

SURVIVING ABUSE: 46 tips

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Contents	Pages
1. Introduction to Abuse	1-2
2. New Ways of Thinking	3
3. New Ways of Feeling	4
4. New Ways of Acting	5
5. How to move on with your life	6-7

Many persons experience abuse in their infant and childhood years. It can also occur during other stages of life such as adolescence, adulthood and even as seniors. Abuse can be physical, sexual, verbal and emotional. As well it can be spiritual. Abuse is where one or more persons deliberately and repeatedly harm the welfare of another with little or no display of empathy. The goal is to receive some form of satisfaction from the act such as feeling in control, gaining attention, exercising revenge, taking out inner anger, being judgmental, or sadistic. Also Abuse can be a form of perceived protection from an irrational fear or suspicion.

Abusers come in all shapes or forms or persons. They can include family members such as spouses, parents, siblings, children, and members of one's extended family. Domestic violence can become the norm regardless of class, colour, or occupation.

At the workplace we find abusive employers, supervisors and co-workers. Abusers turn up as harmless seeming neighbours, trusted teachers, professional mentors, civic protectors and even pastors and other church workers.

We are not so much dealing with obvious criminal abuse. In this article, I am focusing especially on abuse from persons who abuse us through exploiting their position of being someone occupying a role where caring, protection, intimacy or protective authority are expected. Most forms of abuse become a distortion of relationships of trust where we base our sense of security on convention or on stated promises.

Abusers are predators who go after the most vulnerable. We become attached to them because, as with childhood parents, we may have no choice. We can become strongly persuaded through a judgemental distortion of the marriage vow, sexual using, and verbal manipulation. Codependent victims and a user's can become locked into a destructive attraction.

After the facade of persuasive manipulation including emotional, sexual and monetary grooming, we all tend to become intimately attached to the abuser. This is partly due to the addictive effect of the "pleasure hormone" Dopamine and the attachment nurturing hormone Oxytocin.

The abuser or self-seeking predator, is usually an expert with "a thousand faces". He or she uses role playing and hypnotic deceit to condition unsuspecting victims and especially the public to see him or herself as a charming, exemplary and even sacrificial citizen.

When the potential victim is sufficiently bonded, trusting and believing, then little by little the abuser begins to gradually take control over his or her mind. It is nothing less than that.

Techniques include systematically undermining the belief of the victim in their own good intent, competence, reliability and truthfulness. This is achieved through mechanism such as "gaslighting" the victim or falsifying any perception, memories or conviction of positive realities about themselves or of negative realities of the abuser's expressed emotions, words or actions.

The victim may lose their sense of self or reality as they try to prove their good intentions by trying to please the abuser. This becomes an increasingly futile experience. Eventually the victim may so mistrust themselves that they practically lose their identity. Then they become a codependent person whereby they depend on the abuser's selective "favour" approvals and permissions to feel, think or act.

Control becomes exercised in the various contexts of abuse through various tools such as discouraging or enforcing a denial of freedom of thought, finances, movement or association.

Control devices can include emotional disapproval, attack, harassment, blackmail and arbitrary withdrawal of affection. There can be verbal attacks, berating, insults, and degrading.

Physical attacks, restraining, bumping, and arm twisting can be done "under the radar" so that physical evidence is not produced. Threats can include coded rather than overt language. This includes "you know how we do things around here"

Sexual abuse extends from suggestive words, looks, casual seeming touching or brushing against or fondling, to the extent of rape. There is no such thing as "degrees" of sexual abuse. Once a person senses that any aspect of their sexuality is being exploited or involved non-consensually or below the age of consent then this is a violation of the victim's personhood.

If you have been abused in any way. You are likely to experience certain feelings, beliefs and behaviours common to all victims. This can include feeling used, violated, shamed, unreasonably guilty or cheapened as well as permanently mistrustful of persons. Many persons become mistrustful of their own judgments or beliefs. This occurs whether or not their experience has been in the past or still occurs in the present..

