

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

The Invisible Family Violence

**Detection, Protection,
Treatment, and Reconciliation**

*Dr. Bob Gordon
with Kelley Leach, M.S.*

Emotional Abuse
The Invisible Family
Violence

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Emotional Abuse. Robert Gordon with Kelley Leach.

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Dr. Gordon serves as the Senior Lawyer Division of the American Bar Association liaison to the ABA Commission of Family Violence. The Commission is dedicated to protecting children, teens, adults and seniors from abuse. As a member of the Senior Lawyer Division he has contributed articles to its publication “The Voice of Experience.” By maintaining mental competence, Gordon believes, the likelihood of abuse to seniors diminishes.

In 1991, his contribution to establishing the new field of forensic psychology was recognized by the Psychological Foundation, which presented him with the Distinguished Psychologist Award.



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Dedication

This book is dedicated to those good people—men, women, children, seniors, veterans and corporate staff—who have experienced emotional abuse, have been affected by it, and have worked hard to overcome its effects.

This book is also dedicated to those good people who have unwittingly emotionally abused others and have the courage to recognize the issue, accept responsibility for harm they have caused, and sought to change their personalities and behavior in positive, constructive ways.

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Preface

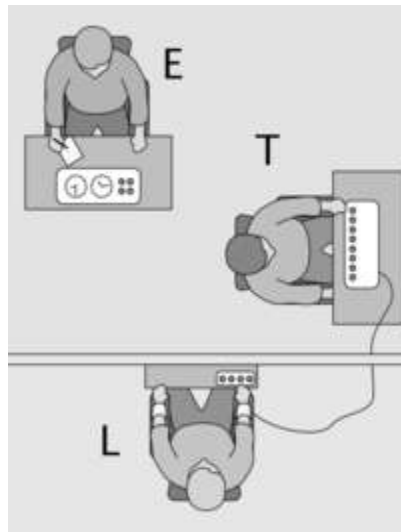
I learned about the invidious nature of emotional abuse [EA] and developed insight into its causes from listening to patients talk about their life experiences. Over time, it occurred to me that its pain is invisible—and the causes of it complex—therefore the emotional abuse syndrome is more difficult to diagnose and treat than other mental health problems.

My interest in emotional abuse has spanned my years of study and practice of psychology and law. It first occurred to me as a significant mental health problem when I discovered the work of psychologist, Stanley Milgram. He researched obedience to authority. I was concerned about the methods Professor Milgram used to study the problem.

He created an experiment in which one student would administer progressively greater shocks, in 15 volt increments, to another person for making mistakes in learning pairs of words. There was, of course, no real

shock administered but the students did not know this. The teacher would then read the first word of each pair and read four possible answers. The protocol of the Milgram study is shown in the diagram below.

A majority of participants administered “shocks” at the highest level of pain, although most everyone expressed discomfort in doing so, questioning the teacher and, in some cases, asking to be released



from participation. The ethics of the experiment’s construction have been called into question because of the intense emotional stress many of the participants experienced, although further study found that most participants curiously described themselves as glad to have been a part of it.

When I was a law student, I wrote an article for the Baylor Law Review stating that Milgram may “have committed a tort or civil wrong by conducting his study,” despite the fact that there was no apparent physical injury. At that time, the law was clear: in a lawsuit there was no recovery for mental distress without a physical injury.

The faculty debated the merit of my article but Professors Michael Vaughn and David Guinn took my defense and it was published because I offered a rationale for recovery that considered physical injury—the stress created by mentally abusive conduct stimulated injury to the autonomic nervous system and insult to the brain of the research participants. This rationale was prescient of changes in the law that would occur in time.

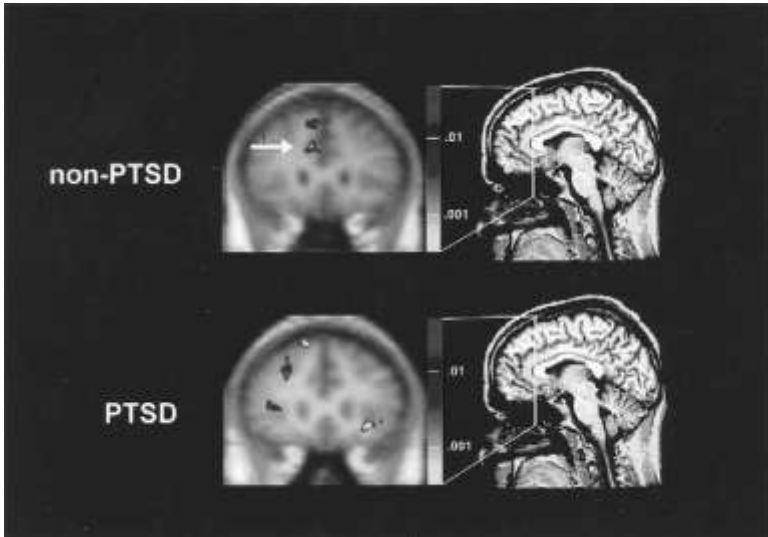
Today, the ethics guidelines of the American Psychological Association would prevent the Milgram studies from taking place. These guidelines, influenced in part by the Nuremberg Principles for scientific research developed after World War II, forbid scientific research that creates stress or

emotional harm. In other words, even if new data and knowledge was acquired, the scientific methods used by the researchers may not justify the experiments.

In most states now, there can be a recovery for eliciting mental distress or emotional abuse without overt physical injury. It can also affect eligibility for joint custody in family law cases and effect the distribution of property at the time of divorce. As anticipated by my law school article, it is now appreciated that emotional distress does have physical repercussions including increased risk of heart problems such as cardiovascular disease; decreased immune system response; slowed digestion; high blood pressure; and neurological changes within the brain.

Below is a brain image that illustrates the physical changes stress causes in the brain. The illustration is based upon brain imaging studies of post traumatic stress disorder that can affect combat veterans, trauma victims, and victims of family violence. The changes in the brain caused by violence adds

increased validity to the view that there are physiological effects of psychological injury.



Introduction

Emotional abuse (EA) is a social problem of epidemic proportions. Enthusiasm for defining, confronting, and remediating it is growing in the fields of



law, social science, education, and medicine. Most often EA is described in the United States within the context of choice to recognize it as a form of family violence.

The word *family* describes the basic social unit of society. It may include more than one generation, degree of kinship, or nature of affiliation. As such, the description accommodates the emotional abuse of children, spousal relationships, and elderly group members. Simultaneous with the burgeoning recognition of EA as a form of family violence is the

awareness that it also occurs in academic and corporate families and the military.

EA defies psychological, social, gender, religious, and economic boundaries. Economic prosperity is not a defense against it. It can occur among the rich and famous in the most beautiful of homes.

Age does not immunize one to it. In fact, the EA of the elderly as well as children provide its most compelling



examples. Experience of EA amongst Senior citizens may occur in extended care facilities, home health care circumstances as well as in interactions with relatives who have an agenda to control their lives or property. EA occurs in seemingly successful marriages and intimate relationships. The prevalence of EA is observed and measured in all ethnic groups.

In March 2011, a campaign to address the deleterious effects of emotional abuse resulting from bullies at school was highlighted by First Lady Michelle Obama.



There are an estimated two million EA incidents in the workplace annually and most commonly occur among workers who handle money, provide health care, or work in delivery services.

The lack of potable water in certain urban areas of India such as Mumbai stains an otherwise inspirational accomplishment of the Indian government to bring gentleness, kindness, and economic progress to its citizens.

The United States Center for Disease Control estimates that 10.3 percent of the American population experiences EA. The family research laboratory at the University of New Hampshire found 32 cases of emotional abuse for every 1000 elderly citizens. The World Health Organization places the percentage of prevalence of EA higher depending on the country in which the data is sampled. The Australian Child



Welfare Conference estimates the EA of children to be at 14.1 percent.

Stark and disturbing reports of emotional overlay with physical abuse in the refugee camps of Somalia and Ethiopia is considered an international tragedy. In 1998 during a tour of Africa President Bill Clinton apologized for the United States not intervening to assist the Rwandan people, women, children and men with the physical and emotional abuse inflicted by their government. While his observation stimulated controversy, it highlighted the sense of responsibility of American leaders in confronting abuse internationally as well as at home.



While domestic violence and its EA overlay affects men and women in equal numbers, recent national attention has focused on the plight of abused women. Perhaps this is because violence against women affects children, both boys and girls, in equivalent ways. Perhaps this is because of the

American cultural value that encourages the protectiveness of women. It may also be due to the underreporting of EA by men who believe acknowledging abuse is a threat to their masculinity.



In 1994, the United States Congress enacted legislation empowering the federal government to participate in the fight against domestic violence, including emotional abuse. The Violence against Women Act (VAWA) recognized that “violence against women is a crime with far-reaching, harmful consequences for families, children, and society,” and empowered the United States Department of Justice to prosecute crimes of family violence.

Most significant was the recognition that family violence, including emotional abuse, is a crime as well as morally wrong. Historically, the federal government has generally lacked jurisdiction over many such cases. EA injuries from hate crimes occur when a

perpetrator targets a victim because of his or her perceived membership in a certain social group, usually defined by race, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or ethnicity.

It also affects immigration and naturalization status with the INS. A person who has been a victim of domestic violence with EA characteristics may be given priority consideration for asylum. Complicating the issue are cultural differences as in so-called “family honor violence” and child kidnapping situations.

The most significant development is that EA can be prosecuted as a crime even though there has not been a physical injury. Mental health professionals and legal educators know that while the tort of mental distress historically required physical injury, the modern trend is to accept physiological and neurological imaging that can identify insult and injury resulting from stress.

Affecting the evolution of the tort of mental distress is the inclusion of new views of compensable injuries that include intrinsic and sentimental value. This new legal



perspective is challenging traditional views of the types of concerns for legislation and the courts. For example, the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act requires states seeking federal assistance to provide for companion animals when evacuating residents facing disasters. The Texas Family Code was recently amended to allow pets and companion animals to be included in protective orders.

The following chapters will attempt to shed some light on EA which is far too often an underestimated and under-considered form of abuse. Grasping the issue necessitates examining it holistically, including what constitutes emotional abuse, what precipitates and

follows it, and what can be done about it. While many of the pictures in this book are distressing to view, the authors believe that visually confronting the reality of EA is necessary to detect its presence and to remediate its impact.

What is Emotional Abuse?

