

Victims of Abuse and Their Symptoms

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Certificate of Acknowledgment

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Objectives of Research

To understand the common symptoms among the victims of abuse.

To gain knowledge about the stages a victim of abuse goes through.

To gain knowledge about different kinds of abuse and their effects.

With an intent to, generate a new list of common symptoms among the victims of abuse.

What is Abuse?

Abuse is the improper usage or treatment of a thing, often to unfairly or improperly gain benefit. Abuse can come in many forms, such as: physical or verbal maltreatment, injury, assault, violation, rape, unjust practices, crimes, or other types of aggression. It can occur in someone's home, a care home, hospital or a public place.

Who is a Victim?



- one that is acted on and usually adversely affected by a force or agent
- one that is injured, destroyed, or sacrificed under any of various conditions :
- one that is subjected to oppression, hardship, or mistreatment
- one that is tricked or duped

DIFFERENT TYPES OF ABUSE

1. **Physical Abuse:** This involves the use of physical force or violence that causes harm or injury to another person. This can include hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, or any other form of physical assault. It is intentionally causing bodily injury to an individual to establish dominance over them.
2. **Emotional/Psychological Abuse:** This form of abuse is characterized by the manipulation, intimidation, humiliation, or control of another person. It includes gaslighting, threats, insults, or isolating someone from their friends and family. This form of abuse does not require physical contact to cause damage, it does, however, diminish a person's self-esteem and self-worth.

Forms of Emotional Abuse

- Silent treatment
- Withholding affection
- Routinely making threats
- Isolating the victim from friends and family

3. **Sexual Abuse:** It refers to any form of non-consensual sexual activity or exploitation. Including rape, sexual assault, molestation, and harassment.

Forms of Sexual Abuse

- Insisting a partner dress in a preferred way
 - Demanding sex when a partner is ill or tired
 - Unwelcome sexual photography
 - Sharing nude photos without consent
 - Forcing a partner to watch pornographic content
4. **Verbal Abuse:** Verbal abuse involves the use of words, tone, or language to belittle, demean, or humiliate another person. This can include yelling, name-calling, constant criticism, or derogatory comments.
 5. **Financial Abuse:** This type of abuse involves the control or exploitation of a person's financial resources or property without their consent. This can include stealing money, controlling someone's finances, withholding funds, or coercing someone into financial dependence. This ultimately affects the victim's ability to survive.

Forms of Financial Abuse

- Preventing an individual from taking up employment opportunities.
 - Placing an individual on an allowance from the income they earned.
6. **Child Neglect:** Neglect occurs when a person fails to provide the necessary care, support, or attention to the child who is dependent on them. This can include neglecting basic needs like food, shelter, clothing, medical care, or emotional support.
 7. **Digital Abuse:** With the rise of technology and online platforms, digital abuse has become prevalent. It includes cyberbullying, online harassment, stalking, and non-consensual sharing of explicit images or videos.
 8. **Institutional Abuse:** This type of abuse occurs within institutions or organizations such as schools, prisons, nursing homes, or healthcare facilities. It involves the mistreatment, neglect, or exploitation of individuals by those in positions of power or authority.

EFFECTS OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF ABUSE

PHYSICAL ABUSE

There is a high chance that their body will host various injuries in many states of healing.

Individuals who have been battered may experience stress, PTSD, and eating disorders, among other symptoms. Physical violence may disrupt sleep patterns and has been linked with insomnia. In addition, there is a high risk of engaging in substance abuse.

Abuse victims may also find that they are restless during daily activities or unable to achieve much due to fatigue.

The effects of physical abuse can be both acute and far-reaching. The immediate effect of physical abuse may be a bruise or a cut, but the long-term effects can be drastic.

Physical Effects of Physical Abuse

- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Heart disease
- Chronic pain syndromes

Other physical illnesses, such as diabetes, may be worsened due to physical abuse as the victim may have been denied access to care. Murder and suicide are also frequently associated with physical abuse.

Pregnancies are also frequently impacted by physical abuse. The effects of physical abuse on pregnancy include:

- Poor weight gain
- Preterm labor
- Miscarriage
- Low infant birth weight

Psychological Effects of Physical Abuse

Depression is the primary psychological response to physical abuse but drug and alcohol abuse are also common. Abused women have a 16-times greater risk of abusing alcohol and a 9-times greater risk of abusing drugs when compared to non-abused women. Other psychological effects of physical abuse include:

- Suicidal behavior
- Self-harm
- Panic disorder
- Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

Effects of Physical Abuse on Children

"...on Mother's Day of that year, he broke my back, showing my son how it was done..."³

Children are severely affected by physical abuse even if they, themselves, were not the victims of violence. It has been found that one-third of children who witness the battering of their mother demonstrate significant behavioral and emotional problems.

The effects of physical abuse on children may include:

- Stuttering
- Anxiety; fears; compulsive behavior
- Sleep disruption
- Excessive crying
- Problems at school
- Depression

- Self-destructive behavior; running away
- Anger and hostility
- Difficulty trusting others; relationship problems Children who witness physical abuse are also more likely to be victims (often women) or perpetrators (often men) of physical abuse as adults.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Victims of emotional abuse are likely to experience depression and anxiety. It is common for an abused individual to develop phobias, or alcohol and substance use disorders. An emotionally abused person may also self-harm or engage in reckless sexual practices following emotional harm.

Very worryingly, a person that has experienced emotional abuse may begin to harbor suicidal thoughts and can even attempt to end their life as a result of the pain.

SEXUAL ABUSE

When a person's sexual autonomy is forcibly overtaken by a partner or another person, this can produce understandably adverse reactions in the body and mind. Can cause feelings of guilt.

Victims may experience PTSD, sexual dysfunction, and poor sleep patterns.

In severe cases, this extreme breach of trust and humanity can cause a victim of sexual assault to make attempts at ending their life.

Sexual violence can have psychological, emotional, and physical effects. Some of these effects may be caused by the brain's biological responses to traumatic events. Individuals may experience a wide range of emotions and reactions both immediately after an assault and for months and years after. There is no "right" reaction to trauma.

FINANCIAL ABUSE

Victims may be found in a constant state of anxiety and distress over their economic state. The reality is that they lack the resources to leave their situation and feel trapped. This feeling can lead to depression.

MORE ABOUT...

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional abuse, on its own, is particularly damaging because it is insidious and tends to be covert. Most victims and others do not see it.

While staying in an abusive relationship the victim uses coping strategies. These coping strategies tend to be self-protective in nature; they include denial, minimization, addictions, arguing, defensiveness, rationalization, compliance, detachment, and dissociation.

- Victims learn to block out abusive events, which is much easier to do with emotional abuse because it is so. The victim may not even realize abuse is happening. Just like drug addiction or alcoholism is a progressive disease, abuse is a progressive disease as well. The existence of chronic disrespect and even cruelty will become commonplace in the relationship. Victims may comply, numb out, take anti-depressants, live in a detached state of being, pretend that everything's fine, etc. They have learned to be hyper-vigilant to the feelings and reactions of others and have stopped focusing on their own internal feelings. Their feelings and thoughts are invalidated so often that victims stop listening to their own inner voices. Usually, it is the victim's strengths and assets that keep him or her in the relationship; traits such as forgiveness, empathy, compassion, long-suffering, self-control, stick-to-it-iveness, loyalty, etc. While these are all awesome character traits, an abuser will use them to his or her advantage. Victims are usually unwilling to believe they are victims or use the term, victim to describe themselves.
- Victims must stop colluding with the abuser, step aside, and observe their relationship from an outside perspective. When victims of abuse start facing the reality of how they have co-created their

relationships, they can see that they really have the capability to be agents of change as well.

