

# TYPES OF ABUSE

**Abuse definition:** Any action used to hurt or injure another person with the intent to gain power and control.

## **TEN TOOLS that are used for power and control over others:**

**Physical Abuse:** Any unwanted physical contact or threat of physical harm. It is used to punish, harm, dominate, threaten, terrorize and control.

- Invading a person's personal space, restricting a person's movement (blocking an exit).
- Physical contact such as pushing, shoving, slapping, kicking, punching, hitting, spitting, pinching, pulling hair, choking, throwing things, hitting victims with an object and using or threatening to use a weapon, (gun, knife etc.)
- Damaging a person's property or abusing pets
- Kicking the victim out of the house or car and driving recklessly.

**Sexual Abuse:** Forced or unwanted sexual contact. Using someone's sexuality to control them.

- Making a person do a sexual act they do not want to do, including but not limited to: sexual intercourse, touching, watching pornography, watching sexual acts, performing sexual acts, having sex acts with others.
- Using a person's gender against him/her by: making demeaning or humiliating remarks about a person's gender, restricting a person's activities/freedom based on gender or discriminating in any way based on a person's gender.
- Leering
- Intentional exposure of partner to STD's

**Using Children:** Any behaviour that involves or uses the children as a way to gain power and control.

- Bad-mouthing partner in front of children, threatening to take custody, limiting visitation rights, using children to relay messages, or threatening to harm the children.

**Financial Abuse:** Using financial power to control others:

- Restricting a person's (or one's children) financial security by not allowing access to money, giving an allowance, requiring unreasonable accountability for spending, taking money away, not allowing the person to be involved in decision making regarding spending.

**Spiritual Abuse:** Destroying someone's sense of who they are.

- Not allowing the person to practice their faith or to connect with a "higher power", demeaning a person's deeply held values and beliefs.
- Restricting contact with loved ones considered important to the victim

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**Isolation and/or Abandonment:** Any attempt to cut off a person from sources of support and care by controlling another person's social interactions.

- Threatening to leave or leaving and not saying where they are going or when they will return.
- Telling the victim that no one wants them now or in the future and that they will be alone.
- Monitoring what another person does, dictating where they go, who they spend time with, embarrassing them in front of others, criticizing activities and/or people important to them.

**Positional / Entitlement:** Any action or tactic used to support the belief that one partner is more superior, more central and more deserving of privilege than the other in a relationship.

- Demanding that one's desires and/or needs are met, treating partner like a servant, acting like the "master" of the home, or being the one to define gender roles.

**Minimizing, Denying, and Blaming:** Any behaviour that makes light of the abuse, denies its reality and/or shifts responsibility for the abuse on to the partner.

- Making a person feel they were the cause of the abuse, making jokes about the abuse, and ignoring the abusive behaviour.

**Emotional Abuse:** Undermining a person's emotional well-being with controlling how another person thinks and feels. **Playing on someone's emotions.** It is about feelings.

- This is done by forcing a person to have the same feelings or moods as the abuser does by dismissing or denying feelings. (If I am having a bad day, then I'll make sure you will too!)
- Intimidation and excessive criticism.

**Psychological Abuse:** Shifting responsibility by destroying a person's thought patterns, making a person think they are the cause of the abuse, ("If you had not done that/ said that/ looked at me that way, I would not have lost my temper/ hit you/ thrown that etc.)

- Controlling how a person thinks, coercing a person into thinking a certain way (brain washing), demanding perfection.
- Playing mind games, making a person think he/she is crazy, making a person think he/she is worthless through verbal putdowns, creating a "no-win" situation.

*Based on Leduc and District Family Support and Intervention Program 2007 as well as Drayton Valley Family Support and Intervention Program Handout 2002.*