

HEALING FROM EMOTIONAL ABUSE **Hesma Swart (Social Worker)**

“Healing is about embracing sadness, anger, fear and dysregulation so that we create a new neutral pathway in our brain that will no longer see those as threats. Teach your body and mind that you can cope but also put discipline and boundaries to it”.

We were raised to deal with this world as it should work not as it does work -Dr Phil

GOAL: To avoid trouble and a complicated life.

- 1. Emotional abuse** is about an emotional abusive person causing turmoil in your mind and heart. You will experience a mind that cannot stop replaying traumatic incidents, thoughts about trying to figure out what happened and confusion. Your heart will feel hurt, pain and a heaviness.
- 2. Toxic relationships and environments:** In a toxic relationship, one person abuses another person who is called the victim. The victim gets emotionally injured and can start showing mental and physical health problems.
- 3. Trauma leads to negative thinking (resource: carolinemiddeldorf):**
 - Trauma activates the amygdala, a brain region responsible for processing emotions, particularly fear. The Amygdala triggers a stress response, releasing stress hormones like cortisol. The brain becomes hyper-vigilant, anticipating threats or danger, leading to negative thinking patterns.
 - Repetitive negative thinking strengthens neutral pathways, making these thoughts automatic and habitual. These patterns lead to persistent negative emotions, affecting the mood. Stress hormones continue to be released, reinforcing your emotional response to trauma.
 - The persistent negative mood and emotional response to trauma become a state of being. A consistent way of experiencing the world.
 - The state of being influences your overall wellbeing and behaviour.
 - It can lead to a heightened state of self-criticism and inner judgment as well as feelings of guilt and shame. As you internalize the negative emotions associated with trauma.
 - Over time, this state of being can shape your personality traits as the brain adapts to the persistent emotional response to trauma.

- Coping mechanisms like anxiety, defensiveness, or avoidance may develop in response to perceived threats.

4. **Identify the BAITER or Baiters in your life:** According to Dr Phil (Podcast on Baiters) to identify dangerous people or who acted to your disadvantage in your life look out for:
 1. **BACKSTABBER – A person who use others to get to you. They never face you alone or talk it out.**
 2. **ABUSER – financial/emotional or physical**
 3. **IMPOSTER – A person who pretends to be someone they are not to gain money or things from you. They deceive you and will tell an untrue story to get help from you.**
 4. **TAKER – You feel used**
 5. **EXPLOITER – A person who treats people unfairly for his or her own advantage.**
 6. **RECKLESS – reckless with your relationships, money, property...**
“They do what they want “
5. **The 8 main characteristics to look out for (Dr Phil (Podcast on The Evil 8) -how they do what they do:**
 1. **Arrogant Entitlement –** They believe they are entitled on what they think, your relationships, your money... They are arrogant by thinking they are above others. “Survival of the fittest mentality – I can push you out of your house/marriage/your job”. “Not my fault I am smarter than you”
 2. **Lack of Empathy –** they cannot see or tell the damage they did to you.
 3. **Lack of guilt/remorse –** they don’t feel sorry. No change in behaviour after doing you wrong.
 4. **Irresponsible and self-destructive –** they are willing to die/jailed to destroy you.
 5. **Thrive on Drama –** they are happy to create conflict between people. They want to be the center of attention and fights.
 6. **Brag about outsmarting you.**
 7. **Short term relationships, relocate often or many jobs.**
 8. **Delusional or living in a fantasy world.**
6. **Parenting mistakes that can create a “Baiter”**
 1. **Not forcing them to figure things out for themselves.**
 2. **Allowing them to react in cruel ways to things in their lives.**
 3. **Allowing them to get away with lying.**
 4. **Not setting limits on what they do or how they act.**
 5. **Making them think they are better than everyone else.**
 6. **Not making them own up to their mistakes.**
 7. **Not taking the time to instill proper values in their lives.**

8. Refusing to make consequences clear.

7. **Educate yourself on “Red Flags” or the abnormal treatment from others such as:**

6.1 Gaslighting: A form of psychological manipulation and emotional abuse. The Gaslighter avoids responsibility for toxic behaviour by lying or denying or making you question facts, your memory or feelings. They do something, denies it, say you are too sensitive and you are crazy.

6.2 Projection: Accuses you of doing things you aren't doing but they are doing it like cheating.

6.3 Deflecting: You confront the abuser about their behaviour and they turn the focus back on you of something you have done.

6.4 Circle arguments: talking in circles, show no interest in a resolution, they want to win the argument and don't think about the damage done to the relationship, they don't care that they have hurt you, putting you on defense and use one thing to derail the conflict resolution.