SEXUAL ABUSE

Ninety percent of all rapes are committed against women. One in six women in America have experienced rape. One in five girls and one in 20 boys experience childhood sexual abuse.

Sexual abuse and sexual assault are umbrella terms used to refer to multiple crimes. These crimes include:

Incest: Incest describes sexual contact between family members who are too closely related to marry. Most reported incest occurs as child abuse. Over a third of sexual assault survivors under the age of 18 are abused by a family member, according to latest statistics. However, incest is an underreported crime, so the actual number of incest survivors may be higher.

Non-contact sexual abuse-For instance, parents who have sex in front of their children or who make sexually inappropriate comments to their children are engaging in sexual abuse. So-called revenge pornography sites, which publish nude photos of people without their consent, are another form of sexual abuse.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE MILITARY

Most perpetrators commit these crimes out of a desire for domination. Offenders often wish to establish control over their inferiors. Reporters may also face barriers to mental health treatment. Research suggests the military has falsely diagnosed many sexual assault reporters with personality disruptions as an excuse to discharge them. The Department of Veterans Affairs classifies personality disruptions as a pre-existing condition.

MALE VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AND ABUSE

Due to stigma, male survivors can be reluctant to label their experiences as rape or abuse. Some may not mention the event at all. However, a reluctance to disclose can prevent men from getting treatment. Without professional help, some men resort to substance abuse or self-harm to cope with trauma.

RACE/ETHNICITY AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

Sexual assaults on white people are often punished more harshly than assaults on people of color. As such, people of color are much less likely to report their sexual assaults. Others may fear “betraying” their community by disclosing personal information. In some cases, cultural values create extra stigma for people who report. These factors can also prevent survivors from seeking mental health treatment.

CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT

Childhood maltreatment can be linked to later physical, psychological, and behavioral consequences as well as costs to society as a whole.

Abuse or neglect may stunt physical development of the child’s brain and lead to problems such as low self-esteem, which later lead to high-risk behaviors, such as substance use.

The outcomes for each child may vary widely and are affected by a combination of factors, including the child’s age and developmental status when the maltreatment occurred; the type, frequency, duration, and severity of the maltreatment; and the relationship between the child and the perpetrator.

Childhood maltreatment has been linked to higher risk for a wide range of long-term and/or future health problems, including—but not limited to—the following

Diabetes *f* Lung disease *f* Malnutrition *f* Vision problems *f* Functional limitations (i.e., being limited in activities) *f* Heart attack *f* Arthritis *f* Back problems

□ High blood pressure *f* Brain damage *f* Migraine headaches *f* Chronic bronchitis/emphysema/chronic obstructive pulmonary disease *f* Cancer *f* Stroke *f* Bowel disease *f* Chronic fatigue syndrome.

Child abuse and neglect also has been associated with certain regions of the brain failing to form, function, or grow properly.

For example, a history of maltreatment may be correlated with reduced volume in overall brain size and may affect the size and/or functioning of the following brain regions.^f The amygdala, which is key to processing emotions ^f The hippocampus, which is central to learning and memory ^f The orbitofrontal cortex, which is responsible for reinforcement-based decision-making and emotion regulation ^f The cerebellum, which helps coordinate motor behavior and executive functioning.

Children who were victims of sexual abuse were more likely to contract hepatitis C and HIV.

Psychological Consequences

Maltreatment can cause victims to feel isolation, fear, and distrust, which can translate into lifelong psychological consequences that can manifest as educational difficulties, low self-esteem, depression, and trouble forming and maintaining relationships. Diminished executive functioning and cognitive skills. Disrupted brain development as a result of maltreatment can cause impairments to the brain's executive functions: working memory, self-control, and cognitive flexibility (i.e., the ability to look at things and situations from different perspectives)

Attachment and social difficulties.

Additionally, children who experience abuse or neglect are more likely to develop antisocial traits as they grow up, which can lead to criminal behavior in adulthood.

Behavioral Consequences

Victims of child abuse and neglect often exhibit behavioral difficulties even after the maltreatment ends. Unhealthy sexual practices.

Juvenile delinquency leading to adult criminality

According to research funded by the National Institute of Justice within the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, girls tended to express internalizing behaviors (e.g., depression, social withdrawal, anxiety), while boys tended to express externalizing behaviors (e.g., bullying, aggression, hostility) leading up to adult criminal behavior.

Future perpetration of maltreatment

Although most children who have experienced abuse and neglect do not go on to abuse or neglect their own children, research suggests they are more likely to do so compared to children who were not maltreated.

Preventing and Reducing the Long Term Consequences of Maltreatment

By reducing the incidence of child abuse and neglect through primary prevention approaches and providing comprehensive, trauma-informed care when it does occur, communities can limit its long-term consequences.

Communities can ensure that public and private agencies have the tools—such as assessments, evidence-informed interventions, and properly trained staff—to provide children and their families with timely, appropriate care to prevent child maltreatment and alleviate its effects.

Research shows the following are protective factors for victims of child maltreatment

Individual level ○ Sense of purpose ○ Agency (self- efficacy) ○ Self-regulation skills ○ Relational skills ○ Problem-solving skills ○ Involvement in positive activities Relationship level ○ Parenting competencies

Positive peers ○ Parent or caregiver well-being Community level ○ Positive school environment ○ Stable living situation ○ Positive community environment.

SYMPTOMS THAT OCCUR AMONG THE VICTIMS OF ABUSE

Note- (these are generic symptoms)

What is PTSD?

Post-traumatic stress disorder is a mental health condition that can result from a traumatic event. Survivors might experience feelings of stress, fear, anxiety, and nervousness. While PTSD is often associated with experiencing combat, some research shows that survivors of sexual assault actually develop it. PTSD at higher rates than combat veterans. With PTSD, these feelings are pronounced, can be solicited by many common sights and sounds (as well as your other senses), and make it difficult to function in everyday life.

To establish a diagnosis of PTSD, there are three main

symptoms of PTSD:

Re-experiencing: feeling as if you are reliving the event through flashbacks, dreams, or intrusive thoughts. This is different than having bad memories of what happened.

Avoidance: intentionally or subconsciously changing your behavior to avoid scenarios associated with the event or losing interest in activities you used to enjoy.

Hyper-arousal: feeling “on edge” all of the time, having difficulty sleeping, being easily startled, or prone to sudden outbursts.

Self-Harm

Deliberate self-harm, also called self-injury, is when you inflict physical harm on yourself, usually in private and without suicidal intentions. Some survivors of sexual assault may use self-harm to cope with difficult or painful feelings. It may be a way to feel a release or regain a sense of control.

Unfortunately, this relief is often short-lived. The urge to self-harm can return, encouraging a cycle of self-harm that may cause damage, infection, and sometimes life-threatening medical problems.

Suicide

Many of the emotional and psychological reactions to sexual assault can eventually lead survivors to experience thoughts of ending their life.

Dissociation

In very simple terms, dissociation is a detachment from reality. Dissociation is one of the many defence mechanisms the brain can use to cope with the trauma of sexual violence. It’s often described as an “out of body” experience where someone feels detached from reality.

Sleep Disorders

What are sleep disorders?

Sleep disorders are medical conditions that affect the quality of sleep by interfering with normal sleep patterns. Symptoms can include trouble falling or staying asleep, sleeping at unusual times of day, or sleeping for longer or shorter than usual. Sleep is important for restoring physical and mental health, especially for survivors. Some sleep disorders include nightmares, sleep terrors, or insomnia.

EATING DISORDERS

Why do some survivors develop eating disorders?

