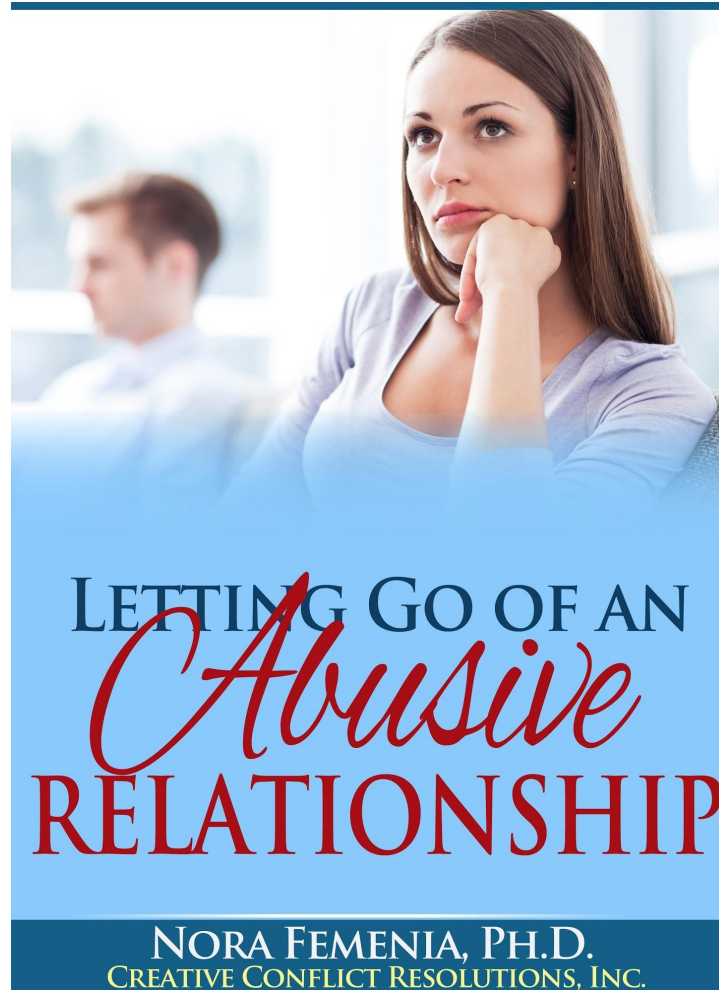




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TO OUR FRIENDS AND READERS:

HERE YOU HAVE THE BASIC PROPOSITIONS OF THIS BOOK:

- 1. We strongly support self-development and realizing each person's life goals as the path for happiness. Relationships should be the structure where we find support and love as to continue our own personal growth. We give each other this support when we are or enter into relationships under a contract to love each other.***
- 2. Each human being has a right to a life without victimization or cruelty and to receive the positive support needed to develop in life and accomplish his/her life purpose.***

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Introduction:

Usually the abusive relationship is described as an interaction where the person receiving the abuse is the victim, under the control of another person that plays the role of the abuser. By watching the behavior in this way, you risk having a fixed view separating people into two categories: victims and victimizers.

You could then assume a fixed interaction between the two: how and when one becomes a victim, how the victimizer decides to step up the abuse, how do they keep the relationship in precarious balance, and how and when it ends, probably because the victim leaves, and the victimizer has to find the next victim to control. This view is useful, but risks stereotyping people into definitive categories, and life is much more complex, whereas a former victim can become a victimizer with a new person.

Of course, there is much more information about how to identify emotional abuse, than about the process of breaking free and healing from it. The preferred solution for the victim seems to be to leave both, the abusive partner and the abusive situation. For the abuser himself, if he is not done with this behavior, now he has the job of finding another person submissive enough as to occupy the role of new victim.

I found that the experience of being abused is extremely common, and that each one of us has to find his/her own way out of the role of victim.

What do I mean with this? That an abusive relationship is a “sacred contract,” as Carolyn Miss would say, that we enter into with the objective of learning some life lessons.

This is the different frame I want to offer you here. This short book is not about each one of the emotionally abusive couple, but a new view of their relationship as a contract for learning through pain. Remember that we are born in this life with a purpose to accomplish? Remember that we are supposed to discover which purpose each one of us needs to realize, and then apply all our energies and skills to do it?