6.5 They don't apologize or show remorse: If they apologize it is to manipulate you.

6.6 Blame shifting: They will blame you for everything that goes wrong in their life.

6.7 Lack of empathy: can switch empathy on and off.

6.8 There is no love only using you: Treats you like an object.

6.9 Trauma bonding: The ups and downs in the relationship cause a variable-ratio reinforcement pattern which is the same pattern which cause gamblers to go racing back to slot machines.

6.10 Love bombing: They are experts at impression management. They can look like a 10/10. They can be super charming. The judgment centers of the brain become eerily quiet when you are in love.

6.11 They only talk about themselves and how good and successful they are. They make you feel bad about who you are. They use your vulnerability against you. They make fun of your goals and interest.

6.12 They are competitive.

Their words and actions don't align.

Grandiose and self-serving. Superiority.

6.13 They play the victim and make excuses. They can tell very sad stories about their previous relationships and childhood to get sympathy.

6.14 You feel stressed or alert around the person. Feeling like you need to keep the person happy by saying things they will expect you to say or do. Feeling emotional exhausted after being with the person.

6.15 Body shaming: They will make comments on your looks and tell you what clothes to wear.

6.16 Triangulation: They cause conflict between two people.

6.17 Cause you to react on their hurtful acts and then blame you and make you out as the bad person.

6.18 Abandonment and discarding you – physical, financial and emotional. Silent treatment. Disregarding you, ignoring, rejecting you and make it as if you don't exist. Betrayal.

6.19 They want to have all the attention and focus on them: Ruin your birthdays, holidays and special days.

6.20 Cyber stalking and threats to post private photos of you. Careful for spy ware and cloning your phone.

6.21 Overstepping boundaries.

6.22 Often very **unhealthy sexual tendencies.**

6.23 Isolate you from friends, family and professionals who can help you.

6.24 Manipulation. Name calling. Spitefulness. Very controlling. Smirk on their face when they realized they scammed you.

Their behaviour is planned and deliberate.

Promising you a great future and then delivering a nightmare.

Uses guilt, charm, hope, love, obligation, fear, or confusion to get what they want.

Often likes to agitate, provoke, argue or “crazy making” and pretends to not know why you are upsets.

Criticism and public shaming.

6.25 Threats: They can make a lot of threats which cause fear.

6.26 They **love the court** and will make easily a false case against you or your family or friends.

6.27 They are **jealous** of you and envy you.

Moving on very quickly after a break-up, posting pictures on social media for you to see how happy they are and then come back to you if it doesn't work out or they need a place to stay.

Prepare for smearing your name and recruiting of flying monkeys (people who will abuse you on behalf of the abuser).

8. Stages of recovery:

Despair – where there is a conflict with the person.

The big bang – somehow somewhere you come across information about the person and everything begins to click and it blows your mind.

The denial – you look for every excuse desperately not wanting to believe that the person you love is toxic.

The gooey stage – back and forth stage of rage, depression and grief.

The acceptance – you realize there is only one way: no contact or very strict boundaries.

The rebuilding – you rebuild a new life.

The thriving – you become healthier, stronger and wiser.

Building yourself up takes time and it is a process.

There is hope that it is a process that even you go through difficult stages you will reach a point in your life where you will feel happy again and where you will function well.

9. How to heal

- Stop paying attention to them.
- Make a decision to use your energy on building your life.
- Make peace with yourself – acknowledge your self-worth.
- Ask yourself did they treat you well, if not make the decision not to hold on to those feelings.
- Stop seeing a future with this person. Let go.
- Get 2 boxes: Name the one “My healing the box” the other “My happy box”. In the “My healing box” you can have a journal where you write down the traumatic incidents and your emotional struggles. You can write letters, poems and put drawings in your box. In your “My happy box” keep a gratitude journal, a happy memories book and a micro moments of happiness book.
- Put discipline to taking out your “My healing box” or where you let your mind think of past traumatic incidents. Choose a day and times when you will allow yourself to work on your healing.
- Stay healthy (physical and mentally).
- Keep a list of your daily struggles and all the abnormal in your relationship to remind yourself when you are feeling drawn back to the abuser.
- Set strict boundaries such as with contact with your children and in your communication.
- Affirmations: “My heart is healing”. Keep saying this over and over, because healing takes time. A cut doesn’t heal overnight, nor do emotional and psychological wounds.
- Write a list of things that brought you gratitude this week.
- Come to acceptance that it was deception right from the beginning.
- Heal from feelings of anger, shame, betrayal ...
- You felt in love with a person who did not really exist.
- Accept it could have happened to anyone.
- Learn to trust your instincts.
- You can absolutely be you again.
- You can experience happiness again.
- Embrace and release your sadness, disappointment, tears, emotions, fear, raw aggression, nightmares ...
- Get activities to distract you when you feel emotionally overwhelmed.
- Set up a priority list and keep doing the things you should such as taking a shower, doing your work ..
- Don’t seek healing from the abuser – be aware of trauma bonding.