Sexual violence can have an effect on your perceived body image and affect your eating habits. You may use food in an attempt to cope with the trauma, feel in control, or compensate for feelings and emotions that may otherwise seem overwhelming. These actions only provide short-term relief, but they have the ability to cause long-term damage to your health.

What types of eating disorders are there?

Sexual violence can affect you in many ways, including body image concerns and a feeling of loss of control.

Anorexia nervosa: characterized by restriction and self-starvation that cause excessive weight loss and has a damaging effect on overall health

Binge eating disorder: characterized by bingeing, the act of eating without control or response to normal hunger cues

Bulimia nervosa: characterized by a cycle of binge eating and purging of food in some way, such as laxatives or self-induced vomiting

It's also possible to engage in disordered eating that doesn't fit into one of these categories but is still dangerous.

What are the warning signs of an eating disorder?

Dramatic weight loss or gain • Preoccupation with food, calories, and dieting • Wearing excessively baggy clothing • Cold hands or lowered body temperature • Refusing to go out to eat or visit during mealtimes • Rituals during mealtime such as chewing excessively, cutting up small bites, pushing food around a plate

Substance Abuse

Alcohol and different drugs have specific effects on the brain. Some of these effects offset symptoms such as depression and anxiety. It is very common for some sexual assault survivors to 'self-medicate' with alcohol and drugs.

What are some reasons for substance use?

Trying to numb or escape the pain • Fear that family or friends won't understand • Confusion or self-consciousness about the experience • Lacking an effective support system or care

What are the warning signs of substance abuse?

Spending time with new friends who may encourage excess substance use • Taking or borrowing money or valuables from family and friends to buy substances

Performing poorly at work or school because of substance use • Lying to hide substance use • Driving while under the influence

Depression

- Depression is a mood disorder that occurs when feelings associated with sadness and hopelessness continue for long periods of time and interrupt regular thought patterns. It can affect your behavior and your relationship with other people. Depression doesn't discriminate—it can affect anyone of any age, gender, race, ethnicity, or religion.

- If these feelings persist for an extended period of time, it may be an indicator of depression.

Depression is not a sign of weakness, and it's not something you should be expected to "snap out of."

Flashbacks

A flashback is when memories of a past trauma feel as if they are taking place in the current moment.

That means it's possible to feel like the experience of sexual violence is happening all over again.

During a flashback it can be difficult to connect with reality. It may even feel like the perpetrator is physically present.

Flashbacks may seem random at first. They can be triggered by fairly ordinary experiences connected with the senses, like the smell of someone's odor or a particular tone of voice.

What helps during a flashback?

Return to the present by using the five senses.

- Look around you. Make a list of the items in the room; count the colors or pieces of furniture around you. **What do you see?**
- Breathe in a comforting scent, or focus on the smells around you. **What do you smell?**
- Listen to the noises around you, or turn on music. **What do you hear?**
- Eat or drink something you enjoy. Focus on the flavor. **What do you taste?**
- Hold something cold, like a piece of ice, or hot, like a mug of tea. **What does it feel like?**

Recognize what would make you feel safer. Wrap yourself in a blanket, or go into a room by yourself and close the door. Do whatever it takes for you to feel secure.

How do I prevent flashbacks?

Be aware of the warning signs.

These signs could include a change in mood, feeling pressure in your chest, or suddenly sweating. Becoming aware of the early signs of flashbacks may help you manage or prevent them.

Identify what experiences trigger your flashbacks.

Personality disruptions: Sexual abuse can sometimes result in personality disruptions such as borderline personality. The behavior linked with personality disruptions could actually be an adaptation to abuse. For instance, a characteristic of borderline personality is a fear of abandonment.

That fear might not be adaptive in adulthood. Yet avoiding abandonment might have protected someone from sexual abuse as a child.

Attachment issues: Survivors may find it challenging to form healthy attachments with others. This is especially true among children who have been abused. Adults who were abused as children may have insecure attachment patterns.

- Having a mental health concern does not make you “weak” or “broken.” People cope with trauma in different ways.
- Some victims and survivors might also feel that they haven’t really been affected by what happened to them.

Triggers

Sometimes, the effects of trauma can be brought on by ‘triggers’. These are things that remind the victim or survivor of their trauma –for example, a certain sound or smell.

A trigger might cause someone to experience a trauma response, such as a flashback or panic attack. A trigger doesn’t have to be a scary or stressful situation. Lots of everyday things can be triggers. For example, a particular place, a piece of music or a certain day of the year.

What will trigger a victim or survivor is not always easy to predict and might not even always seem to ‘make sense’. But, how it affects them is involuntary – they cannot control what will or won’t trigger a trauma response.

The ‘knock-on’ impacts

Even tasks that seemed ‘simple’ before what happened – for example, getting out of bed, taking a shower or leaving the house – can feel really hard or even impossible.

Some Thoughts about Victimization, Anger and Abuse

It’s not always the case that people can leave an abusive situation. Some people are trapped economically, or politically. Some people cannot leave easily because to do so will cause them to have

to leave their children behind, for instance. Other people cannot provide for themselves easily. It strikes me that part of becoming able to leave an abuse situation involves learning to change the way that you think about yourself. The emotion expressed over this unfairness is not consistent, however.

While some are angry, others feel hopeless or frustrated.

The main difference between whether people end up feeling hopeless or angry seems to come down to whether they end up blaming themselves for what is happening, or their abusers. Also to a lesser extent on how much control they feel they have over their situations. **People can become angry regardless of whether they feel they have control or not, but it is easier and safer to feel angry when people feel that they have a little control versus when they feel they have no control.**

Being able to feel angry about being abused is, in general, a good thing. **Anger has the capability of acting as a motivating force.** Anger's ability to motivate is never stronger than situations in which people feel they have been put down unjustly and that they have a right to take action to correct their situation.

Anger as rocket fuel. I like that analogy because though anger can fuel someone's escape if that anger is properly channeled, it is always a potentially dangerous thing as well. If handled poorly, the same anger that can motivate someone to leave a dangerous relationship can also cause that person to attack the person who has abused them, increasing the chances that they are harmed, and making that relationship ever more volatile and dangerous.

A sort of paralysis can set in and the situation may worsen. Now, not only are people being abused; they are also aware that they are not feeling brave enough to act to save themselves. Such people become upset with themselves and may start beating up on themselves. Such people end up beaten up from without and from within.

Abuse tends to change people – often for the worse. Righteous and self-protective anger. It is easy for anger to turn into something self-destructive. Anger that lingers on for years after abuse has ended will reduce rather than enhance the quality of your life.

COMMON STAGES THAT THE VICTIM GOES THROUGH AFTER THE ABUSE

Denial or Minimization: In the initial stage, victims may deny or minimize the abuse they are experiencing. This can be a coping mechanism to protect themselves from the overwhelming reality of the abuse.

Confusion and Fear: Victims may feel confused, scared, and uncertain about their situation. The abuser may have instilled fear, making the victim feel trapped or dependent on them.

Guilt and Self-Blame: Victims often experience feelings of guilt and self-blame, believing that they are responsible for the abuse or that they somehow deserve it.

Anger and Resentment: As the victim begins to recognize the abuse and its impact, they may feel anger and resentment towards the abuser. This stage can be a turning point where the victim starts to question the abusive dynamics and seek ways to assert their rights.

Acceptance and Acknowledgment: Victims gradually accept that they are being abused and acknowledge the need for change. They may reach out for support, whether from friends, family, or professional resources.

Decision and Action: In this stage, the victim may make a decision to leave the abusive situation or take steps to protect themselves. This can involve seeking legal assistance, finding a safe place to stay, or accessing support services.

