

§2.3 Emotional Abuse

...The American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect defines “psychological maltreatment”⁶¹ and “a repeated pattern of damaging interactions between parent(s) and child that becomes typical of the relationship” and “occurs when a person conveys to a child that he or she is worthless, flawed, unloved, unwanted, endangered, or only of value in meeting another’s needs. The perpetrator may spurn, terrorize, isolate, or ignore or impair the child’s socialization.”⁶² The committee stated that:

If severe and/or repetitious, the following behaviors may constitute psychological maltreatment:

1. Spurning (belittling, degrading, shaming, or ridiculing a child; singling out a child to criticize or punish; and humiliating a child in public).
2. Terrorizing (committing life-threatening acts; making a child feel unsafe; setting unrealistic expectations with threat of loss, harm, or danger if they are not met; and threatening or perpetrating violence against a child or child’s loved ones or objects).
3. Exploiting or corrupting that encourages a child to develop inappropriate behaviors (modeling, permitting, or encouraging antisocial or developmentally inappropriate behavior; encouraging or coercing abandonment of developmentally appropriate autonomy; restricting or interfering with cognitive development).
4. Denying emotional responsiveness (ignoring a child or failing to express affection, caring, and love for a child).
5. Rejecting (avoiding or pushing away).
6. Isolating (confining, placing unreasonable limitations on freedom of movement or social interactions).
7. Unreliable or inconsistent parenting (contradictory and ambivalent demands).
8. Neglecting mental health, medical, and educational needs (ignoring, preventing, or failing to provide treatments or services for emotional, behavioral, physical, or educational needs or problems).
9. Witnessing intimate partner violence (domestic violence).⁶³

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⁶¹ Although emotional and psychological abuse are used synonymously here, they may be distinguishable for professional diagnostic purposes.

⁶² See Steven W. Kairys, Charles F. Johnson & Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect, *The Psychological Maltreatment of Children – Technical Report*, 109/4 PEDIATRICS e68 (2002).

⁶³ *Id.*; see also Stephanie Hamarman & William Bernet, *Evaluating and Reporting Emotional Abuse in Children: Parent-Based, Action-Based Focus Aids in Clinical Decision-Making*, 39/7 J. AM. ACAD. CHILD ADOLESC. PSYCHIATRY 928 (2000).