If we came to this world with a purpose, and we need to learn some skills in life to be able to accomplish our life mission, then entering into very difficult situations, including some of them so risky that one can end tortured, severely hurt or dead, is part of the program....and has the purpose of teaching us resilience.

Which skills are those? Resilience, the first one, is composed from several others: patience, stubbornness, strategy to learn from the enemy how to outsmart him/her, endurance as not to forget that the objective is not win the war but to survive; even humor in desperate situations is a good skill.

Of course, not everybody reading this paper will accept this frame, and most of you could be hurt thinking that I'm promoting using pain to teach others....Not so: is life that presents us with challenges, all along our given time, up until the last one which will end our lives. Meanwhile, each challenge big or small is presented to teach us some lesson to make us wiser or stronger.

Is not necessary to have been interned in a concentration camp to learn survival skills; it is only necessary to look around when in a painful situation, like being abused by a loved one, and ask yourself some vital questions: ***"Why am I here under abuse"? "What do I need to learn from this situation"? "And, how can I let go of this situation?"***

Perhaps this dire situation has to teach you to learn to stand up against injustice; or to be aware of your own needs and learn how to express them clearly...perhaps is so simple as this lesson: if you let another person decide for you what you really want or need to do, you will never get to accomplish your purpose.

Is exactly this frame the only one which allows more individual empowering for people like you. We could provide a list of the aspects which define the victimization of a person; what we also aspire here is to provide a hint about the second question:

"Why is it that at this moment of my life, this abusive person appears? Why do I need abuse now? Or, like in some life stories where people find a second husband as abusive as the first one, why the lesson reappears?"

This question is important because it forms the kernel of truth that allows you to move on and let go of the abuse.

If the "victim" can identify which of her needs has invited the victimizer to start using the abusive behavior, then this is her moment of power! Is like pointing to some behavior you are doing that opens a door, and abuse is

invited/allowed in/tolerated.

If you didn't send such signal to the would-be abuser, he would then move on to more inviting people...as they are always in the prowl to identify who can be a suitable partner for an abusive relationship. When you love yourself as much as to stop an abusive comment and nip it in the bud, you send the signal that you don't take abuse as part of the relationship.

Here you know why; you know that when your lesson is learned, the abuse will drop out, either the relationship will improve or it will end. The power resides in the simple fact that now, the episode of abuse corresponds to a developmental need of the supposed "victim". When she has learned her lesson, or understood why the need to include this experience in her life presented itself, she will let go and move on.

So, now, the power is in the hands of a person who, needing some higher learning lesson, accepts an implicit contract to enter into a temporary abusive situation with someone else. Once you know this, then you know how to stop the lesson and move on with your life!

The abusive person, reciprocally, needs to learn how to stop imposing himself on other by abuse or violence, and is counting on the help of the "victim" to build limits and force him to know how and when to stop, examine his/her own frustrated needs and change.

Here we offer some suggestions to manage the learning in such a way that the "victim" stops fast being the victim when she learns how to stop, prevent or disarm the victimizer abuse, or learns the difficult process to detach, let go of the relationship and start a new life leaving abuse behind. Lesson

learned!

Thinking on leaving your abusive relationship

You have been all over the map with this relationship: first excited, then getting serious as you settled into this relationship, and then slowly, the step by step process of discovering the painful truth of abuse.

The process of discovery has taken you from surprise, to shock, to anger and finally to the sad realization that for him this has to be a relationship including abuse. Of course, this is not what you signed for!

Everything becomes a battle between his need for relationship control and your proposals for equality and mutual respect. Slowly, your appreciation of the situation tells you that is impossible to continue a life in common with this person, regardless his nice words of understanding and support. He can't help it but use his demeaning words to show who is the boss and you can't take it any longer.

So, you are thinking on breaking up this relationship, right?

First we need to consider a serious element here: how strong is his need for control of you? Even when it looks like as if you are a little piece in his life, according to his words, you don't know how deep can be his need for attachment in this relationship.

Without you, the abusive person will have a very hard time balancing his emotions, because he needs to confirm that he is in constant control of his reality. You are now in the area of his control; if you leave, this precarious balance gets disrupted and he will need to recover.

