



# Types and Signs of Abuse

Himaya is a Lebanese Non-Governmental Organization dedicated to making child protection a right across the country.

Himaya aims to break the silence on abuse, a subject considered till today by most as still taboo, protect children from abuse and developing children's life skills so that they'll be better able to face adversity and become more resilient.

In order to be as effective as possible, himaya works directly with children, their families and environment, in a holistic approach, build on life skills and specialized psychosocial services.

Himaya believes that becoming aware of the different forms that abuse can take, helps you, whether being a parent, an adult working in proximity with children, or a child, be better prepared to recognize such behaviors as abusive, as well as to recognize the possible consequences of these forms of abuse.

Once you are able to label abuse and recognize it, steps can be taken in order to stop it from happening and protect yourself.

The 4 types of abuse we will be introducing are emotional, physical, sexual and neglect.

**Emotional abuse** refers to the psychological and social aspects of child abuse, and is the most common form found.



More than 40% (312 out of 711) of the cases detected and taken in charge by himaya's specialized psychosocial teams in 2014, were directly related to severe emotional forms of abuse.

Professionals often recognize specific parenting style in these situations including shouting and intimidation, manipulation and emotional blackmail.

Emotionally abusive parents often associate their own negative feelings to the "gap" existing between their unrealistic expectations and demands as parents on one hand, and the emotions, cognitions and behaviors of the child on the other.

As every form of abuse, emotional abuse does not only occur at home, but children can be emotionally abused by teachers and other adults in a position of power over the child.

Emotional abuse can also happen at the hands of other children in the form of "bullying".

There are no specific signs or symptoms of emotional abuse but we often observe that emotionally abused children are more withdrawn and disengaged than their peers.

They also find it more difficult to predict other people's behaviors and understand the reasons behind those behaviors.

In severe cases, children learn to interact with others in the same ways adults previously interacted with them, without being able to distinguish harmful behaviors from safe and caring ones.



**Physical abuse** has been a normal aspect of domestic life in Lebanon for a long time, where hitting, slapping, hair pulling, striking with an object and burning, amongst other behaviors, are still considered by many as "reasonable correction" and "effective education".

Physical abuse is often correlated to cultural understanding of dealing with gender. Making a man become a boy might mean beating him if he cried. A girl might receive the same treatment for leaving the house unaccompanied.

Severe physical abuse could require hospitalization and even lead to death.

There is a constant threat of violence on these children who become perpetually vigilant and mistrustful in a constant attempt to predict and control other people's behavior.

**Sexual Abuse** of children includes, but is not limited to, rape, incest, inappropriate touching (with or without intercourse), forcing a child to view pornographic material, making unwelcome sexual comments or jokes, denial of sexual information and education and forced prostitution.

Sexual abuse is often coupled with physical abuse (or threat of physical abuse) and emotional abuse. For instance, pedophile child molesters will often threaten their victims to harm them or someone they care about in order to compel silence or to convince the victim that he or she "asked for it" in some way.

One of the most effective ways to prevent sexual abuse is by building trust with children, letting them open up with no taboos, and strengthening their skills to have critical judgments and deeply believe that their bodies belong only to them.

Complaints of **neglect** constitute a significant proportion of notifications and referrals to himaya's child protection services.

Neglect occurs when a parent or caregiver fails to provide for the basic needs of the child he or she is responsible for.

A child is being neglected when his basic needs are not met. These include the provision of food, shelter and clothing, ensuring their access to medical care and providing them with care, love and support, exercising adequate supervision and appropriate moral and legal guidance, and ensuring schooling expenses and engagement.

Neglect never really comes alone, it is more often linked to another form of abuse, and has in fact the highest correlation with one or more other form of abuse.