

**Threats, Intimidation and Harassment are defined as forms of domestic violence under the Queensland Domestic Violence [Family Protection] Act 1989. They can be grounds for seeking a protection order under the Act.**

**General Characteristics of Verbal, Emotional and Psychological Abuse**

**Verbal/Emotional Abuse :**

- is a means of gaining and maintaining power
- is manipulating and controlling
- is hurtful
- attacks the nature and abilities of the partner
- is harmful and destructive
- most often takes place behind closed doors
- undermines and discounts its victims perception

**Which can cause people to:**

- Feel confused about the perpetrators interactions and behaviour towards them, and may fear to question it
- Feel lost
- Be caught off guard
- Feel confused about their own feelings
- Feel pushed around
- Feel out of control
- Feel uneasy and empty within one self
- Lack self-esteem and confidence

Many of the details in this brochure have been taken from Patricia Evans "The Verbally Abusive Relationship" and Laurie Mackinnon "Hurting Without Hitting: non-physical contact forms of abuse".

**Feelings**

Feelings are an emotional response to the environment around us. Feelings are natural and should be respected. By recognising and validating our feelings we can tell when something is right or wrong. The feelings previously listed can be a response to being treated abusively. It is important to acknowledge these feelings for your own safety and well-being.

I feel hurt, I am being hurt  
I feel diminished, I am diminished  
I feel ignored, I am being ignored

**NQDVRS**

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**TOWNSVILLE OFFICE**

PO Box 6061, Townsville QLD 4810

Phone: 07 4721 2888 Fax: 07 4721 1794

nqdvrs @nqdvrs.org.au

4<sup>th</sup> floor, Narthtown Tower. Flinders Street Mall.

**MOUNT ISA OFFICE**

Po Box 502, Mt Isa QLD 4825

Phone: 07 4743 0946 Fax: 07 4743 7999

minqdvrs@bigpond.net.au

The Old Court House Building, Isa Street

<http://www.nqdvrs.org.au>

**Against Violence #6**

***Emotional, Verbal  
and Psychological  
Abuse in  
Relationships***

**North Queensland Domestic  
Violence Resource Service**



**Yelling at living things  
does tend to kill the spirit  
in them. Sticks and Stones  
may break our bones, but  
words will break our  
hearts**

Robert Fulgham

Non physical contact abuse, such as verbal, emotional and psychological abuse is a violence that does not leave bruises or marks on people from the outside, but it can cause long lasting hurt on the inside.

It has been shown that there are long-term effects from emotional, verbal and psychological abuse that include physical and mental illness and relationship problems. It is often said that hurtful words have a longer lasting affect on people.

Perpetrators aim to gain control over the other person through using emotional abuse.

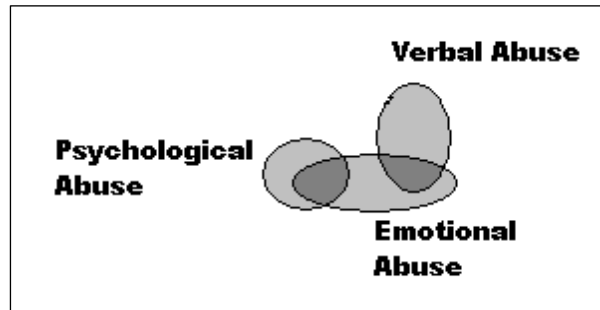
**EMOTIONAL ABUSE can include:**

- Name calling
- Accusing or blaming
- Shouting and yelling
- Put downs
- Disguise jokes (ie. put downs)
- Discounting reality and experience
- Judging and criticising
- Trivialising
- Undermining
- Threatening
- Withholding information or feelings
- Forgetting (denial, covert manipulation)
- Ordering

The content of the message in verbal abuse often degrades, insults, humiliates, ridicules or in some other ways lessens the dignity of the other person. It can also be the hostility in the tone rather than the content of the message which makes the communication abusive. The communication, either verbal or nonverbal, intends to cause psychological pain to another person, or perceived as having that intent.

Emotional abuse almost always involves verbal abuse. Psychological abuse almost always involves emotional abuse (Figure 1)

Figure 1.



Verbal abuse becomes emotional abuse when it continues over time and has the potential to negatively affect the target person's emotional development and behaviour. Emotional abuse becomes psychological abuse when it continues over a prolonged period, and involves one partner using power and control over the other. This can damage the target persons self esteem.

Psychological abuse is an ongoing pattern of control, put downs, unrealistic expectations, verbal attacking and silent withdrawal. Through repeated episodes over time, the perpetrator undermines the target person's sense of self through emotional abuse strategies, such as:

- Attacking the person by ignoring, humiliating, and or belittling them,
- undermining a person's self-worth, mocking someone's traits or criticising their behaviour,
- Defining the persons reality by making them question their own ideas and judgments.

**Verbal Abuse checklist**

- Does your partner persistently demand and retain control?
- Are the words and attitudes from your partner showing you disrespect and making you feel less in control?
- Is the relationship marked by inequality?
- Is the relationship marked by competition?
- Is the relationship marked by manipulation?
- Is the relationship marked by hostility?