

MARKERS AND EXAMPLES OF RELATIONAL ABUSE AND VIOLENCE

While not the only way to organize aspects and markers of abuse and violence, these categories offer a means to identify and classify types and degrees. Rather than mutually exclusive categories, they function like layers or dimensions. Emotional cruelty always includes mental torment, and physical abuse always constitutes mental and emotional abuse. Verbal abuse is assumed within these categories because words act as a primary means for delivering the mental, emotional, and spiritual assault.

MENTAL – a pattern in the use of words and actions to assault, reorder, and control the thoughts and ideas of the other person for the achievement of selfish ends. The more intense, consistent, and longstanding the pattern, the more destructive it is to the oppressed.

LESS SEVERE	SEVERE	MOST SEVERE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regular, harsh criticism ● Name-calling ● Constant questioning and challenging of thoughts and perspective; ● Cold shoulders or silent treatment to punish ● Frequent “innocent” sarcasm about the ideas of the other person ● Instinctive defensiveness ● Habitual dishonesty or shading of the truth to avoid accountability ● Habitually blaming partner for problems or misunderstandings ● Twisting words to confuse the other and evade communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Frequent insults; biting sarcasm ● Threats of suicide or harm to self during or after conflict ● Playing mind games ● False accusations as a means to control ● Mocking and belittling ● Yelling/Screaming or using tone to instill fear ● Separating partner from friends ● Isolating partner from contact with friends and family ● Withholding help when reasonable to provide it, whether money, medical care, transportation, or other resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Threats of physical harm ● Vicious, demeaning words ● Constant assaults upon character ● Threats to harm children or friends, or actually harming the children to control or punish the partner. ● Severe and repetitive verbal harassment and intimidation ● Relentless attacks upon, and controlling of, the partner’s view of reality. ● Subjecting partner to verbal rants and lectures that are designed to humiliate, punish, and subjugate

EMOTIONAL – a pattern in the use of words and actions to assault, reorder, and control the emotions and affective state of the other person for the achievement of selfish ends. The more intense and long-standing the pattern, the more destructive it is to the people involved. Of course, there is plenty of overlap with the other categories of abuse. Words and actions that constitute mental abuse will certainly take an emotional toll as well.

LESS SEVERE	SEVERE	MOST SEVERE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular, low-grade anger • Blames other person for frustration and irritability • Constant criticism and questioning of how the other person feels • Cold shoulders; Silent treatment when upset in order to arouse guilt or anxiety in the other person • Subtle attempts at humiliation • Aloof or calloused to the emotional pain and burdens of the other person • Places responsibility for hurt feelings of the oppressed person onto the sensitivity of the oppressed person. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional explosiveness • Insults, biting sarcasm, mocking to wear partner down • Threats of suicide or harm to self in order to produce sympathy, shame, or guilt in the other person • Playing mind games • Trying to induce guilt and shame in order to manipulate • Taking advantage of emotional frailty and weakness • Attempts to instill fear in order to control the other person. • Sudden and unpredictable changes of mood, quickly or from day-to-day, in order to destabilize partner and induce fear • Using filthy language and swear words to demean or threaten • Threats to harm children, family, or friends to intimidate and control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threats of physical harm • Vicious, demeaning words • Constant assaults upon character • Severe and repetitive verbal harassment and intimidation • Attempts to instill terror for the fun of it • Really aggressive mocking and ridicule • Expressing a sense of pleasure in the emotional pain of partner • Creating public situations designed to humiliate, embarrass, or threaten partner and often with the aim to punish/control

PHYSICAL – a pattern in the use of posture, property, and physical contact to assault, punish, and control another person for the achievement of selfish ends. The more intense and longstanding the pattern the more destructive it is to people. The more aggressive and violent the physical assaults, the greater the toll it takes over time.

LESS SEVERE	SEVERE	MOST SEVERE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A bristled, threatening posture ● Hostile facial expressions ● Clenched fists ● Slamming doors ● Getting in the face of the other person ● Poking or flicking in anger ● Self-harm to punish and manipulate ● Refusal to offer simple physical assistance ● Use of law enforcement, legal counsel, and churches to threaten the physical and financial livelihood of another. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Grabbing or restraining ● Pushing and shoving ● Stalking ● Feinting a strike or punch ● Punching walls ● Throwing objects around the house ● Spitting on the other person ● Forced drug use ● Destroying other person's items of value ● Slapping ● Physically isolating other person from friends and relatives ● Refusal to offer vital physical assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Punching ● Biting ● Stabbing ● Shooting ● Forced confinement ● Torture ● Hitting with objects ● Physical injury to the other person's loved ones, including children ● Active, careful, and sinister involvement of law enforcement or churches to threaten or severely harm the physical and financial well being of a person

SEXUAL – related to physical violence, but more centered around sexual organs, ideas, and acts. Involves the use of sexual thoughts, privileges, and acts to assault, demean, devalue, manipulate, and control the other person for the achievement of selfish ends.

