



## **What is Emotional Abuse?**

Emotional abuse is when someone repeatedly damages and diminishes their relationship partner's self-esteem. Emotional abuse is different from the emotional moments all couples face at one time or another. It's a pattern of behavior designed to gain power and control over the victim. Emotional abusers repeatedly chip away at their victims' self-worth and cause psychological damage that can last long after the victim leaves the relationship.

### ***What does emotional abuse look like?***

- Constant criticism
- Humiliation (public or private name calling, making you the butt of jokes)
- Bullying
- Blaming you for all problems, real or imagined
- Conveying that nothing you do will ever be good enough
- Belittling your feelings ("Get over it, you're being too sensitive")
- Being "hot and cold": one minute they love you, the next they hate you
- Withholding approval, appreciation, or affection as punishment
- Ridiculing women as a group ("You women are all crazy/emotional/stupid")
- Insulting or driving away your family and friends
- Refusing to socialize or be seen in public with you
- Requiring you to get permission to do normal, everyday things
- Using children as a weapon (punishing the children in order to punish you, encouraging them to gang up against you, or threatening to take them away from you)
- Threatening to commit suicide if you leave

### **Emotional Abuse Hurts**

The cycle of emotional abuse is difficult to break, and all abuse leaves emotional scars. Abusers usually deny or minimize their behavior, saying the victim is too sensitive, too stupid, or that "it's all in her head." Because victims cannot point to physical scars of their abuse, it can be harder for them to explain and ask for help.

It's important to know that the consequences of emotional abuse can be just as severe as physical abuse. If you think you or someone you know may be in an emotionally abusive relationship, call our free and confidential 24/7 Help/Crisis Line at 1-773-583-HOPE (4673).