relationship with a younger partner who has plans to take their money or belongings.

DARVO

DARVO stands for deny, attack, reverse victim and offender. If you bring a valid criticism to someone who has treated you poorly and their response is to say "I didn't do that, you did xyz and that really hurt me." or "That never happened, you're a liar." or even just ignoring the criticism altogether and focusing on things you've supposedly done, they are attempting to make you a "villain" of the story and gaslight you. This can result in a huge mix of emotions for the person whose trauma has been, not just ignored, but completely invalidated and even turned against them. Guilt, shame, anger, frustration, low self esteem, and the depression associated with those feelings are very common in victims of DARVO. It's sometimes difficult to be sure of your position and experiences when experiencing DARVO, as it can make you doubt your reality and cause you to feel worthless.

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At it's core, DARVO is another mode of "whataboutery" where an abuser, or someone representing a "side" in bad faith, attempts to weaken your standpoint so they can avoid blame, criticism, and responsibility. It fosters an unsafe environment, and it's often wise to distance yourself from situations and relationships where it's a known risk. This can be difficult as it's often seen in large groups that have power imbalances such as workplaces, education, law enforcement, and political parties, as well as amongst friends and family members.

Remember: Their first step is always to deny wrong doing. The second is to make an accusation against you, which could be claiming you are "crazy", "a liar", "violent", or that you behaved in some other inappropriate way. This reversal of dynamic, "I'm not the problem, you are." is the defining hallmark of DARVO abuse, the intent of which is to silence you. Don't be afraid to ask someone you trust to provide support to you during meetings when confronting this type of behaviour.

Red Flags

There are many behaviours that someone prone to committing abuse might exhibit, and staying on the lookout for them can help you identify a dangerous situation before it progresses too far. Remember that any kind of relationship could turn out to be unhealthy or detrimental to you.

Controlling behaviour:

- Who you can see
- Who you can talk to or interact with
- What you can buy or how much you can spend
- How much money you're allowed
- What you can wear
- Where you can go
- What you can eat
- What you can post online
- Demanding physical/emotional affection or expecting it regularly and becoming upset when they don't get it
- Pushing physical affection on you without asking
- Pushing emotional affection on you
- Dictating how you should spend your time
- Controlling what substances you can use, like alcohol
- Keeping large secrets from you
- Using aid they've given you *against* you
- Invading your physical or digital privacy (reading messages, tracking movements, looking through your belongings)
- Criticising or undermining your emotions
- Expressing entitlement to influence over your behaviour that disregards your boundaries
- Uses emotional declarations of love to undercut your boundaries or anger from mistreatment
- Refusal to accept responsibility for hurt caused, possibly making you out to be the abusive party
- Winding you up until you have an outburst
- Controlling how others see you through lies and gossip

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People who are vulnerable, such as being young, might need more oversight than an adult but there are *always* limits as to what counts as reasonable. Being young or otherwise vulnerable doesn't mean anyone else gets to remove all agency from you. Everyone has the same basic, human rights.

Manipulative Behaviour:

- Often Looking for pity
- Invents problems so you feel bad for them (and are more likely to do things for them or be nice)
- Can't keep a story consistent, changes narrative, or tells outright lies (people recounting a story are fallible – *some* inconsistency is normal, but excessive or regular inconsistencies are a red flag)
- Places themselves in a victim role regularly
- Puts unrealistic demands on your time or attention and gets angry or cries when they aren't met
- Causes scenes in public so it makes it harder for you to confront them
- Comparing you to other people
- Creates consistent high stress situations to keep you vulnerable
- Excessive physical touching or emotional declarations (enforces your attention and presses an intimate situation or feelings on you, common behaviour after they've done something to hurt you)
- Withdrawal of physical comfort for no reason
- Uses their emotions or yours against you
- Places burdens or obligations on you without consent
- “Whataboutery” changing the subject to avoid being criticised or having to provide a defence (a common tactic by the far right). For example, if you express that their behaviour has hurt you and they respond with “but you saying that hurt me.” or “but you hurt me when you did xyz.”
- Sudden increases of mental health problems with suspicious timing and/or no obvious trigger (often when they begin to lose control over you or a situation)
- Relying too heavily on friends/family/community for support on issues that need professional assistance
- Sudden changes of behaviour
- Tears during confrontation or any conversation they're unwilling to have
- Expressing entitlement to your affection and that you're a bad person if you don't provide it
- Telling lies about their well-being or whereabouts to cause you concern and/or to get you to do something specific, such as leave a party
- Insisting some people must stand up for themselves when they obviously don't have the tools, especially if they have been made to feel like they aren't allowed to, or are dismissed when they try
- Being overly smothering to others when they try to remove themselves from situations for their own benefit
- Choosing to misunderstand or ignore the difference between someone putting up with behaviour as opposed to genuinely being ok with it – “it's fine” is a very common avoidance tactic that really means “I can put up with it,” rather than “I'm happy with this.”
- Talking for other people without permission, not helping them gain the tools to speak for themselves, deliberately silencing someone else by talking for them
- Deliberately misunderstanding or misrepresenting someone's behaviour as being negative
- Refusal to accept an answer as being true and insisting that the real answer is whatever they've decided it is
- Using vulnerabilities (theirs or other peoples) to manipulate you into agreeing with them

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They might also have some personality traits that *could* be a signal to even more negative behaviour further down the road.

Paranoia: (*And can't be reasoned with, or refuses to accept the answers as truth even with evidence*)

- Unfounded accusations of infidelity (romantic, sexual, or platonic)
- Suggesting you only associate with them for some kind of gain
- Repeatedly saying you/your friends/your family secretly hate them
- Accusing you of hiding something
- Keeps secrets from you without cause
- Uses safety anxiety to control your movements, or use recording devices to monitor them
- Invades your privacy
- Refuses to accept answers as truth, instead being invested in their own narrative

Paranoia can lead to attempts to separate you from loved ones, and they *may* be projecting their own behaviour onto you.

