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What Is Verbal Abuse?

A comprehensive guide to helping you understand verbal abuse

A verbally abusive individual will regularly leave a partner feeling uneasy, scared, degraded and ashamed, sometimes even when a fight never occurred.

Verbal abuse is a pattern of speaking with the intent to demean, humiliate, blame or threaten the victim. Though an abuser may raise their voice in mean and threatening ways, verbal abuse does not always include shouting. It can simply be defined by the manner in which the abuser is speaking—typically in a demeaning, demoralizing way.

This toolkit will provide you with these insights and more. Inside you'll find:

- Helpful Articles
- Recommended Books
- Lists
- Danger Assessments
- In-Depth Videos
- Survey Results
- Support Communities
- How to Find Help



There are hundreds of articles on [DomesticShelters.org](https://www.DomesticShelters.org) covering the many facets of domestic violence. Here are links to those that will help you answer the question, “What is verbal abuse?”

[What is Verbal Abuse?](#)

A comprehensive guide to understanding how an argument can be healthy, but a pattern of ongoing degradation is not.

[10 Patterns of Verbal Abuse](#)

This form of abuse can be harder to recognize than you may think.

[What Is Emotional Abuse?](#)

A comprehensive guide to understanding emotional abuse.

[Am I Being Abused?](#)

How to recognize when a partner's actions show a pattern of abuse.

[Using the Grey Rock Method to Avoid Abuse](#)

Choosing not to react can be a temporary solution to shutting down some types of abuse.

[Survivor Brianne: I'd Finally Had Enough](#)

After a decade of control, yelling and terror, this survivor packed a bag and never looked back.

[How Abusers Speak](#)

Listen for these words that could spell control, or much worse.

[Why You Should Document Abuse](#)

Your records may be allowed as evidence in court.

[Smartphone Apps that Help You Document Abuse](#)

Retain notes, text, audio, video and images which can be used as evidence

[How to Prove Nonphysical Abuse in Court](#)

Steps you can take before you enter the courtroom.

[Yes, Abusive Partners Brainwash Their Victims](#)

Abusers deliberately make their partners feel disoriented, dependent and worthless.

[Beyond a Bruise](#)

Would you recognize abuse even if it didn't leave a mark?

[The Big Deal about Belittling](#)

When abuse takes the form of insults and other disparaging words and actions.

[Recording Phone Calls Can Help Prove Abuse](#)

Here's what you need to know about what's legal and admissible.

[Abuse Almost Always Escalates](#)

If you're trapped in a cycle of abuse, it's most likely going to get worse.

[When Abuse Goes from Shouting to Striking](#)

Verbal abuse often turns to physical abuse.

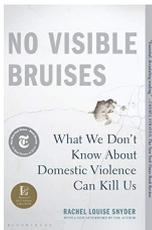
[The Mind-Trip That Is Emotional Abuse](#)

How to recognize the signs of abuse that leaves no bruises.

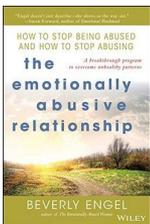


Reading books can be a helpful way to understand if you're a victim of abuse and understand the abuser's behavior.

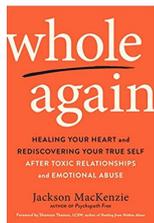
Here are our recommended reads:



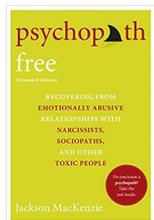
No Visible Bruises: What We Don't Know About Domestic Violence Can Kill Us. In *No Visible Bruises*, journalist Rachel Louise Snyder gives context for what we don't know we're seeing. She frames this urgent and immersive account of the scale of domestic violence in our country around key stories that explode the common myths—that if things were bad enough, victims would just leave; that a violent person cannot become nonviolent; that shelter is an adequate response; and most insidiously that violence inside the home is a private matter, sealed from the public sphere and disconnected from other forms of violence.



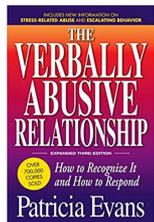
The Emotionally Abusive Relationship: How to Stop Being Abused and How to Stop Abusing. Whether you suspect you are being emotionally abused, fear that you might be emotionally abusing your partner, or think that both you and your partner are emotionally abusing each other, this book is for you. In this breakthrough book, Beverly Engel, one of the world's leading experts on the subject, shows us what it is and what to do about it.