Emotional abuse is a form of relationship violence characterized by a pattern of behaviors that result in an injury to an innocent party. It occurs within families, corporations, health care, religious and quasi-religious settings. When defining emotional abuse, the status of the victim must be taken into consideration.

Typically, emotional abuse of a child is defined as:

“Inflicting or failing to reasonably prevent others from inflicting mental or emotional injury that impairs a child’s growth, development, or psychological functioning.”

When the victim is an adult, emotional abuse can be defined as:

“Inflicting or failing to reasonably prevent others from inflicting mental pain, anguish, or distress through verbal or nonverbal acts including terrorizing, isolating, exploiting, humiliating, ignoring, intimidating, threatening, harassing, stalking, and corrupting. Acts or omissions that lead to a mental or emotional injury resulting in an observable and material impairment in a person’s psychological functioning can also be considered emotional abuse. “

Additionally, emotional abuse can be in the form of an attitude, which may or may not result in an actual behavior. The definition of abuse just described can include the attitude of intimidating toward a spouse or insulating an elderly person. The emotionally abusive attitude, act or omission does not have to be

intentional to be considered problematic. An act committed recklessly rather than with intent still possesses the ability to cause damage.

Typical aspects of an emotionally abusive relationship may include:

- Dominance – Expecting a person to obey without question or treating an adult like a servant, child or possession; treating a child like a younger or incompetent child.

- Humiliation – Making a child or adult feel bad about themselves or defective in some way. Persuading a child or adult they are worthless and that no one else will want them. In the service of this type of behavior are insults, name-calling, shaming, screaming, shunning and public put-downs directed toward eroding a person's self-esteem.

- Isolation – Cutting the adult or child off from the outside world; keep them from seeing family or friends or even preventing them from meeting

responsibilities at school, work or in the military. Requiring permission to go places.

- Threats – Abusers commonly use threats to keep their victims from leaving or to scare them into dropping or renouncing outcry statements; threatening to hurt the victim, their children, other family members or pets. The responsible party may threaten to commit suicide, file false charges against the victim, or report them to child services for real or imagined wrongs.

- Intimidation – This may include threatening looks or gestures, smashing things in front of a person, destroying property, hurting pets, or putting weapons on display.

- Denial and blame – Emotionally abusive persons are often adept at rationalization, justifications and excuses. They may try to explain their abusive behavior with reference to a bad childhood, a bad day or to behavior stimulated by their victims.



Legally speaking, the definition of emotional abuse varies depending on location with

some states, such as Utah, Oklahoma, Ohio, and Alabama, adopting broad definitions, and others, such as New York, Florida, California, and Texas, specifically detailing what is considered abuse. Only Washington and Georgia don't explicitly acknowledge emotional abuse at all in their statutes.

Studies have shown that the number of reported cases of emotional abuse is related to a state's definition of it. Because there is no clear standardized definition of emotional abuse, EA may be vastly underreported because of confusion about what it actually is. Furthermore, states have tended to view emotional abuse only in the context of damage that is

manifested later, which fails to address, or prevent, the abuse as it is occurring.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders which is currently under revision is the gold standard handbook used by most mental health



professionals to aid in identifying and diagnosing pathology. It does not specifically address emotional abuse by name. The system does recognize the symptoms caused by emotional abuse as well as by physical abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. Symptoms such as anxiety and depression are painstakingly described. But the writers of the manual are not ready to describe the abuses which may be causative factors of the symptoms. Future editions of DSM are expected to do so.

Currently, the diagnosis of emotional abuse as a syndrome or as a cause of psychopathology would

most likely fall under what are called, “the Relational Problem V Codes.” Likewise, the American Psychological Association has yet to develop standards for definitions or the treatment of emotional abuse for either the victim or perpetrator. However, individuals who have experienced severe emotional abuse may qualify for a Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder diagnosis. Within the V Codes, the DSM IV-TR refers to disorders primarily in terms of their causes rather than their dynamics of their effect. We will go into more detail concerning the effects of these disorders in the chapter on injuries resulting from emotional abuse.

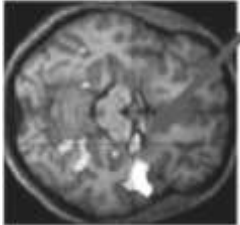
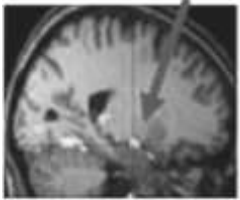
The process of emotional abuse and its effects can be evaluated across multiple angles. Psychologically, emotional abuse



may operate on a conscious, preconscious, or unconscious level. These levels can be applied to both the victim and the perpetrator’s point of view.

One or both parties may be actively aware of the abuse taking place, or they may be passively aware of the abuse, but unwilling or unable confront it. The level of awareness a victim or perpetrator possesses pertaining to the abuse may be affected by a deficit in cognitive functioning that prevents them from fully understanding what has happened or by a lack of information about what actually constitutes emotional abuse. Victims and perpetrators tend to minimize the significance of emotional abuse because of the absence of outward bodily harm.

Contrary to popular belief, emotional abuse does contain a physical component. Individuals suffering



from emotional abuse are often living with high levels of stress. Stress triggers the fight-or-flight response, which prompts the release of hormones intended to prepare the body to either run away from or confront the cause of the stress.

Other bodily processes are neglected during the stress response so the body can use all of its resources to combat the source of the stress. While this is a wonderful and necessary adaptive process under normal circumstances, living in a state of perpetually heightened anxiety can lead to a number of health issues, such as lowered immune system resistance, poor digestion, and decreased sexual response.

The neurological impact of emotional abuse manifests in the amygdale, the part of the brain associated with processing negative emotions. Researchers have noticed what is termed the *fear response* in individuals living in situations that provoke apprehension and anxiety over extended periods of time. Basically, the memory of the fear is imprinted within the brain, prompting the amygdala to become over-active, producing panic attacks in the affected person.

Emotional abuse usually occurs within the context of a relationship and may be more difficult to identify than physical abuse because there is often no overt

physical evidence left behind. However, the majority of professionals consider emotional abuse to be just as damaging as physical abuse. In abusive relationships, there is an imbalance of power, creating an environment in which one person is more susceptible to being abused. The commonly held belief that all abusers are male is incorrect; females can just as easily abuse a male or, in situations like teenage bullying, another female. Emotional abuse occurs across ages, genders, races, and socio-economical levels. In other words, everyone is subject to its impact. EA is everybody's problem.

Children can be emotionally abused in a number of ways. A child may be yelled at, threatened, or put down, or the abuse may occur more subtly. A parent who is so inconsistent in his behavior that his child doesn't know if he'll be hugged or slapped when called is emotionally abusive. Creating an environment that promotes the expectation of abuse can be extremely detrimental to a child. Likewise, a parent who is so detached and cold that the child perceives they are indifferent is abusive. This is referred to as emotional refrigeration.

From the mid-1800s to the early 1900s in the United States, trains shuttled



children from cities on the coast to towns in the Midwest for them to be adopted. It could be argued that these orphan trains were emotionally abusive. Conditions on the trains were often poor and in all cases children were made to give up everything they had known in the hopes of finding a better life.

The end result was children being displayed on podiums like slaves, often being separated from their siblings, and, in some cases, becoming used as workers by their new adoptive family. Organizers of the trains, motivated by good intentions, created a hope and expectation of improved conditions for the children that often went unrealized.

In cult or quasi-religious settings, members may be ostracized for certain behaviors considered acceptable in typical society. This can be described

as *Scarlet Letter* Syndrome, referencing the book by Nathaniel Hawthorne about a



woman who commits adultery and is forced to wear a red A, signifying her sin. Many former cult members have been outspoken about the harsh treatment received for minor offenses. This shaming and rejection may be considered emotionally abusive.

Some forms of abuse of emotional abuse in religious settings have heralded alarm among religious leaders intent on exposing and taking corrective action against their devastating impact. The devastating impact is exacerbated in part by their occurring under the misguided directions of persons with apparent authority.

The 2012 Texas trial of polygamist sect leader Warren Jeffs included jurors hearing testimony of the practice of adult men marrying multiple



teenager girls and included a recording of a 12-year-old girl who was cajoled into marriage by Jeffs.

Another painful example of religious leaders abusing their authority involves the trials of former priests whose mental illness and lapses of ethical judgment led them to sexually abuse children under their care. These painful revelations have caused consternation for practicing Catholics and the Catholic Church. A more willing attitude by the Church of detecting and preventing such traumatic abuses is being translated into constructive parochial school policies to protect children from misconduct which involves extreme emotional trauma as well as criminal conduct.

As with children, emotional abuse in intimate partner relationships can take on different forms. The abusive party may intimidate or insult the victim, isolate them from friends and family, or exercise control through finances.

Avoidance or rejection may also be considered abusive: not hugging, not kissing, or not talking to your partner. Giving one's mate the silent treatment

can have just as much potential for harm as calling one's mate a bad name. There are those who argue that such conduct is an unfortunate by product of human frustration but not entitled to the label of abuse. The answer to this apologetic attitude is to determine whether the behavior is a single or occasional incident or whether it connotes a pattern of behavior over a protracted period of time.

In the case of the elderly, emotional abuse may create questions about mental competency that requires the responsible party to



take control of the elderly person's property and medical decisions. The daughter who has her father put into a nursing home in order to assume power of attorney is abusive. When the victim is disabled or chronically ill, not responding to the special needs of the individual can be emotionally abusive.

Emotional abuse may occur in the workplace, such as when a boss uses his or her power to belittle an employee or coerce an employee into doing things that are improper in terms of business ethics or company policy by holding a raise or promotion over their head.

Abuse can also take place between children at school. Children may be abusive to each other through teasing, exclusion, or harassment. With the recent rise in social networking websites, cyber-bullying has become an issue. It can be done through chat rooms, texts, emails, instant messaging, or social networking websites. There have been several reported cases of teenagers being so severely abusive to one another over the Internet that it has prompted mental illness symptoms in the victims including catatonic-like withdrawal and even suicide. In November 2010, the Dallas, Texas, school district adopted a new anti-bullying policy, which speaks to emotional abuse in no uncertain terms, defining bullying in part as:

“systematically and chronically inflicting physical hurt or psychological distress on one or more students,” and specifies that it may include “hazing, threats, taunting, teasing, confinement, assault, demands for money, extortion...ridicule, name calling, rumor spreading, slurs, jokes, innuendo’s, demeaning comments, and ostracism of the person...”

Like abuses in the workplace and extended health care facilities, bullying is “..often characterized by an imbalance of power.”

