

Forms of Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse varies in intensity from occasional, to mild, to extreme, over a sustained period of time. Some possible actions by a perpetrator that may cause a child to have a serious mental injury are:

Denying Emotional Responsiveness or Ignoring:

This includes the caregiver ignore the child's attempts and needs to interact, and showing no emotion in interactions with the child.

Denying emotional responsiveness includes:

- Being detached and uninvolved through either incapacity or lack of motivation;
- Interacting only when necessary;
- Failing to express affection, caring, and love for the child.

Spurning (or Hostile Rejecting/Degrading) includes verbal and non-verbal caregiver acts that reject and degrade the child.

Spurning includes:

- Belittling, degrading and other non-physical forms of overtly hostile or rejecting treatment;
- Shaming and/or ridiculing the child for showing normal emotion such as affection, grief or sorrow;
- Consistently singling out one child to criticize and punish, to perform most of the household chores, or to receive fewer rewards;
- Public humiliation.

Isolating includes caregiver acts that consistently deny the child opportunities to meet needs for interacting/communicating with peers or adults inside or outside the home. Isolation can come from a variety of caregiver motivations, but the resulting behavior prevents children from having opportunities for social relations with both adults and peers. Some isolating caregivers are themselves fearful of the outside world and want to protect the children from the dangers they believe exist from contact with others. Isolation is also present in sexually abusive families and in families where ritualistic abuse occurs. The isolation is to keep what happens in the family a secret and to keep the children from learning that there is any other way of life. Other isolating caregivers are themselves without social skills and merely lack social contacts and/or supports and do not provide this opportunity for their children.

Isolating includes:

- Confining the child or placing unreasonable limitations on the child's freedom of movement within his/her environment;
- Placing unreasonable limitations or restrictions on social interactions with peers or adults in the community.

Forms of Emotional Abuse (continued)

Terrorizing includes caregiver behavior that threatens or is likely to physically hurt, kill, abandon or place the child or the child's loved ones/objects in recognizably dangerous situations.

Terrorizing includes:

- Placing a child in unpredictable or chaotic circumstances;
- Placing a child in recognizably dangerous situations;
- Setting rigid or unrealistic expectations with threat of loss, harm, or danger if they are not met;
- Threatening or perpetrating violence against the child;
- Threatening or perpetrating violence against a child's loved ones or objects.

Exploiting or Corrupting includes caregiver acts that encourage the child to develop inappropriate behaviors (self-destructive, anti-social, criminal, deviant, or other maladaptive behaviors).

In families where parents are corrupting their children, the parents could be repeating the parenting cycle. They pass on the type of parenting they received. Parents, who themselves have antisocial behaviors, commonly transmit those values, actions, and attitudes to their children. These parental behaviors result from some events in their own lives.

Exploiting/corrupting includes:

- Modeling, permitting or encouraging antisocial behavior (e.g. prostitution, performance in pornographic media, initiation of criminal activities, substance abuse, violence to or corruption of others);
- Modeling, permitting, or encouraging developmentally inappropriate behavior (e.g., parentification, infantilization, living the parent's unfulfilled dreams);
- Encouraging or coercing abandonment of developmentally appropriate autonomy through extreme over-involvement, intrusiveness, and/or dominance (e.g. allowing little or no opportunity or support for the child's views, feelings, and wishes; micromanaging child's life);
- Restricting or interfering with cognitive development.

Mental, Medical, and Educational Neglect

This includes unwarranted caregiver acts that ignore, refuse to allow, or fail to provide the necessary treatment for the mental health, medical, and educational concerns or needs of the child.

Mental, health, medical, and educational neglect includes:

- Ignoring the need for, failing or refusing to allow or provide, treatment for serious emotional/behavioral problems or needs of the child;
- Ignoring the need for, failing or refusing to allow or provide, treatment for services for serious educational problems or needs of the child.