Being too eager:

- Pushing to date, move in, get engaged, or move away ect when you're not ready or when you've only been close for a short time – before you get to see the full range of their behaviour (which can take years)
- Persistent sexual or romantic come-ons, despite having been told no already
- Pushing to meet your family
- Pushing to combine resources, usually financial ones
- Expressing entitlement to your time or attention

Being too eager can indicate a lack of respect for boundaries, making it even more important to enforce them before things get out of hand. It can also indicate a hidden motive for some kind of gain. Different relationships operate on different time scales, but if a friend described a situations just like yours and that would cause you concern, you may wish to take a step back and reassess the situation.

Demeeaning others:

- Treating others with disrespect without just cause, such as racism, homophobia, transphobia, or general prejudice
- Prone to getting into unprovoked arguments, frequent arguments, or physical fights with strangers or friends
- Treats workers in shops or restaurants poorly
- Makes sexually inappropriate or aggressive comments about others
- Claims *all* previous ex's were "mental," "evil," or "liars" etc.
- Feeling entitled to have more things or better experiences than others
- Inflating their fragile ego by putting others down

This indicates a lack of respect for the well-being and dignity of others, which could include yourself.

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Habits:

- Excessive drinking or drug taking, while addiction doesn't always lead to abuse severe cases may increase the chances of physical, financial, or emotional abuse. Casual use doesn't often lead to the same abusive behaviours.
- Repeated violent encounters with others
- Breaks belongings that aren't theirs
- Lots of seemingly insignificant lies
- Lies to you about their activities outside of reasonable personal privacy or fear that you may react abusively to the truth
- Repeated incidents of cheating, or breaking romantic/polyamorous rules
- Surrounded by lots of "drama" and is heavily involved in it (some people do end up in close contact with drama if they have active lives, and with things getting much harder now drama can be a side effect of ongoing global stress and trauma. Caution is advised.)

Abusive tactics:

- Love Bombing – showering you with affection part time, with incidents of outright abuse
- Gaslighting – convincing you that the truth isn't reasonable or real
- Negging – lowering your self esteem by using insults, passive aggressive comments, and demeaning you so you will be more agreeable
- Bread crumbing – giving you the bare minimum respect or affection, and only part-time
- Goaded you into public outbursts
- Turning others against you or isolating you from your community
- Encouraging or demanding you keep secrets from loved ones without good reason
- Encouraging you to think of others poorly and treat them badly
- Cries frequently when attempting to address their behaviour or a harmful situation (some people are just very expressive emotionally, telling the difference between that and manipulation can be difficult)
- Blames you for situations you aren't involved in or forcefully drags you into the middle of them
- DARVO
- Waiting until a relationship is established or you've become "trapped" in some way before becoming abusive (such as pregnancy, emotional obligation, marriage, co-habitation, long term work contract)
- Leaving you waiting on their promises, lowering your expectations
- Dangling your desires or needs in front of you with no follow up - "Someday we'll get married"
- Convincing you to drop your life, friends, or work
- Encouraging financial dependency which leads to more psychological control
- Convincing you to move far away with no support network

Breach of social boundaries:

- Showing you images you're not comfortable with without consent or in inappropriate settings
- Forcing conversations outside of agreed upon boundaries*
- Inserting themselves into your life knowing you need distance from them
- Invading personal space after being asked not to
- Interrupting you or someone else in particular consistently – neurodivergency often leads people to interrupt, it's when that behaviour is targeted at an individual that it's a red flag

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*Not including confronting the ways in which someone’s behaviour has been harmful – if you had to get the consent of an abuser to set a boundary or advocate for better treatment abusers would have full, unequivocal control over your life and everyone else’s. You have a right to set a boundary at any time about the standard of treatment you’re willing to accept.

Bullying Behaviour

- Excludes you from activities or conversations, often right in front of you
- Makes you feel bad about yourself
- Criticises you excessively or inappropriately
- Publicly humiliates or isolates you
- Disrespects your opinion or personal property
- Insults you, either with “mild” language, swearing, or slurs
- Any form of harassment
- Tells lies about you to others
- Inflates stories of your behaviour
- Tells you no one likes you or loves you
- Tells you to harm yourself
- Insists of praising things that cause you distress, such as dysphoric concerns about your appearance, or an abusive relative

Neurodivergence often leads to a breach of social boundaries and should be taken into account when dealing with difficult interactions, *within reason*, repeating behaviours after having been asked not to could be an indicator of a more concerning, potentially abusive, problem.

If you recognise some of these things in one of your relationships but believe the context is different and so it doesn’t count, ask yourself if you think it would be acceptable for it to happen to a friend or family member of yours, and why your situation is different.

Challenges you might encounter

There are many challenges you might face when coping with situations involving narcissists or abusers, including the fact that society tends to reward people who are arrogant, mistaking it for confidence. This can make you feel like your experience and position is “weak”, “overly sensitive”, “petty”, or “baseless.” Social media in particular rewards those who are extreme or outlandish. Once you have seen the reality however you can’t un-see it and it begins to weigh on your mind, at which point you may wish to consider going no-contact.

When an abuser realises they’ve begun to lose control over you, which they are often very perceptive to, they may well try to regain control somehow. This could be through upping the abuse against you, attempting to sour your relationship with others, making you a pariah in your community through lies, or anything else that removes the support you have and puts you into a vulnerable position where you have few choices or *feel like* you have no choice or ability to leave.

Often people can be reluctant to offer you support if they haven’t seen the truth of an abusers behaviour for themselves, if you ask for help and they’ve refused they’ve become an enabler to the

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cycle of abuse you're undergoing, and therefore a safeguarding issue for you. You always have the option of seeking the help of charities to help you escape abuse.

Enablers

Enablers are people who are involved in the dynamic (even if it's only on the outskirts) and continue to make allowances for abusive behaviour to continue. This may be because they don't want to face changing circumstances that would inconvenience them, because they're afraid to confront someone who can be nasty and hurtful, they might be reluctant to deal with emotional manipulation, they might also have either bought into their justification or are actually abusive themselves.

