

Child Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated or frightened by threats or the witnessing of family violence to the extent where the health, wellbeing and emotional development of the child or young person is impacted.

Research has shown that emotional abuse can be equally as harmful to a child and young person as physical abuse and neglect (Vachon et al 2015).

EMOTIONAL ABUSE BEHAVIOURS

Emotional abuse may involve the following behaviours:

- hostility e.g. insults, derogatory name-calling and put-downs
- persistent coldness
- shouting
- rejection
- humiliation
- intimidation
- isolation or confinement of the child.

PHYSICAL INDICATORS

Possible physical indicators of emotional abuse are:

- signs of neglect (e.g. malnourishment, poor hygiene)
- speech disorders (e.g. language delay)
- delays in emotional, mental or physical development.

BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS

Possible behavioural indicators of emotional abuse are:

- over-compliance and passivity
- withdrawal and emotional disengagement
- depression and/or anxiety
- fear
- distress
- avoiding persons or the context where the abuse is occurring (e.g. running away from home, hiding)
- mistrust
- poor self-image/self-esteem (e.g. fear of failure, overly high standards)
- poor academic performance
- poor social and interpersonal skills
- difficulties with peer relationships
- demanding or disruptive behaviour (e.g. attention-seeking behaviour, aggression, destructiveness)
- regressive behaviour (e.g. bed wetting and/or soiling)
- dishonesty (e.g. stealing)

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REFERENCES

Vachon, D.D., Krueger, R.F., Ragosch, F.A. & Cicchetti, D. 2015, 'Comparable consequences across different forms of child maltreatment', *JAMA Psychiatry*.



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