The Dallas policy also addresses cyber bullying and cyber stalking, asserting that bullying will be investigated and dealt with, with remediation possibilities ranging from “positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion.” Victims of bullying also have counseling

made available to them. The policy is quite firm in its stance toward bullying and the detrimental effects it has on victims. Educators and parents alike in the Dallas-Fort Worth area are saddened and distressed by reports of three instances of student suicides which were caused in part by the anguish of cyber bullying.

In 2003, a 13 year old named Ryan Halligan became a nationally recognized poster icon. He committed suicide after repeated emotionally abusive incidents of cyber-bullying in which his classmates threatened him, taunted him, and called him gay. He is one of several children who have chosen to end their lives in order to escape the emotional torment. The lack of accountability that comes with not having to speak directly with someone may account for the amount of cyber-bullying that takes place. It's easier to be cruel to someone when you don't have to look him in the eye.



Cyber bullying, as a form of emotional abuse, is extremely difficult to stop or control because of the accessibility of the Internet, which not only crosses time zones but legal jurisdictions. Democratic inclinations are to place the responsibility on parents to monitor and supervise their children's Internet access via smart phones and iPads. Practically speaking, few parents and educators believe that monitoring and supervising a child's access to the Internet is feasible.

Ethics and Law



Ethics are the values and rules for behavior, portraying them as acceptable or

not acceptable. The law defines what behaviors are authorized and permissible. While a multidisciplinary perspective is necessary to understand EA, in terms of defining permissible and impermissible behavior, it is ethics and the law that guide our reaction to identifying and labeling proper and improper behavior.

Neuroscience images how the hurtful behavior is activated in the brain. Psychology explains why behavior occurs and it describes how behavior occurs. But it is ethics and law which society embraces as determinative as to what is proper and lawful behavior and that which is not. Emotionally

abusive behavior that is identified as hurtful and injurious in the 21st century becomes actionable at civil law and, in some cases, it involves criminal law consequences.

Emotional abuse is described by its victims as bad because it denigrates their rights to be respected, content, and happy. Victims of EA uniformly remark that it is more hurtful than physical abuse for a variety of reasons: it's more painful to admit, more difficult to explain, more frustrating to talk about, easier to hide and more difficult to stop. It is also more arduous to overcome. Those who are investigated for abuse are also frustrated because it is difficult to recognize and admit their abuse. If they are innocent, the allegation itself is hard to take. A responsible party is also emotionally affected when the EA occurred when there are extenuating circumstances. When extenuating circumstances are proved, they diminish the force and effect of the sanctions. Examples are when the responsible person acknowledges their bad act, apologizes, receives treatment and, when appropriate, agrees to work toward a goal of reconciliation.

In terms of ethics and values, most parents teach their children that a behavior is good when it leads to a good result. Feeding hungry people is good so they won't be malnourished. Helping a visually handicapped person to cross a street is good because they won't get hurt. Sitting with an unpopular student in the cafeteria is good because they won't feel isolated and alone. For young children, parents often use fairy tales and fables to illustrate and teach children to think about ethics and about what is right and what is wrong.



In other words, parents teach their children to infer from a good result that the behavior that produced it was good and vice versa. So if a person is mean to another person and this leads to harm or injury then the act that caused it was bad. Few adults tell their children that the ends justify the means; that a good result justifies a harmful, cruel, or destructive act that led to it.

Ethicists who focus on business, relationships, and international relations ask what sort of consequences count as good consequences? In business, were the actions of Ken Lay at Enron emotionally abusive to the employees? When the scandal broke in 2001, employees lost their retirement program as well as their jobs. Californians lost the use of the electrical grid as a result of their unethical business manipulations for several precarious hours.

And who is the primary beneficiary of good actions of not-for profit companies? How are the consequences judged and who judges them? Is a good deed that leads to emotional well-being measured by its effect on a large number of people or just one?

Again, the question of intentionality becomes significant. If one person hurts another, but doesn't mean to do so or does not even know they are doing so, is it less bad an act? Invariably, there are responsible parties who commit emotional abuse that are oblivious to the fact that their behavior is wrong or damaging. Some even think they are doing something

good by “toughening up” the other person to be strong in the face of adversity.

Is the Sergeant who confronts the Army recruit in an “in your face”, screaming, intimidating, and confrontational way, actually helping the recruit? Is the high school basketball coach who pushes her team to test their limit, abusive or dedicated and courageous? Some issues of emotional abuse are clearly in the eye of the beholder. There are those who think that EA happens all the time and should be taken lightly as an excessive aspect of normal behavior.



" When can you come back to work and start taking abuse again ? "

A challenge to understanding emotional abuse is that some victims are strengthened by it; it raises their pain threshold and it makes them more resilient. President Barak Obama acknowledged he was a victim of emotional abuse, chided by peers about the size of his ears, his diverse ethnic ancestry, and his Muslim name. Still, it is hard to imagine that he was not emotionally strengthened by his victimization and energized to help protect others from it in the future.

Another challenging aspect of understanding emotional abuse is appreciating the personality and circumstances of the victim. Every teacher knows that some behaviors are devastating to one child while another child is seemingly unaffected. In evaluating emotional abuse, the characteristics of the victim are paramount. Most everyone agrees that the more vulnerable the person is, the worse the result of the bad act.

In this respect most experts agree that children and the elderly have the fewest defenses against EA and have the greatest need for protection. Others say that in traditional relationships, the disproportionate power

of one person over another, either for economic reasons, strength of personality, or size, tips the scale in terms of the intensity and harm of the abuse.

Women's rights activists say that the disproportionate power of men over women is institutionalized in law and religion.

Other thinkers suggest that since no one is perfect, each person has likely emotionally abused another at some point. For this reason, some psychologists say that EA must be framed in the context of a pattern of behavior, its sequencing and the length of the pattern. Most experts reject the single instance of emotional abuse as dispositive of fulfilling the requirements for the diagnoses. This makes EA a different kind of family violence than physical or sexual abuse where a single action justifies the label of abuse.

Still there are those who think a single remark can qualify as being emotionally abusive such as "I never loved you"; "I'm not really your father;" "your work is so pitiful, you should start looking for another job" or "you've just got to get into a nursing home." Perhaps the single unkind remark with a grain of truth still must

be viewed against the perspective of the long term relationship with a child, spouse, employee or elderly parent. Since no one is perfect and each person is capable of behaving badly as a result of stress, fatigue, the over activity of neurotransmitters, and hormone change, why not apologize, forgive, and forget misconduct?

Why not let “bygones be bygones”? Perhaps understanding the reasons for an occasional unkind remark justifies it. But can understanding and insight excuse a pattern of behavior that is emotionally abusive over days, months, or years? We think not.

In criminal law, it does not matter what the provocation may be or the circumstances are; if the behavior is illegal, the act or omission can be investigated, prosecuted and punished. In law as compared to the study of ethics, issues of single occurrence, extenuating circumstances, provocation and intentionality become relevant only during the punishment phase of the criminal process. These issues are ordinarily not relevant during the guilt or innocence phase of a criminal proceeding such as in

the prosecution of assault. Assault is close to a crime for causing emotional injury because of its penal code definition which includes “threats” of physical hurting or kidnapping without the occurrence of the physical acts.

Assault involving threatening another person is considered a Class C misdemeanor, typically punishable by a fine. However, when the



assault involves threatening someone unlikely to be able to defend himself, such as an elderly person, it becomes a Class-A misdemeanor, punishable by up to one year in jail and a substantial fine.

The civil law of negligence and marriage dissolution takes a different perspective. This perspective has evolved over time and continues to change. In the 21st century, certain behaviors are deemed actionable, which in previous centuries would not be treated as such. Emotional abuse is a prime example. In family law, it may be considered in custody arrangements

and property division. A tort is a civil wrong. Tort cases involving emotional injury are often tried to juries rather than to judges. The reason is that trial lawyers believe that juries are likely to be more influenced by the emotional aspects of such cases.



Historically, the infliction of mental distress on another person, for example, was not recognized as

the basis for a lawsuit or civil relief unless there was a physical injury. Today that has changed. There is the growing awareness that an emotional injury can be more devastating than a physical one. In addition to abusive behavior in the family, an emotional injury may also be caused by war, by genetic factors and physical illness.

The trauma of fighting a battle was once referred to as “shell shock” and was seen as an unintended consequence of war and in some cases, as revealing a psychological weakness in the soldier experiencing

it. Only recently has “shell shock” been accepted as a valid psychologically significant disorder carrying the diagnosis of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

During the aftermath of 9-11, the United States Government considered PTSD diagnosable and compensable through the Victim Compensation Fund, though no ostensible physical injury occurred. Stress was found in persons who witnessed the terrorist attacks because they were several blocks away when the events occurred.

As a civil wrong, a tort action for emotional distress has the following elements:

- The act occurred
- It was wrong
- It violated a duty
- It caused an injury
- The injury resulted in damage

In addition to the ethical question of whether an act is wrong, there is the profound question of whether it violates a duty or the rights of the victim. People are

entitled to basic human rights regardless of nationality, sex, national or ethnic origin, race, religion, language, or other status. Human rights are often thought of as universal and natural. Despite this framework, the doctrine of human rights continues to provoke considerable skepticism and debate. In the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson penned:

We hold these truths to be self evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.



Does the pursuit of happiness mean the right to be free from emotional abuse and family violence? First Lady Eleanor

Roosevelt provided the inspiration for the United Nations establishing a charter on human rights on December 10, 1948. She chaired the drafting committee. In the preamble is a reference to “the inalienable rights of the human family .” They are described as:

... the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family which is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world.

The document is remarkable in that it recognizes the right of people to be free of emotional harm. It states:

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home, or correspondence, or to attacks upon honor and reputation. Everyone has the right to develop their own personality. They are entitled to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

It continues that people should treat each other with brotherhood. She said that no-one should receive degrading treatment. Since the human family is universal, family violence is everyone's business.

Below is a photograph of New York school children looking at the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



For a claim of the intentional infliction of mental distress to result in financial recovery, there must be evidence that the defendant's objectionable behavior caused the plaintiff's injury. For this to happen, there must be a clear understanding of the injury. So let's review two operating definitions of EA from Chapter 2 and then give examples of objectionable behavior.

1) Causing or failing to reasonably prevent others from inflicting mental pain, anguish, or distress in a person through verbal or nonverbal acts, including terrorizing, rejecting, isolating, alienating, projecting, eliciting, exploiting, humiliating,

intimidating, trapping, surveilling, Internet hacking, withholding approval, bullying, threatening, harassing, stalking and corrupting.

