

# Understanding Healthy Relationships Parent & Carer Guide

AnyOne.  
AnywhEre.



Welcome to your

# **'Anyone. Anywhere.'** **Understanding Healthy** **Relationships guide**

– a resource filled with the right information to support your child's understanding of healthy relationships. This guide is designed to empower you with the knowledge and tools to support your child in recognising the signs of both healthy and unhealthy relationships.

Inside, you will find clear definitions of critical terms like 'coercive control' and 'gaslighting,' valuable conversation starters for discussing your concerns, and links to trusted external organisations for additional support. Our goal is to help you foster open, honest discussions with your child, ensuring they build safe and respectful relationships.

**Let's navigate this  
journey together  
for a brighter,  
healthier future  
for our children.**



# Important Definitions

Understanding what an unhealthy relationship can look like is so important, but knowing the correct terminology is equally as useful. By knowing the right language to use with your child, you can feel confident beginning open conversations.

## Gaslighting

Gaslighting is a form of psychological manipulation where one person makes another doubt their own memory, perception, or sanity. This is done by denying facts, lying, or distorting information, causing the victim to feel confused and unsure of themselves.

Here is an example of gaslighting in action:

**Sarah:**

"Alex, you said you would pick me up from work yesterday, but you never showed up. I had to walk home."

**Alex:**

"I never said that, Sarah. You must be remembering it wrong. I was busy with work, and you knew that."

**Sarah:**

"I distinctly remember you promising to pick me up. We even talked about it that morning."

**Alex:**

"You're being ridiculous. You're always so forgetful and overdramatic. You probably just imagined it."

## Coercive Control

Coercive control is a pattern of behaviour in which an individual uses threats, humiliation, and intimidation to dominate another person. This can include controlling their finances, social interactions, and daily activities, making the victim feel trapped and powerless.



## Relationship Violence

Relationship violence, also known as intimate partner violence, involves physical, sexual, or emotional harm by a current or former partner. It can include hitting, forced sexual acts, threats, or constant criticism, aiming to maintain power and control over the victim.

## Abuse

Abuse is the harmful treatment of another person and can take many forms:

