



PheZulu AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

ABUSE

The [United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women](#) (1993) defines violence against women as any act that results in "physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women."

Specifically, the UN defines domestic violence as a violent act perpetrated by intimate partners through:

- **physical abuse** (such as slapping, beating, arm twisting, stabbing, strangling, burning, choking, kicking, threats with an object or weapon, murder, genital mutilation, and others);
- **sexual abuse** (such as coerced sex, intimidation or physical force, forcing unwanted sexual acts or forcing sex with others);
- **psychological abuse** (includes intimidation, persecution, threats of abandonment or abuse, confinement to the home, surveillance, threats to take away custody of the children, destruction of objects, isolation, verbal aggression, and constant humiliation), and
- **economic abuse** (includes denial of funds, refusal to contribute financially, denial of food and basic needs, and controlling access to health care, employment, etc.)

The nation expressed outrage at the gang-rape, murder and mutilation of Anene Booysen, 17, in Bredasdorp, a small Western Cape rural town.

A few weeks later, the body of Ge-Audrey Bianca Green, 19, of Scottsville was found stashed in a drawer beneath a bunk bed.

A few weeks ago, the body of 18-year-old Jo-Anne Diane van Schalkwyk was found in bushes near Atlantis.

"The brutality and cruelty meted out to defenceless women is unacceptable and has no place in our country".
President Jacob Zuma: State of the Nation Address
 14/02/2013

These are but some of the incidents reported and brought to the attention of our nation.

What is emotional abuse??

Domestic abuse—defined as chronic mistreatment in marriage, families, dating and other intimate relationships — can include emotionally abusive behavior. Psychological abuse does not always lead to physical abuse, but physical abuse in domestic relationships is nearly always preceded and accompanied by psychological abuse. Murphy and O'Leary report that psychological aggression by one partner is the most reliable predictor of the other partner's likelihood of first exhibiting physical aggression.

According to the United States-based magazine "Psychology Today," one of the worst things that can happen to a person is to live with an emotional abuser.

Yes we have all the studies done and facts and definitions compiled and yet these transgressions within our societies grow daily.

"Angela's husband has never hit her. Still, she lives in fear of him as he constantly ridicules and scolds her for every little mistake she makes".

I am writing this with memories taking me back to my childhood, when emotional and physical abuse of women and children was the "norm" amongst our culture.

Women need to recognize that Control and Obsessive behaviour does not equate to love.

Are you a victim of Emotional Abuse??

Most women find it difficult to admit that their boyfriend or husband is hurting them, but don't let the embarrassment keep you in an unhealthy relationship. Krumin warns that women in emotionally abusive



PheZulu AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

relationships suffer feelings of conflict, grief, insecurity, feeling overwhelmingly stifled and that nothing they do or say is right or good enough.

Here are some questions you should ask yourself:

- Is he always blaming you for problems in your relationship?
- Do you conflicts ever get resolved?
- Is he always controlling the relationship or you?
- Are you constantly confused or insecure about where the relationship is going?
- Does he run hot or cold, fly into rages out of the blue and blame you for them?
- Do you feel trapped or cornered?
- Does he put you on a guilt trip for expressing your opinion – or are you afraid to even express your feelings or opinions?
- Do you feel like you always walking on eggshells for fear you'll say the wrong thing?
- Is everything you do or say scrutinized or judged by him?
- Does he make you feel worn down mentally and physically until you just give in to what he wants?

If you had answered “yes” to these questions, this is NOT normal. You are being emotionally abused.

Below is another quiz you may take:

Emotional Abuse Quiz *Walking on Eggshells*

Millions of relationships walk on eggshells, with the partners in constant dread that the other will set them off - push their buttons - or make them feel disregarded, rejected, unattractive, incompetent, inadequate, or afraid. There is a proven way out of this painful pattern that eventually destroys relationships. Start the healing process by taking the **Emotional Abuse Quiz**.

