

## WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE?

Psychological abuse involves trauma to the victim caused by verbal abuse, acts, threats of acts, or coercive tactics.<sup>i</sup> Perpetrators use psychological abuse to control, terrorize, and denigrate their victims. It frequently occurs prior to or concurrently with physical or sexual abuse.

### PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE INCLUDES:

- Humiliating the victim
- Controlling what the victim can or cannot do
- Withholding information from the victim
- Deliberately doing something to make the victim feel diminished or embarrassed
- Isolating the victim from friends and/or family
- Denying the victim access to money or other basic resources
- Stalking<sup>ii</sup>
- Demeaning the victim in public or in private
- Undermining the victim's confidence and/or sense of self-worth
- Convincing the victim (s)he is crazy

### WHY IT MATTERS:

Psychological abuse increases the trauma of physical and sexual abuse, and a number of studies have demonstrated that psychological abuse independently causes long-term damage to a victim's mental health. Victims of psychological abuse often experience depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal ideation, low self-esteem, and difficulty trusting others. Subtle psychological abuse is more harmful than either overt psychological abuse or direct aggression.<sup>iii</sup>

### DID YOU KNOW?

- 48.4% of women and 48.8% of men have experienced at least one psychologically aggressive behavior by an intimate partner.<sup>iv</sup>
- 4 in 10 women and 4 in 10 men have experienced at least one form of coercive control by an intimate partner in their lifetime.<sup>v</sup>
- 17.9% of women have experienced a situation where an intimate partner tried to keep them from seeing family and friends.<sup>vi</sup>
- 18.7% of women have experienced threats of physical harm by an intimate partner.<sup>vii</sup>
- 95% of men who physically abuse their intimate partners also psychologically abuse them.<sup>viii</sup>
- Women who earn 65% or more of their households' income are more likely to be psychologically abused than women who learn less than 65% of their households' income.<sup>ix</sup>

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### **If you need help:**

Call The National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)  
Or, online go to [DomesticShelters.org](http://DomesticShelters.org)



## Facts about Domestic Violence and Psychological Abuse

### EFFECTS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE:

- 7 out of 10 psychologically abused women display symptoms of PTSD and/or depression.<sup>x</sup>
- Women experiencing psychological abuse are significantly more likely to report poor physical and mental health and to have more than 5 physician visits in the last year.<sup>xi</sup>
- Psychological abuse is a stronger predictor of PTSD than physical abuse among women.<sup>xii</sup>

### AM I BEING PSYCHOLOGICALLY ABUSED?

Does your partner:

- Threaten to harm you, your children, your family and/or your pets?
- Tell you are worthless and that no one else will ever love you?
- Isolate you from your friends and/or family?
- Control your behavior and monitor your movements and whereabouts?
- Tell you that you are crazy?
- Demean you in public or in private?
- Constantly criticize you?
- Blame you for everything that goes wrong?
- Stalk you?
- Cause you to feel guilt over things that are not your fault?
- Threaten to take away your children?

If so, your partner may be abusing you. For help, contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE (7233), or visit [Domesticshelters.org](http://Domesticshelters.org) to access professional help.

Sources:

<sup>x</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2014). *Intimate partner violence: Definitions*. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/definitions.html>.

<sup>xi</sup>Ibid.

<sup>xii</sup>O'Leary, K. D. & Mairuo, R. D. (2005). *Psychological abuse in violent domestic relations*. New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company.

<sup>xiii</sup>Breiding, M. J., Chen, J. & Black, M. C. (2014). *Intimate partner violence in the United States – 2010*. Retrieved from [http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/cdc\\_nisvs\\_ipv\\_report\\_2013\\_v17\\_single\\_a.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/cdc_nisvs_ipv_report_2013_v17_single_a.pdf).

<sup>xiv</sup>Ibid.

<sup>xv</sup>Ibid.

<sup>xvi</sup>Ibid.

<sup>xvii</sup>Henning, K., & Klesges, L.M (2003). Prevalence and characteristics of psychological abuse reported by court-involved battered women. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 18(8), 857-871.

<sup>xviii</sup>Kaukinen, C. (2004). Status compatibility, physical violence, and emotional abuse in intimate relationships. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66(2), 452-471..

<sup>xix</sup>Pico-Alfonso, M., Garcia-Linares, I., Celda-Navarro, N., Blasco-Ros, C., Echeburua, E., & Martinez, M. (2006). The impact of physical, psychological, and sexual intimate male partner violence on women's mental health: Depressive symptoms, posttraumatic stress disorder, state anxiety, and suicide. *Journal of Women's Health*, 15(5), 599-611.

<sup>xx</sup>Coker, A., Smith, P., Bethea, L., King, M. & McKeown, R. (2000). Physical health consequences of physical and psychological intimate partner violence. *Archives of Family Medicine*, 9(5), 451-457.

<sup>xxi</sup>Dutton, M.A., Green, B., Kaltman, S., Roesch, D., Zeffiro, T. & Krause, E. (2006). Intimate partner violence, PTSD, and adverse health outcomes. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 21(7), 955-968.

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