The purpose of this article is to provide abused persons with various tips for overcoming and surviving abuse. I will just list them without commentary. They are intended as pointers to alert you to new ways of thinking, feeling and acting. These could become useful to help you consider, meditate, do further research and take action.

New Ways of thinking

1. Most persons do not understand the nature of abuse. Many will be fooled by the public deceptions of abusers.
2. Being abusive is a form of personal weakness, illness or even antisocial moral values. It is almost never admitted. No human being can overcome these by himself or herself. We cannot change others. No matter how many expressions of regret or promises to change the abuser only has a chance to change with honest admission and consistently seeking therapy or religious transformation.
3. Many abused persons lack healthy families and have been repeating living with the patterns of abuse they grew up seeing. This is all they may know with regard to conflict management.
4. Recognize that just as in human trafficking, abuse involves a calculated process of mental conditioning, brainwashing and Gaslighting. There is controlling including financial and physical. Here the abused person becomes a genuine victim.
5. The words "you made me do it" or "it is because of how you were behaving" are the most devious excuses for abuse. No matter how much one is wronged, one needs to take total responsibility for their actions.
6. A person who neglects the small things of etiquette, consideration and little kindness, without remorse, cannot be depended on for bigger things.
7. Mistakes in being kind and considerate may be made when non-abusive persons are stressed, but they will be usually quick to share regret and apology. This is not so with the abuser.
8. Every person must seek never to become a victim of any form of abuse. 9. We need not give up on what God can do to change people. Yet where a person feels entitled to be abusive, to let go is necessary. Let God do the changing when the person repents.
9. As you let go, recognize that often the abuser will not easily give up trying to get to you to use you.

New Ways of Feeling

10. When you have been abused in any way do not feel as if you are “damaged goods” or as if you are necessarily partly to blame. This is how the abuser, the public or even your acquaintances may regard you.
11. A person's inherent God-given dignity, worth and potential can never be removed. Despite all the camouflage, it is the abuser who has soiled their character, reputation and destiny.
12. Don't worry if you are not believed, told, by skeptics that you are lying, and that you should have pity or be more loyal to the abuser. Remember that abusers are master manipulators of others besides yourself. They will present an opposite face to others.
13. Often abusers who feel spurned can seek a vendetta of falsehoods which others have no way of verifying accuracy on either side. Ignore accusers, diagnosers, ignorant advisors or judges.
14. Don't feel that you are letting out family secrets or betraying your abuser's confidentiality when you share the truth with mature persons that you can trust.

New Ways of Acting

15. Where possible, seek to avoid the following persons:

- i. persons who are consistently negative
- ii. persons who use you in any way, or who are habitual "takers"
- iii. persons who don't care about your feelings.
- iv. persons who are not reliable in being there for you.
- v. persons who cannot be depended on for truth speaking and honesty. 3

- vi. persons who habitually do not keep promises

- vii. persons who give excuses or reasons that you know are not true or that just don't sit right in you mind.

- viii. persons who sidestep apologies.
- ix. persons who repeatedly "cut corners" with doing things correctly and act as if it is "no big thing"
- x. persons who expect you to cover for their wrongdoing as a sign of loyalty to them, the relationship or institution.
- xi. persons who accuse you of taking sides against them when you give a truthful opinion or state a fact that they disagree with.
- xii. persons who show a basic character flaw and share no desire or show evidence of growth through some process involving accountability such as therapy or healthy religion.
- xiii. persons who avoids consistent responsibility such as domestic, financial, punctuality
- xiv. persons who expect you to pick up, and wash up after them as part of your responsibility or due to a lack of consideration.
- xv. persons who feel entitled to neglect the small things of etiquette, consideration and little kindnesses cannot be depended on for bigger things
- xvi. persons who will not listen to you patiently, avoid interruption or consider your point of view as potentially being as correct as theirs.
- xvii. persons who pull you into arguments and avoids two-way discussions. An argument is a contrived contest where the only goal is to win.
- xviii. persons who are for "win-lose" rather than "win-win"
- xix. persons who habitually shouts, swears, puts down, berates, insults, harasses or verbally attacks in any way. Attacks wound mind, body and spirit.
- xx. persons who feel entitled to use physical violence of even the mildest seeming type.

