

Emotional or Psychological Abuse

Emotional or psychological abuse is the experience of criticism, name-calling and put-downs, alone or in front of friends and relatives that over time has a debilitating effect on victims. It includes any abuse which attacks self-esteem by acts such as unjust blaming, false accusations about loyalty, controls on time, activities and actions, shouting, screaming, any form of degradation or denial of ideas and feelings. It includes living with the constant fear caused by threats to the woman or the people or animals who are dear to her, of murder and physical harm, suicide, kidnaping children, property loss or damage, or deportation. It can also include control of a woman's eating and sleeping habits, use of weapons, harassment, verbal attacks that humiliate her or make her feel insecure, constant criticism, unfair accusations, isolation from friends, forcible participation in degrading acts and all other acts which are designed to manipulate, intimidate or terrorize her into compliance. Many women report that this form of abuse can be more devastating and have a more lasting effect than other types of abuse.¹

"...he did what I felt was psychological abuse, he was playing with his guns, he had a lot of guns, testing them in front of me and I was terrified, ... he threatened a lot of times that he was going to blow his own head off, I also felt that before he did that he would blow my head off."

"I couldn't be any more afraid of him, he never hit me but he would get really angry. ... he would come right up in my face, and ... I'd be bent over like he was right in my face. ... I had no memory anymore, I was a Registered Nurse, but I couldn't work, I could barely cope. I couldn't clean the house, I couldn't do anything ... I just know that I felt like I wanted to die. I just wanted to be dead because it was too painful to live..."

"He had a gun [and] ... I wasn't allowed to put it away. Sometimes, he would have a bullet for each one of us sitting beside it, like it was a symbol to me, I hated it all those years..."

1. □ Prince Edward Island Woman Abuse Protocols, 2000

"He did everything to me, took everything away from me, he verbally abused me bad, blamed me for running around, I never did, verbal abuse really bad, running me down in front of the kids, waking the kids up all hours of the night, screaming and yelling ... there's nothing he didn't do to me, mental, social. I couldn't go out with people around him, he'd be running me down in front of them and making me feel bad, and he had me believing that I was nobody, no good for nothing. I didn't have any self esteem when I left, I thought I was no good ... I couldn't eat at the table some days, because he wouldn't let me, he'd run me down to the lowest so I'd go away, a real monster."

Woman Abuse
and the
PEI Justice System
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www.isn.net/~tha/womanabuseresearch/

The quotes in this document are from PEI women interviewed in 1999 during herStory of woman abuse and the PEI justice system, a project of the Woman Abuse and the PEI Justice System Research Team of the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research.