

Simplifying the Realm of Violence

Physical, Spiritual, Mental

By Cowdrey | Union of Saints

When people or spirits are attacking me, I often start to think in categories. What kind of violence does this person who is harming me, blame shifting me, or gaslighting me participate in? More often than not, when we really examine the conduct, we may discover violence that the person is not accountable for, does not recognize, or does not consider because they are not grounded, anchored, or aware.

Physical

The first category is **physical violence**. For example, violence against animals is quite normalized within our society. Whether others are ready to acknowledge this or not, violence against animals still fits within the realm of physical violence. Physical violence can involve direct harm to another person, an animal, the body, or another living being.

Thinking about physical violence in this way encourages us to consider not only the acts society readily recognizes as violent, but also conduct that has become so normalized that people may no longer stop to consider its gravity. Normalization does not necessarily remove the harm from an action. Something can be socially accepted while still involving physical suffering.

Spiritual

The second category is **spiritual violence or spiritual harm**. Gossiping, defaming, participating in smear campaigns, spreading rumors, sharing half truths, or intentionally damaging another person's character can cause serious spiritual harm. These actions can affect a person's relationships, reputation, community, sense of peace, and spiritual well being.

This is not something that I participate in. Although I have chosen to be open on my church page and acknowledge political harms and other matters that affect our communities, I do not gossip. I stay true to my oaths and vows, and I believe there is an important difference between addressing conduct openly and participating in gossip or character destruction.

Mental

The third category is **mental violence or mental abuse**. Mental abuse can sometimes be the result of an imbalanced or uncentered mind. A person who is not healed, self aware, or who has never participated in therapy of any kind, especially conversational therapy, may not even

realize that what they are participating in has repercussions and is causing more harm than they understand.

Personal responsibility is always required. Conduct such as gaslighting, blame shifting, intimidation, manipulation, coercion, persistent degradation, or psychological harassment can have serious consequences. On the more extreme end of the spectrum, certain conduct may even cross legal boundaries or develop into a genuine civil or criminal dispute.

A Simple Way to Understand Harm

This provides a very easy way to interpret harmful conduct. Harm often falls within three components: **Physical, Spiritual, and Mental**. Interestingly, these are the same three components we frequently associate with healing, yet they can also become places where harm occurs.

The body can be **healed or harmed**.

The spirit can be **healed or harmed**.

The mind can be **healed or harmed**.

Understanding these three realms can help us identify what is happening, establish boundaries, examine our own conduct, and determine what kind of healing or accountability may be necessary.

Physical | Spiritual | Mental

The same realms through which we heal are also realms in which harm can occur.

~ Cowdrey

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