This is the deep reason-his emotional imbalance- which can make the break up very complicated, noisy and dramatic at the last moment, just when you are ready to go. You can never underestimate the emotional manipulations you will get if and when you announce your decision to split.

This is exactly the reason you need a route map to plan your detachment from a relationship with an abusive person, beginning with the very personal moment when you decide to let go.

1.- Let's remember why Emotional Abuse Happens

In the most basic definition, emotional abuse has to do with control. Someone is **emotionally abusive** when they try to exert control over someone else, not supporting this person's personal development path. Because it is directed to avoid any growth that can disturb the victimizer's self wellbeing, it will produce pain (physical or emotional)

Emotional abuse doesn't have to mean being shouted at and humiliated in public. Sometimes it is enough to whisper cruel words into the ear of another person. It is very much like the art of **bullying without physical contact**.

When emotional abuse is done by a family member or partner, it is domestic abuse. Domestic abuse occurs when one party in a family, intimate relationship, marriage or domestic partnership uses psychological or physical tactics to control another person's mind in the same relationship. The abuser conceives of people from his family as parts of his self; which he can control, instead of independent people that will develop into their own lives.

2.- Why a person needs to abuse another:

Power, interpersonal power is one of life variables we encounter soon in life...we are just born, and we need others around us to survive. Complete helplessness is with us, and it teaches us a lesson: we do need other people to survive, at least babyhood...or childhood. This survival has a heavy price if we are born into a situation where our adults don't respect our needs and use their power to humiliate the less powerful, in this case us.

Why people feel that this is a valid alternative? Power use is glamorous; perhaps our parents were also humiliated when growing up, and they use now this opportunity to occupy the opposite role: from abused they go to abuser without transition. Having someone depending on them can be validating or extremely demanding; it depends on the inner resources of the person we depend from. So this is our throw of the dice:

- either we were luckily born in an environment supportive of our needs, and we were attended to without control tricks;
- or we were born into the hands of grown ups who were inner children themselves, and anxious to get even and use the power once was forced on them, by feeling superior to others...

If in this second case, our task in life consists in surviving childhood, not getting too damaged by such parental excess of power we can't function later; and become wise in the uses of interpersonal power as to teach others as our life mission.

In short:

- Power abuse is inter-generationally transmitted; acted on and learned;
- You can either act out on it, automatically; or re-educate yourself;
- If you can know about the heavy programming you received to either be an abuser or an abused, you can then work towards having the choice of being neither.
- Transforming relationship abuse is the way we learn valuable lessons in life.

3.- Emotional abuse directed at destroying self-esteem

During emotional abuse, the abuser will take whatever they know is a **weak spot** for the other person, and use it against them. Through insults, criticism and threats, the abuser devalues the other person and tries to take away their self-esteem.

Most times the abuser whittles away at victim's self-image or intelligence. Sometimes what is denigrated is her sexual performance, or her parenting skills, or "performance of her duties" as a spouse.

In each instance, it is an "**I'm better than you**" message that makes the victim subservient to the abuser's "**superiority,**" where from he can dictate what the abused should think, feel and like.

Conveniently for the abuser, he can make the victim lose trust in others, which keeps the victim close at the abuser's side and away from family or friends. So, there is nobody around to remind this person of her intrinsic value as a person, or her particular gifts...making the person vulnerable to

the denigrated image of self that the other person is delivering. Now, she can believe that she is stupid, incapable of making her own decisions, unlovable, etc.

We all need the positive feedback of people around us to form a healthy self-image: if the only source of input are the abuser's negative comments, very soon the abused person will have no self-esteem, and her identity will be also compromised.

4.- Abuse's long term impact:

To understand emotional abuse, here we frame it as being largely based on the need to use power and control over the life partner or relative, for some hidden needs of the abuser that can only be put in practice through controlling a loved one, which becomes part of the abusive person's self.

Let's remember the basic characteristics:

- Emotional abuse follows a pattern; it is repeated and sustained. Left unchecked, abuse only gets worse over time.
- Continued emotional abuse can cause many victims to develop chronic anger and mistrust issues, which sometimes detach from the abuse and appear as different symptoms.
- Like other forms of violence in relationships, the ones who are most often emotionally abused are also the ones who hold the least power in society, for example, women and children;
- Emotional abuse can severely damage a person's sense of self-worth and perception;
- Emotional abuse can also affect a child's brain development and may

result in an impaired ability to perceive, feel, understand and express emotions.

