



What Is Emotional Abuse?

A comprehensive guide to helping you understand emotional abuse

In emotional abuse, an abuser will manipulate a survivor's feelings in order to control that partner.

A survivor may find themselves deep into a relationship before realizing that their choices—everything from who they can talk to, see and where they can go, to whether or not they're able to end the relationship—are no longer their own; an abusive partner is making them for him or her. It's a tactic of abuse that is hard to spot and even harder to prove, allowing abusers to get away with it time and time again.

This toolkit will provide you with these insights and more. Inside you'll find:

- Helpful Articles
- Recommended Books
- Lists
- Danger Assessments
- In-Depth Videos
- Survey Results
- Support Communities
- How to Find Help



There are hundreds of articles on [DomesticShelters.org](https://www.DomesticShelters.org) covering the many facets of domestic violence. Here are links to those that will help you answer the question, “What is emotional abuse?”

[How to Recognize Emotional Abuse](#)

19 questions that help identify this type of domestic violence.

[The Mind-Trip That Is Emotional Abuse](#)

How to recognize the signs of an abuse that leaves no bruises.

[What Is Emotional Abuse?](#)

A comprehensive guide to understanding emotional abuse.

[From Romance to Isolation: Understanding Grooming](#)

Anyone can fall for the clever manipulations of an abusive partner.

[What is Coercive Control?](#)

A Q&A with author, activist and professor Lisa Aronson Fontes, PhD.

[How Abusers Trick Survivors Into Denying Abuse](#)

A five-step manipulation process.

[Withholding Intimacy Can Be Abusive, Too](#)

Another type of sexual abuse includes using sex to taunt, control a victim.

[10 Patterns of Verbal Abuse](#)

This form of abuse can be harder to recognize than you may think.

[More About Coercive Control](#)

Why women are most likely to be victims of this type of abuse and why they stay.

[How to Prove Nonphysical Abuse in Court](#)

Steps you can take before you enter the courtroom.

[Normal Jealousy or the Start of Abuse?](#)

How to tell the difference in your relationship.

[When Abuse Goes from Shouting to Striking](#)

Verbal abuse often turns to physical abuse.

[The Big Deal about Belittling](#)

When abuse takes the form of insults and other disparaging words and actions.

[It's Not Love, It's Love Bombing](#)

Abusers rely on long-term tactics to build up a sense of dependency in their victim.

[The Silent Treatment: An Abuser's Controlling Tactic](#)

Ignoring another person is a strong communication of power and control.

[Am I Being Abused?](#)

A comprehensive guide to help you identify domestic violence and abuse.

[Abuse Almost Always Escalates](#)

Bad news: If you're trapped in a cycle of abuse, it's most likely going to only get worse.

[What Is Toxic Triangulation?](#)

Abusers can turn a survivor's friends, family and children against them through harmful fabrications.

[Beyond a Bruise](#)

Would you recognize abuse even if it didn't leave a mark?

[Recovering from Life with a Psychopath](#)

Q&A with Jackson MacKenzie, author of *Psychopath Free*.

[20 Ways Manipulative Narcissists Silence You: Part I](#)

Learn the ways some abusers with mental illness negate responsibility for their choices.

[Ways Manipulative Narcissists Silence You: Part III](#)

Toxic partners tend to insult and devalue their exes, which is a warning sign for your future.

[My Partner Is Trying to Make Me Seem Crazy. Am I Crazy?](#)

How abusers use mind tricks and manipulation to portray survivors as insane.

[Ways Manipulative Narcissists Silence You: Part II](#)

Does your abuser shift blame, change the subject, name-call or nitpick?

[Ways Manipulative Narcissists Silence You: Part IV](#)

Narcissists enjoy making malicious remarks at a survivor's expense.

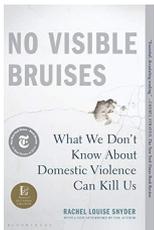
[Psychological Aggression and Domestic Violence](#)

Leading facts and statistics on abusers use of verbal and emotional tactics in domestic violence.

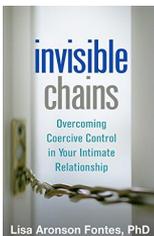


Reading books can be a helpful way to understand if you're a victim of abuse and understand the abuser's behavior.