Things you might encounter with an enabler

- Excuses that they (the abuser) had a tough history or is going through a difficult time, which may be used to intentionally make you feel guilty.*
- Insisting the abuser didn't mean it, when there's no way they can know
- Insisting "I never had a problem with them" to invalidate you and your experiences. They may have never had this problem because they don't pose a threat to the abuser, or outright support them
- Insisting that things will get better with no evidence, which manipulatively rewards you for "patience" in being subjected to abuse
- Insisting it's "not that bad". Minimising your experiences in any way is a form of gaslighting
- Insisting that the abuse you're subject to is a fair trade off for other benefits, such as financial security

*While this may be true it doesn't make their behaviour acceptable or something you have to tolerate.

Fear, hope, and guilt are big contributors to anyone staying in an abusive situation but the impact of enablers cannot be brushed aside, as without their support the primary abuser would find it much harder (if not impossible) to continue the cycle of abuse. Safeguarding yourself sometimes means considering going no-contact with people who contribute to suffering.

Mirroring

mirroring can be a healthy reciprocal behaviour in a relationship that helps people to feel understood and form strong bonds based on shared interests or beliefs, but from an abuser mirroring is an exercise in weaponised empathy that is designed to discover your weaknesses, fears, and trauma which will be used against you in the future. This can look like mimicking your activities, habits, or personality traits which can begin to feel invasive or creepy. When confronted it's not uncommon for them to accuse you of wanting to keep them out of your life, or otherwise not reciprocating genuine care and using that guilt to make you feel like a bad person and to drop your boundaries.

While it may feel flattering to begin with as part of the love bombing process, as time goes by the mirroring becomes a method of control. Eventually they may begin to mirror your negative traits and even *make up* your negative traits, using it to manipulate you into believing you're a worse person than you really are to put you in a vulnerable position. This can be done in any relationship, including professional ones.

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Manipulators are experts at twisting your perception of yourself through a combination of accurate and distorted mirroring. Having a strong sense of identity is an important factor, not just in positive mental health, but in protecting yourself against others attempting to warp your sense of self.

Bread crumbing

Breadcrumbing is when an abuser offers you a small amount of attention or affection after long periods of neglect, or “emotional famine”. This can be as small as offering you a drink, listening to you, or putting down their phone during dinner. It offers you a small glimpse of hope, often after having devalued you through disregard, which often goes with negging or neglect, as it depends on you having a lowered self worth. It often comes when you are starting to set boundaries or step away from the relationship as it offers you hope for improvement or guilt for being ungrateful or fed up, and can stretch a relationship out for several more years. It undercuts your ability to advocate for your needs.

Can you change your personality? Probably not, so it's not reasonable think an abuser can without intensive therapy. If they show no commitment to putting in work they're manipulating you with fake promises.

Housing abuse

Sometimes people will use your housing security to manipulate or abuse you. You're particularly vulnerable if you're disabled, rent a house, rent a room (especially if you live with your landlord), have a council home, live in a family home, or lodge with friends.

Things an abuser might do:

- Threaten to kick you out for minor infractions (such as not washing your plate) or to get you to do things for them so you can stay (like get their shopping or picking up drugs)
- Changing the house rules with no notice
- Refusal to pay you a reasonable rent when they have the ability (social housing rates or lower)
- Refusing to move out
- Refusal to do housework, actively leaving mess behind them
- Invading your personal space/privacy
- Threatening to report you to the council or landlord for things you haven't done (blackmail)
- Asking you to trade sex for housing
- Jumping up the cost of living there with no notice
- Restricting your ability to use shared facilities (like bathroom, kitchen, or living room)
- Making up damage you've done to the property
- A partner/friend/family member forcibly moving into your home or moving others in
- Refusing to contribute to house resources
- Destroying your property and refusing to fix or replace it
- Wanting to keep the fact that they live with you a secret
- Restricting your ability to host friends or family
- Using your personal factors as an excuse to control your behaviour or evict you (disability, neurodivergency, minority status, ect.)

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If you are having these types of problems a renters union could be helpful to you. If you do not rent or need more personal support you can seek aid from your community; people are often willing to help you move, find a new home, or temporarily move in until your abuser has left. Domestic abuse charities can also offer you aid.

Financial Abuse

Financial abuse is when someone either steals from you, or uses money to control or hurt you. This can be perpetrated by anyone, most often by partners and family, and is often combined with other types of abuse.

Types of financial abuse:

- Restricting your access to money, especially for essentials
- Demeaning you for needing it, or for not earning "enough"
- Taking your wages or benefits
- Paying you an allowance from money you're entitled to, possibly also including convincing you that it's necessary
- Wanting to entangle finances early into the relationship, even if it seems like it'll be a long time off. Sudden changes of situation which bring the plan forward are common.
- Refusing to pay your for work
- Getting you to pay off their debt
- Asking you to keep their living situation secret to avoid large amounts of debt
- Giving cash or items as a "gift" then expecting repayment in time, affection, or labour, often involving emotional manipulation
- Paying for necessary items and then holding it over you
- Selling, destroying, or stealing your belongings
- Inappropriate expenditure that negatively effects you
- Unexplained money loss that negatively effects you
- Excessive gambling that puts your property, money, or other security in jeopardy
- Forcing you to sell property or belongings
- Forcing or coercing changes to wills
- Forcing or coercing someone into bad investments
- Offering to "hold" money for you when you are in a vulnerable position
- Tricking you into giving them money or items
- Living excessively off of your finances when they have or can earn their own
- Secrecy over finances that affect you
- Refusing to reimburse you for things bought/expended
- Sudden changes to an agreement of money lending
- Offering to cover the cost of something with no strings or time scale then changing the agreement, or holding it against you

Possible Effects:

- Isolation from friends and family
- Poverty stress
- Poor health
- Inability to have independence, or leave the situation
- Poor standards of living

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- Homelessness
- Lack of self esteem
- Guilt
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Poor diet
- Inability to look after yourself

Neglect

Neglect is when someone has a duty to your care that they aren't meeting, this is particularly relevant if you are a minor, elderly, or have health issues. If your carer or guardian isn't meeting their responsibilities you can speak to social services, family members, or staff members at your school or place of support.

