

Abuse

When someone hurts another person

Abuse is the cruel and violent treatment of another person. When you abuse someone you disrespect their body, their feelings or their safety.

The person abusing you could be a parent, a family member, a teacher or even a member of your community. It's important for you to know that being abused is never your fault. It is not because of something you did.

Abuse can be physical. This is any action that causes your body pain and leaves a physical mark. Abuse can be when someone hits, kicks, bites, chokes, throws, burn or violently shakes you. Abusers will often pretend it was an accident that you got hurt.

Abuse can be emotional (feelings) or verbal (words). This happens when someone constantly shouts, swears, criticises, scares or even just ignores you. When someone uses emotional abuse on another person, they are hoping to hurt you by destroying your self-worth. Emotional abuse can hurt and cause pain that lasts a lifetime.

Abuse can be sexual. This happens when someone touches your penis or vagina, makes you touch theirs, makes you watch sexy things, or even has sex with you; without your consent (agreement). In South Africa, you can only give sexual consent once you're over the age of 16. Sexual abuse can happen between an adult and a child, children or adolescents.

Abuse can be when you are not looked after properly. It is called neglect. It happens if your parent/caregiver leaves you alone, doesn't give you food, love, clothes or they don't take you to the clinic if you are sick.

If you think that one of these kinds of abuse is happening to you, speak to an adult that you trust.

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