Healing and Recovery: After leaving the abusive situation, victims can focus on healing and rebuilding their lives. This stage involves therapy, counseling, support groups, and self-care activities to address the emotional, psychological, and physical impact of the abuse.

FIRST STEP TO BE TAKEN AFTER ONE REALISES THEY ARE A VICTIM OF ABUSE

Ensure personal safety: If you are in immediate danger, prioritize your safety above all else. If

necessary, remove yourself from the abusive environment and seek a safe place, such as a trusted friend's house or a shelter.

Reach out for support: It's essential to confide in someone you trust about what you are experiencing. This could be a friend, family member, or a helpline specifically designed for individuals facing abuse. They can provide emotional support, help you assess the situation, and guide you through the next steps.

Educate yourself about abuse: Learn about the different forms of abuse, their dynamics, and the impact they can have. Understanding the nature of abuse can help you make sense of your experiences and validate your feelings.

Seek professional help: They can provide guidance, help you process your emotions, and develop coping strategies.

CASE ANALYSIS

CASE 1

Child abuse – a personal story

J. Smith submitted this account of being abused in foster homes and by his step-grandfather.

Well where do I start? I was born in Christchurch, New Zealand. I'm 23 years of age and this is my story. When I was five, my family left me and I was put into foster

always told that I was nothing, a worthless person, that

my family wanted nothing to do with me and that's why I was put into foster care. I was beaten, thrown down stairs and pulled up by my hair. I remember one day I was in the bathtub crying because I just wanted someone to love me, and because of the crying my head was pushed under water. I started crying myself to sleep at night because I feared the abuse if someone caught me crying again. I never was given a chance to celebrate my birthday, which didn't really matter at that point because the only thing that I had hoped for was a loving family.

When I turned seven, my grandparents were given custody of me so I was out of the foster care system and very excited. I thought this was the best thing to ever happen, but that feeling would change dramatically two weeks after I got there.

One morning I woke up and my Nana had already gone to work, so it was just my step-grandfather and me there. As I was about to get out of bed, he walked into my room and sat down ... taking total advantage of me. He forced me out of my bed and into the shower where he sexually abused me.

He continued to do this to me for months. One day I asked him, 'What would you do if I told someone?'

He pulled out his belt, smacked me and said, 'If you tell anybody I will hurt you. I will send you back to foster care and you will have nobody.' I never wanted to go back to foster care, so I had to deal with the abuse for nine years. **This man took my childhood days, my self-esteem, my trust and my life. I was turned into this boy who lived in fear daily and carried the shame of who I was. Each day of my life was a living hell.**

As a teenager, I couldn't live in this world I was in, and desperately wanted to get out. I started inflicting pain

on myself ... I was admitted to the hospital so many times until I was 18. I was in pain and mentally in another world.

My self-inflicted harm and suicidal thoughts stopped when I was 21. Here I am today ... I almost lost my life more times than I can count due to the abuse, and to this day I still cannot work out how I survived. I have been through hell and I have seen some things that a child

should never witness or experience at such a young age, but I have come to believe this: if you can live through the worst times of your life, you can live through anything. Your life is beautiful even if one person or many people try and take it from you. You will get days that you just want to give up but you don't, you keep on marching and moving forward. All I can say is, just live your life how you want it. As we get older we learn, as we learn, we succeed, and when we succeed, we achieve greatness and we

know we can overcome anything.

CASE 1 (ANALYSIS)

- Sexually and physically abused
- Low-self esteem
- Depressed
- Experienced verbal abuse
- Questioned their own self worth
- Wanted to feel loved
- Physical abuse (beaten and hair being pulled)
- 'HOPE' for a loving family
- Trusted his grandparents (but was sexually assaulted instead, therefore, betrayed) leading to issues of lack of trust
- Self blame/guilt (in the form of shame)
- 'Again' started inflicting 'self harm' as a coping mechanism
- 'I was in pain and mentally in another world'- indication of detachment from reality (could be symptoms of dissociation)
- Suicidal tendencies
- At the end, the individual went towards the right path, and learnt lessons such as 'not to give up', 'keep marching forward' and 'life is beautiful'. – Indicating 'hope' that things eventually get better.

CASE 2

EMILY CASE (Based on sexual abuse, child neglect, child abuse, child sexual abuse)

Emily Victoria notes a string of dates where 'absent' has been put beside her name and tells her tearful mum: "That was the year I felt like I died."

She was the victim of [relentless abuse](#) by her dad from the age of two to 18 and was kept off school so he could subject her to sickening sexual assaults.

He even gave up his job to become a foster parent while her mum was forced to work long hours to put food on the table - leaving him alone to abuse his daughter without his wife's knowledge.

"Being so young and having that level of betrayal from the person who is meant to love you and protect you in life, will never leave me," Emily tells The Sun. "It's the most profound heartbreak you can ever feel, and it goes down to your soul."

Dad Paul was finally jailed for 14 years after Emily, now 32, plucked up the courage to speak out.

Red flags missed

The brave survivor reaches out to a headmaster who missed the [red flags](#), a school friend's mum who admits she felt "uncomfortable" around Emily's dad and the police who handled her case.

She is left "feeling sick" after one officer reveals her dad's twisted statement, which reads: "Emily was a very sexual child", adding that they had a "brilliant father- daughter relationship. I didn't do anything she didn't want. I didn't have to force her or tell her not to tell."

Emily's attempts to face her demons by arranging a meet with her dad through the restorative justice system and, in the most emotional scenes, she and her mum break down together after finally addressing the events that have haunted them both.

"That was really helpful for me because I could let go of the guilt and anxiety I felt, and I think that also released mum from some of that worry and those anxieties as well," says Emily.

I hadn't had those conversations with family, going directly to the issues, myself.

"This taught me those conversations are brilliant and so helpful because they release you from all the fears, worries and guilt you carry."

'Fooled everyone'

Initially an estate agent, then a tarmacier, Emily's dad gave up work when she was eight to become a foster carer and "fooled everyone".

As the only breadwinner, Emily's mum had to work long hours to make ends meet and explains to her daughter she felt "pushed out" when she came home, thinking "my little girl had become daddy's girl".

For her part, Emily saw her mum as "distant" because a wedge was driven between them by her controlling, manipulative abuser.

Perhaps the most tragic aspect of the story is that Emily's survival mechanism - which was to present an outwardly cheerful nature - was so convincing that no one suspected the daily trauma she was experiencing.

"As I got older the abuse was frequent and prominent," she says. "I had to replace my own thoughts with his thoughts as a way to survive."

"I had to be happy and smiley to him in those awful moments, to make him happy, and that happiness and a smile was always on my face, wherever I went, just completely masking it."

She adds: "At the age of 12, the real me had gone. I was like a zombie going through the motions."

As well as the constant abuse, Emily's dad was controlling, keeping her from making friends and stopping her from attending parties and social events.

She excelled at school and at her chosen sport of swimming - the only area of her life where she felt in control - but says that by the age of 18 she had the "social skills of a two-year-old."

With younger brothers and foster siblings at home, Emily resigned herself to the constant abuse, even putting herself into situations such as dog walks, when she knew he would assault her, to protect the other children.

But, when she saw one of the foster children comforting him in a certain way he had always expected her to, she suspected she was not his only victim - and "something snapped."

"I was trying to throw myself in harm's way to protect my brothers and the foster children but it wasn't enough," she says.

"I thought that I was protecting others but that wasn't the truth. I couldn't see or prove what he was doing to other people because he was that manipulative, but something snapped inside me, everything changed."

"I thought, why the hell have I been trying to protect everybody else and put myself in the line of fire? A few weeks later I spoke out."

