

Emotional Maltreatment

Various authors define “psychological abuse” in slightly different ways. Following is a list that includes components of several definitions and lists specific features of several types of psychological maltreatment:

Rejecting

Hostile, degrading and rejecting behavior towards the child, such as belittling, ridiculing, shaming, denigrating, scapegoating and publicly humiliating the child; singling out the child for criticism, punishment, to perform most of the household chores or to receive fewer rewards.

Terrorizing

The parent threatens to hurt, kill or abandon the child; exposing the child to partner abuse; leaving the child unattended in a threatening situation; placing the child in unpredictable or chaotic circumstances; setting unrealistic or rigid expectations for the child with threat of loss, harm or danger if those expectations are not met; threatening or perpetrating violence against the child or the child’s loved ones or loved objects.

Exposure to Domestic Violence or Abuse of a Sibling

Where spousal abuse occurs, children are sometimes physically injured because they try to protect their battered parent or are unintentionally injured because of their proximity to the violence. Witnessing domestic violence or the abuse of a sibling can also have a significant impact on a child’s emotional well-being, even if there is no other maltreatment to the child. Witnessing violence is often emotionally detrimental to children, causing many of the same behavioral and emotional outcomes abused and neglected children display. However, it is also clear there is a wide variety in how children respond to being exposed to domestic violence; there appears to be little or no impact on some children.

Exploiting or Corrupting

When the caregiver encourages the child to engage in deviant behaviors, such as anti-social, criminal or self-destructive acts, substance abuse or prostitution; or financial exploitation of the child

Denying Emotional Responsiveness

Ignoring a child's attempts and need to interact, interacting with the child only when it is absolutely necessary, and behaving in a manner that is devoid of love and affection. Note that some cultures are not physically demonstrative, however, they show care and concern in other ways.

Isolating

Consistently placing unreasonable limits or restrictions on a child's social interactions and interfering with the child's need for peer and adult relationships. It is important to remember, however, not all cultures approve of what may be perceived as America's liberal approach to raising adolescents. Newly-arriving immigrants may refuse their children certain freedoms other youth have and may run into conflicts when their children reach adolescence.

Extreme Confinement

Punishments, such as confining a child to a closet or basement or excessive, prolonged confinement

Withholding Necessities and Exploitation

Withholding shelter or sleep as a means of punishment