2) Acts that lead to a mental or emotional injury resulting in an observable and material impairment in a person's psychological functioning. In the case of the elderly, emotional abuse may create questions about mental competency that allows the responsible party to take control of their property and medical decisions.

The types of emotional injuries that result from abusive behavior include cognitive, psychological, financial, emotional, intimacy, impaired relationships, and disturbances of peace of mind.

Causes

In science, determining the cause for an event or circumstance is always tentative and requires validation. When behavioral scientists talk about causes we use confidence limits and levels of significance that are very high. They are statistically rigorous. They are usually understood in terms of the likelihood of making an error. For example, a 95 percent confidence limit means that the likelihood of being wrong is only five chances out of 100. A 99 percent confidence limit means that the likelihood of being wrong is only one chance out of a hundred.

Consider the Error Matrix used by scientists and jurists to evaluate their decisions. This example considers the validity of the allegation and outcome of the opinion of the decision maker.

Allegation Is	Decision Makers Opinion
1. True	Decision Maker Believes It
2. True	Decision Maker Doesn't Believe It
3. False	Decision Maker Believes It
4. False	Decision Maker Doesn't Believe It

2. The False Negative Situation

3. The False Positive Situation



The problems of mistakes in judicial decision making are understandably to “err on the side of caution.” But in the law, the problem of

deciding causes is based on the burden of proof, which is represented by the scales of justice. It is more complex a criteria that is ordinarily based on subjective rather than objective data points.

In a typical civil case, personal injury or family law, the burden of proof is usually “by a preponderance of the

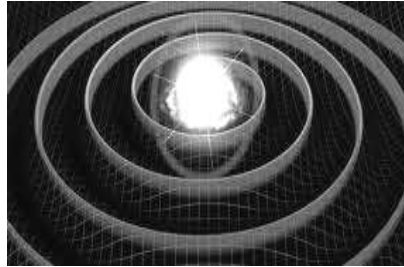
evidence”. In other cases, the burden may be by “clear and convincing evidence”. In a criminal case, the burden is “beyond a reasonable doubt”.

Psychological research indicates that what people mean by these burdens can vary tremendously on a 10 point scale. In 1972, the late Texas Court of Criminal Appeals Justice Rusty Duncan and I conducted a jury study that indicated the burden could vary in people’s opinion by as many as three points of certainty on a 10 point scale.

The law makes useful explanations of causality. The phrase “proximate cause” means that without the behavior, the injury would not have occurred. A cause of an injury can be a contributing cause but not a proximate one. To understand causality, science adds the concept of a catalyst. A catalyst is a force which doesn’t cause an injury but begins a chain of events that results in an injury. While in law, the percentage of a cause leading to an injury can be assessed and the causes must add up to 100 percent. In science, causes can be over-determined. If you take all the causes for an event and add them, the result can be greater than 100 percent. As theologians are quick to

point out, the “big bang” didn’t cause there to be a universe; that is God’s doing. Instead, they take the position that the big bang was the catalyst for it.

When the great German physicist Albert Einstein was confronted by a reporter who



demanded to know if he believed in an almighty God who created the universe, Einstein replied, “Absolutely I believe that God created the universe. What I’m trying to do is figure out how he did it!”

Causes can also be remote or immediate. This leads to fallacies that many decision makers experience in evaluating abusive behavior such as believing that two events that occur close in time have a causal relationship. In science, we know they may be correlated but causatively connected. Another fallacy is concluding that if one event precedes an injury, it is likely a cause of it.

Each state has criminal laws that address family violence and emotional abuse. In Texas, for example, the crime of family violence tracks the law of assault. It is defined as:

“Intentionally or knowingly threatening someone else, including your spouse, with imminent bodily injury.”

This means that you don't have to physically touch or injure a person's body; assault involves the threat of doing so. One has only to create the reasonable fear of physical harm.

The standards for investigation, arrest, prosecution, and conviction are different. In many cases, the police may investigate a 911 call and arrest one or both spouses if they simply feel that one of the parties is being belligerent or difficult.

As of September 23, 1996, federal law prohibits family violence and makes its commission a crime. To

qualify as a federal law, there must be an interstate aspect. Under 18 U.S.C. § 2261(a)(1), the Federal Interstate Stalking Law, the United States Department of Justice will prosecute family violence including emotional abuse such as in harassing or stalking if state lines are crossed. Violating an in-state protective order in another state is also a crime. Many protective orders deal with subjects of emotional abuse and restrain such abusive conduct toward the elderly, children and spouses.

In addition there are federal laws that recognize emotional aspects of family violence that includes stalking. But when a person is pursued by a stalker, no matter how frightening the emotional experience may be, how can the injury be described and understood? How can it be quantified so that the extent of the injury can be compared to others?

The Injury



So far, we have discussed diagnosing emotional abuse in terms of behaviors that are considered offensive or cruel. However, in real life situations, people often talk about emotional abuse in terms of the injuries caused

by it. So how do you determine if an injury has occurred? If it has occurred, how can you identify it without physical cuts and bruises to guide you? How do you assess the severity of it?

The relationship between the abusive behavior and the injury must also be examined. Was the injury caused by the abusive behavior or just exacerbated by it? Evaluators must be aware of a possible delayed onset reaction; signs of the injury may not appear for some time after the ill-treatment has taken place.

The following is a list of symptoms victims of emotional abuse may present with:

- low self-esteem
- sadness
- anxiety
- withdrawal from social situations
- appetite changes
- feelings of shame and guilt
- fearfulness
- isolation from family and friends

As was previously mentioned, the manual of mental disorders does not specifically address emotional abuse. However, there are a variety of mood and anxiety disorders detailed in the manual that can develop from the effects of emotional



abuse, many of which are characterized by similar symptoms. So evaluators must be careful to use the process of differential diagnosis during assessment,

which involves examining symptoms in detail in order to distinguish one disorder from another.

As described in the *What Is It?* chapter, the brain's amygdala can become over-active when a person experiences high levels of fear, causing panic attacks. Panic attacks are sudden periods of intense anxiety accompanied by physiological responses such as sweating, a racing pulse, nausea, shortness of breath, and shaking. Victims of emotional abuse may experience panic attacks at times when there is no actual threat; they manifest as a result of being conditioned to live fearfully.

Panic attacks may lead to a panic disorder, which is characterized by the individual having a persistent fear of the occurrence of panic attacks even during “calm” periods. Studies using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) indicate that people who



have been victims of emotional abuse show atypical exaggerated brain response to stress and fear.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is another mental illness that may be acquired as a result of emotional abuse, particularly when the abuse is traumatic as are involved terroristic threats.

Diagnostically, developing PTSD requires that the victim has lived through a period in which they feared for their safety and later persistently relive the experience through mental flashbacks. The reoccurring thoughts are often intrusive and uncontrollable, leading to intense anxiety.

Victims of stress often become withdrawn in an attempt to avoid coming into contact with anything that may have associations with the trauma.

In short, it's a terrible way to live and they often engage in self damaging physical as well as mental behavior. A similar, but less severe injury that may develop is an acute stress disorder, which involves developing



emotional numbness and detachment as a way to cope with persistent re-experiencing of the trauma.

Persons dealing with emotional abuse may end up with a diagnosis of generalized anxiety disorder, which is characterized by experiencing abnormal levels of anxiety more often than not over long periods of time. It typically involves some other adverse effects, such as irritability or difficulty concentrating. This may be related to the stress adaptation syndrome, which basically holds that the more stress you have, the less stress you can tolerate. A person's coping mechanisms become overwhelmed, leaving them unable to deal with high levels of stress and experiencing anxiety related to situations that previously may not have been stress-provoking.

Emotional abuse may also be related to the development of depressive symptoms or disorders. Depression goes beyond just feeling down or blue. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, symptoms of depression include:

- difficulty concentrating, remembering details, and making decisions
- fatigue and decreased energy
- feelings of guilt, worthlessness, and/or helplessness

- feelings of hopelessness and/or pessimism
- insomnia, early morning wakefulness, or excessive sleeping
- irritability, restlessness

- loss of interest in activities or hobbies once pleasurable, including sex
- overeating or appetite loss
- persistent aches or pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive problems that do not ease even with treatment

- persistent sad, anxious, or “empty” feelings
- thoughts of suicide, suicide attempts



As noted above, depression is more likely to develop in people who feel that their situation is hopeless. There is typically a power differential in abusive relationships so the victim may

feel dependent on their abuser. In many cases of emotional abuse with the elderly, encouraging that kind of dependence is actually the abusive behavior. Individuals forced to rely on their abuser are prone to feelings of hopelessness, which makes them more vulnerable to depression. Although the disorders mentioned above are mental issues, they all include some form of physical consequence. The connection between the mind and body has been well studied and documented but still reflects perplexing psychological questions and epistemological mysteries. Therefore, although emotional abuse does

not result in broken bones and bruises, it does possess the ability to physically impact its victims.

There has been some debate within the mental health community as to whether the brain reacts to the body's physiological cues or if the body is stimulated to respond because of brain activity. Regardless of whether the chicken or egg came first, the two are undeniably connected.



The use of biofeedback and neurofeedback equipment to treat stress and anxiety disorders is efficacious and has become increasingly popular. Individuals are encouraged to monitor their physiological reactions to stress and then use that increased awareness to help calm themselves down during stressful situations.

The effects of emotional abuse can bleed over into other aspects of the victim's life, resulting in impairment of functioning.



Involvement in one severely harmful

relationship may cause the victim to behave in a maladaptive way within otherwise healthy relationships. The abused individual may become socially withdrawn or fearful of trusting people. In abused children, problems may manifest at school.

A child will often be unaware of how to deal with the feelings of fear, confusion, and rejection that arise out of emotional abuse. He may misbehave at school, fail to socially connect with peers, or channel his anger into bullying other children. Likewise, emotionally abused adults may struggle with issues at work, an environment already rife with inherent stresses of its

own; adding in an abusive home life can lead to myriad problems.

Many people spend more time at work than at home, which can lead to the development of working relationships that resembles a kind of corporate family. When examining dynamics between co-workers, one can find features of parent/child, spousal, mentoring/grandparent, and sibling rivalry relationships. What might those working relationships look like when a person's actual familial relationship model is corrupted by abuse?

Coupling relational deficits with the detrimental effects of emotional abuse (difficulty concentrating, heightened anxiety) can lead to very poor performance at work.