- In the future, this stunted development of the capacity to feel empathy could make of the former victim a new abuser of others, perpetuating the circle.

Alice said that for years she thought she was to blame for all of their problems. "I thought everything was my fault," she said. "If he had run over somebody while drunk I would've thought it was my fault because I should have tried harder. He always said everything was my fault, and I believed him. "You think maybe it's not real, or that he's going to change, or that it's going to get better the next day. I kept thinking that if I was a good wife he would be different. "But it didn't matter what I did, I know now, because it made him feel superior."

How can you decide if this relationship is over?

It is possible that you have traveled a very tortuous path, from falling in love, making plans to be together, organizing your common life, and then begin the daily discouraging routine to observe your lover doing always exactly the opposite of what was needed to make you happy

You began to feel taken advantage of in so many petty things as to be nauseated.

Over all, this persistent sense of isolation and loneliness, of being stranded in a far land where the usual signposts of connection are being taken away. You don't recognize the man you fell in love before, or the girl you were at that moment. He is this person you live with, but at each abusive command, you feel that you don't know this person, and you don't remember what are you doing under his control.

Now comes the last straw: What did you do to try once more to connect with the man you fell in love with and it failed?

Your "last straw" story probably has a bitter flavor, and I could figure out what is its aspect that gave you the most anger...What was it:

Was it you trying to calm him down by taking responsibility for things you didn't do, so the stress of his temper tantrum would go down, and then he ended accusing you of doing exactly this behavior? and finally he ended up blaming you for the emotional pain caused by the sole episode he

instigated?

Or was it a crisis of anger with violent threats that made you experience the dangerous situation you are in, seemingly having his support, but knowing that he is mentally unstable, changing fast between abuse and a fake offer of support, and unable to give you any piece of the normal support you would expect? and it made you feel scared and abandoned? Or, perhaps, was a small incident like this that presented you with your reality?

" I was saving a bit of money from the house grocery shopping on my side, because I imagined I could give him a gift for his birthday...There was a sale at the store, and I got the sweater for half the price. So I managed to come up with a nice sweater and a decent dinner. Put the kids to sleep and invited him to sit at the table. And of course, he was totally surprised...first, I could see that he enjoyed the meal, and even commented about the new dish's taste. At the end, I produced his gift package, carefully wrapped, and gave him my gift. I could see that he was briefly moved, but then, the situation turned horrible. He began asking "Where did you get the money?" how is it that you have this kind of money to spend?" Why you didn't tell me that you had this money?" and on and on...

I was so destroyed by this turn of events...I could not clean the kitchen; went to bed immediately and decided that if the world was such a hideous place, I did not want anything in it. After that night, something was broken inside me, and I could not gather any positive feelings for him anymore; I was feeling dead inside"

Understanding emotional abuse

To truly recover from emotional abuse, we must choose to stand for our rights and demand to be treated with the respect we deserve. Otherwise, we choose to accept an unhealthy relationship and agree to pay the price of self-esteem destruction for the imaginary, never reliable sense of support from the abuser.

Usually, the victim thinks that to recover from emotional abuse, they only have to make the abuser understand his/her point of view, believing that a misunderstanding is at the root of the problem. But there are deeper reasons for the emotional abuse, as we saw above (early conditioning as an abuser by our family of origin; being abused as a child, etc.) as well as elements intrinsic of the mindset of the abuser and pertaining to his mental model of a relationship. Is this "mental model of a relationship as one of dominance and submission," (never an equal partnership) that constitutes the core problem here.

The victim especially needs to understand that the abuser will only change if he/she decides to do so, and not just because the victim needs him/her to change. Is very difficult to accept that they will not change regardless the love, attention and requests from their spouse!

Sometimes, abusive husbands don't even change even if society makes them pay the price of jail time because committing domestic violence; they will still believe that their view of the relationship was the right one. Why is

this? Because owing to the abuse is terribly difficult: too painful to see yourself in the mirror and see that you are the person hurting the people you love the most?