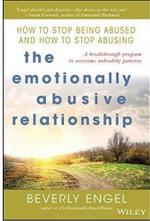
Here are our recommended reads:



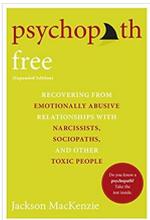
No Visible Bruises: What We Don't Know About Domestic Violence Can Kill Us. In *No Visible Bruises*, journalist Rachel Louise Snyder gives context for what we don't know we're seeing. She frames this urgent and immersive account of the scale of domestic violence in our country around key stories that explode the common myths—that if things were bad enough, victims would just leave; that a violent person cannot become nonviolent; that shelter is an adequate response; and most insidiously that violence inside the home is a private matter, sealed from the public sphere and disconnected from other forms of violence.



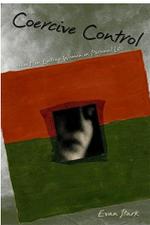
Invisible Chains: Overcoming Coercive Control in Your Intimate Relationship. Showered with attention? It can feel incredibly romantic and can blind you to hints of problems ahead. What happens when attentiveness becomes domination? The desire to control can lead to jealousy, threats, micromanaging, even physical violence. If you are trapped in a web of coercive control, this book provides answers, hope, and a way out



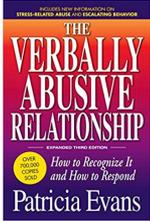
The Emotionally Abusive Relationship: How to Stop Being Abused and How to Stop Abusing. Whether you suspect you are being emotionally abused, fear that you might be emotionally abusing your partner, or think that both you and your partner are emotionally abusing each other, this book is for you. In this breakthrough book, Beverly Engel, one of the world's leading experts on the subject, shows us what it is and what to do about it.



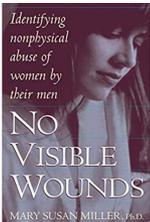
Psychopath Free: Recovering from Emotionally Abusive Relationships With Narcissists, Sociopaths, and Other Toxic People. Written from the heart, Psychopath Free is the first guide for survivors written by a survivor, offering hope for healing and thriving after psychopathic abuse. Say goodbye to the chaos, self-doubt, and victimization. You are free.



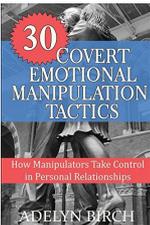
Coercive Control: How Men Entrap Women in Personal Life. One of the most important books ever written on domestic violence, Coercive Control breaks through entrenched views of physical abuse that have ultimately failed to protect women. Evan Stark, founder of one of America's first battered women's shelters, shows how "domestic violence" is neither primarily domestic nor necessarily violent, but a pattern of controlling behaviors more akin to terrorism and hostage-taking.



The Verbally Abusive Relationship, Expanded Third Edition: How to recognize it and how to respond. In this fully expanded and updated third edition of the bestselling classic, you learn why verbal abuse is more widespread than ever, and how you can deal with it. You'll get more of the answers you need to recognize abuse when it happens, respond to abusers safely and appropriately, and most important, lead a happier, healthier life.



No Visible Wounds: Identifying Non-Physical Abuse of Women by Their Men. An experienced counselor who works with abused women, Mary Susan Miller breaks the silence that surrounds this devastating form of domestic violence. She identifies the many types of nonphysical abuse verbal, emotional, psychological, social, and economic--and explores why this outrageous treatment of women continues unabated in our society.



30 Covert Emotional Manipulation Tactics: How Manipulators Take Control In Personal Relationships. Learn the manipulator's game, so they can't play it with you. Identifying covert emotional manipulation is tricky. You sense something is wrong, but you can't quite put your finger on the problem. This powerful book will reveal to you if manipulation is at play in your relationships. It will open your eyes.



Sometimes lists are easier on the mind because they are uncluttered and to-the-point. If you'd rather read a few items vs. articles or books, these lists are for you.

To view all list items at once, click the SEE ALL button located below the list text.

- [25 Relationship Red Flags](#)
- [18 Warning Signs That You're Being Gaslighted](#)
- [18 Things Abusers Do When They're Gaslighting](#)
- [19 Myths About Domestic Violence](#)
- [35 Ways to Recognize Emotional Abuse](#)
- [20 Things Abusers Say](#)



There are three well-known, free, online assessment tools available that can help you understand the level of danger that may be present, but not always obvious.

