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## Mind Games

### How to recognize abuse by Gioya McRae



Everyone loves her husband. He's charming, handsome, polite, and intelligent. Then why is she so miserable in this marriage? This is a common theme in relationships where emotional abuse occurs.

Emotional abuse is cruel and causes long-term damage to a woman's self-esteem, yet many women suffer through it because they feel alone and misunderstood. Emotional abuse can leave a woman feeling worthless, flawed, unloved, or endangered, reports the Canadian Health Network.

### Changing Personality

Abused women may find themselves wondering, "Why do I let him treat me this way? How did this happen and why do I stay?"

This may be because an abusive person often holds back obvious abuse until after a woman moves in with or marries him. Once she is emotionally committed and physically under his control, the real abuse begins.

### Feeling Powerless

Unfortunately, even the most intelligent among us begin to emotionally deteriorate under constant verbal abuse. Just think about it. If you constantly hear that you're worthless and unwanted, you'll begin to wonder, and then to believe what you're told, especially in the absence of support from friends or family.

Usually the abuser hides his cruelty from the public so that when his spouse makes an appeal for help, friends and family often don't understand there's a problem. This lack of support reinforces the abused woman's confusion and feeling of isolation. She becomes reluctant to reveal she's being abused by her mate, especially if others find him charming.

Low self-esteem and self-doubt compound the problem. We think, "He used to be so sweet. I must have done something to make him act this way." We mistakenly feel ashamed that we're ruining a relationship with an obviously wonderful man.

## **Excusing Behaviour**

In addition to our own doubts, an abusive mate probably has a healthy supply of plausible excuses for his behaviour. For example, “I had a hard day at work” or “I had too much to drink.” We may even make excuses for him: “He had an abusive childhood.”

But there is no good excuse for violating another human being. Remember, an abuser is basically a coward and a bully using a woman as his mental punching bag.

## **How Do You Know if You’re Being Emotionally Abused? Does He...**

- Constantly degrade you by calling you “stupid,” “fat,” “useless,” or “ugly”?
- Make everything “your fault,” even if he causes the problem?
- Make you feel like you’re always walking on eggshells?
- Intimidate you into doing things you don’t want to do?
- Keep you from practising your spiritual beliefs?
- Keep extremely tight control of the finances?
- Isolate you from your family and friends, perhaps by moving you to a remote location?

If you’ve answered yes to any of these questions, you may be in an abusive relationship.

## **How Can You Stop It?**

- You cannot change him. Concentrate on changing your situation and your mindset.
- If you can move back with family or friends, do so immediately. Don’t worry if they don’t understand why you need to get away. This is your life in jeopardy.
- If possible, get a restraining order. It’s hard for an abuser to give up control.
- Get help. Two of the most important things you will discover are that you are not alone and that this situation is not your fault. And you don’t want to wait. Eventually, verbal abuse can escalate into physical abuse.

The Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres ([casac.ca](http://casac.ca)) provides links to agencies across Canada that can help.

## **Protect Your Future**

### The best prevention is good observation

- Has he insulted or snubbed you during your early courtship (even a few times)?
- What about his past relationships; can anyone give you background information about how he treated women in the past?
- Don’t feel bad about discreetly checking up on him. Your future is worth it.

## **About the Author**

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