

THE **WOUNDS** OF **ABUSE**

Can We Do More?

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STORY





- There is scientific evidence that survivors may talk to their pastors before they talk to anyone else about their abuse.



TYPES OF ABUSE

- Although violence affects everyone, women, children, and the elderly seem to bear the brunt of nonfatal physical, sexual, and psychological abuse. Consider the rates of various types of abuse:





- **One in four adults** reports having been physically abused as a child.
- **One in five women** reports having been sexually abused as a child.
- **One in three women** has been a victim of physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner at some point in her lifetime.
- **One in seventeen older adults** reported abuse in the past month.²
- Women report higher rates of lifetime exposure to rape, physical violence, and stalking than do men.³



COMMON YET UNRECOGNIZED

- Even though the harm of physical and sexual abuse is immediately evident, psychological abuse is less recognized and discussed—and often downplayed.
- Unfortunately, the most common form of emotional abuse is verbal abuse, and it often goes unrecognized as abuse.



RECOGNIZING EMOTIONAL ABUSE

When we talk about emotional abuse, we must take into consideration a number of important questions.

- Would you recognize emotional abuse?
- How would you respond if someone psychologically abused you?
- What does the Bible say about it?



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- The most frequent type of psychological aggression used for both men and women is **coercive control involving the demand to know her or his whereabouts at all times.**



THE PREVALENCE OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE AMONG CHRISTIANS

- Adventist Health Study-2 did conduct an analysis exploring the prevalence of emotional abuse during childhood among 10,283 Seventh-day Adventist adults in North America participating in the research.⁵ In this study, 39 percent of females and 35 percent of males reported experiencing emotional abuse by their parent (father or mother) before the age of 18.



EMOTIONAL ABUSE VERSUS CONFLICT

- “It is not emotionally abusive to break up with a partner. It is not emotionally abusive to argue with your partner. It is not emotionally abusive when someone reacts to what you have done with hurt. People react out of their own perceptions, so their reactions do not define your behavior. It is also not emotional abuse to speak one’s mind with blunt honesty. Perhaps the statement lacks tact, but it is not emotionally abusive. Again, just because someone reacts to what has been said with hurt does not mean that one has been emotionally abused.”⁶





EMOTIONAL ABUSE, HOWEVER, INVOLVES
INTENTIONAL DOMINANCE.

THE PERSON CHOOSES THAT BEHAVIOR IN ORDER
**TO HAVE POWER AND KEEP THE OTHER UNDER
CONTROL.**



HOW TO HELP SOMEONE
RESPOND
IF THEY ARE BEING
PSYCHOLOGICALLY ABUSED



1. STUDY THE EMOTIONALLY ABUSIVE TACTICS AND **LEARN TO BE ASSERTIVE**

- Abusers use abuse as a tactic to manipulate and dominate others. Focusing on the content makes one fall into the trap of trying to respond rationally, of denying accusations, and trying to explain oneself. Unfortunately, the abuser has won at that point and deflected any responsibility for the verbal abuse.



2. SET **HEALTHY BOUNDARIES.**

- Even Christ felt the need to set boundaries in His life. We should do the same. God gave each one of us our own individuality, so we must not be afraid to confront abuse or to set limits as to how much we will tolerate. In some cases, we can best address verbal abuse with forceful statements such as, “Don’t talk to me that way,” “That’s demeaning,” “Don’t call me names,” or “Don’t raise your voice at me.” Should the abuser respond with, “Or what?” one can say, “I will not continue this conversation.”⁷



3. BUILD YOUR SELF-WORTH AND SELF- RESPECT

- Abuse can slowly chip away at self-esteem. Usually, both the abuser and the victim have experienced shaming in childhood and already have impaired self-esteem. It is important for the abused person to remember that it is not their fault. The Bible contains many wonderful reminders of how precious we are. “I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness. I will build you up again” (Jeremiah 31:3, NIV).



4. **SEEK HELP** FROM A PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR.

- If one is in immediate danger, calling the police or a crisis number is imperative. But if the situation is not so threatening, it is important to reach out to a trusted friend or family member, therapist, pastor, volunteer with an abuse shelter, or domestic violence hotline. Confronting an abuser, especially in a long-term relationship, can be challenging. Seeking individual therapy and counseling is key.⁸ But it is not advisable to start counseling as a couple at this stage because it can be unsafe for the abused to tell the counselor the whole truth with the abuser present.



5. **SEEK COMFORT, HEALING, AND WISDOM FROM GOD.**

- The Holy Spirit is our Comforter and will guide us in all wisdom and truth. He can not only warm our hearts with God's love in a healing way but also teach us what words to say to someone who is abusive. Because Jesus suffered all forms of abuse, including psychological and emotional, He understands. He says, "I know your tears; I also have wept. The griefs that lie too deep to be breathed into any human ear, I know. Think not that you are desolate and forsaken. Though your pain touches no responsive chord in any heart on earth, **look unto Me, and live.**"⁹



CAN WE DO MORE?

- The Seventh-day Adventist Church has for years led a public health campaign against violence and abuse called **enditnow®**
enditnow.org
- It started originally with a focus on women and girls and has moved to a more global focus on violence and abuse against anyone: male, female, young, and old.



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- We must not grow weary but continue to make our presence felt in words and action as we learn together and bring to light forms of abuse that dehumanize others.



THE HEALTH FACTOR

- Why should we do more? Many of God's children are either dying or suffering in their health and well-being as a result of violence and abuse. Health authorities tell us that 1.3 million people die worldwide each year as a result of violence in all its forms: collective (as in the case of gangs or war), self-directed (suicide), or interpersonal (such as domestic violence).¹⁰ Such deaths account for 2.5 percent of global mortality each year. During the first 15 years of the twenty-first century, about six million people perished worldwide from incidents of interpersonal violence alone.



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- The wounds of interpersonal violence survivors may not be visible but are felt deeply and, consequently, can be crippling and long-lasting.¹¹



THE INCARNATION FACTOR

- “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34, 35, NKJV).
- In a congregation of believers that share His good news, the gospel urges us to be agents of healing and support: “Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble” (1 Peter 3:8, NIV).



“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10, NKJV).

CAN YOU DO MORE?

