

When Trauma Becomes a Weapon: The Harm of Using Abusive Exes as Jokes or Bullying

Abuse does not end when a relationship ends. For many survivors, the aftermath continues in the form of social shaming, jokes, or bullying about their abusive ex-partner. This behavior is far from harmless. It is an aggravated form of psychological harm that combines retraumatization, humiliation, and suppression of voice. In fact, weaponizing someone's past abuse may be one of the worst forms of psychological violence a person can inflict outside of the abuse itself.

Why People Engage in This Behavior

- **Power & Control:** A way to silence and dominate survivors.
- **Bullying & Social Positioning:** Public humiliation as a means to gain social advantage.
- **Minimization of Abuse:** Trivializing trauma to make it seem unimportant.
- **Displacement of Shame:** Using humor to deflect discomfort with the seriousness of abuse.
- **Prejudice or Bias:** Targeting survivors through sexism, racism, or cultural stereotypes.
- **Projection:** Shifting insecurities onto the victim.
- **Normalization of Violence:** Reinforcing toxic cultural patterns that excuse or laugh at abuse.

Psychological Harm to Victims

- **Re-Traumatization:** Triggers PTSD symptoms such as flashbacks, panic attacks, or dissociation.
- **Shame & Self-Blame:** Implies the victim was responsible for their own abuse.
- **Isolation:** Forces victims out of social, work, or school environments.
- **Voice Suppression:** Silences survivors from speaking out or seeking justice.
- **Erosion of Trust:** Breaks down confidence in peers, family, colleagues, and community.
- **Long-Term Emotional Damage:** Fuels depression, anxiety, relational difficulty, and loss of self-worth.

Because the behavior exploits a victim's deepest trauma in public, it can be considered psychologically aggravated harm—the kind that compounds injury and ensures the abuse continues in a new form.

Legal Context

- **Harassment / Stalking** → Repeated taunting may constitute criminal or civil harassment.
- **Intentional Infliction of Emotional Distress (IIED)** → Extreme and outrageous conduct that causes severe emotional trauma.
- **Defamation** → If false or damaging statements are spread alongside the “jokes.”
- **Hostile Work Environment** → In employment, such conduct may violate Title VII or state labor laws.

- Title IX or School Bullying Statutes → In education, weaponizing abuse may be actionable harassment or retaliation.

Actionable Steps for Victims

- Document Everything: Save texts, posts, emails, or witness statements.
- Seek Legal Recourse: Cease-and-desist letters, restraining orders or anti-harassment petitions, civil claims for damages.
- Report Through Proper Channels: To HR in workplaces, to Title IX coordinators or administrators in schools.
- Engage Law Enforcement: Where harassment or stalking thresholds are met.
- Therapeutic Support: Trauma-informed counseling to process harm and regain voice.
- Community Accountability: Churches, ministries, and community groups should adopt zero-tolerance boundaries against using survivors' trauma for entertainment or humiliation.

Conclusion

When people mock or weaponize survivors' abusive past relationships, they commit a profound act of social violence. It is aggravated harm because it reopens the deepest wounds, spreads them into the public sphere, and ensures silence through shame.

The Union of Saints and similar faith-based ministries must lead by setting strong boundaries, refusing to tolerate such behavior, and offering survivors both support and advocacy. Healing communities must acknowledge that this is not "just joking." It is a continuation of abuse, one of the most psychologically damaging tactics, and it demands serious response—legal, therapeutic, and spiritual.

Continued, expanded:

Intentional Infliction of Emotional Distress

“Outsider Boyfriending”– As Injury

Union of Saints

1. Legal Context

When people bring up abusive ex-boyfriends, abusive ex-husbands, or exploiters as “jokes” or bullying, to harm a victim via re-victimization, or re-traumatizing, the conduct may cross into legally actionable harassment or defamation, depending on the circumstances:

- Harassment / Stalking
 - If the behavior is repeated, unwanted, and intended to distress, it can qualify as harassment under both state civil and criminal statutes.
 - Harassment often includes verbal taunts, unwanted communication, or public humiliation.
- Intentional Infliction of Emotional Distress (IIED)
 - Using someone’s trauma as a weapon can meet the threshold for IIED if it is extreme, outrageous, and causes severe emotional harm.
- Defamation
 - If the bullying includes false statements (e.g., suggesting the victim “wanted” or “enjoyed” the abuse), it could be defamatory.
- Workplace or School Context
 - If this happens at work → it could violate hostile work environment laws under Title VII (federal) or state employment laws.
 - In schools → it may constitute bullying, harassment, or retaliation under education codes or Title IX (if linked to gender-based abuse).

2. Remedies & Protections

Depending on where the conduct happens, a victim may have multiple options:

- Civil Remedies
 - File for a restraining order (anti-harassment order).
 - Bring a civil lawsuit for damages (IIED, harassment, defamation).
 - Criminal Remedies
 - Report repeated harassment, threats, or stalking to law enforcement.
 - Many states criminalize harassment, cyberbullying, and stalking, even if done through “jokes.”
 - Workplace Protections
 - Report to HR → triggers employer’s legal duty to investigate and prevent hostile work environments.
 - File an EEOC complaint if tied to gender discrimination or harassment.
 - School Protections
 - Report to administrators under anti-bullying or Title IX policies.
 - Schools can be held accountable if they fail to act.
 - Community / Personal Actions
 - Send a cease-and-desist letter through counsel.
 - Document everything (texts, posts, witnesses).
 - Seek therapy/support → documentation can strengthen legal claims for damages.
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In legal practice, we often advise victims to:

1. Document each incident (dates, words, context, witnesses).
2. Save communications (screenshots, recordings where lawful).
3. Consult an attorney to decide whether civil, criminal, or administrative action is most effective.

Psychological abuse and social bullying. When people bring up someone’s abusive ex-boyfriend as a “joke” or weapon against them, it often falls into a few categories:

- Re-traumatization → Forcing the victim to relive their abuse through reminders.

- Gaslighting / Minimization → Treating serious harm as something funny or trivial.
- Character attack → Using a victim's painful history to shame, silence, or humiliate them.
- Relational bullying → Undermining social standing by mocking their past relationships.

At its core, it's emotional manipulation and harassment. It sends the message that the victim's pain isn't valid and can even serve to silence them from speaking up about the abuse.