So, we hope you realize it is not possible to find a solution when an abuser is not cooperating. He has too much to lose to agree with the victim in a different relationship style! What, then, can the victimized person do from her side? It's important to see that the only way out of this nightmare is to recover your own power by stop participating in an emotionally abusive relationship. This means letting go of the victim's role and starting to work on personal issues and self esteem, in order to strengthen our interactions and relations with others. Without this, recovery from emotional abuse cannot start.

The path from abuse to light:

Some elements of this transformation are listed here. Ultimately, these points will facilitate recovery itself from emotional abuse, while promoting your self-esteem and happiness. Please, see the ones that you can accept and do something about first:

- Become aware. Acceptance of the reality of abuse is the very first step, even when it hurts a lot.
- Avoid self-deception: give up the hope that change will happen by itself.
- Learn as much as you can find about emotional abuse.
- Learn how to use assertive techniques when confronting.
- Use community resources as help in planning a better future.
- Seek help and share your case with others who can provide different solutions. Seek professional case whenever needed.

Recovering your self-identity:

In the process of learning from this difficult situation you find yourself in, you need to go through several steps:

STEP I: Stop Denial and Realize the Abusive Situation

(Read the phrases in loud voice and adapt the words using your own words until they resonate as true inside you)

- Each day, look around and tell yourself:
- I trust my feelings, and here there is no respect for me;
- Even when he apologizes, he still doesn't see the hurt done;
- I can't try to tell him to stop once more;
- I'm done with this situation

STEP II: Taking your own power back:

Begin watching yourself:

- each time you respect your own decisions;
- each time you listen to your own voice;
- each time you say: "This is my opinion, and I want it respected;"
- each time you see that you have your own voice, opinion and it is
VALID:

Give yourself a high five! You are on your path!

STEP III: Allow yourself to dream on your next life:

Begin thinking of yourself using your own self-directed words, as in:

- When I'm in my own place, I will....
- When I take my own decision, I can see myself doing....
- When I'm following my destiny I will be doing X...

STEP IV: Put images on your dream, make a dream map:

Get magazines with glossy pictures:

- cut beautiful pictures of places you'd like to know;
- or of activities you wish to do;
- or of professional tasks you could enjoy doing;
- or situations you want to be part of;
- get a bottle of glue, and paste your own pictures on those images....
- you are making a collage representing your future, post on wall!

DREAM ON!

Getting a hard look inside

Deciding to stay or to leave is a very difficult decision to make. Even when you feel that you are done with this situation, your inner feelings can keep you paralyzed or confused. Part of this confusion is coming from the fact that you can understand where the abuser is coming from, even if you don't accept or condone or forget this behavior. You deeply know this person, and have had lots of information about his past, where probably he himself was an abuse victim.

Here we invite you to see the abuser as much a victim as their partner is. Our proposal doesn't deny his responsibility, or excuse him of his actions, but increases your understanding and thus your personal power.

"I just left an abusive relationship a few days ago and know that my ex partner is a victim of deep-seated self loathing. He is too afraid to face it, and so has constructed great walls of defensiveness around himself. He is deceiving himself in believing that he is able to protect the ones he loves from this awful pit of fear, hate and anger. Abuse often seems painted as very black-and-white, but it's never as clear as 'good guy' vs. 'bad guy'. The hurt he has inflicted upon others only comes from a deep hurt within himself, and now he will have to face and heal that."

The good part of this approach here is the immense opportunity for growth and learning. You can see what prompted your husband to be abusive, while

at the same time you are able of saying "NO" to the abusive relationship. If gives you an edge of respect for the origin of his need to twist relationships at his will (his original wound), at the same time you learn how to avoid this same kind of damage for yourself or your children.

The bad part is that you can convince yourself that you need to continue tolerating the abuse, even when you can call it "*helping him*." This is not the best way to help an abusive person; he needs to own his behavior as the first step to stop it.

But if this decision is out of your own control you still have to decide by yourself if you need to stay, or if you are ready to go and reconstruct your own life.

Your feelings around taking the decision:

Many times you have bounced between sadness, frustration and sheer pain; facing the challenges of emotional abuse coming from the person who should love you the most is a grievous situation that can even hurt you in a physical way. Being his victim has been solitary and hurtful.

Now, deciding to take yourself and your own healing seriously is your present task, but you know that you are taking a decision that affects the two of you. Even when it is inevitable and foreseeable, you could be hating yourself for being forced to make a decision. He will never decide on a separation, because he needs you in the place of "his victim" to complete the system and be able to confirm his identity as a powerful abuser. He doesn't want to allow you to be deciding by yourself that you need to go!