In addition to the disorders detailed above, which are directly influenced by the pattern of emotionally abusive behaviors, there are other disorders that are often co-morbid with abuse that aren't typically thought of as resulting from abuse. Abused teenagers, adults, and elderly persons may develop

eating disorders, which are often associated with control. A person with very little control within their life may choose to exercise control over food as a means of self-empowerment. In individuals with low self-esteem, poor body image may also be a factor.



Children who have been emotionally abused may also have learning disorders, such as dyslexia (difficulty reading) or dysgraphia (difficulty writing), which can be affected by the

lack of concentration associated with the anxiety caused by abuse. Learning disorders can develop as a result of neurological trauma, which we have discussed as a possible side-effect of emotional abuse. Self-esteem issues in children may manifest in low self-efficacy (confidence in one's ability to perform tasks).

Emotional abuse of the elderly can often be thought of as adding insult to injury. As previously discussed,

abuse of the elderly usually involves manipulation by a trusted person, often a family member, although sometimes the perpetrator may be a worker in a nursing home/assisted living facility. Dependence on the abuser is fostered, while doubt of self-competence is encouraged.



The abuse typically results in an attempt to take control of medical and matters, leaving the abused individual with very little control over their own life. In some cases, “gas lighting” may even be used by the abuser, in which the elderly person is fed false information in order to make him doubt his own memory or perception, thus giving credence to the abuser’s assertion of incompetence. The damage that

results from such a betrayal by a loved one can be devastating.

Emotional abuse stimulated by improper control typically afflicts spouses and seniors in disturbed relationships. It includes matters such as:

- Not letting a person work full or part time.
- Taking or making inoperable a person's necessary health care devices such as glasses, hearing aids, wheel chairs.
- Taking a person's paycheck.
- Managing without request a person's SSI, SSD, savings or retirement.
- Controlling information of bank cards or credit cards.
- Participating in a threat of eviction.
- Ruining a person's credit.
- Buying things for a person they do not need.
- Buying things with a person's resources they cannot afford.
- Changing the name or address of property such as houses, cars, or apartments.

Emotional abuse is typically identified because of an outcry made by or on behalf of the abused individual. When attempting to diagnose emotional abuse, the depth and severity must be assessed. The Texas Family code states that the abuse must constitute a substantial injury in order to be considered. How does one define substantial? Until recently, there has not been a specific way in which reports of emotional abuse have been handled, making it difficult to clarify and treat.

To that end I have developed an assessment measure called the Emotional Abuse Profile (EAP) designed to aid professionals in determining the nature and degree of emotional abuse. The EAP involves a systematic process to examine emotional abuse from several angles. It addresses the victim and perpetrator as well as the abuse itself. It assesses factors such as awareness, social supports, intent, and risk factors. The EAP provides a standardized method for identifying and classifying emotional abuse, which is crucial for determining what should be done about it.

Parties in the Process



While emotional abuse has an obvious impact on the abuser and the victim, there are often many other people affected by, and involved in, the abusive situation that are typically not considered. Individuals who may have observed the abuse, people relied upon for support by the abuser and the victim, the person who reports the abuse (in cases in which the victim is not the complainant), and the evaluator who deals with the parties after the fact. They are all touched by the abuse.

The nature of the relationships between the abuser and the victim, as well as their respective relationships with others, often plays a large role in the level of impact and depth of severity of the abuse.

In the Emotional Abuse Profile, scales are provided to assess the relational dynamics for both parties across multiple areas that are critical to evaluating abuse.

The injured party's dependence upon the abuser is assessed, along with the scope of the abuse as it relates to those around them and the strength of the available support system.

The responsible party's level of closeness to the victim is examined, as well as whether or not the abuse was intentional. Risk factors that indicate whether the abuser is likely to reoffend are also evaluated. People who have mental health issues, struggle with addiction to drugs or alcohol, or have been abused themselves are at risk to remain abusive or repeat abuse.

Upon completion of the Emotional Abuse Profile, the evaluator develops a thoughtful view of the issues within the relationships of the directly involved parties.

I propose two diagnostic terms for individuals who repeatedly find themselves involved in emotionally abusive relationships:

- **Abusopathic Personality Disorder [APD]**
- **Victimocentric Personality Disorder [VPD]**

Diagnostically, these disorders may be considered when the clinician is assessing Axis 2 in the DSM IV-TR system. Complexity and clinical issues may camouflage a clear differential diagnosis when the situation exists where the perpetrator suffers from APD and the victim shows signs of the VPD.

People who qualify for a diagnosis of abusopathic personality disorder have a predisposition to abuse others. They present with a pattern of behaviors involving two or more relationships in which they have been abusive. The abuse is intentional. They experience a neurotic gratification from their power play intermixed with irrational features typified by excuses, justifications and rationalizations. Like most personality disorders, the treatment of choice is long and arduous. The motivation of the person with APD

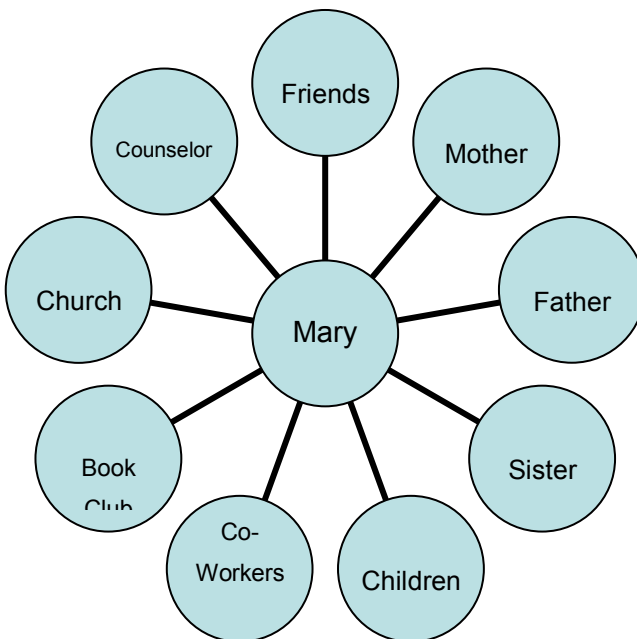
is difficult to sustain. As such, the prognosis for these individuals is poor.

People experiencing a victimocentric personality disorder are drawn toward abusive relationships in which they are the victim. Being a victim becomes their mantra. It becomes a role they use to define themselves. Like the APD, there is a secondary gain of sympathy and empathy that they seek which is not healthy. Those with the VPD often use their distress to avoid potentially meaningful relationships citing their fear of being abused again. The level of fear could be described as phobic, resulting in a pathological avoidance of social interaction. The Victimocentric Personality Disorder resists treatment to reframe their lives and engage in opportunities for healthy, kind and caring relationships in the future.

The support network of the healthy person who has been abused often includes friends, parents, siblings, children, other relatives, or co-workers. The level of involvement of the support network will vary. Some may directly witness the abuse, others may hear

about it, either indirectly or straight from the victim. Still others may be entirely unaware of the abuse.

However, even in cases in which support network members do not know of the abuse, it is still likely to affect their relationship with the victim. The victim's ability to function and interact normally will deteriorate over the course of consistent abuse, resulting in changes within all of their relationships. The figure below presents an example of an injured person, Mary, and all of the relationships she has with groups and people that are affected by abuse.



In some cases, a member of the support network will be the first to make the outcry of abuse, directly involving them in the situation. When children are involved, the abuse is typically reported to Child Protective Services (CPS). When the victim is elderly or a disabled adult, the reporting agency involved is Adult Protective Services (APS). There is no specific agency designed to deal with cases of abuse between typically developing adults.

If abuse necessitates reporting, the police must be called. In corporations, HR is notified. In schools, the Principal is notified. For law enforcement to make an arrest, the perpetrator must be guilty of committing a legal offense. This may be difficult for police officers to determine in instances of emotional abuse, as there will likely be no physical evidence of a crime having been committed. Furthermore, as was mentioned in the *What Is It?* chapter, legal definitions of what constitutes abuse vary from state to state.



Each state is responsible for running and regulating its own chapters of CPS and APS and rules will vary between states. In Texas, anyone who suspects abuse or neglect of a child, disabled adult, or elderly adult is required to report that abuse so that it can be investigated.

Once someone is being investigated, everything becomes framed in terms of the allegation. The caseworker, or police officer in some cases, will try to identify “probable cause” in order to take action.

It should be noted that defining what constitutes abusive behavior that should be reported may prove

tricky in some instances, particularly when concerning emotional abuse because of the lack of explicit guidelines provided by the government agencies. However, Adult Protective Services specifically cites exploitation as abusive and defines it as:

..the illegal or improper act or process of using the resources of an elderly or disabled person for monetary or personal benefit.”

As was previously mentioned, emotional abuse of elders often takes place in order to financially manipulate the victim. Meaningful action must be taken to undo the harm and prevent further exploitation.

Individuals and agencies responsible for dealing with the aftermath of abuse are also brought into and affected by the situation. Reporting abuse to CPS, APS, or the police involves the people working in those organizations assigned to the case. Often, further investigation will be needed to determine the

nature and extent of the abuse in order to decide if further action is warranted. The investigator's involvement in the situation will deepen. What is not easily understood by investigators is the concept of "transference", both positive and negative, which unintentionally effects the evaluation by their own involvement. The undertrained investigator may see themselves as "the rescuer" or the "police officer" or the "judge." This is highly problematic.

Other figures within the community likely to be touched by the abuse are teachers, family doctors, and mental health professionals. Each of these individuals may have involvement prior to and after the reporting of the abuse. Often, a person in a helping profession will be the one to report the situation. They typically are in a position to work with the victim more intimately than others and most likely have training in identifying signs of abuse. Upon completion of the investigation, the CPS or APS caseworker forms an opinion and recommendation about what needs to be done, such as removing the victim from the home or facility.