Types of neglect:

- Not providing you with enough good quality food when they could do so
- Not helping with important or necessary things when asked (such as using the bathroom, or paperwork)
- Ignoring a declining situation
- Not helping you maintain personal hygiene
- Not picking up medications you need
- Not helping you get medical aid
- Refusing you the opportunity to live authentically (particularly if you are LGBTQIA+)
- Not helping you, or restricting your ability, to have a full or enriched life
- Refusal to provide the basics of a functional relationship (care, attention, honesty, involvement) and blaming you for not doing enough

There's a common belief that some people attract abusers, but abusers aren't picky – they'll try and attach to anyone and the skill that needs to be developed is how to put up healthy boundaries and put distance between yourself and the abuser in question.

Gaslighting

Gaslighting is a very common tactic involving changing your perception of events, refusal to accept your testimony and insisting you are wrong, disregarding your concerns, or blaming you for your “perceived” experience. Some people aren't aware that their behaviours are gaslighting, but that doesn't excuse them. If you are in contact with someone who engages in gaslighting and refuses to address their behaviour caution is strongly advised.

- If you feel like you need to record your conversations because you're repeatedly told you're wrong despite your recollection or evidence, you're almost certainly being gaslit. Recording conversations outside of self protection or accessibility is not ok, nor is it ok to share them.

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Remember: there is no "accidentally" recording things unless you're interrupted doing an activity where recording is necessary

- If you feel like you're losing your mind because of unexplained discrepancies, that's a sign of gaslighting
- Contradicting your experiences with no evidence
- Insisting that you must be wrong because of "stress" or "mental health"
- Consistent insistence that your opinion or experience is not valid
- Quickly changing their opinions, either without obvious reason or for personal gain and then denying their previous position
- Minimising your experiences or expressions of concern
- Saying "that's not my experience, so I'm not taking yours seriously." or anything similar
- Saying "that never happened" when it's already been acknowledged or there's evidence

One thing a person might do is called "lampshading" where they point out what they intend to do so that you can't call them out on their behaviour, for example: "I'm not going to gaslight you, *but-*". It's completely ok to then say, "you said you weren't going to do that, but actually that's exactly what's happened."

Abuse Through Duty Or Obligation

A manipulator or abuser will often try to trap you into a relationship, or a situation of benefit to them, through duty or obligation. This often involves guilt, shaming, or demeaning you through phrases like: "What else are you good for?", "I need you to live.", "You can't leave me like this." Everyone must make *their own choices* about what responsibilities they are happy to take on, but it should always be done willingly without coercion. If they've been threatening self harm and you refuse to do what they want their actions are their own responsibility.

- You're "the only person available" to provide short term or long term personal care due to illness or injury
- There's an unexpected pregnancy (either yours, theirs, or someone else's for whom you've been assigned responsibility)
- They lent you money and now you "owe them" beyond reasonable expectation, such as putting up with abusive behaviour
- You have to take up family obligations, despite the emotional or physical impact
- You feel a duty to community that involves sacrificing your own well-being, desires, or needs.
- You have to pretend to be happy and loving (otherwise known as "Fawning" which can cause trauma associations with expressions of positive emotions) to prevent them becoming upset
- They have extreme mental health issues and either refuse professional help or insist that they need your support in particular. Some may threaten suicide to prevent you from leaving the relationship, to force you to drop your own life for their care, or to force you into behaving a particular way*

*People who are in crisis with their mental health need to be seeking a professional during these times. The average person, while well meaning, can easily make the situation much worse. Offering someone support and talking them down from MH spiral are two very different things that can leave all participants vulnerable to trauma. If you decide to offer someone support in a MH emergency, be prepared to offer it for months afterwards as well as the sudden removal of support can cause major

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set backs. If this person in particular engages in abusive behaviour long term support puts your safeguarding at risk – it's important to consider the well-being of both the individuals.

Verbal Abuse

Verbal abuse is aggressive or derogatory words, shouted or spoken. It's one of the most common forms of abuse as it takes little effort and there is rarely any evidence left behind, which makes witnesses and any evidence crucial to criminal or civil cases.

It can include:

- Insults
- Threats of physical or emotional harm, or blackmail
- Accusations of crimes
- Defamatory remarks relating to demographic
- Degradation and Humiliation
- Accusations against those in your support network
- Passive aggression
- Emotional manipulation

Gender Abuse

Gender abuse is when someone is cruel or controlling about your sex, gender, identity, transitional status, or other demographic. This can apply to everyone, but is most commonly experienced by people who are gender diverse and/or women.

- Insisting your identity isn't valid
- Insisting you can't change sex
- Refusal to use your correct name or pronouns, even if they change regularly
- Treating you as sub-human (for example: by withholding things you need or treating you disrespectfully)
- Transphobia of any kind
- Being derogatory about your gender or sex
- Giving priority to others because of your demographic
- Trying to, or succeeding, in restricting your access to HRT meds or surgery
- Telling people details about your identity, struggles, or body without permission
- Using slurs against you
- Insisting you're incapable of the same things they are (e.g. looking after finances because you're a woman)
- Physical abuse based on your assumed sex at birth
- Gender diversity based fetishizing

Psychological/Emotional Abuse

We all know abuse often consists of physical violence, it can also be combined with psychological violence which can be difficult to quantify and intersects with the other forms of abuse covered in this guide. Emotional abuse is often a precursor to physical abuse.

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Types of emotionally abusive behaviour:

- Physical, verbal, or digital aggression
- Withholding communication beyond reason (no one is obligated to be constantly available)
- Sudden or complete emotional withdrawal outside of being genuinely hurt and setting boundaries
- Blaming or shaming
- Systematic diminishment
- Calling the police on you or others for made up reasons
- Tricks or forces you into defending yourself, physically, verbally, or via text, and then uses it against you
- Lying (either explicitly or implying) about the actions and intentions of those in your support network
- Lying about you
- Convincing you that others hate you, that you won't be believed, or that you can't get help
- Indicating that your time or emotions aren't worth as much as theirs
- Deliberately buying clothes too small or big for you to make you feel bad about your size or appearance
- Derogatory comments about your looks

This can result in:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- PTSD
- CPTSD
- Phobias
- Psychosis
- Changes of behaviours
- Damaged sense of self or integrity
- Lashing out
- Uncertainty or doubt
- Poor physical health

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is an action taken against you that causes physical harm, which is often aimed at areas of the body that aren't typically visible. The reason for this is two-fold: it makes it unlikely someone will accidentally see, and it makes you more reluctant to show evidence if it's on a more intimate part of the body.