Of course, you know all this. Even so, a wave of old feelings can come crashing on you. Guilt, remorse, empathy, pity for him, shame for having to take the role of the way out wife...who knows what mix of negative emotions is washing over you just now?

Take some time to sit down, breathe deeply and calm down. You need now to accept this wave as something that will wash out far away from you. Let it go over your head....and keep breathing. It will clear up by itself soon, as soon as you make the basic, practical decisions that follow the first one: *"In order to send him the signal that abuse is finished, I need to go."*

The same attitude: *"sit down, take several deep breaths, and calm yourself,"* will help you face something ingrained in all of us: fear of change, any change. This fear is instinctual, beyond our control, and a primitive response to our rational planning. So, say hello to your fear of change as it is an old friend, and tell yourself:

"I know that I will be afraid, but I need to go through with this change to improve my life. So I will keep breathing and the fear will go away."

Questions to Answer Now:

You can have multiple questions, some practical and others purely emotional but very frightful, going around your head....How can you separate the useful, practical ones from the ones produced by your fear of change? Let's go through this list:

- Who can help you, if you became so isolated as not to have near

family or friends?

- What do you do if having denied the abuse up until now, you fear people wouldn't believe you when you tell them?
- What do you do if the abuser tries to make other people think you are the abuser instead?
- What are the resources that you have left now?
- What do you think you will be able to do by yourself, and what are the steps you will need help with?

Building confidence takes a lot of work. It won't happen overnight. Surround yourself with good people who care about you so you don't forget that you matter. Let them support you as you build yourself back up. While you may feel devastated and horribly imperfect at the start, you were that way when you felt happier, too. The sadness only points to the problem you didn't notice before. In a way, that's better, as you can only fix the issues you actually know exist.^P

Now, look inside....Sometimes you can recognize a subtle first step: somehow your energy is not there anymore. You stop arguing, debating or discussing issues. You don't talk anymore about what a good relationship looks like to you. You don't ask for changes any more.

The reason is very deep: inside you, the love energy has disappeared and there is no more life in it. It can take some time for you to realize that in your soul, there are no more expectations on relationship changes. It's done, finished. You don't care for change any more!

The only thing remaining is attachment to the comfort of the routine of sharing day to day life with someone. This is a large package composed by routine, comfort of same type at having someone possibly sharing the

burden...together with the old package of illusions we carry from all our life.

What were your expectations of marriage before you found this guy? Even if you get to recover bits and pieces of this fantasy, it can have long roots...It means a sense of security designed when we were children, that persists along any circumstances today.

its time to re assess where you are now...perhaps so many moments of fighting for your marriage

Now, look outside you: Assuming that your partner has resisted changing his behavior and, despite your best efforts to work things out so that you are not feeling so much abused, he persists in the snide remarks, negative descriptions of you and all kind of manipulative behaviors that leave you alone and bereft, you will have to accept reality.

Once you've recognized this passive aggression for the emotional abuse being downloaded on your shoulders, you will likely be sick of it and want to split, even when you still have some lingering feelings for this person.

Whatever is the core element of your present anger, righteous indignation, hurt pride or deep self-esteem wounds, let's use its energy to make the final decision now! Now is the time to see clearly what the only way left is; now is the time to leave him for good!

The task now is to let go

How can you know whether leaving or staying is the best thing for you to do? There are some simple questions you can ask yourself. If you answer yes to a majority of them, you need to take a break from this relationship!

You can go through this task in several steps:

A) Get a picture of the whole situation:

Step back and get a look at both of you, as if you were a third person, separated from the couple. Imagine that you are able to watch the two people in your marriage interacting with each other. Watch their body position, are they touching each other or no? are they looking straight to the other's face or not? can you imagine if they are fighting now by their face expressions?

Look at the interaction: is it vibrant, engaged or dismissive and avoidant? are they connected or not? what is happening between them?

At the end, imagine that you can put a name, like a movie's name to this picture, what would it be:

"isolation and frustration"?

"the great disconnect"?

"mismatched couple"?

"pain and love don't mix"?

