Examples of Abuse

Below are several common forms of abuse that survivors of trauma and oppression may experience – either from an abusive individual or from the larger society. Survivors may have experienced additional forms of abuse not listed here.

Physical Abuse

Shoving … Pushing … Slapping … Hitting … Pinching … Grabbing … Kicking … Twisting Arms … Pulling hair … Choking … Punching … Beating … Depriving you of sleep … Forcing you to drink alcoholic beverages or use drugs, or “spiking” your drink without your knowledge … Encouraging drug dependence as a way to control you … Forcing the use of medication to sedate you

Emotional Abuse

Put-downs or ridicule … Name-calling … Yelling or screaming at you … Humiliating you in front of others … Not taking your concerns seriously … Encouraging you to feel bad about yourself … Playing mind games … Blaming you for everything that goes wrong … Treating you like a child … Making decisions that affect you without consulting you

Psychological Abuse

Abusing pets … Displaying weapons … Destroying your belongings … Threatening to harm you … Threatening to take the children away from you … Threatening suicide … Attempting to intimidate you through looks or gestures … Treating you like a servant … Attempting to control access to family or friends … Driving recklessly to frighten you

Sexual Abuse

Sexual harassment … Rape … Sexual assault … Childhood sexual abuse … Incest … Unwanted touching … Forcing you to watch or participate in pornography … Pressuring you to participate in sexual activities that make you uncomfortable … Forcing you into commercial sex … Forcing you to have unsafe sex … Openly having sex with others in a “monogamous” relationship … Withholding affection or sex as punishment

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From Real Tools: Responding to Multi-Abuse Trauma
Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
Financial/Economic Abuse

Taking your money … Not letting you have access to your own money … Preventing you from getting or keeping a job … Withholding child support … Making you ask for money … Interfering with your work or education … Using your credit cards without permission … Hiding or destroying important papers

Societal abuse

Prejudice or discrimination because of perceptions about race, gender, sexual orientation or other differences … Trivializing and minimizing your experience of abuse … Asking you what you did to provoke abuse … Blaming you for violence committed against you … Implying that abuse is the outcome of not knowing “your place” … Ridiculing your cultural traditions or values … Refusing to allow accommodations if you have a disability … Threatening to “out” you if you are lesbian, gay or bisexual … Threatening to have you deported if you have recent immigrant status

Spiritual Abuse

Twisting religious or spiritual teachings to justify abuse … Ridiculing your beliefs … Preventing you from practicing your religion or spiritual tradition … Forced conversion to a different religion or spiritual tradition … Discriminating against you because of your religious beliefs or spiritual tradition … Forcing one individual’s or group’s beliefs and values on others