

Some Common Characteristics of Abuse

There Are Ten Different Types Of Abuse

Physical abuse

Domestic violence or abuse

Sexual abuse

Psychological or emotional abuse

Financial or material abuse

Modern slavery

Discriminatory abuse

Organisational or institutional abuse

Neglect or acts of omission

Self-neglect

Sexual Abuse and Rape:

- Has frequent or repeated Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs), yeast infections, rashes around genitals, or sexually transmitted diseases
- Vaginal or anal tearing, bleeding (that is not related to periods), etc.
- Blood or semen in underwear
- Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
- Jumps at, freezes, or avoids touch and becomes scared, watchful, or dissociated, or may desperately seek safe touch, or a combination, or goes to the opposite extreme and touches others sexually or offers sexual acts;
- Is overly compliant to adults and/or authority figures, especially men;
- Becomes pregnant or has repeated pregnancies and/or abortions if they have a uterus and have had periods;
- Has trouble talking about private parts, sex, or rape, and can only write, draw, or act out what they need to say;
- Talks about, writes, draws, or shows discomfort or pain in their anus, vagina or penis, and mouth or throat, or when urinating or defecating;
- Has low self esteem and a lack of confidence;
- Has poor body image, deep body shame, hides their body (baggy clothing, long sleeves and pants even in the summer, curves their body inward or crosses their arms over their chest) or goes to the opposite extreme and wears revealing and sexualized clothing;
- Plays with their toys in sexual ways;
- Talks about, writes, plays out, or draws out sexual acts in a way that is much more sophisticated than others their age, knows about specific sex acts and/or unusual sex acts in detail;
- Regression of behaviour (bedwetting, peeing their pants, pretending to be a baby, rocks back and forth, etc.);
- Acts (and feels) much older than children their age and prefers the company of adults. They are often called mature, an old soul, or old for their age;
- Wary of others, mistrustful, withdrawn, often isolates themselves from their peers;
- Has frequent nightmares and night terrors, is afraid to go to sleep or to bed, wants their bedroom door locked;
- Intense feelings of shame, guilt, embarrassment, self-blame and self-hatred;
- Seems frightened of a parent or parents and doesn't want to go home;

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- Runs away from home, talks about running away, or attempts to;
- Uses self-harm (cutting, burning, head banging, breaking their own bones, etc.).
Please note that self-harm is not related to suicide;
- Depression and anxiety;
- Suicide attempts

Physical Abuse:

- Jumps at or tries to avoid touch, shrinks or backs away from adults, and/or has fearful body language
- Forcible feeding or withholding food
- Broken or fractured bones, or evidence of old fractures
- Has frequent and/or unexplained injuries such as bruises, burns, rope burns, head injuries, broken bones, etc. (However, cult abusers usually make sure to keep these hidden beneath clothing or in places people won't see.)
- Burns or scalds, particularly to the feet, bottom, genitalia, and chest.
- The caregiver's refusal to allow visitors to see a vulnerable individual alone
- Open wounds, cuts, punctures, untreated injuries in various stages of healing
- The story from the child or parent about an injury doesn't seem to make sense or match
- Making someone purposefully uncomfortable (e.g. opening a window and removing blankets)
- Involuntary isolation or confinement
- Inappropriate or unlawful use of restraint
- Lacerations to the body or mouth
- Bite marks
- Scarring
- The effects of poisoning (e.g. vomiting, drowsiness, seizures)
- Hides their body, wearing long sleeves and long pants even in the summer to hide injuries
- Breathing problems from drowning, suffocation, or poisoning
- Broken eyeglasses/frames
- Head injuries in babies and toddlers may be signalled by the following symptoms: swelling, bruising, fractures, being extremely sleepy, breathing problems, vomiting, seizures, being irritable or not feeding properly
- Displays frozen watchfulness
- Constantly asking in words/actions what will happen next
- Is called accident prone, but doesn't seem to be clumsy
- Seems frightened of a parent or caregiver and doesn't want to go home
- Talks about, draws, or writes about harsh discipline from a parent or caregiver.

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Psychological Or Emotional Abuse

- Enforced social isolation – preventing someone accessing services, educational and social opportunities and seeing friends
- Removing mobility or communication aids or intentionally leaving someone unattended when they need assistance
- Preventing someone from meeting their religious and cultural needs
- Preventing the expression of choice and opinion
- Failure to respect privacy
- Preventing stimulation, meaningful occupation or activities
- Intimidation, coercion, harassment, use of threats, humiliation, bullying, swearing or verbal abuse
- Addressing a person in a patronising or infantilising way
- Threats of harm or abandonment
- Cyber bullying

Financial Or Material Abuse

- Theft of money or possessions
- Fraud, scamming
- Preventing a person from accessing their own money, benefits or assets
- Employees taking a loan from a person using the service
- Undue pressure, duress, threat or undue influence put on the person in connection with loans, wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions
- Arranging less care than is needed to save money to maximise inheritance
- Denying assistance to manage/monitor financial affairs
- Denying assistance to access benefits
- Misuse of personal allowance in a care home
- Misuse of benefits or direct payments in a family home
- Someone moving into a person's home and living rent free without agreement or under duress
- False representation, using another person's bank account, cards or documents
- Exploitation of a person's money or assets, e.g. unauthorised use of a car
- Misuse of a power of attorney, deputy, appointeeship or other legal authority
- Rogue trading – e.g. unnecessary or overpriced property repairs and failure to carry out agreed repairs or poor workmanship

Types Of Modern Slavery

- Human trafficking
- Forced labour
- Domestic servitude
- Sexual exploitation, such as escort work, prostitution and pornography
- Debt bondage – being forced to work to pay off debts that realistically they never will be able to

