

Emotional Abuse: Definition and Types of Abuse

Emotional abuse can be defined as the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It causes severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.

Types of Abuse

Rejecting the Child

An adult, parent or carer refuses to acknowledge the child's worth and needs.

Example: A parent regularly shuns a child from the family.

Having inappropriate expectations of the child

A parent or carer may have inappropriate expectations for the child's age and development.

Example: A ten-year-old child being regularly expected to care for younger siblings.

Corrupting the child

An adult might make or encourage a child to engage in anti-social behaviour, such as stealing or vandalism.

Example: A parent gives drugs to a child.

Ill treatment of others witnessed by child

The child may witness abuse between adults or of other children.

Example: Regularly witnessing violent abuse against their siblings.

Isolating the child

An adult cuts the child off from normal social experiences and contacts and makes the child believe he/she is alone in the world.

Example: A carer does not permit a child to interact with other children.

Ignoring the child

An adult deprives the child of essential stimulation and responsiveness, stifling emotional growth and intellectual development.

Example: A parent giving a child the 'silent treatment'.

Terrorising the child

An adult verbally abuses the child, creating a climate of fear. The child is bullied (this includes cyberbullying) and frightened by the adult or other person and is made to believe the world is hostile and dangerous. The child is never sure what the adult's response will be to anything they do or say.

Example: A carer behaves in a very unreasonable and unpredictable way towards a child.