### **Physical Abuse:**

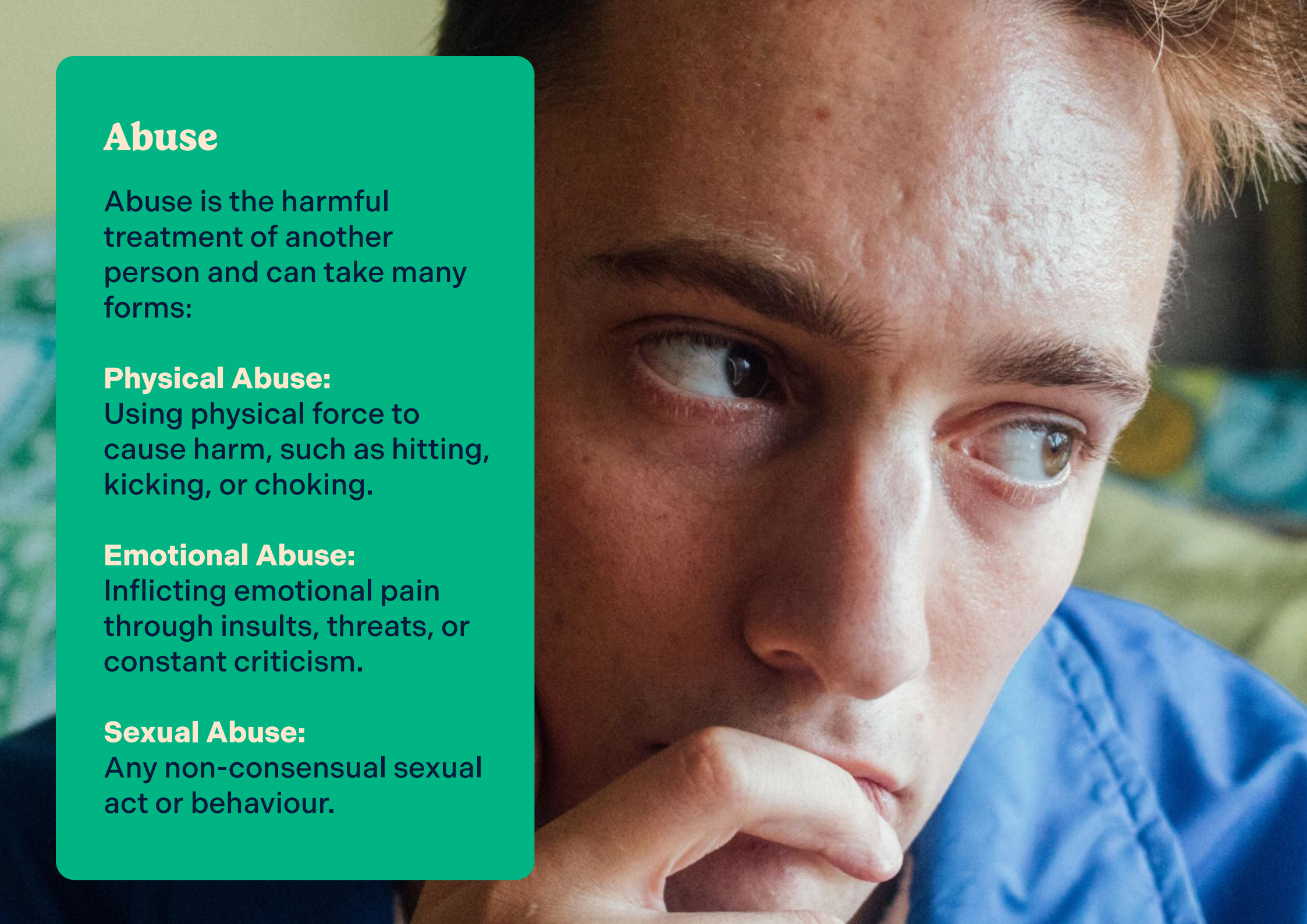
Using physical force to cause harm, such as hitting, kicking, or choking.

### **Emotional Abuse:**

Inflicting emotional pain through insults, threats, or constant criticism.

### **Sexual Abuse:**

Any non-consensual sexual act or behaviour.



## Narcissism

Narcissism refers to a personality trait characterised by excessive self-focus, a lack of empathy for others, and a need for admiration. Narcissistic individuals may exploit or manipulate others to achieve their own goals and often struggle with maintaining healthy relationships.

## Ghosting

Ghosting is when someone suddenly cuts off all communication without explanation. This can happen in dating or friendships and leaves the person being ghosted feeling confused and hurt, as they receive no closure.

## Red Flags and Green Flags

### Red Flags:

Warning signs that a relationship may be unhealthy or abusive, such as excessive jealousy, controlling behaviour, isolation from friends and family, and disrespect.

### Green Flags:

Positive indicators that a relationship is healthy, including mutual respect, open communication, trust, support, and shared decision-making.



# Approaching a Conversation About Relationships

Before you even begin to speak to your child about relationships and any concerns you might have, it's important to plan the right time and place.



## Setting the right environment

Find a place where your child feels safe and at ease. This could be during a walk, a car ride, or a relaxed moment at home. Avoid places with distractions or where your child might feel trapped or cornered.

Ensure the environment is calm and free from interruptions. Turn off the TV, put away phones, and focus on creating a private space for an open dialogue.

Adopt a non-judgmental and supportive tone. Your body language and facial expressions should convey openness and empathy.

## Timing the conversation

Look for natural opportunities to bring up the topic, such as when discussing a relevant movie scene, a story in the news, or a situation with their friends. Avoid times when your child is stressed, tired, or preoccupied.

Make relationship talks a regular part of your conversations rather than a one-time discussion. This normalises the topic and shows that you're always there to listen and support.





## **During the conversation**

Use open-ended questions to encourage your child to share their thoughts and feelings. Avoid yes/no questions, which can shut down the conversation.

Acknowledge your child's emotions and experiences. Phrases like "That sounds really difficult" or "I understand why you feel that way" can help them feel heard and supported.