Crimes exposed

As soon as she was told of the abuse, Emily's mum moved quickly to protect her, reporting her husband to the police and filing for divorce.

Emily meets the two police officers who handled her case, with one telling her she was a "ray of sunshine" and Emily replying: "I hate that because it was that trait which meant I was abused for so long."

They also read the statement from her dad which claims she was a "sexual kid" who straddled him and moved on him because she was "turned on" adding he felt "sexually aroused, guilty."

"I was a toddler," says Emily. "You can't physically be sexual at that age because you don't have the hormones."

"When I heard that I thought I was going to have to run out of the room and be sick in the loo."

It brought up all of those feelings I had as a child of blaming myself for everything, which the adult me doesn't do any more. "But I wanted to show people that hearing the words of the abuser isn't something that we need to be afraid of."

"It was difficult for me to hear but on the other hand I now feel totally different. I now know there was no love there and I learned a lot from it."

"When I first told mum she went into 'let's sort this out' mode but it was only after he was in prison that all the emotional stuff came for her because she was in shock," says Emily.

Emily also says she felt guilty during the abuse, adding: "I couldn't have done anything to stop it but I ruined her life as well.

"Imagine if your dad wanted to be with you instead of your mum, how horrible that makes you feel?"

"I felt sorry for her all the time and I resented her as well on one level and thought 'why weren't you able to see?'"

Lasting damage

"At 18, I could not make a decision," she says. "I had never been allowed to make friends and I couldn't even decide what to eat because he had that level of control over me."

"I was told what to eat, when to wash my hair and what to do at all times. My brain and body had grown under fear and immense control so to step out of that was like retraining myself.

"Suddenly I've got all these choices and I was overwhelmed. I had to learn to find me again because I had vanished.

"But then I had my first love and I learned to trust people, which I didn't think was possible.

"I tried really hard to learn how to socialise and went to work in an upmarket bar, where I had no idea how to have a conversation, but I learned over time by pushing myself out of my comfort zone.

"I did some modelling, I presented on radio, I got a master's degree, I worked in fashion, went travelling and pushed myself.

"But part of it was also trying to avoid my feelings."

When she fell pregnant with her son, now seven, she was "forced to be still" and suffered from PTSD and anxiety.

She went on to build a successful career in media.

Says it has also "freed" her and let her see things from a different perspective.

"It's a journey. I'm just like Bridget Jones, a normal woman who's fun-loving, career driven, family orientated. But beneath that, I have had to really struggle," she says.

"I have bad days, like everybody, and I'll always be impacted by this but not in an all-consuming way.

"I have lost that feeling of shame which was implanted in my brain at a young age, and that you carry with you, even if your adult brain knows you are not at fault. I now feel free of the past."

CASE 2 (ANALYSIS)

- Having a feeling of being dead inside- sign of giving up hope
- Feeling of betrayal- causing lack of trust
- Was not acknowledged enough by the mother (an unconscious neglect)
- She felt guilty, and blamed herself for everything
- Carrying fears and worries
- Warm personality-coping mechanism
- Feeling angry but also confused
- Flashbacks
- Deceptions being created by dad(abuser) for Emily (victim)
- Recognizing that she was being abused and emotionally manipulated
- Isolation
- Feeling of being in control (here swimming)
- Accepted that was a victim, and got the courage to speak up
- Unclear- does ray of sunshine means hope?
- Feelings of pure disgust
- Resented her mother for not being able to see the abuse

- Hope- now able to trust again
- Still has bad days
- PTSD and anxiety
- Talking leads to ‘freeing feelings’ and learning different perspectives.

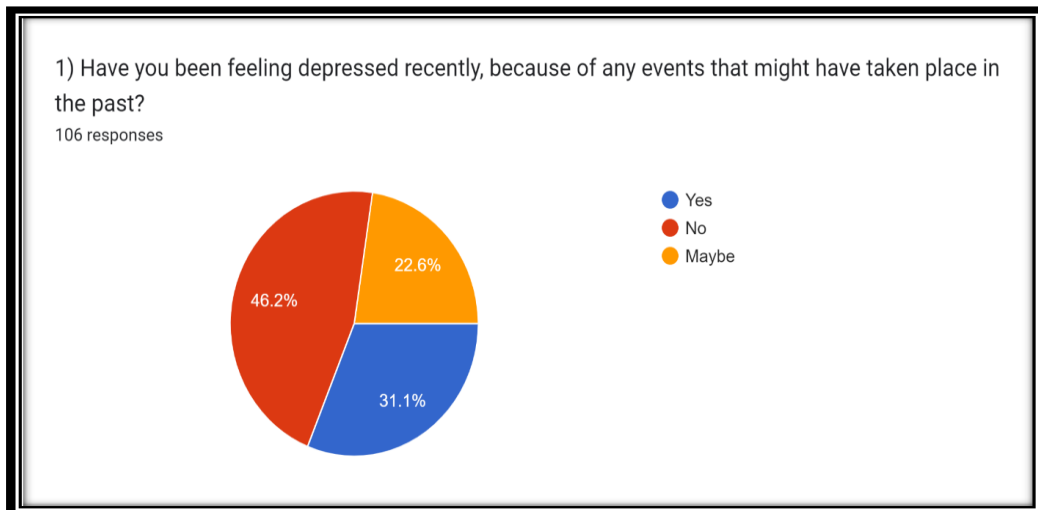
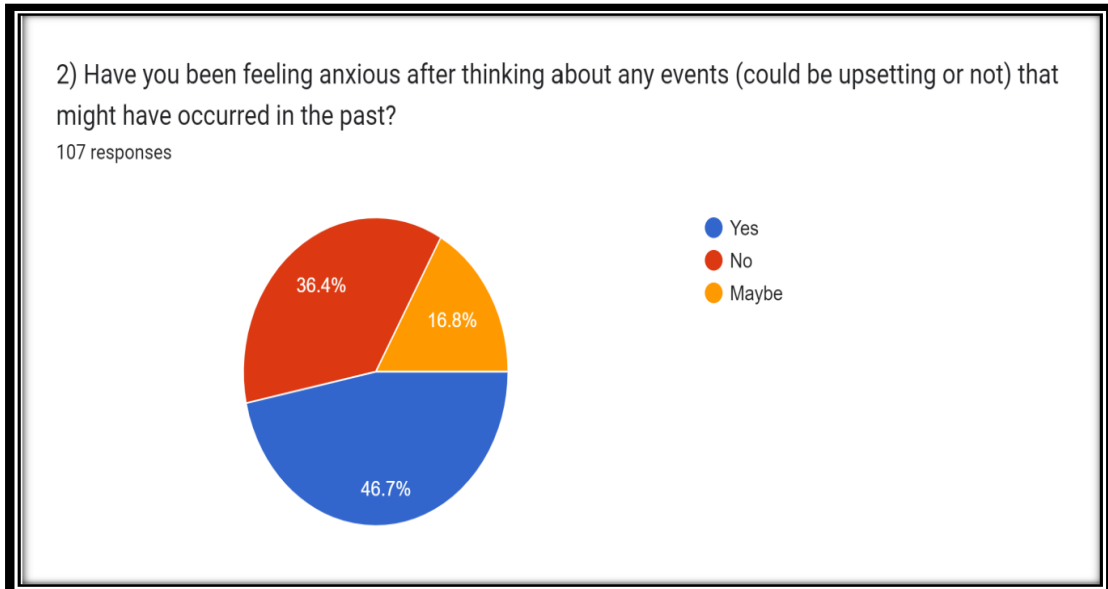
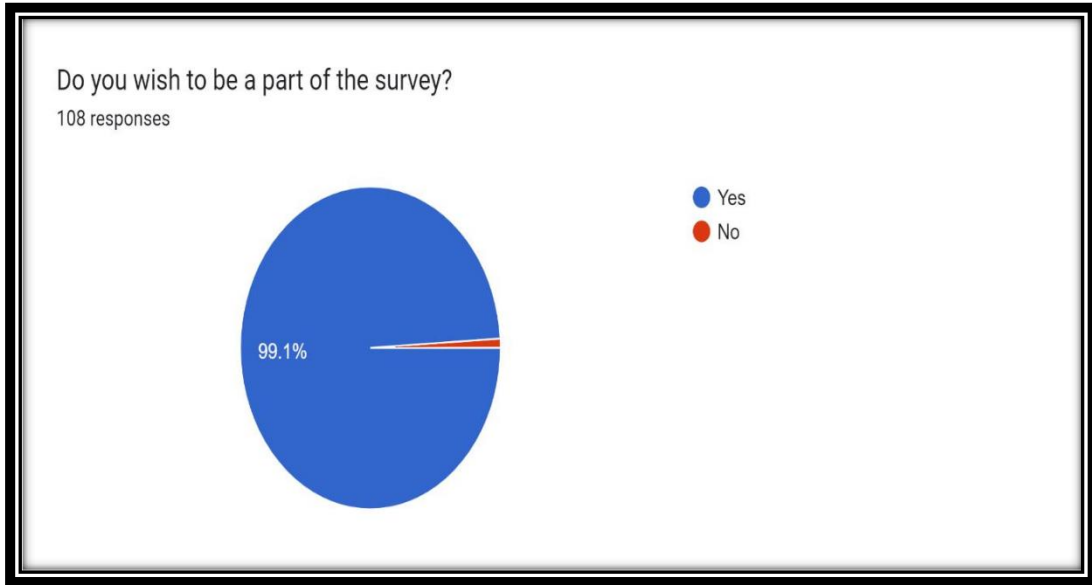
20 Common Symptoms based on the Research done so far and the Cases Analysed