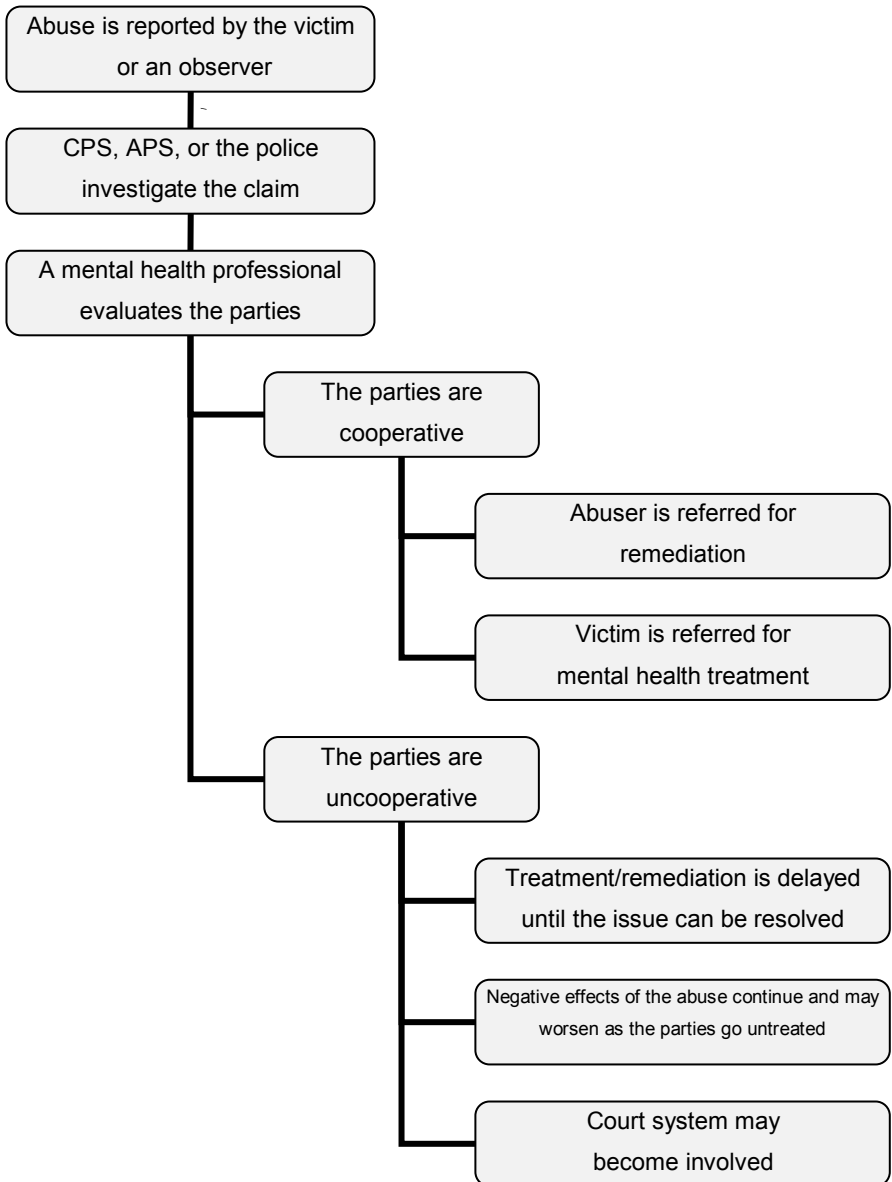
The act of reporting can also confuse the roles of the helping and concerned professionals. These professionals are also often involved during the recovery stage of abuse. The teacher still has the bullied child in her class; the doctor still performs check-ups on the abused man; the counselor still provides therapy to the traumatized woman.

Several agencies have been established to aid those affected by all types of abuse. Organizations exist at macro and micro levels. Some are global, many are national, and several operate at the state level. Often, individual metro areas will have one or more agencies devoted to abuse victims that reside within them.

Victims are offered services such as counseling, housing, financial assistance, and educational grants. Agencies may be private entities or government-sponsored programs. A list of some of these agencies currently in operation may be found in the *Resources* section.

The process of negotiating the ramifications of abuse can be helped or hindered by the level of cooperation of the involved parties. The typical course of what

happens after abuse is reported is detailed in the figure below.



As illustrated above, the impact of abuse has the potential to reach far beyond the parties directly involved and may branch out into numerous areas. Who coordinates services between all of the people and agencies necessary to deal with a case of abuse? Right now, the answer is typically no one. However, mental health professionals are often in the best position to initiate a strategy leading from incidence to remediation while incorporating all the necessary components. Using an assessment measure like the EAP, the mental health professional is capable of obtaining a holistic view of the situation and responding accordingly with recommendations and referrals, both for the victim and the perpetrator.

False Claims and Injustices

An outcry of emotional abuse is met by a typical response from evaluators. The response takes the form of a



follow up inquiry expressed as sympathetic but penetrating questions. Is the person making the complaint okay? A quick status inquiry is followed by in-depth questions about the facts and circumstances.

- Who caused the EA?
- What is its nature, duration and scope?
- Is it ongoing?

Additional questions inquire about the circumstances of the person making the complaint. What is their relationship with the suspected abuser? A claim of EA by a child or an elderly person is viewed as having

initial credibility because of their personal vulnerability or the defenselessness of their situation.

Initial claims of EA by spouses, domestic partners and coworkers are met with characteristic sympathy but not credibility. This is especially true when they are not associated with physical or sexual abuse or circumstances of ascertainable neglect. The hesitance of professionals to accept EA claims as valid and reliable is due to a variety of circumstances.

First there is the question of perception versus reality of the circumstance. Second there is the expectation that a healthy adult has the power to stop the abuse by standing up for their rights or to extricate themselves from the abusive situation by leaving.

When a person reports abuse, and when they genuinely believe it to be so, there is a natural empathy elicited in the evaluator. After all, feelings are feelings and there is no right or wrong about them. But validating emotional abuse requires a thorough and intense assessment conducted in an

objective way. The abuse may not have taken place at all or it may not have occurred as described.

In some cases, the personality of the injured person is a primary issue; in other words, some people are more susceptible to stress than others. Behaviors that upset one person may not upset another. Isn't every person subject to being upset by the words or actions of another? Is there anyone who hasn't lost control and said or done hurtful things to another that they didn't mean to do, wish they hadn't done, and are willing to apologize?



With regard to EA, validating the abuse requires a careful consideration of pattern, scope, and intensity of the offending behavior. And what is the basic nature of human beings? Aren't

people basically good? The life and work of Mother Theresa affirms this point of view. This is the view of many humanistic psychologists, educators, and pastoral counselors. Or are people basically a bundle

of hostile, aggressive, and sexual impulses as traditional Freudian theory suggests?

In attempting to verify the validity of the victim's report of the situation, Evaluators typically consider the motives of the person making the outcry. Is the motive simply to stop the abuse? Is it to get help or treatment for its effect and impact? Is there a motive to vent anger, retaliate for past grievances, to punish, to get even, or to gain an improper advantage in a conflict?

Few knowledgeable professionals aren't moved by the pain experienced by good people who are falsely accused of abuse. They have to live through the excruciating public humiliation of the complaints; the frustration and impossibility of proving a negative e.g. that something did not happen; or the emotional and avalanche of financial expenses required to defend oneself against an accusation which is exaggerated, edited or simply not true.

Words Matter

Labels can be helpful and hurtful at the same time. They communicate in a parsimonious way the concept or idea involved. But they are also potentially hurtful because they can include connotations that are not true, not accurate, or imply more than what is intended. The words abuse, abuser, perpetrator, victim, and injured party are key examples. How they are used in a sentence is equally suggestive. For example, consider the meaning conveyed by a person who says:

- “I’m being evaluated for EA.”
- “I can’t see my child because I’m accused of abuse.”
- “HR is investigating whether I abused someone at work.”
- “They say I am abusing my dad.”
- “I’m accused of hurting a senior.”

Professionals often prefer to use the adjective “abusive” rather than the noun or verb abuse because it is less threatening, misleading, and more careful. To

prevent inappropriate stigmatization where it is not proven or justified, everyone should exercise extreme caution before making accusations.

The key elements in appraising the validity of a claim of emotional abuse include the following risk factors:

- **Personality.** What is the personality of the complaining party like in terms of structure and function? Is the person mentally well or are there signs of Cluster B symptoms such as narcissism, borderline and anti- social personality?

People's levels of sensitivity and tolerance for criticism vary greatly. One person may



consider certain behaviors to be emotionally abusive that most other people deem harmless. For example, the parents of a young daughter may laugh whenever the child

attempts to dress in boy's clothing and puts them on incorrectly. This would not typically be considered emotionally abusive behavior.

However, an especially sensitive child with a gender identify disorder, may perceive it as such, believing that she is being mocked. If it happens repeatedly and goes unaddressed, the child could develop symptoms of having been emotionally abused by behavior that is typically thought of as harmless.

- **Mental fitness of the complaining party.**

What is the cognitive ability and capacity of the complaining party? The same reasons that make us sympathetic to a child or elderly person in their outcry of abuse, also call for closer inspection of their veracity and mental capacity. Children do lie. And children make up stories because imagination is encouraged through exposure to the fantasy of movies, video games, and suggestions of friends.

The symptoms of cognitive disabilities—pre-senile dementia and Alzheimer’s—make it difficult to confirm the accuracy and consistency of elder abuse reports.

- **Mental competency of the person accused** of abuse is certainly relevant when considering the validity of a complaint. This is especially true where intent or knowingly doing something wrong is part of the EA definition. Examples are a mentally retarded person or someone suffering from mental illness including paranoia and a disassociate problem which raises issues of

reality. The same is true of an abusive party who is a minor. This is illustrated by



"Wait! — We'll never develop a meaningful relationship if you keep knocking me unconscious!"

the behavior an emotionally abusive sibling who engages in hurtful conduct but does not appreciate the consequences because of their development delay or arrested development.

- **Personal history.** A person who has been abused as a child is especially sensitive to early warning signs of EA which may never come to fruition. They may also unwittingly cause situations that unnecessarily test the limits of love. They engage in provocative behaviors that instigate negative reactions from the would-be abuser to test loyalty and their own lovability.
- **Mental fitness of the person accused.** The person accused of abuse may be innocent but unable to defend themselves because of other emotional problems that make it difficult for them to persuasively and convincingly present their case. This may result from fatigue, frustration, anxiety, and antipathy about the legal system, which has cost them time, worry, and expense that is unjustified.

Rare though it may be, there are persons who make false confessions for abuse they did not

commit because they feel guilty about other actions and behavior.

In other cases, the suspected abuser may be a good person who has no clue about the effect of their behavior. They may lack the intent to emotionally abuse because they lack insight about the consequences of their behavior. In this case the behavior is amenable to treatment and remediation.

- **Explanation.** A person accused of EA may acknowledge it happened and apologize but offer a comprehensible explanation. For example, the abusive person may have been under extraordinary stress from job loss, physical illness, or under the influence of prescribed medication. Similarly, the injured person may have been under extraordinary stress of physical, emotional, or financial stress which made them especially vulnerable to the effects being criticized or verbally attacked.