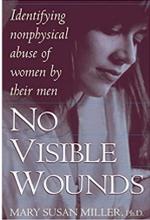
Whole Again: Healing Your Heart and Rediscovering Your True Self After Toxic Relationships and Emotional Abuse *Whole Again* offers hope and multiple strategies to anyone who has survived a toxic relationship, as well as anyone suffering the effects of a breakup involving lying, cheating and other forms of abuse--to release old wounds and safely let the love back inside where it belongs.



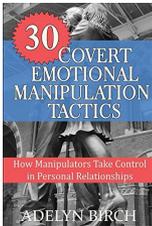
Psychopath Free: Recovering from Emotionally Abusive Relationships With Narcissists, Sociopaths, and Other Toxic People. Written from the heart, *Psychopath Free* is the first guide for survivors written by a survivor, offering hope for healing and thriving after psychopathic abuse. Say goodbye to the chaos, self-doubt, and victimization. You are free.



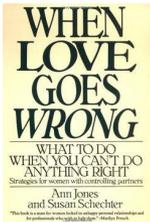
The Verbally Abusive Relationship, Expanded Third Edition: How to recognize it and how to respond. In this fully expanded and updated third edition of the bestselling classic, you learn why verbal abuse is more widespread than ever, and how you can deal with it. You'll get more of the answers you need to recognize abuse when it happens, respond to abusers safely and appropriately, and most important, lead a happier, healthier life.



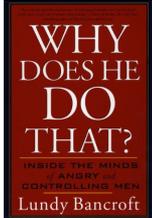
No Visible Wounds: Identifying Non-Physical Abuse of Women by Their Men. An experienced counselor who works with abused women, Mary Susan Miller breaks the silence that surrounds this devastating form of domestic violence. She identifies the many types of nonphysical abuse verbal, emotional, psychological, social, and economic--and explores why this outrageous treatment of women continues unabated in our society.



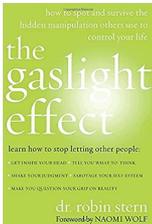
30 Covert Emotional Manipulation Tactics: How Manipulators Take Control In Personal Relationships. Learn the manipulator's game, so they can't play it with you. Identifying covert emotional manipulation is tricky. You sense something is wrong, but you can't quite put your finger on the problem. This powerful book will reveal to you if manipulation is at play in your relationships. It will open your eyes.



When Love Goes Wrong: What to Do When You Can't Do Anything Right. Too many women find themselves in abusive relationships and don't know what to do, or even what's wrong. the victim may feel anxious, inadequate, intimidated and on eggshells, and find herself trying harder without success. The authors bring their experience with survivors to offer an eyeopening analysis of controlling partners and empowering information for women seeking change.



Why Does He Do That?: Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men. From the perspective of the director of the first U.S. program for abusive men, the author offers early warning signs, ten abusive personality types, and the abusive mentality, and dispels 17 myths about abusive personalities, sheds light on the origin of the abuser's values and beliefs, which he believes is a better explanation of abusive behavior than reference to psychological problems.



The Gaslight Effect: How to Spot and Survive the Hidden Manipulation Others Use to Control Your Life. Gaslighting is an insidious form of emotional abuse and manipulation that is hard to recognize and break free from. The book tells you how to detect gaslighting, recognize the stages and how to escape it in your relationships.



Sometimes lists are easier on the mind because they are uncluttered and to-the-point. If you'd rather read a few items vs. articles or books, these lists are for you.

To view all list items at once, click the SEE ALL button located below the list text.

- [25 Relationship Red Flags](#)
- [18 Warning Signs That You're Being Gaslighted](#)
- [18 Things Abusers Do When They're Gaslighting](#)
- [19 Myths About Domestic Violence](#)
- [35 Ways to Recognize Emotional Abuse](#)
- [20 Things Abusers Say](#)
- [23 Ways Survivors Can Collect Evidence of Abuse](#)
- [25 Risk Factors for Domestic Violence](#)
- [27 Characteristics of Unsafe People](#)



There are three well-known, free, online assessment tools available that can help you understand the level of danger that may be present, but not always obvious.