Ways of causing harm:

- Throwing objects at you
- Throwing hot drinks on you
- Pinching
- Grabbing
- Squeezing
- Punching
- Slapping
- Dragging

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- Kicking
- Biting
- Scratching
- Any type of touching without your consent

Effects of physical abuse:

- Injuries ranging from mild to requiring hospital treatment
- Panic and anxiety
- Flinching
- Reluctance to show skin
- Reluctance to leave the house
- PTSD
- Desire to withdraw from friends or family
- Lowered sense of self esteem

If you are being left with injuries make sure to keep a record of them, either by seeing a medical professional or taking pictures. If your phone isn't secure from your abuser ask a friend or family member **you trust** to take pictures for you.

The major hallmark of abuse is things done to you without your consent, if you are an adult engaging in BDSM the rules of encounters should be extremely clear and respected at all times, with both parties full and enthusiastic consent.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is when someone violates your sexual bodily autonomy, or perpetrates psychological abuse, both of which can take various forms. It's important to acknowledge that assault is not sex.

Psychological Sex Abuse:

- Insulting your body
- Insulting your sexual habits
- Showing you nude or inappropriate pictures without your consent
- Being asked out romantically or having physical contact initiated after having been told "No."
- Degrading you sexually through comments
- Degrading you sexually to other people, or sharing details about you/your sex life without your consent
- Refusal to acknowledge boundaries
- If you are gender diverse, (trans, non-binary, intersex) insisting that you will always be the gender you were assumed to be as birth (often accompanied by forced stripping or physical abuse)
- Sharing images of you without your consent
- "Corrective" assault, sexual abuse with the aim to change something about you – often gender identity or sexual orientation
- Exposing their own genitals to you without consent, either in private or public settings

Physical sex abuse:

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- Touching your genital or intimate areas without consent – including doing it to prove a point about your assumed gender at birth
- Attempting to persuade you to drop boundaries or engage in sexual activities in inappropriate places
- Using force to take action on you
- Wearing you down by refusing to take “No.” as the answer
- Taking an action during sex or BDSM that you haven’t consented to
- Forcing you to undress
- Touching you while asleep
- Using sex aids without your consent

Digital sexual violation:

- Taking pictures or video of someone without their consent
- Sharing Videos or images without consent
- Downloading, or leaving open tabs of, porn on your devices that you aren’t comfortable with
- Sharing stories of you online without consent
- Grooming you into sexual relationships through online means

Gender diverse people are extremely vulnerable to abuse, with “corrective” assaults and breach of trust being commonplace. Value your safety and take precautions or post care seriously.

Digital abuse generally

Digital abuse is anything that happens online that defames you, harasses you, or causes you distress. This can range from social media posts about you or to you, posted videos, unwanted emails or persistent messages, and violations of your property.

- Spreading lies about you on social media
- Creating fake accounts to harass you
- Creating fake accounts to spy on you
- Breaking into your device to access your personal information, social media profiles, pictures, messages, pretend to be you to buy items or interact with others, or to plant data
- Taking advantage of your unattended device to read your messages, look through your files, or take/send your files
- Sharing images of you
- Sharing your work
- Sharing your personal stories or details

There are a few ways to protect your safety online, such as VPNs, setting your accounts to private, using the block button, double factor authentication, and setting email senders as spam. If the harassment is ongoing keep a record and send it to the police. Using and changing passwords on your devices and logging out when using browsers is highly recommended.

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Drug abuse

On rare occasions someone might take advantage of your prescribed medications or pressure you into taking illegal substances, which can be difficult to deal with. Here we will cover what those situations might look like.

- Taking your prescribed meds from you when they don't need them, for personal use or to sell
- Asking you to get more or extra of your meds
- Encouraging you to take medications you don't need
- Tricking you into taking medication or drugs
- Taking advantage of you while under the influence of medications or drugs
- Getting you to deliver meds or drugs to other people when you don't want to
- Encouraging you to take medication or drugs that you are trying to come off (with Dr support)
- Pressuring you into taking Drugs
- Making you “earn” your meds or drugs
- Controlling an addict by taking advantage of their vulnerability

Drug addiction is a serious issue that can lead to long term physical and mental health problems, homelessness, and poverty and early intervention can save your life.

Racial Abuse

Racial abuse is directed at you because of the colour of your skin or perceived origins, often consisting of slurs, dehumanising treatment, withholding of resources or opportunities, and assault.

As a white person it is not my place to speak on racial abuse for others, people who have direct experience of this have spoken about it at length and much better than I ever could. If you have experienced racial abuse please seek education and advice from people who have more experience and relevant resources to share, for now I have these red flags to offer on the subject, for people who might experience or commit these acts:

- Race based slurs
- Denying racism exists, either individually or institutionally
- Believing and perpetuating racist beliefs expressed by the media
- Believing others should be treated inhumanely or without compassion for not being indigenous to your country
- Race based sexual harassment and assault
- Racist stereotypes
- Race based fetishizing
- Race based harassment or violence
- Refusal to give credence to the experiences of other races
- Making negative judgements on strangers based on their colour

This list barely touches on the subject. Please go and find more education on the subject to protect yourself and others.

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Parental Abuse

While parents must maintain an element of control, it's common for them to believe that they have a right of ownership over their child and thus have the right to treat them however they want. Parental abuse can look like:

- Controlling what their child wears, outside of gratuitously offensive items or excessively revealing outfits on minors.
- Controlling what, how, or when their child eats (including forced dieting, deliberate overfeeding, withholding of appropriate nutrition, or excessive control over snacks)
- Physical pain as punishment or repeated “accidents”
- Emotional trauma
- Neglect
- “Sexual” abuse
- fostering dependency
- Repeated refusal to let their child see friends
- Controlling their child's romantic/sexual life when the situation is healthy for them
- Any of the behaviour listed in this booklet

Educational Abuse

While not inherently domestic educational abuse easily spills over into a person's personal life. Uncomfortable though the conversation may be, some people should not be teachers. Often people fall into the profession and use it to mistreat the people under their care.

