

FEELINGS, EMOTIONS & TRAUMA

Experiencing abuse is traumatic and can affect how we feel and how we respond to other people and the world around us. Our responses to abuse help us to survive and cope with the abuse and its traumatic effects, but these same responses can sometimes create obstacles to our safety, well-being, and life goals. Understanding how abuse and trauma have affected us can help us to access safety, heal from the traumatic effects of abuse, and support others to do the same.

"We want you to know that whatever you are thinking and feeling, you are welcome here."

If someone is abusing you, you might...

- Feel scared, hurt, sad, confused, angry, embarrassed, guilty, angry or hopeless
- Feel numb or like you can't feel anything at all
- Feel flooded or overwhelmed with fear, anxiety, or panic
- Feel like you are losing your mind
- Want to run away from or avoid something because it makes you feel scared or reminds you of past abuse
- Use alcohol or other drugs as a way of surviving and coping with the abuse and its traumatic effects
- Be startled easily or feel your heart racing.
- Have lots of aches and pains, or feel like your muscles are often tense.
- Feel like you are spacing out when someone is talking to you
- Feel like it's hard to make decisions or get things done
- Notice that the abuse makes your mental health symptoms worse
- Feel like you don't want to be around other people
- Have a hard time sleeping or feel tired all the time
- Find it difficult just to get out of bed in the morning
- Feel like you don't want to live anymore

"You are not alone. Many people have feelings like these when they are being abused or after leaving an abusive relationship."

Your abuser may blame you for feeling or acting these ways by...

- Telling you that you are "crazy"
- Telling you that you are stupid, lazy, or a bad parent
- Telling you that no one will believe what you say
- Telling you that you are the one with the problem

Your partner may try to use information about your mental health to convince friends, family, the police, prosecutors, or judges that...

- You are lying
- You are "crazy"
- You are a bad parent
- You should not have custody of the children
- You were "out of control" and needed to be "restrained"

"The abuse is not your fault. You deserve to be treated with kindness and respect."

"You deserve to be listened to and believed."

From the National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health

www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org

Domestic Violence Services

509.582.9841

800.648.1277

"No One Deserves to be Abused"

Your abuser may also try to prevent you from feeling well by...

- Depriving you of sleep and other basic needs
- Controlling when or how you receive mental health treatment
- Speaking for you or preventing you from talking to doctors or mental health professionals
- Controlling your prescription medications (e.g., by giving you too much or too little)
- Forcing or coercing you to use alcohol or other drugs, controlling your access to alcohol or other drugs, or interfering with substance abuse treatment

"You have a right to control your own mental health treatment and medications."

When you might need extra help coping with feelings and emotions:

- Your attempts to feel better don't help.
- Your thoughts and feelings are affecting your physical health.
- Your thoughts and feelings are affecting your ability to care for yourself or your children.
- You are having thoughts of harming yourself or others
- You are having thoughts of killing yourself.

If support from family and friends, positive lifestyle changes, and emotional skills building aren't enough, you may want to seek help from a mental health professional.

A counselor or mental health professional can help you:

- Come up with plans for solving problems
- Feel stronger in the face of challenges
- Change behaviors that hold you back
- Look at ways of thinking that affect how you feel
- Heal pains from your past
- Figure out your goals
- Build self-confidence

Be sure to find a counselor that is knowledgeable about abuse and trauma. Ask questions about their training and experience. Not all counselors are a good fit for everyone. If you feel like your counselor is not helping, then you have the right to go to another counselor.

LOCAL RESOURCES:

Crisis Response Unit: 783-0500

Lourdes Counseling Center: 943-9104

Nueva Esperanza: 545-6506

Grace Clinic (Free services to uninsured): 735-2300

National Suicide Hotline: 800-784-2433

LGBTQQ Focused Suicide: 866-4-U-TREVOR

Assessment Center: 735-2704

Narcotics Anonymous: 546-8244

Catholic Family & Child: 946-4645

Lutheran Community: 735-6446

Tri-City Chaplaincy (Grief counseling): 783-7416

Youth Suicide Prevention: 800-273-8255

Detox Center: 547-9000

Alcoholics Anonymous: 735-4086

Check out page 25 for tips on "How to Find a Counselor for Your Child" -- the same advice applies to how to find a counselor for yourself!