16. Never give power to an abuser or try to blame yourself or "beg off" for the person. 18. Seek to get out of the role, dependency, habitual thinking, feeling and behaviours and controls as soon as possible.

17. Avoid the "one more chance" approach. It could be the one that takes your health or your life. Never try to negotiate or seek permission for a non-adversarial separation.

How to move on with your life

18. Seek to get out of the victim role, dependency, habitual thinking, feelings and behaviours and controlling as soon as possible.
 19. The main task of the person abandoning victimhood is to seek resources and strategies to get out of it emotionally, financially, and physically with legal protection and secret shelter if necessary, with the support of friends, family or specialized agencies.
 20. Search for an experienced therapist who can understand your experience and help you to find your way out.
 21. One of the best things you can do for yourself is to “tell your story”, in confidence, to persons you can trust.
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22. Secretly keep all evidence of any abuse such as doctor's certificates. Keep a diary or journal of events, make recordings etc. Get advice from legal experts or anti abuse advocates about this.
 23. Find a mature support group of abused persons, in person or online Find trusted friends that you can share with.
 24. Making abuse non-secret is the best way for the freedom of yourself and other abused persons.
 25. Expect to have symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder including flashbacks with anxiety, insomnia, poor concentration and depression. See this as normal and get help. 28. Expect a sense of loss and even possible grief. This occurs even with living with abusers. Some abused persons can be made to feel that they cannot cope on their own. Even an abuser can be seen as “company”
 26. Work through the stages of grieving your loss which includes: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and eventually acceptance. These stages can repeat themselves before healing.
 27. As you let go, recognize that often the abuser will not easily give up trying to get to you to use you.
 28. Be always mindful and on your guard.
 29. Arrange your business re your possessions, financial affairs and legalities where you really have nothing to talk about at this stage of letting go.
 30. Recognize that usually you may have nothing to talk about that will be not end up being to your detriment with further abuse. You can become re-traumatized. 34. Set up boundaries including the telephone or visits. Use neutral intermediaries for any necessities that crop up. Expect to be harassed or even stalked. Get legal help as necessary.
 31. To let go is not to fail to forgive. Forgiveness is for the abused persons healing e.g. from revengeful wishes. One will not leave the injured person lying in the road. Yet forgiveness needs to include protection.
 32. The process of awareness building, letting go, grieving, accepting and setting boundaries may be a long and painful process. Be patient with yourself. 37. Recognize that whereas we can't change people in abusive relationships, we can change ourselves.
 33. The way we apply our coping strategies and help seeking will vary with the context of abuse.
 34. Dependent persons such as children will need assistance by the state and voluntary groups and specialized professionals.
 35. Adult surviving childhood abuse most often have to deal with memories especially when the abusers may be deceased.

36. Where adults have to deal with dependent abusive relatives. As they manage emotional boundaries, they may need to set up arrangements for paid or voluntary intermediaries to ensure adequate caregiving and financial arrangements.

37. Healing is lifelong. Your abuse trauma most likely have been lifelong or the memories will be there in some form for the rest of one's life. Be patient. With the right approach time heals all wounds.

38. Self-management is the victory.

39. Move from codependency to independence. Get your hands on any information to help yourself develop wellness of the whole person, emotional healing and resilience, life skills coping. See my website www.wholepersongrowth.com. Find groups, fellow survivors and professionals.

40. Set goals for your future which are yours. Take your time.

41. To be healed does not mean you have to set up unnecessary boundaries in all relationships. Gradually get to know what is healthy behaviours in others and yourself. Healthy relationships can be fun.