- Judging new students as being troublemakers from the start and refusing to give them the opportunity to be different or good at their studies
- Repeatedly singling a student out
- Aggressiveness, verbally or physically
- Giving work a lower score than is deserved
- Telling parents information about a student's life that puts them in danger
- Neglect in their duties of care or education
- Physical touching
- Encouraging students to mistreat each other
- Showing material that's age inappropriate
- Unfounded accusations of lies or misdeeds
- Parents controlling a young person's ability to learn, through restriction or over exertion
- Parents preventing a young person from engaging in normal educational activities
- Using home schooling to influence a young person into an abusive lifestyle (such as being a “trad wife”)

Medical Abuse

Medical professionals often engage in discriminatory or neglectful behaviour, particularly against minorities or those whose life factors can be blamed on themselves.

- Withholding or suddenly stopping medications

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- Refusal to treat ailments or find answers
- Derogatory behaviour
- Refusal to make requested referrals
- Physical abuse such as causing pain, sexual contact, or unnecessary requests for removal of clothes or intimate examinations
- Treating you in a way that causes you anxiety
- Prescribing you medications you don't need or want (seek a second opinion before outright refusal to take them)
- Attempting to get serious intervention on the basis of mental health reasons without just cause
- Refusal to make referrals
- Blaming other factors, such as weight or being trans, for unrelated health conditions

Celebrity/Public Figure Abuse

While the days where high profile celebrities are left unattended with the public are now much rarer, the abusive behaviours live on through internet celebrities who use para-social relationships to their advantage. The relationship between a celebrity or fan will always have a power imbalance as a fan is always eager to maintain a relationship, often regardless of cost, and the celebrity protected from consequences by their money, influence, and the devotion of strangers.

- Engaging minors in sexual conversations
- Requesting pictures of your body or clothes
- Promising fame or opportunities in exchange for a relationship or service
- Attempting to isolate you from your friends/family/community, either during general life or during private opportunities (such as at a backstage event so they can pray on you)
- Negging or lowering your self esteem
- Promising you rewards for extreme behaviour
- Blaming other demographics for your problems
- Dehumanising others
- Encouraging violent behaviour
- Encouraging the rejection of peer reviewed science for guilt-free abuse of others

Para-social relationships are the one-way feelings fans have for someone they see in any kind of media – Youtube creators are often the most accessible public figures to gain contact with and their movements are not as noticed by the general populace, making it easier for them to become predatory and groom vulnerable people into far-right radicalism and sexual abuse.

Coercive control

Coercive control is when people use abusive methods to control your mentality, finances, behaviour, or life factors, usually by wearing down your self esteem or threatening you with a loss of life necessities (housing or money for example).

Coercive control is a crime that can be prosecuted.

- Insisting that if you don't do what they want there's something wrong with you, or that there'll be a consequence
- Using emotional manipulation against you to control your behaviour

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- Uses finances to control your behaviour or that of others
- Makes you do things to others that are wrong, because of manipulation or threat

Cultural Abuse

Cultural abuse is passed down through generations and is found in every community, and sometimes individual families. It can include social expectations that are damaging, normalised physical abuse, verbal abuse, and every other kind already listed in this document. It's often so ingrained in a culture, be that country or ethnicity, that it can be difficult to spot as being unusually harmful and can take many years to identify and recover from. Some examples:

- Insisting on adhering to beliefs like “The English don't cry” or “You have to be the best, nothing else is acceptable” even when it causes you distress or pain
- Corporal punishments
- Control over your development as an individual
- Using you as an unwilling tool for family advancement, through your profession or marriage

Religious Abuse

Some subsections of religions can be very harmful, but is not necessarily indicative of the entire faith. Research shows that religious beliefs are moulded to fit a persons world view*, and so there is great variation in practices and behaviours; sometimes a person will use their faith to manipulate or hurt others, such as telling children that they will be eternally tormented in the afterlife for the most minor infraction. If a person is making you feel unsafe or scared with their beliefs, including their beliefs of what will (or should) happen to you, it is a good indicator that there is an aspect of abuse happening – which they themselves might have been a victim of. They might even use their faith to outright threaten you, at which point you should consider taking measures to protect your safety. Be on the lookout for these warning signs:

- Insisting your behaviour is sinful or harmful (without evidence)
- Ostracizing you for minor “infractions”
- Punishing you for non harmful activity
- Making up reason why your actions negatively effect others without evidence (e.g. you being gay harms the community)
- Holding eternal punishments or rewards over you
- Insisting on you contributing finances or labour
- Being derogatory to or about you
- Using threat or manipulation to force you into keeping secrets

*A persons world view can be manipulated in religious settings to conform to those of the group.

“Cult” Abuse – Otherwise known as High Control Groups (HCGs)

A cult is a group of people who come together, often with a particular goal or belief set that can be religious in nature. This can include mainstream religions or small groups. The global distress is currently a breeding ground for HCGs as people who are vulnerable look for ways to make sense of the world, and their experiences. They are not inherently bad, but there are some standard hallmarks

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of an abusive situation with a High Control Group that should be kept in mind when interacting with new people:

- Encouraging you to withdraw from family and friends, or keep secrets from them
- Love bombing (phases of affection mixed with phases of abusive behaviour)
- Encouraging you to be cruel to others
- Not allowing leaders to be questioned
- Not allowing differing opinions
- Deceptive Recruitment tactics
- Using intimidation or fear against you
- Extreme illegal activities
- Gaslighting
- Encouraging you to take on an identity that was not your idea nor something you feel naturally drawn to
- Sudden aggression
- Emotional manipulation (guilt, blackmail, emotional ransom, insults, accusations, ect)
- Fostering dependence, particularly in young people
- Strict rules
- Restricting your use of language, particularly if it pertains to them or their treatment of you
- Targeting of people in vulnerable positions for recruitment or harassment
- Expectation of submission
- Refusal of new members without permission
- General “Clique” behaviours
- Making a villain out of one (or several) members
- Blind devotion to a central figure, or unwavering loyalty to an “unassuming” presence despite evidence of misdeeds
- Refusal to hear any criticisms
- Targeting outsiders for abuse
- Demanding or expecting monetary “donations” or other financial support/purchases
- Expectation of physical or emotional labour
- Keeping members under stress to make them easy to manipulate
- Insisting members must improve in some way
- Appropriating positive language to create a facsimile of safety
- Agreeing with anything a person says to seem trustworthy, even if it directly contradicts their own opinions, then using that trust to manipulate
- Agreeing with anything a person says to force their position to be correct and unchallengeable, even if it directly contradicts their own opinions, then using that to enforce their own way
- Threat of consequence
- Refusal to let people leave, targeting those who do
- “Mind Hive” behaviour, where every event or action must be exposed and discussed amongst the leaders while others are not included in the conversation*
- Exerting control through romance and sexuality, either in their own relationships or between those of others in the group
- Financial control through coercive means, such as pyramid schemes or enforced labour

Cults are often thought of as being exclusively religious, but this is not the case – a cult can also be atheist, fixated on a group delusion, well-being based, business based, spiritual, or cultural. Any

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faction that meets these criteria could be a risk to yourself or others, and could even be as small scale as a family situation or new social group. It's also possible for a cult to not engage in harmful behaviours at all, but even the most well meaning people can accidentally slip up. Look for signs of planned or repeated abuse to safeguard yourself.

One of the most common ways people are recruited to High Control Groups is through youtube videos that lead to extremist far right views, as well as most social media websites. Every website or social media has a toxic "community" hidden away or blatantly obvious, and caution is advised when engaging with people and content online.

*This is a prime opportunity for a manipulator to get several people on side and then let herd mentality take over, meaning as long as the central group agrees any objections are not considered valid.

People who are emotionally vulnerable, traumatised, or already isolated are prime targets for cult behaviour. The best counter to targeted recruitment is an environment that fosters feelings of safety.

What to do if you suspect someone is being abused

Being there for someone who might be in a dangerous situation can be taxing on your own mental health, make sure you don't overstretch yourself – no one is super human. Here are some tips that can help you support a loved one.

- Don't try and force them to leave a negative situation as it often causes them to double down
- Be gentle when pointing out that what they're going through is abuse
- A victim is often being manipulated, and applying pressure won't counteract that
- Provide a calm, safe, and welcoming environment for them to talk
- Offer what help you reasonably can that doesn't also put you in danger, effect your mental health, or quality of life (such as relationships)
- Offer to keep a record of evidence safe for them
- Help them make a safety plan – a way to exit their situation, such as things to pack, where to go, or finding free legal advice
- Set up a safety word they can use with you to indicate they're in danger without an abuser knowing
- Let them know you're concerned about their safety, and why
- Don't judge them or put blame on them
- If they decide to stay continue to offer support in a way that safeguards yourself
- Encourage them to do things outside of their relationship

It's important to understand that the responsibility of aiding someone who is undergoing domestic abuse is not entirely on you, there are lots of resources that can be called on to help rectify the situation. If you feel the weight of situation is becoming difficult, seek support of your own through helplines and counselling. Never sacrifice yourself and your well-being, you are not a saviour. Putting obligation on yourself can cause resentment and emotional instability, serious problems need a serious professional.

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What to do if you suspect a someone is an abuser

If you think someone you know might be an abuser be careful about how you approach the situation, your actions can inflame their behaviour (which would not be your fault, but isn't desirable). Trying to diffuse the tension will not typically work if someone is being abusive, and reacting unpredictably can make it worse. Try to offer their victim(s) support, and cut out as much contact as possible with people who put your well-being in jeopardy. Remember you have a right to determine how you're willing to be treated in a relationship, and if you see red flags or get feelings that someone may be unsafe to be around you're entitled to decide who you want to be in your life, and to set boundaries with people who you can't, or don't want to, cut out. If you confront an abuser about their behaviour they may well respond confrontationally, with complete denial, or (if they're extremely manipulative) pretend to take your feedback on board. It's not impossible for people to change their ways, but don't believe it without evidence.

Ways an abuser will behave, a recap:

- Abuse is most likely to happen behind closed doors
- It will often start after they think their victim is unlikely to leave, such as after marriage, declarations of emotion or bonds, beginning of dependency, or having gained some kind of control over their victim to be
- Might be sweet and apologetic in the early stages when the relationship is new and insecure
- They often won't consider the survivor to have been abused at all
- They will deny their actions
- They will blame their victims
- They are possessive, and their behaviour can escalate if they feel safe in their ownership of someone or that it has become insecure
- They might present opposing personalities, one nice and easy to like and one nasty and aggressive. Those who only experience the nice facade might not be willing to accept the nastiness. Likewise, confidence and authority could be opposing vulnerability and inflated (or made up) victimhood. Humans are complicated and fully capable of complete contradictions, regardless of being an abuser, victim, or someone completely outside of such dynamics, but abusers will often be extreme about their personality swings
- They can be controlling, and may spy on their victim
- Might attempt to make their presence seem valuable
- Might become aggressive or emotional if confronted in any way
- Might try and control other's ability to talk about the situation, with themselves or others
- Might try to oppose feedback or criticism with DARVO techniques
- They can be oversensitive, and will often respond with rage to minor things
- There will often be a love bombing phase after abuse with apologies and shows of guilt

You can attempt to point out that their behaviour is classed as abuse, but they will most often be resentful and determined that they are always right. They may also turn those accusations around on you. The perpetrator must be willing to change their behaviour first to be receptive to feedback or support in improving themselves, and they will often find the suggestion of counselling threatening as it implies they are, or have, a problem – but framing it in a positive light can be helpful. If you feel that someone in their vicinity is in danger consider having a sensitive conversation with them over what behaviour might be harmful to them without placing blame, as they might not be receptive to what might be seen as a personal attack on someone they care about.