<http://compassionpower.com/EmotionalAbuseQuiz.php>

Basic Rights in a Relationship

If you are involved in an emotionally abusive relationship, you may not have a clear idea of what a healthy relationship is like. Evans (1992) suggests the following as basic rights in a relationship for you and your partner:

- The right to good will from the other
- The right to emotional support
- The right to be heard by the other and to be responded to with courtesy
- The right to have your own view, even if your partner has a different view
- The right to have your feelings and experience acknowledged as real
- The right to receive a sincere apology for any jokes you may find offensive
- The right to clear and informative answers to questions that concern what is legitimately your business
- The right to live free from accusation and blame
- The right to live free from criticism and judgement
- The right to have your work and your interests spoken of with respect
- The right to encouragement
- The right to live free from emotional and physical threat
- The right to live free from angry outbursts and rage
- The right to be called by no name that devalues you
- The right to be respectfully asked rather than ordered

How to cope with Emotional Abuse

1. **Realize that you cannot change your partner, only your reaction to him or her.** You can attempt to show your partner how damaging these behaviors are and how they are affecting you, and hope your partner will agree that you are being badly damaged. You can hope your partner will then make the decision to change. However, ultimately, you cannot force change. Realize that the abusiveness in your partner is rooted in multiple layers of their emotions and perspectives. Trying to change them through arguing or persuasion translates to them as the complete denial and devaluation of their experiences and realities. They will feel an immediate instinct to protect the intricacies of their own thought patterns and push your



PheZulu AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

logic away in the process. Remember that you cannot argue logically with an unreasonable person. Also remember that abusive behavior is only a manifestation of abusive thought patterns. The only thing that can change a person's thought patterns is the introduction of a different set of them created by a deeply impacting set of healthy new experiences. Afterwards, your partner will recognize the old patterns and gladly decide to end the behavior on his or her own.

2. **Your energy is most effective when you change yourself.** However, take care not to change yourself in order to primarily avoid conflict with your partner. Changing yourself is to be done with an objective mindset, not a defensive or offensive one. Choose a goal for yourself that comes from a well known truth or long-standing reality that is time proven. Do not choose a goal just to soothe a circumstantial issue generated by your partner. After a while, your spouse will respond and begin to change if they feel compelled to follow your good example. Change takes time and you have to be patient. However, year after year, you will begin to see some change. When a person is born, their heart beats 140 beats per minute. This makes young people energetic and emotional. In middle age, the heart beats 90 to 110, so middle aged people are pensive and thoughtful. In old age, the heart beats 70 beats per minute and the elderly are habitual. It has been said that a woman's body is beautiful before 40, but her personality is beautiful after 40.
3. **Set new, reasonable terms for the relationship with clear and consistently implemented consequences.** Decide (ideally together, but if that isn't possible, decide for yourself) that you're going to learn a new way of being in this relationship. Abuse most often exists because the emotional weaknesses of *the abuser* demand the exercise of control or torment of others (you) to give them a feeling of emotional security and fulfillment. Read that again, because it's important: **Abuse really starts because of insecurity or trust issues with *the abuser*.** It is most often enabled by (1) the victim's inability or failure to recognize the abusive behavior or (2) powerlessness of the victim, as in the case of a child enduring the emotional abuse of a parent. In adult relationships, ultimately, neither partner understands a healthy way to diffuse abuse and to respect each other or themselves. Establish that, effective immediately, all interactions will be honorable, and will specifically and especially exclude: name calling, character attacks/judgments, raised voices, spitting, throwing objects, etc. and that if either partner breaks the agreement, then separation will immediately be imposed until mutual respect is restored. Be prepared to accept that this may never happen, especially in advanced stages of abuse, and that your commitment to a healthy, respectful relationship may result in the termination of this abusive one.
4. **Set boundaries.** Abuse, in general, is an issue of disrespect that usually involves trespass upon individual's equality and freedom due to unclear or poorly-defined boundaries. If you are on the receiving end of abuse, it's up to you to set up clear, reasonable boundaries for an honorable relationship and to consistently stick to them. Let your partner know that you now recognize your responsibility in allowing the disrespect in the past, but that this era has now come to an end. Recognize the damage incurred by the previous era and establish a commitment to obtaining the support needed to forgive and restore the peace and strength necessary for mutual respect in all of your future relationships.
 - Continuing to enforce disrespected boundaries while living with or constantly seeing an abuser will only enable and give the abuser permission to continue the abuse. Your presence is all that is needed for them to translate it into permission. Remember, you are dealing with tragic self centeredness of unfathomable depth and complexity. The abuser sees your commitment to boundaries as a sign that you approve of their abusive behavior and in some way you are there to rescue them from themselves. You are not dealing with a reasonable person. Your logic and ethics are working in the abuser's defense, not shedding a contrasting light for them to use as guidance.
 - Do not tolerate repeated offenses longer than 30% of the total time you've been in the relationship. If you fail to stop tolerating it, then you must begin realizing your codependent streak and work against it with outside backup. You are not doomed to loneliness and the abuser does not realize or recognize how much they need you to pull away from them right now. You are not abandoning them or the relationship at this point. You have permission to separate.
5. **Develop emotional intelligence.** In cases of abuse, both partners are often unknowingly suppressing important emotions. Receivers of abuse are often uncomfortable expressing authentic, respectful anger, which is necessary to establish boundaries. Abusers are often expressing fear, not anger, when abusing. It is the "fight or flight" response that is coming through, and in order to end abuse, both partners must be willing to learn new ways of feeling and expressing their true emotions to end the pattern of blaming, shaming, and punishing. Express your deepest and strongest feelings only in forms where they will receive the fullest respect and support, such as a diary, a blog, a group of very close friends or trusted family members, a professional and respectful psychologist (best by referral only), etc.



