



Social Issues

Racism



Definition:

Psychological abuse is the maltreatment of a person not using physical means e.g. Verbal and emotional abuse and neglect.

Examples:

- Name-calling, insulting or offensive language
- Bullying without physical contact
- Being constantly put down through criticism or scorn

Why the situation occurs?

Abusing someone psychologically is a way of exerting power over them to make the abuser feel better about themselves. They may be compensating for something that has happened in their past, but they have no right to take this out on others. Abusers are bullies and need to seek help themselves.

Psychological abuse can continue over long periods, sometimes with the abused party not recognising the signs at first. They may not wish to act, especially if the abuser is known to them. They may fear total rejection more than the abuse they suffer. This sort of abuse can even become a way of life.

For example, a person could grow up being constantly criticised by their friends and peers or members of their families, perhaps being told that they are worthless, stupid, ugly, etc, or even that they shouldn't have been born. They may love their family or fear being rejected by their peers, so not act. They may suffer this abuse throughout their adult life, even when they have proved themselves to be successful and have created their own family. This is not their fault, but the fault of the abuser - however both parties should get help to understand why this has happened.

Psychological abuse is sometimes more difficult to identify than physical abuse - it does not necessarily leave visible scars, but it is no less abusive than physical violence and can have the same serious consequences including self-harm, aggressiveness, seclusion, mental illness and possible suicide.

Also see the information sheet on bullying, which is related to this subject.

How you can make a difference:

Tackle the issue - learn about the issue and learn how to recognise the signs. Why do people abuse and why do others 'accept' this? What support exists for both sides? Think about how you react to certain people. We sometimes hurt others with our words without thinking - try to think first before answering. How can you help people who have been abused? How can you help them to rebuild confidence in themselves?

Use the materials and tools provided to follow the process of:

1. Identifying the problem
2. Developing Awareness and Empathy
3. Taking action
4. Measuring the change

Resources and Links:

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child:

<http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>

Information on this subject is available on the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) website (English, French and Spanish): <http://www.unicef.org>

World Scout Conference Resolution 16/90 on the Convention of the Rights of the Child

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World Scout Conference Resolution 7/02 - Keeping Scouts safe from harm

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