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What to do if you have been abusive

Acknowledging your behaviour is the first step, it can be difficult to accept a negative responsibility but it also holds the promise of improvement for yourself and others. Often the person committing the abuse either believes that there's wrong with doing it or that their behaviour is either warranted or an exception, but instigating any kind of violence is not acceptable.

- Keep a clear understanding of what is and is not abuse
- Stop rationalising aggressive behaviour
- Getting professional help through counselling is essential
- Change the life factors that lead you to be abusive, childhood trauma for example should be treated
- Listen to the people you've hurt without becoming defensive, making excuses, or placing yourself at the center of the situation
- Take the survivors lead
- Face the fear of accountability
- Don't expect forgiveness, but do offer sincere apology

Remember that you can stop hurting others at any time, you have the tools to gain control over yourself.

Where you can get help

You can access aid through any medical professional, such as your GP, who will be able to provide help and support.

Norfolk Local:

NIDAS

0300 561 0555 referrals@nidasnorfolk.co.uk

Leeway

0300 561 0077

adviceandsupport@leewaynwa.org.uk live chat available at leewaysupport.org

Sue Lambert Trust

01603 622406

info@suelamberttrust.org

suelamberttrust.org

National:

Refuge's National Domestic Abuse Helpline

0808 2000 247 (online service available)

Men's Advice

0808 8010 327 and info@mensadviceline.org.uk (online service available)

ManKind on 0182 3334 244

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Galop

0800 999 5428 and help@galop.org.uk (LGBTQIA+)

Karma Nirvana

0800 5999 247 for forced marriage and honour crimes. You can also call 020 7008 0151 to speak to the GOV.UK Forced Marriage Unit

Women can email helpline@womensaid.org.uk

If you are concerned you might be abusive, you can seek help at the Respect Helpline 0808 802 4040

When calling **999** from a landline, all calls go to centres and will be answered by operators who will ask which service you need. If no service is asked for and anything suspicious is heard you will be connected to a police call handler.

When calling **999** from a mobile and making a sound would put you or someone else in danger, your call will be transferred to the Silent Solution system and you will be asked to press 55.

What to do if you're thinking of reporting it to the police

The police are there to provide a service to you, however you should be aware of police limitations, and that they are just as fallible as anyone else. Successful court cases for abuse are relatively rare, and cases that go forward to prosecution must meet a strict criteria. If you feel your case has been handled incorrectly you can contact the Independent Office of Police Complaints or the police station directly to make a formal complaint.

You have the right to request someone with domestic abuse training when giving your statement or someone with whom you're likely to be more comfortable, such as someone from your own demographic, although there's no guarantee that can be provided.

It's important to file abuse with the police as it keeps a record of behaviour which can support future claims, either by yourself or someone else, but maintain a realistic view of potential outcomes.

You are entitled to take someone with you for support, particularly if you are classed as vulnerable, and can request an official "appropriate adult" to attend the appointment with you.

If you feel the police are applying pressure on you to not follow up on the case or have attempted to dismiss the case without seeing the evidence, make a complaint.

When making a statement to the police provide as much evidence as possible, and be honest about how the abuse has impacted you. Sometime people use larger words and don't talk about their feelings to seem more rational and trustworthy, but this can hurt your case later on. Prosecuting abuse of any kind (for example, hate crimes) relates to the negative impact it's had on the victim/survivor, and often cases with good evidence don't go forward because of those missing details. Use honest phrases and words like: "I was offended," "I was terrified," and "It hurt me."

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Alternatives to the police

Civil suits:

Civil suits have a higher rate of success than criminal prosecutions, and can provide things like restraining orders to help you protect your safety. Some charities will provide free legal aid if this is a route you're interested in.

Community aid:

Your local community can often be a great source of support and provide you with food, housing, help in moving, or other resources. Community can often be a bit daunting as it can seem like you're putting yourself on display for the public, but this doesn't have to be the case! Community can have a lot of different meanings, for example: activity groups you belong to, social groups at your place of education or work, or your local area - it's essentially anyone you are connected to. You can also seek help on social media, just keep in mind that it's often a public forum which can put you at risk.

Mutual Aid:

Mutual aid can be accessed through community survivor support groups, where you can find emotional support. Survivors of domestic abuse can possibly provide co-habitation options, help moving, help with child care, and other needs – so long as they are able, appropriate, and willing to provide. It's important to remember that when people have suffered trauma their resources are limited.

Post Abuse Care

Non recognition of abuse is very common amongst survivors and victims as a coping or defence mechanism to master, minimize, or tolerate the effects. Taking a first step in dealing with the situation can be difficult for many, and the affected person should be supported in overcoming their challenges. Those without support are less likely to be successful in leaving an abusive environment, and healthy boundaries should be observed by everyone involved.

It's normal to miss your abuser, it's a feeling they might have fostered in you or they may have been a large part of your life, if you feel the temptation to contact them or go back to them, ask yourself: "in what way did they enrich my life/make my life better?" before you take an action that might put you back in harms way.

Symptoms of trauma related illnesses:

- Flinching
- Flashbacks
- Unexplained pain
- Persistent guilt
- Low mood
- Thoughts of self harm
- Actual self harm
- Obsessive thoughts
- Intrusive thoughts of violence
- Low motivation
- Lack of enthusiasm for loved ones or hobbies

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- Deliberate self isolation
- Lack of self esteem
- Low self worth
- Addiction or escapism through drugs or alcohol
- Nightmares
- Eating disorders
- Acting out through extreme or risky behaviours
- Life ending ideation or actualisation (suicidal tendencies)
- Mistrust of others
- Trauma responses in behaviour

Abuse can leave you traumatised, which will need treatment or it could lead to negative impacts on the rest of your life or for those around you. You can get free or cheap or free treatment through various charities, the NHS, or online services. Medication and trauma therapy can be life saving after having gone through abuse. Empower yourself, seek help.

You are worthy of respect, dignity, and safety. You are enough.

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