- **Impossibility.** The accused may be able to show that the abuse could not have occurred because the parties involved were simply not together on the day in question or during the period of interest. The accused may also be able to present the corroboration of a credible source who verifies the behavior and circumstances complained of simply could not have occurred as the injured party reports.
- **Awareness.** Sometimes an abusive person doesn't understand what EA is, has no motive to engage in it, or even if they engage in abusive behavior would not if they were aware of its negative impact. So the absence of awareness and motive has an important part to play in defining the validity of the emotional abuse.
- **Motive.** When false allegations of emotional abuse are made without the intent to harm the purported abuser, the reason often lies in differing interpretation of events. Often, the intent of the alleged abuser is misunderstood.

A wife may tell her husband he appears to have outgrown his pants and should consider going up a size. The husband may interpret the comment as an attempt to insult his appearance, while the wife's intent may have simply been to suggest that he would be more comfortable in a different clothing size.

When attempting to legally prosecute an individual for abuse, proving intent is crucial. The alleged abuser must have purposefully sought to do harm to the victim in order to be convicted of a crime such as assault. In the mind's eye of most mental health professionals, a lack of intent is relevant but not dispositive of whether emotional abuse has occurred.

- **Entrapment** .It's often said that two people who care about each other and are confidants, know how to push each other's buttons. This means they know the subjects they are sensitive about and which have a low flash point for anger and upset. To push the buttons

is likely to elicit a strong, angry, and violent response. This is predictable. So, one person who is angry at another may unnecessarily provoke them to anger and rage for a variety of reasons including a pathological need to be punished or to work through their own guilt. It may also be defended in cases of entrapment—pushing buttons to make the other person say or do something regrettable.

- **Condoning.** Is the cooperation of the injured party to emotional abuse a defense? The classic example of this is



Stockholm syndrome, where a victim develops empathy or loyalty toward their abuser. In some cases the injured person will go so far as to defend the abuser. A notable example of this phenomenon is Patty Hearst, who is the granddaughter of publishing mogul William Randolph Hearst. She was kidnapped in 1974 by a left-wing revolutionary group called the

Symbianese Liberation Army (SLA) and eventually committed an armed bank robbery alongside her captors. She was convicted of the crime and served time in prison for it.

- **Special circumstances.** A lawsuit involving divorce and child custody issues is a Petri dish that incubates allegations of emotional abuse, often made to gain an unfair advantage by distracting the evaluators and court from the primary issues of who is the better parent and who should be responsible for the welfare of their children.

Because of the inherent anger and acrimony of family law issues, the person who is making the complaint may sincerely believe the charges are justified, even though it may lack merit. At the same time, the accused bears some responsibility of EA but cannot see it because their judgment is eclipsed by frustration over an unwanted divorce, especially if infidelity was involved.

- **The passage of time.** Except in instances of criminal assault, there is no statute of limitations on allegations of emotional abuse. So some people accuse parents of emotionally abusing them when they were children. At the same time, the memory of abuse and the so-called repressed memories of it are tainted with inaccuracies, inconsistencies, and in some cases lies. The more remote in time the allegation, the more likely its inaccuracy. In the case of spousal claims of EA there is always the process of reinterpreting behavior that previously seemed acceptable but in the light of later conduct is now considered abusive.
- **The First Amendment.** It may also be argued that the verbal behavior labeled emotional abuse is justifiable under the First Amendment to the Constitution. Do we truly have freedom of speech if verbal attacks are subject to legal prosecution? However, the laws limiting our freedoms in this country exist for the most part to prevent one person from infringing on the freedoms of another. As has been discussed in

earlier chapters, verbal violence is often just as, or more, harmful than physical violence. Protective measures should be in place, especially for people who may be unable to defend themselves, such as children, disabled adults, and the elderly. Legal scholars, teachers and behavioral scientists are studying how first amendment considerations affect sanctions for bullying at school.

Do you agree with the law of first amendment privilege when it is applied to distasteful conduct? In 2011, Fashion designer John Galliano was



convicted in France of hurling anti-Semitic insults at others. A French court gave Galliano a suspended fine. He was left with a criminal record and was fired from Christian Dior for his outbursts in a Paris bar but avoided prison.

For the person accused of abuse, the passage of time creates difficulties and potentially insurmountable

challenges. As months or years pass, the ability to find and collect evidence to prove one's innocence becomes more difficult because of unavailable witnesses, lack of real or demonstrable evidence, and missing video records, telephone recordings, texts and emails.

When an allegation of emotional abuse is false and the case involving the abuse is closed, the wrongly accused has several options:

- 1) Get over it and get on with their life.
- 2) Sue the complainant for libel, slander, or the intentional elicitation of mental distress.

If public resources have been used for an improper purpose of making a false claim of abuse, the District Attorney may choose to charge the complainant with obstruction of justice and prosecute him or her criminally. In order to convict someone of a criminal charge, the prosecutor must prove his guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The emotional pain caused by false or unsubstantiated allegations is excruciating. Like abuse itself, it is difficult to recover from its aftermath. The public embarrassment of the investigation and the trauma of the inquiry process elicit deep and penetrating emotion. It is hard to forget and more difficult to forgive. It is vital to the welfare of society that claims of emotional abuse not be false or made for the improper purpose of retaliation or as a punishment for imagined wrongs.

Remediation



Dreams and aspirations are more likely to come true when those who imagine them have a goal and a strategy. A *superordinate goal*

is one that everyone involved in a situation wants to achieve, but one that no individual can achieve alone. The superordinate goal for emotional abuse in a family relationship is that it stops.

A corollary goal, if the parties wish, is that the relationship in which the abuse occurred (parent/child, spouse/spouse, or adult child/parent) heals and that those involved go forward in a safe and fulfilled way. This second goal also exists when abuse occurs in a corporate family in terms of developing and maintaining a healthy, successful work environment.

The strategy for achieving this superordinate goal includes intervention, treatment, prevention, and reconciliation. In all, there are six factors involved in a full and successful remediation when emotional abuse has been verified:

- Awareness
- Investigation
- Intervention
- Treatment
- Prevention
- Reconciliation

As a broad concept, remediation means to intercede in a problem for the purpose of rectifying, remedying, and resolving it. The shared aim of remediating emotionally abusive behavior can take different paths and embrace different views. Since emotional abuse is an identifiable and measurable aspect of family violence, the familial relationship is likely to exist after the abuse is stopped. Even in the event of divorce, family ties continue.

Experience teaches that there is no one best way to stop family violence or treat its negative impact on victims. Instead, there are a variety of successful and efficacious approaches. Each must be analyzed, assayed, and compared before a prudent selection is made.

It's a judgment call! The decision makers in an emotional abuse situation select the strategy that seems most promising. In mild abuse situations, the treatment may be private therapy. In the context of a divorce or family law litigation, the solution may not be private at all. For example, there may be a request for a protective order or a confirmation of the abuse that is relevant to the issue of joint custody or to the equitable division of marital property.

In extreme situations, it may be a judge who decides what strategy is best and whether time timing is urgent. Practically speaking, the strategy may involve removing a child from a home, or an elderly person from a residential facility. In the case of peer group abuse at school, the principal and counselor may direct a period of suspension. In extreme situations, a

police officer may refer the case for prosecution or a lawyer may file a civil lawsuit for the intentional infliction of emotional distress.

When emotional abuse occurs in a large corporate family, the Human Resource Department may be able to handle



it. But when it occurs in the boardroom, the legal department or officers and directors may become involved.

When determining how to deal with emotional abuse, most choices allow for time to assess the situation without immediate emergency intervention. Decisions for identifying a preferred strategy in a non-emergency situation are usually made after consulting with mental health professionals, teachers, and immediate or extended family members. Other decisions in case of physical or sexual abuse require immediate intervention.

Awareness

The mere suspicion of physical or sexual abuse and neglect leads to an immediate investigation based on an appreciation of the inherent potential for danger and lethality. Probable cause is usually determined by the fact of a child reporting sexual contact with an adult, an elderly person displaying unexplained burns, or a neighbor reporting a nearby home with a putrid odor of an unknown source. The suspicion itself suffices for immediate investigation.

Emotional abuse is more difficult to recognize than physical and sexual abuse or neglect because EA involves a pattern of conduct rather than a



single act or easily identifiable injury. That is why EA is called “the invisible injury”. Also, there is a myopic historical view of EA by those who don’t agree that EA, without physical injury, exists. Still others think that emotional harm, while unfortunate, is simply a

reflection of the normal range of human behavior.
Therefore it is tolerable.

Also frustrating the process of awareness and detection are the attitudes of many EA victims who are reticent to talk about their experience because it may cause trouble for people they love or in the case of men, it may give the perception they are weak and can't defend themselves as social stereotypes dictate. This can result despite the warm and accepting attitude of the investigator and counselor.

Because the consequence of emotional abuse most often presents as stress, it is family doctors, mental health professionals, and teachers who are most likely to recognize it. It's part of their job training to recognize such problems and to generate hypotheses about their source, lethality and validity. Inquiries of special concern for investigation are lodged by a family member, fellow student, or colleague.

The initial questions asked by a mental health professional to a suspected victim are seemingly innocuous and are marginally invasive.

- How long have you felt this way?
- How does the stress of the situation affect your daily life?
- Are you comfortable talking about it?
- How bad is the stress making you feel?
- Who or what usually causes it?
- Have you tried to do something about it?
- What seems to help?
- Would you like some help in solving the problem?

The Investigation

The injured party is typically the first person who seeks advice about hurtful behavior. But the determination that the behavior is “abuse” is usually made by a mental health professional or an agency such as Child or Adult Protective Services. Occasionally, a mental health professional helping a patient or family with an unrelated problem first recognizes the signs of behavior that may be abusive. Their assessment leads to confirmation or lack of support for the concern. In such a scenario, the

professional shares their concern with a family member.

Typically, there is a recommendation for formal assessment of the person suspected of abuse. If this advice is declined, ignored, or rejected, the professional may conclude that the threshold is reached for mandatory reporting to Protective Services.



In some instances, there is a hotline call about abuse that leads to investigation. Every state has numbers for reporting suspected instances of child and elderly abuse. **911** is also a good number for reporting instances of abuse that requires immediate investigation and intervention.

Most cities and counties specially train their officers, who are often first responders, on how to handle calls concerning abuse. In the cases of adult abuse, there is often a physical component, but not always.

The 911 call may be exclusively verbal with the threat or danger of physical violence.

