Family Violence
Types of Abuse

Gaslighting

What is it?

Gaslighting is a tactic (sometimes referred to as "mind games") in which a person in order to gain more power makes a victim question their perception, reality, and memories. The victim will often be called "crazy" and made to feel unbalanced and unsure of themselves. This is a gradual process that attacks a person's sense of self to make them feel confused and alone.

Examples:
- Lies about things that have been said or happened
- Denying events that took place despite proof
- Accuse and project their own behaviours onto the victim (addiction, cheating, lying, etc.)
- Making the victim think their thoughts or actions are not important
- Using others to reinforce their false messages

Things they might hear:
- You are just too sensitive
- I didn't say that, you're lying
- Why are you upset, I was only joking
- You're the reason we have problems
- You need to learn how to communicate better
- You always jump to the wrong conclusion

THE TODAY CENTRE

Emotional Abuse/Coercive Control

What is it?

Emotional abuse is a pattern of controlling behaviours which creates an imbalance of power within the relationship that is used to harm, punish, or scare the victim. This makes the victim dependent on the abusive partner by eroding their self-esteem, isolating them from their supports, depriving them of their independence, and regulating everyday behaviour. This also includes coercive control, which Evan Stark describes as "the victim becomes captive in an unreal world created by the abuser, entrapped in a world of confusion, contradiction and fear."

Verbal attacks:
- Name calling, constant criticism, yelling, blaming, put downs, starting rumours.
- Making fun of, intentionally embarrassing or humiliating another person in public.

Isolation:
- Separating a person from their supports, preventing or making it difficult for a person to connect with friends or family.

Control:
- Restricting choices about what a person wears, who they see, where they go.
- Jealousy is often romanticized as a reflection of caring and is often used as a tactic to excuse controlling behaviours.

Threats:
- Threats of violence or suicide to prevent someone from leaving relationship.
- Threats to expose secrets, such as sexual orientation, identity, or immigration status.
- Threatening to take away children.
- Intimidating behaviours, such as damaging property, throwing objects, punching walls, kicking doors, standing in doorways, driving dangerously.

Love Bombing
- A type of coercive behaviour that floods a person with affection, gifts, or attention in order to gain control or influence their behaviour. This form of manipulation is a tactic that often happens in the beginning of the relationship in order to quickly gain trust and control.

Cultural / Immigration Abuse

What is it?

Ranges from criticism, to preventing participation, forcing the abused person to behave in a way that is contrary to their community's norms.

Examples

- Threats of deportation, outing, destroying status card, or immigration papers.
- Taking, holding, or threatening to take immigration papers, passports, and other important documents .
- Using a person's immigration status or treaty status against them.
- Threatening to harm people in their home country.
- Threatening to take children overseas and not return.
- Threatening to take permanent residency documents or passport.
- Preventing someone from integrating into a new culture, preventing a person from learning the language
- Giving incorrect information about immigration processes or status.
- Giving false information or creating confusion about the legal system or policing in Canada

Physical Abuse

What is it?

Physical abuse is the intentional use of force, or threats of force, on another person in an attempt to control behaviour, intimidate, or punish. It may consist of a single incident, or multiple, repeated and potentially escalating incidents. It can cause physical pain or injury that can create ongoing health issues.

Examples

- Pushing, slapping, hair pulling, biting, kicking, burning, punching, shoving, hitting, pinching, withholding / overdosing medication, strangling, stabbing, cutting, poisoning, shooting, throwing objects, or killing someone.
- Restricting movement (holding someone down), confinement.
- Denying access to medical care, food, appropriate clothing, and shelter.
- Threatening with a weapon.
- Senior Abuse: Providing inadequate care by denying or speeding admission to a care facility. Under or over medicating, stealing medication for resale.

Spiritual Abuse

What is it?

"The misuse of divine beings, sacred texts, church doctrine, cultural, spiritual, and familial teachings to harm someone." -Reverend Al Miles

Examples

- Ranges from criticism, to preventing participation, to forcing the abused person to behave in a way that is contrary to their values or community's norms
- Misusing scripture to support abusive behavior
- Demanding obedience and submission in the name of faith
- Labeling abuse as discipline or teaching
- Blaming abusive behaviours on evil beings
- When a person in some sort of dominant position uses scripture or religion to control, harass, ridicule or intimidate someone else

Stalking / Criminal Harassment

What is it?

Stalking is a behaviour that causes fear of harm through repeated following, monitoring, harassing,or watching another person. Stalking is often romanticized in the media, but it is often a threatening and terrifying experience for victims, and it is a criminal offense.

Someone who uses stalking behaviour can be a current or past romantic partner, acquaintance, or a stranger.

Direct:
- Sending unwanted text messages, letters, emails, voicemails. Constantly calling and then hanging up.
- Following, watching home or place of work, waiting in frequented places, showing up unannounced or uninvited.

Indirect:
- Using social media, or other technologies to track a person.
- Sending messages or inquires through friends or family.

Financial / Economic Abuse

What is it?

Financial abuse involves tactics used to control a person's ability to acquire, access, and maintain economic resources, to hinder economic self-sufficiency and self-efficacy.

Examples
- Withholding or taking money, limiting or preventing access to bank accounts.
- Giving an allowance and monitoring what the person buys.
- Creating debt in that person's name.
- Stealing money or property, selling or damaging possessions.
- Interfering with, preventing, or sabotaging the abused person's ability to work or their efforts to better themselves (furthering their education).
- Limiting the hours a person can work, or forcing them to work extended hours or multiple jobs.
- Using their money to hold power over the other person.
- In senior abuse, this can look like pressuring them to gain control of their finances or assets.

Sexual Abuse

What is it?

Sexual abuse refers to any non-consensual action that pressures or coerces someone to do something sexually they don't want to do. It can also refer to behaviour that impacts a person's ability to control their sexual activity or the circumstances in which sexual activity occurs. This can also happen in a long-term committed relationship.

Examples
- Unwanted sexual contact, touching, fondling, forced oral contact (non-consensual kissing).
- Non-consensual intercourse.
- Unwanted rough or violence sexual activity.
- Sexual name calling, or sexual insults.
- Forced / unwanted exposure to pornography.
- Forcing sexual behaviours with others.
- Tampering with birth control, refusing to use birth control, restricting access to birth control or protection from STIs.
- Threatening someone into unwanted sexual activity, pressuring someone into sexual activity, making someone feel guilty or immature when they don't consent to sexual activity.