

**I'm sick** of people always having an opinion about my parenting, as if I am the only parent and he is not responsible. My children are displaying negative, maladaptive behaviours. They are products of abuse. Please don't judge them as badly behaved, insensitive or selfish. They've been modeled this way by a badly behaved, insensitive and selfish parent. It's not their fault. I know they will have to deal with their issues but they, like me, need support and understanding, not judgment. They need a voice and time to heal.

Everyone seems quick to judge and slow to understand and empathize. Everyone seems to know too little and say too much, or say too little and withdraw from me.

**Psychological abuse** makes me feel sad and hopeless. I can't seem to find my future or joy. It robs me of energy and dampens my passion and excitement about life. I've never cried so much on the inside. I'm sorry that abuse puts my friendships under strain and that my ways of coping have caused friends to walk away. I want you to know these ways of coping are an attempt to actively resist abuse—even backing down and putting up with it. I'm not weak, a pushover or a doormat.

**I'm sad** that I've ignored my friendships because this struggle hurts so much and demands so much energy. I'm surrounded by people who love life, enjoy their partners and family, have a sense of belonging, of hope and connection and a sense of humour. I don't feel like that very often. I feel sad, isolated and alone. I wish I could really laugh again.

**I know I'm healing from psychological abuse** because I am no longer willing to live under someone else's power and control. I am gaining back control of my own life. I'm starting to feel my hopelessness subside. More and more I'm learning to stand. I'm getting in touch with my authentic feelings. I'm learning better ways of coping. I'm now convinced I'm not crazy, I'm not to blame, and I'm not a victim.

I believe I will find hope again—in God, and in others who are safe. I'm learning to listen to my body, to be assertive not aggressive, to be a carer not a rescuer, and to live from my authentic self. I'm learning to look after myself. I'm discovering real spirituality.

I'm realising it's ok to have my opinions, feelings, wants and needs and to express them. I'm gaining enthusiasm, hope, and zest for life.



## PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

### What it Feels Like

Learn more about psychological abuse



and tactics of power and control by visiting Dr Clare Murphy's website:

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**I want to share my feelings about psychological abuse with you because I want you to understand my struggle.** I know understanding psychological abuse is difficult; there are times I don't understand what's happening myself. This struggle provoked intense feelings in me and I fear my reactions to my feelings might be misunderstood by you. I want you to understand.

**You may** describe me this way: intense, moody, helpless, hopeless, depressed, too serious, obsessed, a doormat, anti-social, non-committal, unsupportive, withdrawn, antagonistic, cynical and/or self-centred. These aren't very admirable traits; no wonder your understanding of my situation is difficult. I prefer to describe me this way: confused, afraid, full of self-doubt, isolated and alone, guilty, ashamed, angry, sad, unsettled and holding desperately to life.

**Psychological abuse** makes me feel confused. I've always believed if I work hard enough and give my heart to my partner the relationship will work out and together we will build a loving, supportive home. I've spent years working at this and it confuses me that my partner doesn't do the same. I support him, he takes. I care, he uses. I forgive, he blames me. I change my behaviour, mind, approach, all in order to make room for him. He changes nothing.

**Psychological abuse** makes me feel guilty. Society, culture and religion have taught me that a good wife is someone who is always supportive and submissive; isn't loud, outspoken or demanding; doesn't display strong opinions; fulfils her duties; is a good mother; and does all she can to give him what he needs. I feel guilty if I make a stand against abuse.

**Psychological abuse** makes me feel afraid. I live in a perpetual cycle where abuse occurs, then he says he's sorry and promises he won't do it again, then everything goes back to normal routine until tension builds and something sets him off again. I have to be vigilant. I can never truly rest. I cannot relax in my own home and I feel like I'm walking on eggshells all the time (except it's like broken glass). I am constantly exhausted and overwhelmed.

**I'm confused** because psychological abuse can be really subtle. Sometimes the hardest times for me are when he's nice to me, he seems to care, I can go out and be free but then all of a sudden he flicks around and he's nasty, controlling, won't let me go out and I feel trapped. I feel like his princess one moment then like his dog the next. This makes me feel like I'm going crazy. Often I blame myself and think it must have been something I did that set him off.

**I'm scared** for my children because deep down I know they won't be safe with him if I left and they will have to be with him some of the time and I won't be there to hold them, protect them or ward off abuse done to them. So I stay.

**Psychological abuse** makes me feel isolated and alone. I'm so tired I don't feel like socializing and when I do I'm under such a heavy cloud that I'm no fun anyway and I can't be light and airy with you because what I'm living in is deep and dark. I live under someone else's power and control and that's heavy and debilitating.

**I need** your support but I don't feel like I can ask for it if you don't understand. I don't want you to rescue me or carry me. I only need a friend alongside who understands and is safe.

**Please don't** tell me that you're worried I'm losing my faith or not trusting God enough or that I must have done something to cause the abuse. I haven't and I'm not. To come alive again I need to find my voice and express all the hurt, pain and anger. I don't need judgment or criticism.

**Psychological abuse** makes me feel angry and I know much of my anger is misdirected. For so long I've been abused for expressing my feelings so I've learned to emotionally distance, silence myself, scapegoat or get depressed.

**I'm angry** at my partner for treating me this way, for using me, not caring, crazy-making, twisting what I say, manipulating and controlling. It's hard to even say that because for so long I've blamed myself. I want and need an advocate to help me. I want and need you to hear me without shutting me down like he does.

**I'm angry** at some people in my family because they haven't stood up for me and told him to stop and they haven't supported me.

**I'm angry** because church pastors never named this treatment as abuse or told me it's ok to leave. I'm angry because this is a silent epidemic that has been killing me. I'm angry because friends have called me self-centred, unreliable, non-committed, distant, untrusting and untrustworthy.

**I'm angry** because I've been violated sexually, physically, mentally, emotionally and volitionally. My boundaries have been pushed through or ignored, as has my privacy.