Without intervention, there is a danger that verbally abusive

situations will deteriorate into physically abusive ones.

Many adults complain that normal marital and relationship problems involving raised voices and frustrated posturing can lead to an unfair intervention of the police.



Intervention



Once the family doctor, mental health professional, teacher, supervisor, or relative confirms that EA has occurred, a decision tree

matrix inevitably leads to protecting the victim of abuse from further harm. Often this involves marshalling the support network of parties involved, confronting the responsible party and recommending

steps to avoid further emotionally abusive incidents. In a dyadic situation, both parties to a relationship may engage in verbally abusive behavior. Typically, intervention involves separation and monitoring to insure that the harmful behavior has stopped.

Assessment

As previously mentioned, the author has designed a protocol called the Emotional Abuse



Profile, (See DrBob.com) a technique for investigating, assessing, validating, or disconfirming a situation involving EA. Assessment is challenging for evaluating cases of emotional abuse. Maturity and self-confidence is required for a person to acknowledge they have been hurting another person and to recognize that they need psychological help. There is also the challenge of deciding how much weight to give to risk factors such as the person of interest having been abused as a child or operating under extreme financial or occupational stress.

Traditional methods of assessing the symptoms of emotional abuse involve psychological testing. The most common and widely accepted tests include the MMPI-2 and the MCMI- III. These are effective for identifying symptoms such as anxiety and depression. But it is the Wechsler Scales for Adults and Children that are most effective for assessing the impairment caused by EA in a person's judgment and thinking.

The assessment of a person suspected of being responsible for emotional abuse includes the same testing procedures. However, the scales of interest on the tests are different. These include a focus on signs and symptoms of antisocial conduct and paranoia. Also relevant are scales that spike for difficulties in establishing successful interpersonal relations and expressing emotions in a healthy way. One day the test protocol may include brain studies which focus on abnormal functioning in the amygdale structure. It is hoped that the Emotional Abuse Profile (EAP) will enhance the accurate assessment of the emotional abuse situation. When supervised access is considered by the Court, we recommend that the

Parent Child Supervision System be used. (See www.DrBob.com). The PCSS indicates many more helpful alternatives to the technique of “watching interaction” through a one-way glass. The one way glass supervisory technique is no longer state of the art.

Often times, the injured party or a bystander to the abuse is considered an *enabler* of the behavior. This is also difficult for a person to accept. The more common reaction of an enabler is denial, projection of blame to others, and questioning of the motives of the person who first raises the concern.

When the responsible party will not cooperate and collaborate in the assessment process, coercive action may be indicated, such as protective court orders, removing the responsible party from unsupervised contact with the injured party. A lawsuit can be filed against a residential facility for the elderly. A lawsuit can be filed against companies that tolerate EA. A parent may file for sole custody in a divorce, and ask for orders for individual or joint counseling.

Treatment is required for both the injured party and the responsible party. Group counseling may be helpful for those who live and work in the orbit of concern. The bystanders to abuse may also benefit from psycho-educational courses and counseling, which are available online.

Treatment



Cognitive behavioral therapy is an efficacious emotional abuse

treatment for both victim and perpetrator. This modality focuses on changing the way a person thinks about the hurtful behavior and seeks to change the behavior by changing the perception of it.

Group therapy is also a useful treatment modality for assisting a person with coping



with emotional abuse and also sharing information about how to defend against its deleterious effects. Under the guidance of a skilled counselor this forming of sharing experiences also leads to mutually beneficial “group think” answers for dealing with the individual aspects of emotional abuse.

Some therapists offer the convenience of online sessions or telesessions.



There are also support groups for late night symptom abatement and

plea for understanding of other persons suffering from emotional abuse or who live in different time zones.



Play therapy is a favorite resource for dealing with the emotional abuse of children. Since most relationships are learned through

play and fantasy, the lessons of identifying abusive behavior, avoiding it and sharing the experience with a responsible adult can be acted out and learned as a coping mechanism and approach for change. Also, children respond naturally to play so the therapeutic experience itself is more natural and less anxiety provoking than the Q and A format used with adults.

Anger management therapy is often a treatment of choice for responsible parties of emotional abuse because invariably there is an anger component to their actions even in the most naive circumstances of abuse. The process of therapy was highlighted in a popular movie of that title starring Jack Nicholson and Adam Sandler.

What persons of interest who believe they are the victim of false, spurious, or exaggerated allegations find it difficult to understand is that their anger may be justified while their inability to control it is not.

Another approach is to mobilize the support network of both the injured person and the responsible party. Many people feel that what happens in a family

should stay in the family and that problems should be dealt with using only family resources, without intervention from government or health care professionals. This is certainly the approach of choice in past centuries but it is consonant with the legal and societal zeitgeist of the 21st century.

Medication is another useful adjunct for psychotherapy for responsible parties as well as for the victims of emotional abuse.



While medications will not relieve the stress associated with the abuse situation. They are helpful because they slow down the central nervous system.

Benzodiazepines are the most common class of anti-anxiety drugs. They include:

- Xanax (alprazolam)
- Valium (diazepam)
- Klonopin (clonazepam)
- Ativan (lorazepam)

But like all medications, they have their side effects. Anti-anxiety drugs like benzodiazepines work by

reducing brain activity. The higher the dose, the more pronounced these side effects typically become. However, some people feel sleepy, foggy, and uncoordinated even on low doses of benzodiazepines, which can cause problems with work, school, or everyday activities such as driving. Because benzodiazepines are metabolized slowly, they build up in the body when used over longer periods of time. This may result in drowsiness, lack of energy, confusion and to some extent, impaired judgment.



Therapy dogs are an innovative approach to helping persons with the anxiety aspects of emotion abuse. These dogs are trained to notice the signs of anxiety in their owners and respond with attention and caring touch. They also bring medication based on observing symptoms. When the extreme reaction to emotional abuse produces acute symptoms requiring a mental health professional's attention, the therapy dogs can press a 911 button provided for such contingencies.

people Helping People



In-work settings, focus groups, and in -service training are excellent ways to spread the word about the deleterious effects of emotional abuse.



Finally, an enlightened attitude resolving emotional abuse must include reconciliation. This is especially true when

the relationship between the injured person and the responsible person will continue after the investigation and intervention.

Reconciliation of the responsible party and the abused party is predicated on ceasing the abuse and there being efficacious preventative treatment for both. It may also be best achieved when it follows a responsible party being held accountable and responsible for the consequences of their harmful conduct. Reconciliation is a viable meaningful goal when the abuse occurs in the context of the family and where lives and futures will be enhanced by an improved relationship.



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10.1007/s12126-010-9065-0

Ethical Issues in Elder Abuse Reporting: A
Professional Psychologist's Guide. By: Zeranski,
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Research & Practice, Aug2011, Vol. 42 Issue 4, p294-
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Resources

A.A.R.D.V.A.R.C.: An Abuse, Rape & Domestic Violence
Aid & Resource Collection - <http://aardvarc.org/>

Administration for Children and Families -
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/>

Administration on Aging - <http://www.aoa.gov/>

The Allstate Foundation Domestic Violence Program -
<http://www.allstate.com/foundation/econ-empowerment.aspx>

American Bar Association Commission on Domestic
Violence-
http://www.americanbar.org/groups/domestic_violence.html

American Bar Association Commission on Law and Aging -
http://www.americanbar.org/groups/law_aging.html

American Humane Association - <http://americanhumane.org/>

California Safe at Home - <http://www.sos.ca.gov/safeathome/>

Childhelp - <http://www.childhelp.org/>

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Child Welfare Information Gateway -

<http://www.childwelfare.gov/>

Coalition for Children - <http://safechild.org/>

The Elder Justice Coalition - <http://elderjusticecoalition.com/>

The Family Place - <http://familyplace.org/>

Family Resources of Pennsylvania -

<http://www.familyresourcesofpa.org/>

Futures Without Violence -

<http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/>

Global Network of Women's Shelters - <http://www.gnws.org/>

HelpGuide.org - <http://helpguide.org/topics/abuse.htm>

Hope's Door, Plano, TX - <http://www.hopesdoorinc.org/>

Hope's Door, Pleasantville, NY -

<http://www.northernwestchestershelter.org/>

International Child Abuse Network - <http://yesican.org/>

National Center on Elder Abuse -

http://www.ncea.aoa.gov/ncearoot/Main_Site/index.aspx

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence -

<http://www.ncadv.org/>

National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse -

<http://www.preventelderabuse.org/>

National Domestic Violence Hotline -

<http://www.thehotline.org/>

National Network to End Domestic Violence -

<http://www.nnedv.org/>

National Online Resource Center on Violence Against
Women - <http://www.vawnet.org/>

Nursing Home Abuse and Neglect Resource Center -

<http://www.nursinghomealert.com/>

Partners in Prevention - <http://enddomesticabuse.org/>

Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina -

<http://www.preventchildabusenc.org/>

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Safe Horizon - <http://www.safehorizon.org/>

The Safe Space - <http://www.thesafespace.org/>

StopBullying.gov - <http://stopbullying.gov/>

StopFamilyViolence.org - <http://www.stopfamilyviolence.org/>

Texas Attorney General - Child Abuse -

<https://www.oag.state.tx.us/victims/childabuse.shtml>

Texas Attorney General - Elder Abuse -

<https://www.oag.state.tx.us/elder/abuse.shtml>

The R.O.S.E. Fund - Regaining One's Self Esteem -

<http://www.rosefund.org/>

ThisIsAWar.com -

<http://www.thisisawar.com/AbuseEmotional.htm>

Tribal Justice and Safety at the U.S. Department of Justice

- <http://www.tribaljusticeandsafety.gov/>

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the

Empowerment of Women - <http://www.unwomen.org/>

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University of Central Lancashire International Family
Aggression Society -

<http://www.uclan.ac.uk/schools/psychology/ifas.php>

VAonline.org - <http://www.vaonline.org/>

University of Central Lancashire International Family
Aggression Society -

<http://www.uclan.ac.uk/schools/psychology/ifas.php>

Empowerment of Women - <http://www.unwomen.org/>

VAonline.org - <http://www.vaonline.org/>

Verizon Foundation -

<http://foundation.verizon.com/core/domestic.shtml>

Well-healed - <http://www.well-healed.com/>

<http://www.tribaljusticeandsafety.gov/>

West Virginia Coalition Against Domestic Violence -

<http://www.wvcadv.org/>

Your Life Your Voice -

<http://www.yourlifeyourvoice.org/>

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