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Organisational Or Institutional Abuse

- Discouraging visits or the involvement of relatives or friends
- Run-down or overcrowded establishment
- Authoritarian management or rigid regimes
- Lack of leadership and supervision
- Insufficient staff or high turnover resulting in poor quality care
- Abusive and disrespectful attitudes towards people using the service
- Inappropriate use of restraints
- Lack of respect for dignity and privacy
- Failure to manage residents with abusive behaviour
- Not providing adequate food and drink, or assistance with eating
- Not offering choice or promoting independence
- Misuse of medication
- Failure to provide care with dentures, spectacles or hearing aids
- Not taking account of individuals' cultural, religious or ethnic needs
- Failure to respond to abuse appropriately
- Interference with personal correspondence or communication
- Failure to respond to complaints

Neglect And Acts Of Omission

- Failure to provide or allow access to food, shelter, clothing, heating, stimulation and activity, personal or medical care
- Dehydration, malnutrition, untreated sores and poor personal hygiene
- Unattended or untreated health problems
- Providing care in a way that the person dislikes
- Failure to administer medication as prescribed
- Refusal of access to visitors
- Not taking account of individuals' cultural, religious or ethnic needs
- Not taking account of educational, social and recreational needs
- Ignoring or isolating the person
- Preventing the person from making their own decisions
- Preventing access to glasses, hearing aids, dentures, etc.
- Failure to ensure privacy and dignity

Types Of Self-Neglect

- Lack of self-care to an extent that it threatens personal health and safety
- Dehydration, malnutrition, untreated or improperly attended medical conditions, and poor personal hygiene
- Unsanitary or unclean living quarters (e.g., animal/insect infestation, no functioning toilet, faecal or urine smell)
- Inability to avoid self-harm
- Inappropriate and/or inadequate clothing
- Failure to seek help or access services to meet health and social care needs
- Inability or unwillingness to manage one's personal affairs

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Behavioural Clues:

- Infants excessive crying or developmental delay
- Fear, anxiety, clinging
- Phobias
- Nightmares, sleeping problems
- Bed wetting
- Social withdrawal
- Hyperactivity
- Poor concentration/distractibility
- Decreased school performance
- Chronic school absenteeism
- Speech disorders
- Regressive behaviour for age
- Seems afraid of parent
- Eating issues
- Depression, passivity
- Increased verbal abuse or physically aggressive behaviour with others
- Destroys or injures objects or pets
- Substance abuse
- Self-harm such as cutting
- Sexualized behaviour
- Symptoms of PTSD
- Avoidance of undressing
- Withdrawal to touch, afraid of exam
- Overly compliant, especially with difficult or painful parts of the exam

Symptom Clues:

- Headaches
- Abdominal pain, chronic
- Abdominal pain, acute – blunt trauma may not show external marks – look for distention, tenderness, absent bowel sounds
- Vague somatic complaints, often chronic
- Worsening medical problems, such as asthma
- Frequent, unexplained sore throat
- Abnormal weight gain or loss
- Reluctance to use an extremity
- Difficulty walking or sitting
- Genital discomfort or painful urination or defecation
- Unexplained symptoms - look for poisoning, forced ingestion of water, salt (Munchausen by proxy)
- vomiting, irritability or abnormal respiration may represent head trauma

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Physical Clues (Most Common Manifestations Of Abuse Are Found From Skin, Bone, Or Cns):

- Poor hygiene
- Dressed inappropriately for weather
- Failure to thrive, poor weight gain, malnutrition
- Lack of care of medical needs; wound care, medication
- Dislocations
- Defensive injuries on forearms
- Bites - human bites are more superficial than animal, and show up better 2-3 days later
- Burns – (in 6-20% of abused children) cigarette, rope, immersion, or shape of hot objects the severity of the burn consistent with length of contact by history?
cigarette burns circular, 8-10mm deep, heaped margin - may be confused with impetigo or moxibustion
- Stun gun burns occur in pairs, 0.5cm diameter and 5cm apart
- Immersion burns have sharp line of demarcation without drip or splash marks
- Signs of restraints on axilla or extremities
- Trauma to ear
- Lacerations
- Traumatic hair loss
- Facial injuries without good explanation
- Oral/dental injuries, such as torn or bruised frenulum, lips, teeth, palate, tongue or oral mucosa
- Injuries from non-ambulatory child may be "bottle jamming"
- Lacerations or tissue damage to oral structures may come from eating utensils, scalding or caustic liquids
- Scarring/bruising at corners of mouth from being gagged
- Oral injuries/STDs from forced oral sex
- Head injury, mental status change
- Retinal haemorrhage
- Subdural hematoma
- Intra-abdominal trauma, usually to multiple organs
- Bruising, tearing, bleeding, discharge from genital or rectal area
- Diagnosed STD or pregnancy

Red Flags With Injuries:

- Explanation doesn't fit the injury as to pattern, timing, or developmental ability of child
- Explanation keeps changing
- Child is consistently blamed as cause of repeated injuries
- Significant injuries attributed to a young sibling
- Delay in seeking medical care
- History of multiple ED visits
- Frequent change of primary care provider

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Parental Risk Factors:

- Rigid, severe discipline
- Strongly responds to negative behaviours, ignores child's positive behaviours
- Ridicules child in public
- Isolates child socially or from other family members
- Seems overprotective or jealous
- Unrealistic expectations of child development or behaviour for age
- Parent is caregiver for child with significant cognitive, physical or emotional disabilities
- Child unwanted, unplanned
- Lack of emotional interaction with child
- Inappropriate over or under concern about injury
- Partial confession
- Depression
- Difficulty controlling emotions, esp. anger
- Substance abuse
- Teen Parenthood
- Family stress such as divorce, job loss