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Flashbacks
- Suicidal tendencies
- Lack of Trust
- Self-guilt/self-doubt/self-blame
- Low self-esteem
- Anger
- Coping mechanisms
- PTSD
- Dissociation
- Self-harm
- Isolation/loneliness
- Eating disorders
- Loss of Control
- Fear of Abandonment
- Feeling very ‘confused’
- Acceptance
- Lack of ‘confidence’
- Hope

Why do I think that these are the 20 Common Symptoms among the Victims of Abuse?

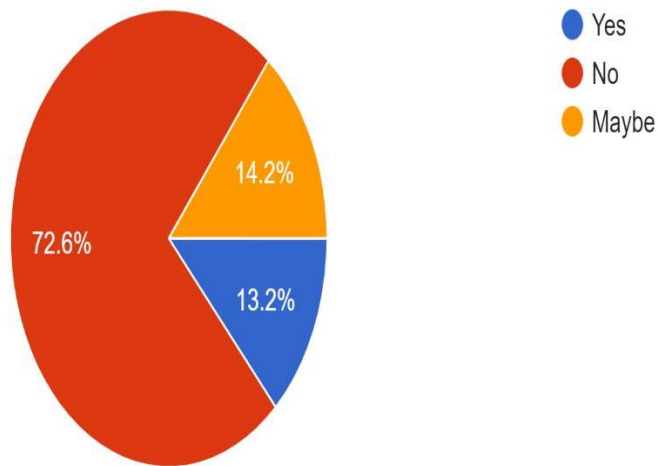
1. They are not heard or seen.
2. They don’t feel loved or feel invisible.
3. They are not able to trust anyone with their feelings or about what’s bothering them.
4. Fear of being ‘judged’ or ‘not believed’.
5. Giving more value to others’ opinions about themselves, rather than their own judgement about themselves.
6. Feeling anxious about opening up
7. Isolation- they start to believe that they would be better off if left alone
8. Feeling of not being in control of their life. (such as decisions or actions)
9. Fearing that they won’t be accepted.
10. Sometimes, people ‘lack the confidence’ to tell someone about their problems or things which are bothering them.
11. Suicidal Tendencies- Feeling invisible, one starts to believe that if they were to just end their existence, no one would notice. Or to just end their pain and suffering.
12. Using coping mechanisms to get through the difficult times in their life. Or to manage their internal thoughts and feelings.

NOTE- A survey was conducted, with 108 participants with an objective to find out, whether these symptoms are common or not.



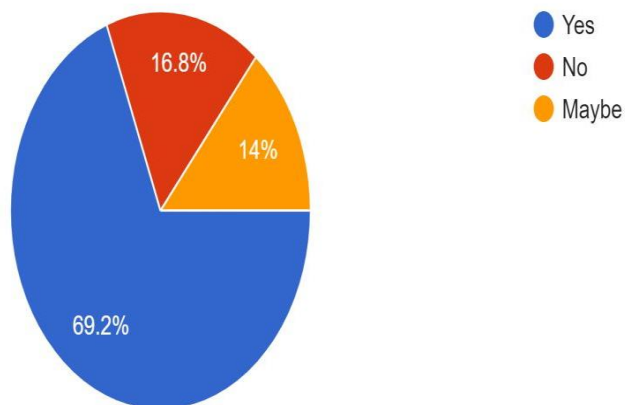
4) Do you feel as if you are 'worthless' or 'not deserving of anything' ?

106 responses



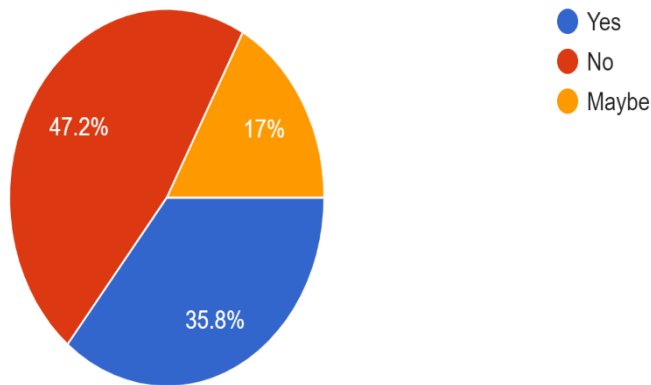
3) Are you able to trust anyone enough, to be able to tell them about things which are bothering you?

107 responses



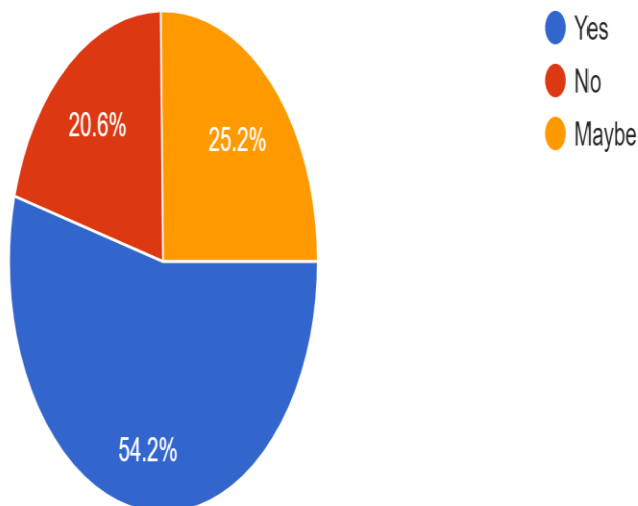
6) Do you fear being 'judged' or 'not believed' about your feelings or experiences you are struggling with?