The Danger Assessment

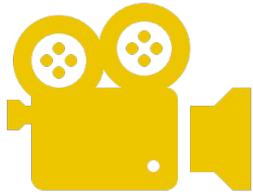
The free tool helps determine the level of danger an abused person has of being killed by an intimate partner.

MOSAIC

Using a series of questions, this tool assesses how similar a situation is to other situations that have gotten worse.

Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment

A risk assessment designed to be used by professionals that calculates how a man who has assaulted his female partner ranks among similar perpetrators with respect to the likelihood that he will assault a female partner again in the future.



Click video thumbnail to watch





A lot of lessons can be taken from people who have been through it before. Check out the following survey results to learn from the experiences of others.

- [Which type of abuse did you experience first?](#)
- [Did you find verbal abuse more or less damaging, long-term, than physical abuse?](#)
- [Have you felt like your abuser has kept or tried to keep your children from you?](#)
- [Did an abuser ever use sleep deprivation as a form of abuse?](#)



Online forums and chats can help you connect with others who are in or have faced similar situations, and find support and ideas from the survivor community.

[AfterSilence.org](https://www.aftersilence.org) aims to help victims become survivors and to communicate in the recovery of domestic and sexual violence. It offers an active message board and chat room for rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse, incest and molestation survivors. There are over 31,000 members and about 1,000,000 posts, including recent posts and many useful posts from days and months past.

[Pathways to Safety International](https://www.pathways.org/) If you're an American overseas, your situation is different than 99% of your fellow countryman, and this site will be a wonderful resource for you. Among the services is a 24-hour response to emails, as well as international phone options.

[DomesticShelters.org Facebook Page](#) offers one of the most active places where domestic violence survivors. You'll find conversation, past experiences and unvarnished stories, and occasionally advice from professionals who have joined in on a topic.

[DomesticShelters.org Facebook Group](#) is a private group designed to be a safe space for domestic abuse victims, survivors, advocates and others affected by abuse to support one another through meaningful dialogue and helpful insight.

[Fort Refuge](#) is a clever, grassroots site run by survivors for fellow survivors as a safe place to come together and discuss their struggles and victories in healing from various types of abuse. Though the forum and chat do not boast the same numbers as some of the larger organizations, they are one of the more active conversation places on the internet currently. They also add new content to their site regularly.

Love is Respect - National Teen Dating Helpline focuses on teen relationships and can be accessed by phone, text or live chat. It offers real-time, one-on-one support by trained peer advocates who offer information and advocacy to those involved in dating abuse. They also offer support to parents, teachers, clergy, law enforcement, and service providers.

National Domestic Violence Hotline offers confidential, private, one-on-one chats with advocates every day 24/7.

OnYourMind.net is a safe and anonymous place for teens to get information and support from other teens in an online chat room, covering topics such as relationships, school, depression, stress, suicide, parents, cutting, identity and health.

Pandora's Aquarium is an online forum with around 2 million posts and over 70,000 members, and is run by Pandora's Project, which provides information, support and resources to rape and sexual abuse survivors and their friends and family.

When accessing hotlines, chats or forums from a computer, tablet, or smartphone, please remember to take the necessary precautions to keep your activities confidential from your abuser. Learn more about how to stay safe online [here](#).

Also, keep in mind that local shelters may offer in-person or virtual support groups. You can find shelters in your area at [DomesticShelters.org](#).



Another way to determine if you're experiencing abuse is to contact a trained domestic violence advocate near you or through a national service.

To search for domestic violence program staffed with trained advocates, visit [DomesticShelters.org](https://www.DomesticShelters.org) and type either your city and state, or ZIP code, into the search bar at the top of the page. A list of organizations and contact numbers near you will be displayed. To reach an advocate, reach out directly by calling the phone number listed. Most are open 24/7.

To speak to an advocate at the National Domestic Violence Hotline, also 24 hours a day, seven days a week, call 800-799-SAFE (7233) or visit [thehotline.org](https://www.thehotline.org) to chat online.

It's important to know that your call is confidential and you can choose to remain anonymous when speaking with an advocate. To know what to expect when calling, read [this article](#).