

Psychological abuse is common and yet few understand the psychological abuse definition enough to spot it. Without the visible signs of physical abuse, psychological abuse can stay hidden for years.

Psychological abuse, though, can be just as devastating as physical abuse. Psychological abuse can affect your inner thoughts and feelings as well as exert control over your life. You may feel uncertain of the world around you and unsafe in your own home. Psychological abuse can destroy intimate relationships, friendships and even your own relationship with yourself.

Psychological abuse also applies to children and may impair their development into a healthy adult.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Psychological abuse signs and symptoms may start small at first as the abuser “tests the waters” to see what the other person will accept, but before long the psychological abuse builds into something that can be frightening and threatening.

Signs and symptoms of psychological abuse include:

- Name calling (Read about Emotional Bullying)
- Yelling
- Insulting the person
- Threatening the person or threatening to take away something that is important to them
- Imitating or mocking the person
- Swearing at them
- Ignoring
- Isolating the person
- Excluding them from meaningful events or activities

EXAMPLES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

The signs of psychological abuse can be seen in many ways and can be manifested in many behaviours. According to Kelly Holly, author of the *Verbal Abuse in Relationships Blog*, examples of psychological abuse in a relationship include the following statements:³

- You’re so cute when you try to concentrate! Look at her, man, she’s trying to think.
- That isn’t at all what I meant. You’ll never understand how much I love you.
- If you don’t train that dog I’m going to rub your nose in its mess.
- I am more capable, smarter, and better educated than you. I will take our kids if you leave me.
- Ohhhh…I’d love to smack you right now!

Moreover, Holly points out that psychological abuse can also include social, financial, spiritual and sexual components. Examples of these types of psychological abuse include:

- Your body feels like spam.
- Stop acting like such a whore. My friends are asking me if I let you behave that way when I’m around or if it’s just something you do on your own.
- In what world does buying that make sense?
- You handle the finances for now; I’ll step in when things go to hell.
- How dare you spread around our personal family business!
- Let me do the talking; people listen to men.
- You took a vow in front of God and everybody and I expect you to honour it!
- Keep your stupid beliefs to yourself; our children don’t need you to confuse them.
- Women are to subjugate themselves to their husband in all ways.

It’s important to remember that any of these examples of psychological abuse can happen to either a man or a woman.