106 responses



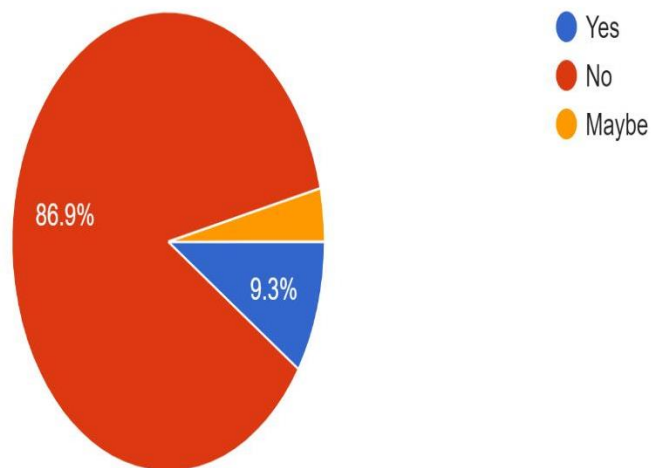
5) Do you feel in control of your life? (it includes your thoughts, decisions and your actions)

107 responses



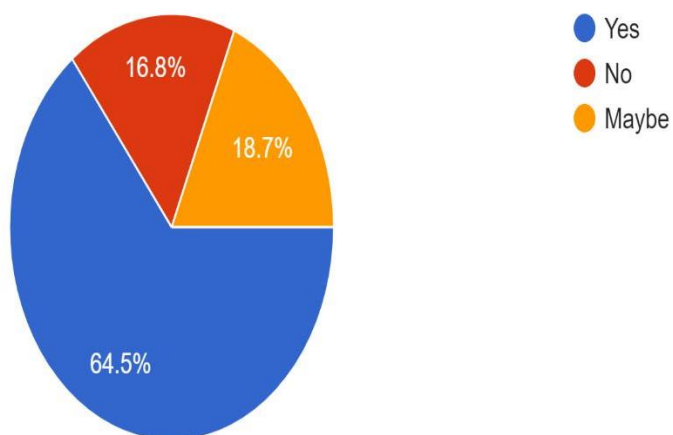
8) Have you been experiencing thoughts about inflicting self-harm recently?

107 responses



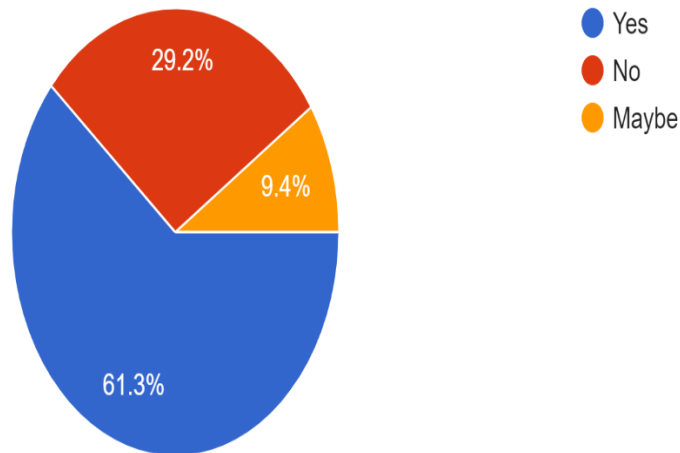
7) Do you feel heard or seen?

107 responses



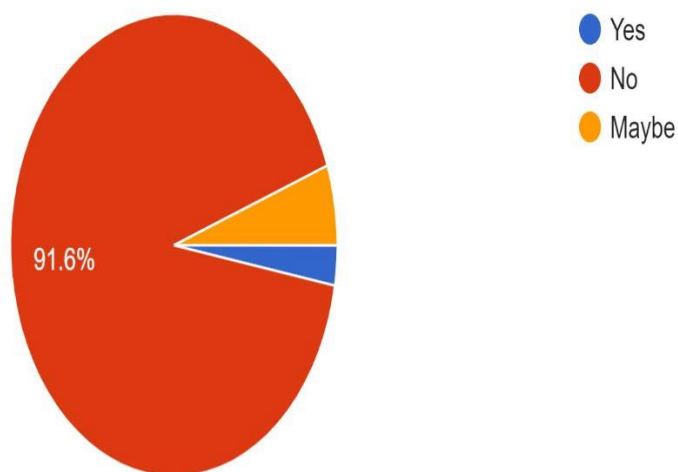
10) Are there any 'coping mechanisms' that you, use in order to get through the difficult times of your life?

106 responses



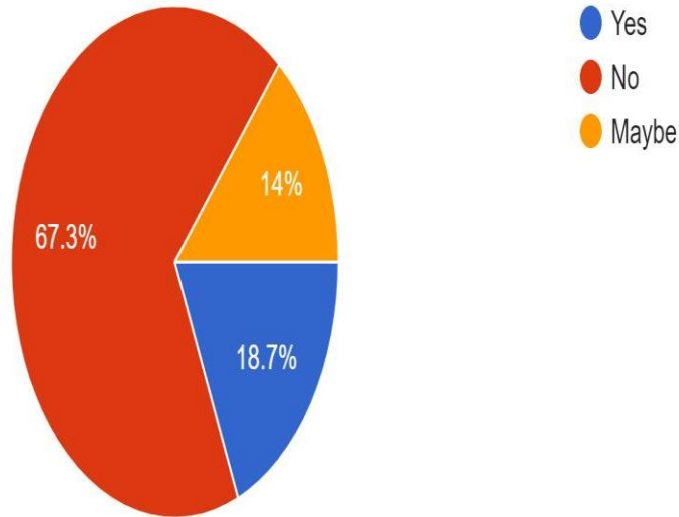
9) Have you been experiencing any suicidal thoughts or tendencies recently?

107 responses



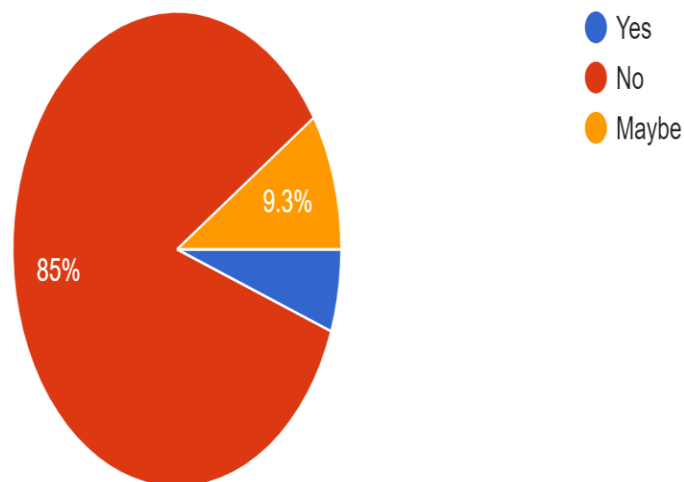
12) Have you been experiencing low-self esteem recently?

