

Support for people with experience of verbal abuse

This is a practical resource for those with lived experience which is part of a set of supportive resources we've developed with Dr Fiona Pienaar.

5 support suggestions for people with experience of verbal abuse

1 Stay connected

Having people in our lives who care for us, are compassionate, respect us and 'have our back' when we need them is crucial to surviving and thriving throughout life. Think of at least one person who you're positively connected to, who you trust and who you can turn to in times of worry or desperation – someone who will build you up.

Don't keep things to yourself – talking to someone you trust and feel comfortable with can help lift the burden of what you're feeling and help you realise what makes you special.

2 Find support

Help is available from the National Association for People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC) for adults who have suffered any form of abuse, including verbal abuse. NAPAC runs a free, confidential support line for adult survivors of abuse on **0800 801 0331**. Find out more at <https://napac.org.uk/>.

You can also use **Shout's free 24/7 crisis text service** for mental health support on **85258** or giveusashout.org

If you're a child and need help, you can get confidential support from **Childline** - to find out more go to www.childline.org.uk you can also call free on **0800 1111**.

3 Recognise triggers

You're not alone in experiencing verbal abuse – 2 in 5 children experience it from adults around them. The memories, experiences and patterns from when we were younger still have the power to trigger us now, however long ago they happened. While we might not immediately recognise why, strong reactions and feelings can emerge because something reminds us of a past relationship or experience.

When we become aware of the things that provoke these strong reactions, we can look out for them and try to avoid them and protect ourselves. Counselling or talking to a trusted friend or relative can help with this.

4 Stop, breathe, think, speak

Stop. We all get overloaded sometimes. Stress and anger can build up until we're ready to snap, especially when something has triggered us. If you feel that happening, this simple technique helps you to stop for a moment and take a step back.

Breathe. Slowing our breathing calms us down, physically, mentally and emotionally. We're able to think more clearly when we pause to breathe. Try the 7/11 technique – breathe in through your nose to the count of 7, and out through your mouth for 11.

Think. Treat this pause for breath as a buffer between the incident that's upset you and the action you're going to take or the words you're going to say.

Speak. After stopping to breathe and think, you'll be in a better place to speak or act with a clearer head.

5 It's never too late

Having experienced verbal abuse in our childhood, we can make the conscious decision not to repeat history, or may find ourselves replicating the patterns of communication we suffered. Either way, those of us with lived experience of verbal abuse have personal insights that can help to educate others about just how much words matter.

If you do find you've verbally lashed out at someone or said something you regret, remember that it's never too late to put things right. Take time to have a chat with that person and say sorry and let them know you mean it.

Try not to be hard on yourself when things go wrong. When we get angry or say something we regret, it's usually because we're under pressure, and there's too much going on. It's important that you also have support and have ways to take pressure off yourself.

In an emergency

If things get too much for you, you may need to get out of your immediate environment and get urgent support.

If there's an **immediate risk of harm** – to you or to someone else – call **999**.

If you're worried about a **child's safety**, contact the **NSPCC** at help@NSPCC.org.uk or on **0808 800 5000**.

If you're worried about **your own immediate wellbeing**, call **NHS 111**.

If you're concerned about **someone else's wellbeing**, call the **police on 101** and ask for a **welfare check**.