



What is Mental Abuse?

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We hear a lot about the term mental abuse. There are many articles written about it. But what exactly is it? When someone says they have experienced mental abuse, what have they been through? Generally speaking, someone will have experienced mental abuse when the actions (including words) of another person have caused them mental hurt and pain. Some people experience mental abuse but have no idea they are being abused because that is all they know, and that is how they think things just are. Below are some more specific examples of mental abuse to help you get clearer on what it means, so you can see if you have experienced it, or, even perhaps, you are someone who engages in mentally abusing others.

- If someone invalidates your emotions, that is mental abuse. This is true whether you are an adult or a child. What you feel is what you feel. You may not want to feel like that, but someone telling you that you don't feel what you say you feel, or telling you that you may not feel a certain way is not okay.
- Being overly controlling of someone is abusive. Human beings are allowed reasonable freedom and independence. Demanding to know where someone is every second of the day and telling them how they may think and where they may go is abusive.
- If someone belittles your achievements, beware. They are engaging in mental abuse. They are trying to make you feel small and insignificant, and that no matter what you do, you are not a good enough person. Note this is not the same as someone having a different opinion. Having a different opinion is not abuse. If you have a different opinion, you can still say to someone, "I respect that is your opinion, however I have a different one".
- Shaming and embarrassing you in public is abusive.
- Abuse occurs when you make someone else responsible for your emotions. For instance, it is abusive to tell someone that you made me angry, you made me make a mistake, you make me depressed etc. You are responsible for how you feel. To try and make someone else responsible is to try and control them. If someone was not nice to you, you can say, "I found that hurtful". Then you are being honest about how you feel, you are telling someone how their actions made you feel, and you are owning your feelings.
- Using another person for your benefit is abusive. This could be a situation where someone makes friends with you to get hold of specific information or money or even emotional support that will help them, and then when their needs are met having nothing to do with you.

- Human decency says we respect others for being themselves and having differing views and opinions. It is mental abuse if someone mocks you for your interests and perspectives when they are not the same as theirs.
- If someone threatens you, your safety, your finances, or your family, then that is abusive. Intimidation is abusive.
- Refusing to listen to your side of the story, or in general refusing to listen to you, is abusive.
- If someone calls you insulting names, and most of us know what insulting names are, it is abusive.
- If you are blamed for things that others did, that is abuse.
- Getting angry with you in a way that is frightening is abusive.
- If someone makes your needs or feelings unimportant because they are the only ones whose needs or feelings matter, that is abusive.

Mental abuse, while not as obvious to most people as physical abuse, is still damaging. It leads to low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression, and can even impact your physical health negatively. For some people, mental abuse is all they have ever experienced, and so they think it is normal. For yet other people, it is a case of be mentally abused or be an abuser, and so they decide the best way to be is to abuse others. Mental abuse is never okay. Human beings have a right to be treated with respect and decency, even if you don't share their views or even like them

To lead a happy, productive, and fulfilled life, you need to free yourself from mental abuse and be in situations where you are respected and valued as a person. If you have experienced mental abuse, and you do suffer from low self-esteem, and find yourself unhappy, and living way below your potential, then do yourself a favour and get some help. It is possible, even in a fairly short time, to start to overcome the effects of mental abuse and get back on the road to living a good life.