LESS SEVERE	SEVERE	MOST SEVERE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Unwanted sexual touch of genitals, breasts, backside ● Pushing for sexual acts that feel demeaning to the other person ● Criticizing sexual performance ● Comparing to others ● Viewing pornography before, during, or after sexual intercourse ● Refusing sex to punish or manipulate ● Sexual teasing with no intent to fulfill aroused desires with the intention of frustrating partner. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coerced sex using threats or incentives (perhaps to avoid a beating or violent outburst) ● Forcing unwanted behaviors during sex (like sodomy), or unwanted locations (like in a public restroom) ● Verbal or physical punishment if the other person doesn't comply ● Use of sexual comments in public to manipulate partner or arouse them against their will ● Wakes spouse from sleep and demands sex; punishes when invitation is declined, or not accepted with the "right" attitude 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Purposeful injury to sexual organs or breasts ● Name-calling using pejoratives for sexual organs ● Forced making of pornography, or prostitution, or involvement of other people ● Forced sexual intercourse after physical assault ● Demanding spouse let other people watch, even their children ● Use of child pornography before, during, or after sexual intimacy

FINANCIAL – a pattern in the use of money, assets, and earning power to assault, reorder, and control the thoughts and ideas of the other person for the achievement of selfish ends. The more intense and long standing the pattern the more destructive it is to people.

LESS SEVERE	SEVERE	MOST SEVERE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping control of income, expenses, and household budget for selfish ends • Limiting the access of partner to financial resources • Threats to use law enforcement, legal counsel, and church leadership to control the physical and financial livelihood of the other person • Refusal to work and provide for household in the most basic way God's Word requires, without good reason, simply to anger or punish partner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demanding control of money, assets, and household resources, and using anger to achieve that control. • Preventing partner from having any access to financial resources • Refusing to allow partner to work and earn an income • Opening bank accounts and credit cards under partner to run up debt, punish, or ruin partner financially 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active, careful, and sinister involvement of law enforcement or churches to threaten or severely harm the physical and financial well-being of a person • Sabotaging career or job opportunities to keep partner dependent and vulnerable • Stealing assets, inheritance, and other property of the partner in order to manipulate and control the partner

SPIRITUAL – a pattern in the use of spiritual authority, Scripture, and religious institutions to assault, reorder, and control the thoughts and ideas of the other person for the achievement of selfish ends. The more intense and long-standing the pattern the more destructive it is to people.

LESS SEVERE	SEVERE	MOST SEVERE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using vocal prayer to correct, instruct, or embarrass partner • Using Scripture to correct and control spouse to selfish ends • Ridiculing interest in spiritual things or growing as a Christian • Exposing spouse to false teaching about headship, submission, and authority in the home in order to keep spouse in line and under control • Distancing their relationship from healthy spiritual accountability, especially those who disagree with or question the abusive partner • Taking her to see a pastor or church leader to correct her • Sermonizing/Spiritualizing in long diatribes to shut down ideas/beliefs and/or evade accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using spiritual authority as the justification for harsh words and control • Cutting off spouse from good spiritual influences and encouragements in order to demoralize and isolate • Preventing partner from contact with godly friends in an attempt to thwart all attempts at free biblical thought or accountability for their relationship • Demeaning bible knowledge of partner in an attempt to keep sense of superiority or control • Having rules that can't be questioned and that the consequences for questioning are severe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Really sick distortions of Scripture to torment, mock, and subdue the other person • Manipulating church leaders and members in order to humiliate, control, or pressure partner • Using God and Scripture as the justification for physical, even violent punishment or “discipline” of partner • Constant, harsh questioning of spouse’s knowledge of God and Scripture in order to create constant doubt of partner’s view of truth and reality for the sake of subjugation and shame • Using God to threaten, intimidate, and control (“I leave you to God’s judgment”)

***Note:** Though the individual acts of domestic abuse can range in severity, the effects upon the internal experience of the victim can be similar. The mere threat of physical violence can produce the same quality of fear, intimidation, and humiliation as the actual perpetration of physical violence. At the same time, the perpetration of physical violence can produce a higher quantity of effect in the victim, and even cause future threats of physical violence to bring greater fear, intimidation, and humiliation. Acts of sexual violence in marriage may produce similar effects upon the victim when compared to physical violence in marriage. At the same time, it can produce effects that are unique to sexual violence. These charts are intended to help name, identify, and place the acts of domestic abuse without explaining their causes or detailing their effects.*