



Effects of Emotional and Psychological Abuse

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Some of the deepest wounds are caused by words. Child emotional abuse is an often misunderstood form of trauma that can cause damage to a child's developing brain, leading to long-term learning difficulties, problematic behaviors, and increased incidences of physical and mental health issues. (PreventChildAbuse) The emotional and psychological abuse of children can lead to much more than mental health issues, it can also cause lifelong cognitive development issues. Abuse often includes manipulation, threatening, undermining confidence, and the controlling of another person. Emotional abuse is frequently seen in parent-child relationships where an authoritative figures misuse their supremacy over children. Children who have been abused often experience deep shame and insecurities. According to LiveStrong, victims of mental abuse may suffer from low self-esteem. The University of Michigan Health System points out that the tactics used by abusers make victims feel worthless. For example, an abuser may insult the victim, telling her that she is crazy or makes bad decisions. The abuser may ignore the victim's feeling, making her feel unwanted. The abuser may also make these insults in front of other people, which can make the victim feel worse. These actions deeply impact the victim.

Unlike physical abuse, which often leaves tangible scars on someone's body, emotional abuse is harder to spot and detect. Children who have been abused fear their abusers and will most likely not confess that abuse is happening when asked. Because emotional predators are threatening and demeaning, victims who seek help are at risk of angering their abusers and increasing the level of hurt. Some victims may not even realize they are being abused, but rather begin to use coping mechanisms (such as denial, minimization, addictions, arguing, defensiveness, rationalization, compliance, detachment, and dissociation) to survive the mistreatment. According to PsychCentral, abusive behavior tends to be cyclical and inconsistent, therefore, the victim learns to "wait it out" over time. Victims learn to block out abusive events, which is much easier to do with emotional abuse because it is so elusive. The victim may not even realize abuse is happening. Furthermore, research also states that victims are notorious for being conditioned to "walk on eggshells" in the relationship in order to try to prevent or minimize any future occurrences of upsetting the abuser; this rarely works, and when it does, it's only temporary. (PsychCentral) Those who use this tactic will begin to lose their sense of self because they are being continually conditioned to only focus outside of themselves.

Emotional abuse can cause serious damage in any victim; however, children are especially vulnerable. Children who have been victimized must be shown their true value and nurtured back to a healthy level of confidence and self-esteem. The road of healing for a victim of emotional abuse may be slow and steady, but in the end it will be worthwhile. Anyone can be a support for someone struggling with abuse by offering a listening ear without judgment or blame and encouragement.

Sources:

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