

# Emotional Abuse and Coercive Control

## What is emotional abuse and coercive control?

Emotional abuse is a type of family violence. It is a way of controlling another person over time by consistently belittling, criticising, shaming and undermining another person to control them in the relationship.

## Is it illegal?

In Tasmania, family violence offences are outlined in the Family Violence Act 2004.

Section 9 of the Act specifically deals with emotional abuse, saying that a person must not treat their partner in a way that they know, or ought to know, is likely to have the effect of unreasonably controlling or intimidating them, or causing mental harm, apprehension or fear.

## What can it look like?

- A person using threatening or intimidating behaviours or language so that the partner will do what they are told to do.
  - A person threatening to leave the relationship if the partner won't do what they tell them to do.
  - A person that goes through their partner's social media and phone contacts to delete people they do not want their partner to contact.
  - A person who talks badly of their partners friends and family, and over time isolating their partner from those people.
  - A person who insists that their partner dress a certain way, and later belittles them about your look, and accusing their partner of flirting and wanting the attention of others.
  - Excessively checking up on where their partner is and who they are spending time with.
  - Undermining their partner's parenting abilities, and undermining their partner in front of the children.
  - A person who makes jokes about their partner to put them down in front of acquaintances.
  - Continual criticism of everything their partner does, which can often include name calling.
- Devaluing their partner's self-worth and making them feel like they are worthless without them, so they are less likely to leave the relationship.

## Case Study: Sheika and Kevin

Sheika met Kevin at a friend's party. Kevin was very nice, and Sheika soon found herself spending a lot of time with Kevin. After a few months, they moved in together.

Kevin would call Sheika through the day to see what she was doing, and if she was with anyone. Sometimes he accused her of being with other men if he heard the TV on in the background.

Kevin liked to take Sheika out, and liked her to wear tight fitting clothes. When they got home, Kevin would make fun of Sheika for how she looked, and often would accuse her of flirting with other men.

Kevin told Sheika that he did not like her family, and insisted that she didn't spend time with them. Sheika also stopped talking to her friends as much, as Kevin seemed to get in a mood afterwards.

Kevin told Sheika that there will be trouble if she doesn't have dinner on the table when he gets home, and sometimes he comes home early, which frightens Sheika if she is still cooking. Sheika feels like she can't do anything right, and feels anxious all the time.

## Contacts

- **In an emergency situation or if you are in immediate danger, call 000.**
- Family Violence Counselling and Support Service, phone 1800 608 122.
- Engender Equality, phone 03 6278 9090.
- 1800Respect, phone 1800 737 732.
- Women's Legal Service Tasmania can be contacted on **1800 682 468**.

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