- Be aware of feelings of fear – imagine it is like a light switch you switch off.
- Learn to deal with loneliness – it will sometimes just feel overwhelming but it will release.
- Don't expect the worse. Tell yourself you will be okay.
- Healing must be intentional, you need to decide it, practice it and long for it. You need to realize why you need healing.
- Keep a journal and write about your thoughts, feelings and progress.
- Set small, medium and big goals.
- Dream again.
- Relaxation techniques.
- Built a healthy support system where you will not necessarily talk about what you are healing from.
- Accept that not all people will understand what you are going through.
- Do little, medium and big things that you can start feeling that you are living even if you feel less excited than usual. Take pictures smile at them.
- Set up a map or plan for the very sad days.
- Identify your triggers and set up a strategy to deal with it.
- Get into a habit of asking yourself – am I busy building my life or destroying it.
- Don't take over the role of the emotional bully in your own life - which is destroying you.
- Built your life by using the Maslow theory.

10. How can I protect myself

- Stay away from internet dating sites.
- Realize that not all people can be trusted and some people can really be dangerous.
- Get information about traits of dangerous personality types.
- Don't get serious too quickly.
- Don't share all your secrets early in a relationship.
- Don't get overly emotional or react in conflict situations. Ask questions and ask the person to explain things they say or do.
- Look out for inconsistency what the person tells you and also behaviour.
- Write facts down regarding conflict.
- Listen for aspects such as belittling you, superiority, treating people with disrespect, ...
- Careful with trauma reactions such as fight, flight, freeze and fawn reactions.
- Manage your triggers

11. Preparing a break-up or to get a divorce

MAKING A SAFE EXIT FROM THE NARCISSIST



@myexisanarcissistandimadeitout

1. Don't give them "one more chance."
2. Don't tell them you're leaving.
3. Make a copy of all your documents.
4. Make sure you have spare cash.
5. Log out of everything.
6. Report what's happened to you.
7. Check your devices for trackers.
8. Don't believe their flattery.
9. Reconnect with your friends and family.
10. Take it as an opportunity to cut out anyone else who's toxic
11. Don't just leave — stay away
12. Ignore the sob stories.
13. Remind yourself that it's a rollercoaster.
14. Throw away painful reminders.
15. Learn how to ground yourself
16. Make a list.
17. Don't rush into anything.

By: Lindsay Dodgson

- Choose your battles carefully, keep your focus on main problems in court battles. Don't mud the water.
- Get out of the court system as quick as possible.
- Do your research.
- Have goals, a strategy, take action and identify obstacles.
- Get a full financial picture.
- Get your own account.
- Take pictures of assets and record it.
- Record negative behaviour and influences to your children.
- Request a personality test to get a diagnosis.
- Get a protection order.
- Compile a documentation package with all the necessary documents
- Record conversations, visits with your children, problems you experience such as the child gets sunburnt regularly.
- Collect evidence.

- Keep emotions out of court.
- Show that you are healthy and stable with your emails and court appearances.
- Stay with the authentic truth.
- Show that you can grow, self-reflect and change.
- Don't ever give up your role as a parent.
- Don't give up – you never know what will happen around the corner.

12. The Gray Rock Method (Method needs you to appear so “boring” that the toxic person leaves you alone)

- Avoid any interaction.
- Don't show your emotions.
- Use a neutral voice tone.
- Don't ask them questions.
- Prefer one-word answers and do head nods.
- Choose boring topics and give dry responses.
- Don't share any opinions and show you are uninterested.
- Don't share any tidbits from your past or any of interest, hurts, triggers or disappointments.
- Don't give them any details about your personal life.
- Never mention how well you are doing at work.
- Engage in minimal conversation.

13. In negotiations

- Avoid mentioning anything they are doing wrong.
- Avoid anything that attempts to make them see how you feel.
- Avoid anything that is going to pull you down into the mud with them.
- Avoid anything that is going to give away your power.
- Don't give a direct no but soften it.

14. Tricks you can use

- Stop responding to everything.
- Don't let on when you are on to them.
- Disengage emotionally.
- Use decoys.
- Creating leverage.
- Give value for value.

15. Self-study

- Make a list of all the daily struggles you went through or still going through with the emotional abuser such as the stress of constant reporting where you were or the isolation from friends and family.
- Make another list of your losses such as the loss of dreams to grow old together, having a normal family life..
- Remind yourself that you don't have to experience the daily struggles anymore and you have to focus on grieving your losses.
- Identify your triggers (where do I get overly emotional). Set-up a plan to deal with your triggers.
- Rebuild your life
Set-up goals, a strategy, take action and identify obstacles.

Resources: <http://bit.ly/3pKIWOA>