PheZulu AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

6. **Understand the dynamics of relationship.** Some relationships are formed on physical attraction only, some on repeating past patterns learned from a parent; some are not of our choosing (as with a parent). Whether you are working out childhood issues on your partner, or simply repeating learned behaviors, it's important to understand that not many relationships are formed in the realm of intellect and emotion. Some remain largely unformed, others change over time. In a perfect world, relationships would be our highest learning playground. Perhaps the one we're with has the most to teach us, and often triggers the most extreme emotional responses. If you feel that it's safe to stay and learn with your partner, then take a good look at the dynamics playing out which have something to teach you. If you don't feel safe enough to stay, but need to end it, then reflect back on what you might learn about the relationship patterns that were in place. The learning may be about valuing yourself, unwinding old traumas, or expressing emotions healthfully.
7. **Source your safety.** It's easy to think that your partner is in charge of your safety depending on his or her behavior, but this is not true. You are the only one who can create safety for yourself. You do this by making choices. You have an innate navigational system within yourself that allows you to make decisions which feel right for you, and which will keep you safe and happy. When you learn to pay attention to your instincts, you will know which choices are life affirming, and which ones will drain you of your energy or create chaos.
8. **Get some coaching or professional help.** Find a relationship coach or mental health professional who can help you with this issue. It is possible for both partners to unwind emotional abuse if they choose to. Finding a great support system, preferably one that utilizes a holistic, no-blame approach to healing domestic violence will create the healthiest and most successful environment for learning and healing.
9. **Know when to say goodbye.** Sometimes, relationships are just wrong and cannot be saved. For your sake, and for the sake of your mental health, try hard to recognize as early as possible whether or not this relationship is even worth working on. The reason we date before marriage is to discover whether or not we are compatible. We thwart that process when we refuse to see that being treated poorly by another adult is unacceptable. If you are unhappy in your relationship, and have been for longer than half the time you have been together, leave. (Example: You have been unhappy for more than two years, but you have only been together for three years.)

Useful Contact Numbers

CHILD ABUSE - Lifeline/Childline

24HR LINE

● 0800 055 555

WOMAN ABUSE LINE

● 0800 150 150