The Danger Assessment

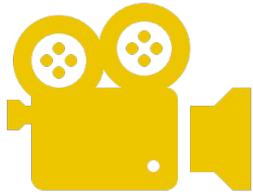
The free tool helps determine the level of danger an abused person has of being killed by an intimate partner.

MOSAIC

Using a series of questions, this tool assesses how similar a situation is to other situations that have gotten worse.

Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment

A risk assessment designed to be used by professionals that calculates how a man who has assaulted his female partner ranks among similar perpetrators with respect to the likelihood that he will assault a female partner again in the future.



Click video thumbnail to watch





A lot of lessons can be taken from people who have been through it before. Check out the following survey results to learn from the experiences of others.

- [Which type of abuse did you experience first?](#)
- [Did you find verbal abuse more or less damaging, long-term, than physical abuse?](#)
- [Survivors: Did you feel like you had power to stop abuse?](#)
- [How did you document the abuse you experienced?](#)
- [Where did you find the most support while going through domestic abuse?](#)
- [What was your last straw with an abusive partner?](#)
- [When you left your abuser, did you contemplate the decision for a while?](#)
- [How long did it take after abuse ended to feel like a strong, empowered survivor?](#)



Online forums and chats can help you connect with others who are in or have faced similar situations, and find support and ideas from the survivor community.

[AfterSilence.org](https://www.aftersilence.org) aims to help victims become survivors and to communicate in the recovery of domestic and sexual violence. It offers an active message board and chat room for rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse, incest and molestation survivors. There are over 31,000 members and about 1,000,000 posts, including recent posts and many useful posts from days and months past.

[Pathways to Safety International](https://www.pathways.org/) If you're an American overseas, your situation is different than 99% of your fellow countryman, and this site will be a wonderful resource for you. Among the services is a 24-hour response to emails, as well as international phone options.

[DomesticShelters.org Facebook Page](#) offers one of the most active places where domestic violence survivors. You'll find conversation, past experiences and unvarnished stories, and occasionally advice from professionals who have joined in on a topic.

[DomesticShelters.org Facebook Group](#) is a private group designed to be a safe space for domestic abuse victims, survivors, advocates and others affected by abuse to support one another through meaningful dialogue and helpful insight.

[Fort Refuge](#) is a clever, grassroots site run by survivors for fellow survivors as a safe place to come together and discuss their struggles and victories in healing from various types of abuse. Though the forum and chat do not boast the same numbers as some of the larger organizations, they are one of the more active conversation places on the internet currently. They also add new content to their site regularly.

Love is Respect - National Teen Dating Helpline focuses on teen relationships and can be accessed by phone, text or live chat. It offers real-time, one-on-one support by trained peer advocates who offer information and advocacy to those involved in dating abuse. They also offer support to parents, teachers, clergy, law enforcement, and service providers.

National Domestic Violence Hotline offers confidential, private, one-on-one chats with advocates every day 24/7.

OnYourMind.net is a safe and anonymous place for teens to get information and support from other teens in an online chat room, covering topics such as relationships, school, depression, stress, suicide, parents, cutting, identity and health.

Pandora's Aquarium is an online forum with around 2 million posts and over 70,000 members, and is run by Pandora's Project, which provides information, support and resources to rape and sexual abuse survivors and their friends and family.

When accessing hotlines, chats or forums from a computer, tablet, or smartphone, please remember to take the necessary precautions to keep your activities confidential from your abuser. Learn more about how to stay safe online [here](#).

Also, keep in mind that local shelters may offer in-person or virtual support groups. You can find shelters in your area at [DomesticShelters.org](#).



Another way to determine if you're experiencing abuse is to contact a trained domestic violence advocate near you or through a national service.

To search for domestic violence program staffed with trained advocates, visit [DomesticShelters.org](https://www.DomesticShelters.org) and type either your city and state, or ZIP code, into the search bar at the top of the page. A list of organizations and contact numbers near you will be displayed. To reach an advocate, reach out directly by calling the phone number listed. Most are open 24/7.

To speak to an advocate at the National Domestic Violence Hotline, also 24 hours a day, seven days a week, call 800-799-SAFE (7233) or visit thehotline.org to chat online.

It's important to know that your call is confidential and you can choose to remain anonymous when speaking with an advocate. To know what to expect when calling, read [this article](#).