

Psychological Abuse Tactics

**** You can't look out for what you don't know about. ****

Be Educated. Be Confident. Be Powerful.

Humiliation, Invalidation & Criticisim

These tactics are meant to undermine your self-esteem. The abuse is harsh and unrelenting.

Name-Calling - This is pretty self explanatory. Any name besides the one on your birth certificate is wrong if it makes you feel bad.

Derogatory "pet names" - This is name-calling in a not-so-subtle disguise. "My chubby pumpkin" isn't a term of endearment.

Character Assassination - This usually involves the word "always." You're always late, wrong, screwing up, etc.

Yelling - Yelling, screaming, and swearing are meant to intimidate you and make you feel small. It might be accompanied by other intimidating behavior.

Patronizing - "Aw, sweetie, I know you try, but my family is just smarter than you"

Public Embarrassment - They pick fights, expose your secrets, or make fun of you in public.

Dismissiveness - You tell them about something that's important to you and they say it's nothing. Body language like eye-rolling, smirking, headshaking, and sighing help convey this message.

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“Joking” - The jokes might have a grain of truth to them or be a complete lie, but they make you look bad.

Sarcasm - Often a dig in disguise. When you disagree, they claim to have just been joking and tell you to stop taking everything so seriously.

Insulting Your Appearance - Telling you that your hair is ugly or that your clothes make you look fat right before you leave the house.

Put-Downs of Your Interests - They might tell you that your hobby is a waste of time or you're out of your league when you play sports. Really, it's that they don't want you to participate in activities without them.

Pushing Your Buttons - Once your abuser knows about something that annoys you, they'll bring it up or do it to upset you.

Belittling Your Accomplishments - Your abuser might tell you that your achievements mean nothing or they may even claim that they're responsible for your success.

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Accusing, Blaming & Denial

These tactics try to make you feel ashamed of your inadequacies.

Threats - They might tell you that they'll take the kids and disappear or physically hurt you. etc. Threats' power lies in your belief that they can and will actually do what they're threatening.

Lecturing - Scolding you about your mistakes, making errors it clear that they think you're beneath them.

Financial Control - They might keep bank accounts in their name only and make you ask for money. Or they might expect you to account for every penny you spend.

Unilateral Decision-Making - They might close a joint bank account, cancel your doctor's appointment, or speak with your boss without talking to you about it.

Digital Spying - They might demand your passwords. They might also check your internet history, emails, texts, etc.

Monitoring Your Whereabouts - They want to know where you are all the time and insist that you respond to calls or texts immediately. They might show up just to see if you're where you're supposed to be.

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Outbursts - You were told to do something, but didn't. Now you have to put up with a pissed off partner raging about how uncooperative you are.

Treating You Like a Child - They tell you what to wear, what and how much to eat, or which friends you can see.

Feigned Helplessness - They may say they don't know how to do something. Sometimes it's easier to do it yourself than to explain it. They know this and take advantage of it.

Unpredictability - They'll explode with rage out of nowhere, suddenly shower you with affection, or become dark and moody at the drop of a hat to keep you walking on eggshells.

They Walk Out - They might stomp out of the room and leave you "holding the bag." They might leave the house in the middle of an important discussion or leave the relationship completely.

Using Others - Abusers may tell you that "everybody" thinks you're crazy or "they all say" you're wrong.

Direct Orders - From "Get my dinner on the table now" to "Stop taking the pill," orders are expected to be followed despite your plans or wishes.

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Control and shame

This behavior comes from an abuser's insecurities. They want to create a hierarchy in which they're at the top and you're at the bottom.

Jealousy - They accuse you of flirting or cheating on them all of the time.

Turning the Tables - They say that you cause their rage/control issues/jealousy/physical violence, etc.

Gaslighting - Denying something you know is true. They might deny that an argument happened. They might agree that it happened, but swear that you did or said things that you didn't. It's meant to make you question your memory and sanity.

Using Guilt - They might say something like, "You owe me this. Look at all I've done for you." They're manipulating you to get their way.

Goading then Blaming - Abusers know just how to upset you and they push those buttons, but once the trouble starts, it's your fault for creating it.

Denying Their Abuse - When you complain about their attacks, abusers will deny it. They might even act bewildered at the very suggestion of it.

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Trivializing - When you want to talk about your hurt feelings, they accuse you of overreacting and making mountains out of molehills.

Saying You Have No Sense of Humor - Abusers make personal jokes about you. If you object, they'll tell you to lighten up.

Blaming You for Their Problems - Whatever's wrong in their life is your fault. You're not supportive enough, didn't do enough, etc,

Destroying and Denying - They might break your stuff or "lose" your things and then deny it.

Accusing You of Abuse - They might say that you're the one who has anger and control issues and they're the helpless victim.

Emotional neglect and isolation

Abusers place their emotional needs before yours. They often try to come between you and people who are supportive of you to make you more dependent on them.

Demanding Respect - No perceived slight will go unpunished, and you better submit to them, but it's a one-way street.

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Shutting Down Communication - They'll ignore your attempts at conversation in person, by text, or by phone.

Dehumanizing You - They might look away when you're talking or stare at something else when they speak to you. They might give you a degrading "pet name". Etc.

Trying to Come Between You and Your Family - They might tell family members that you don't want to see them or tell them that you said terrible things that you didn't say.

Withholding Affection - They deny you physical touch, sex and otherwise. This can be to punish you or to manipulate you into doing something.

Tuning You Out - They'll wave you off, change the subject, or just plain ignore you.

Actively Working to Turn Others Against You - They'll tell co-workers, friends, and even your family that you're crazy, unstable, a liar, etc.

Calling You Needy - When you're really down and you reach out for support, they'll tell you you're too needy or the world can't stop turning for your little problems.

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Interrupting - When you're in the middle of something, they may get in your face to let you know your attention should be on them.

Indifference - They see you hurt or crying and do nothing.

Disputing Your Feelings - Whatever you feel, they'll say you're wrong to feel that way or that's not really what you feel at all.

Keeping You from Socializing - Whenever you have plans to go out, they come up with a distraction or beg you not to go.

The more of these tactics you recognize in your relationship, the more toxic it probably is. Take notice and either create better boundaries or get out of that relationship.

Stay safe until we meet again!

April