Familiarise yourself with terms like 'coercive control,' 'gaslighting,' and other aspects of unhealthy

relationships. This allows you to provide accurate information and help your child understand these concepts.

Focus on being supportive rather than critical. If your child shares something concerning, express your care and willingness to help rather than immediately criticising their partner or friends.

Inform your child about external resources, such as counselling services or helplines, where they can seek additional help. Offer to explore these resources together if they're interested.

# Having the Conversation

Here are some useful conversation starters to help you communicate effectively with your child. Whether you want to have a general chat about relationships or you have concerns about a relationship they are in, we have provided many different avenues for you to try.

# General conversations about relationships

“What qualities do you think are important in a healthy relationship?”

“How do you feel when you’re with your friends or someone you’re dating?”

“How do you feel about boundaries in relationships, and what boundaries do you think are important?”

“Can you describe what respect means in a relationship?”

“Have you ever seen examples of healthy relationships in movies or shows? What stood out to you?”

“How do you and your friends handle disagreements or conflicts?”

# Conversations if you are concerned about an unhealthy relationship

"I've noticed you seem stressed/upset lately. Is everything okay with your friends or partner?"

"It's important to feel safe and respected in a relationship. Do you feel that way with your partner?"

"Has anyone ever made you feel guilty or ashamed for things you didn't do?"

"Can you talk to me about how your partner makes you feel on both good days and bad days?"

"Have you ever felt scared or uneasy around your partner?  
Can you tell me more about that?"

"Do you know what gaslighting is? Have you ever felt confused or doubted your own feelings and memories?"

"Do you ever feel like you can't be yourself or say what you really think around your partner?"

"Do you feel like your partner respects your boundaries and your need for personal space?"

"How do your friends feel about your relationship? Have they expressed any concerns?"

"How does your partner react when you have different opinions or want to do things your own way?"

# Need more support?

Here are some useful organisations that can support and guide you and your child further.

## Childline

Childline is a free, confidential helpline for children and young people in the UK. Available 24/7, it offers support and advice on a wide range of issues, including relationship abuse. Parents and carers can also contact Childline for guidance on how to help their children navigate difficult relationships and ensure their safety.

Call 0800 1111

[childline.org.uk](https://www.childline.org.uk)

## NSPCC

The NSPCC is dedicated to preventing child abuse and supporting families across the UK. They provide a helpline for parents and caregivers who are concerned about their child's well-being, offering resources and advice on recognising and addressing relationship abuse and ensuring children's safety and health.

Call 0808 800 5000

[nspcc.org.uk](https://www.nspcc.org.uk)

## SafeLives

SafeLives is a UK-based charity dedicated to ending domestic abuse. They offer resources and support for families affected by domestic abuse, including specialised programmes for young people. SafeLives focuses on early intervention and providing practical help to ensure safety and recovery for victims and their families.

[safelives.org.uk](https://www.safelives.org.uk)

## Women's Aid

Women's Aid is a national charity in the UK working to end domestic abuse against women and children. They provide support through their helpline, online chat, and local services, offering guidance to parents and carers who are concerned about their child's relationship. Women's Aid focuses on empowering survivors and preventing abuse through education and advocacy.

[womensaid.org.uk](https://www.womensaid.org.uk)

## The Mix

The Mix is a UK-based support service for young people under 25, offering advice on a wide range of issues, including relationships. They provide online resources, helplines, and counselling services. Parents and carers can also access information on how to support their children through relationship challenges and recognise signs of unhealthy behaviour.

[themix.org.uk](https://www.themix.org.uk)

## YoungMinds

YoungMinds is a leading UK charity focused on the mental health and well-being of children and young people. It offers support and resources for parents and carers who are worried about their child's mental health, including issues related to relationship abuse. YoungMinds also provides guidance on how to approach difficult conversations and seek further help.

[youngminds.org.uk](https://www.youngminds.org.uk)

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide. We hope it has provided you with valuable insights and tools to support your child in understanding and navigating healthy relationships.

**Most importantly, if you ever feel that you or your child are in immediate danger, do not hesitate to call 999. Your safety and your child's safety are paramount.**