107 responses



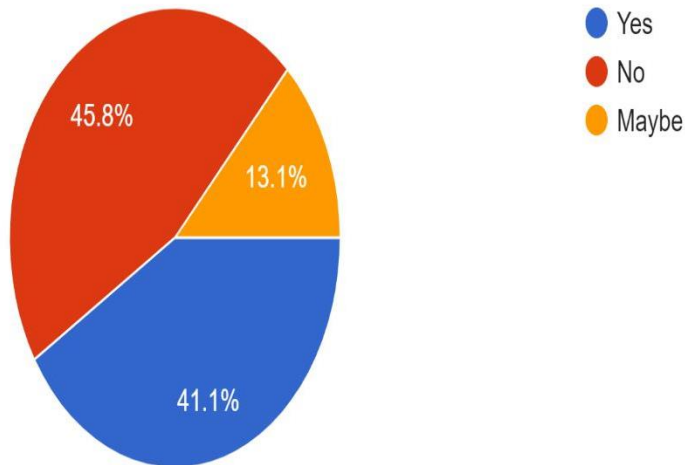
11) Are these coping mechanisms harmful in any way? (example- substance abuse)

107 responses



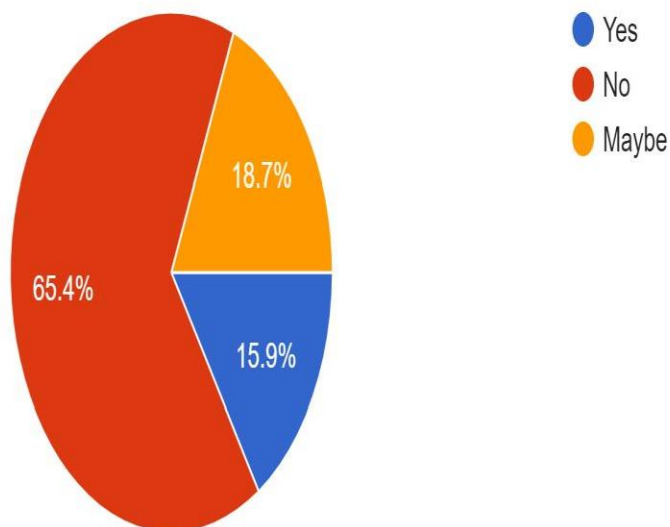
14) Have you been feeling 'on edge' recently or have you felt so in the past?

107 responses



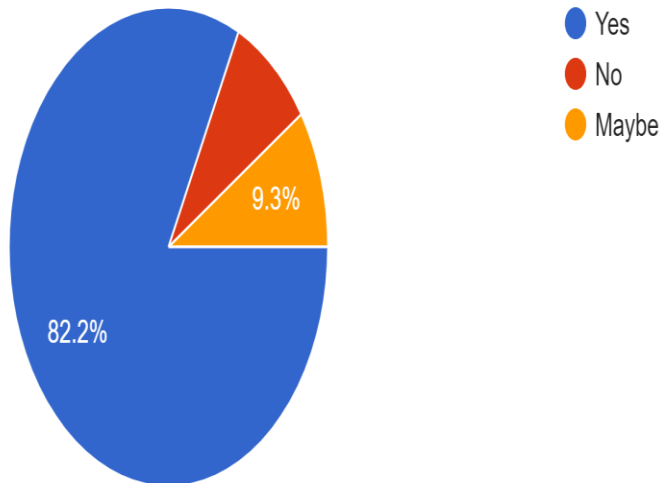
13) Have you been feeling 'invisible' or 'not loved' recently?

107 responses



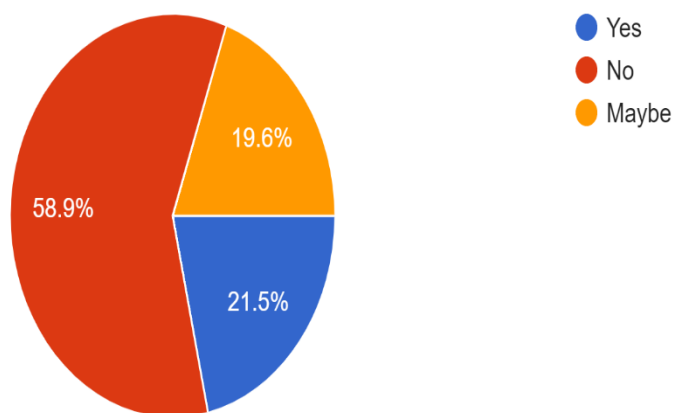
16) Do you have hope that whatever you are experiencing right now or whoever you are at the moment, will eventually get better?

107 responses



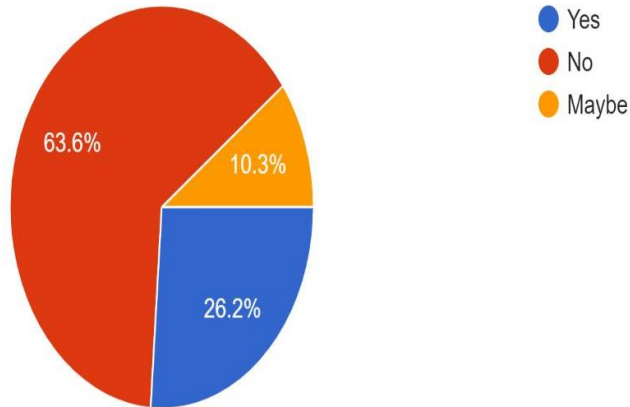
15) Do you give more value to other's opinions about you rather than your own judgements about yourself?

107 responses



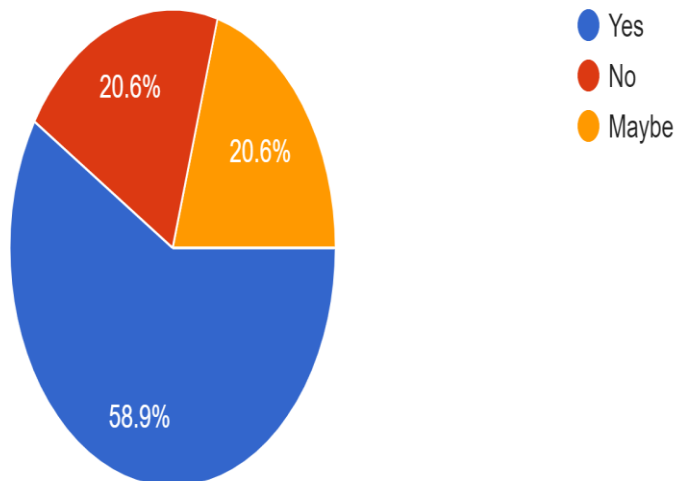
18) Do you fear being 'abandoned' or 'left alone'?

107 responses



17) Have you ever felt as if you are 'physically' present somewhere, but 'mentally' you are somewhere else completely?

107 responses



An interview was conducted with an objective to find out whether these symptoms are common or not?

(Author's note- Here the questions are summarized with, 'yes', 'no' or 'maybe'. At length discussions in the interview can be seen through the links provided, at the end)

1. Do people usually feel depressed, after they have experienced a traumatic thing? YES/MAYBE
2. Do people feel 'worthless' usually, in your experience? YES/MAYBE
3. Have you ever encountered people who do not feel in control of their life? NO/MAYBE
4. In your experience, has anyone ever felt as if they would be 'judged' based on their feelings? YES
5. Have you encountered people, who struggle with low self-esteem? YES/MAYBE
6. Do people usually experience any suicidal tendencies, or thoughts about inflicting self-harm, after experiencing something horrific? NO/MAYBE
7. Do people usually feel 'not loved' or 'invisible', in your experience? YES
8. Do people usually feel on edge? YES
9. Do people usually fear being 'left alone' or 'abandoned', in your opinion? YES/MAYBE

CONCLUSION/RESULTS

The main objective of conducting the research was to figure out a 'new' list of common symptoms amongst the victims of different kinds of abuse.

Given below is the list of symptoms finalized through an extensive research:

1. Depression
2. Feeling worthless
3. Loss of control
4. Fear of being 'judged' or not 'believed'
5. Low-self esteem
6. Fear of abandonment
7. Not feeling 'loved' or 'invisible'
8. PTSD- 'feeling on edge'
9. Anxiety
10. Coping mechanisms
- 11) Anger
12. Lack of 'confidence'
13. Lack of 'trust'
13. Isolation.

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