B) Now, with this picture fresh in your mind, ask yourself: what do I need to learn?

In life, every experience is a lesson: what's is my lesson here? How can I appropriate this lesson so it is learned and I don't need to go through it again? The learning may be perhaps about valuing yourself, reenacting old traumas to heal them, managing anger, rejecting abusive control, or learning how to express your needs in a healthy way. Or, perhaps, you need to love yourself so much as to set up clear, reasonable boundaries for any relationship you can enter from now on?

Whatever it is, remember that this is part of the process of making you more resilient and happier in life!. Now, make a note about your particular LIFE LESSON and hang it on the wall, so you can see it frequently.

C) Now, let go of the rest

Many people want to stay in a relationship, even if they know it is abusive, because they are afraid they will have nowhere else to go, or are holding onto the hope that the abuse is concealing some spousal interest they can construe as a form of love.

We recognize this and respect it, but at the same time, sometimes leaving is what you need to do in order to preserve your emotional health. It doesn't have to be permanent - but it should send the strong message that you will not tolerate the abusive treatment anymore.

How can you know whether leaving or staying is the best thing for you to do? There are some simple questions you can ask yourself.

If you answer yes to a majority of them, you need to take a break from this relationship!

- Do you doubt your own memory or sense of reality because of your partner's word-twisting?
- Do you doubt your own judgment about what's best for you?
- Do you often feel unsafe, as if harm could come to you at any moment?
- Do you feel that you can't do anything or go anywhere without their permission?
- Do you feel depressed, dejected or like there is no point in being alive?
- Does your partner hurt you physically?

And lastly, the very important question from our last book: **Do you feel sometimes afraid of what your partner can do to you?**

Answering yes to many of these, especially the last one, are signs that you should not be staying with your partner right now. Leaving your partner will give you the opportunity to discover who you are and what you want from life without the influence of your abuser. You can reconnect with friends and family you have lost contact with, or reach out to a community of support that your abuser has been isolating you from, and this people will give you access to a different feedback about who you are, what can you do, and your own place in life.

As we said before, leaving sends him the signal that **you will not tolerate abuse**. The responsibility then rests on your partner - will they change because *being* in a relationship with you is more important than *controlling* you? Or will this be the final confirmation for you that your partner isn't

willing to change and prefers control to intimacy?

Can you see yourself in this case?

"It's my fault, if we're short on money, it's my fault, if we can't communicate... it's always my fault. He went from doing questionable cruel things to me to blatantly being cruel to me and our children. I am so confused I wonder if it's me, if I am being too spoiled or ungrateful.

That is my irrational thought process kicking in, but the reality.. (my gut if you will) says that yes, the STDs that you contracted were from him (I haven't been with another man) yes, he's cheated with various women... some physically and others with the intent.

Yes, he's playing cruel mind games with me, yes...he is a major reason why I feel like I'm losing my mind, yes... he is non-supportive of anything that would advance me... yes, he has violated my personal space by hacking into my FB, EMAIL, CELL PHONE, Etc., when he keeps all of the above parts of his life under lock and key.

*Yes... he does not give the love or attention that my children need and Yes....if I stay here, he will eventually kill me, himself and our children and finally yes, **I need to stand up and accept that if I want to live, not survive but live,** I have to step out walk away from everything and cease all contact with him.*

*These are my truths: **I'm scared, I'm afraid, I'm confused, my health is not it's best... but I'm going to live without him.**" (post by forum participant)*

This is the moment of decision:

Whether you decide to leave the relationship permanently, or take a break to see how things go, if you decide to leave there are certain aspects that need to be carried out in the correct way.

Even when it feels like as if your partner could care less about giving you his complete attention and devotion (ever), you don't know how deep goes his need for attachment in this relationship. It could be that a psychological wound in their past is telling them to use any means possible to prevent rejection. Odd as it sounds, many abusers do abuse in order to fulfill the need to be appreciated and loved. The twisted way of doing this reflects the unhealthy mindset that equates staying out of fear with love.

This inner instability means that without you, your partner will have a very hard time balancing their emotions. When you leave him, the precarious power balance gets disrupted and he loses the upper hand. Emotional imbalance can make the break up or temporary separation very complicated, noisy and dramatic - usually at the very last moment, just when you are ready to go. You can never underestimate the emotional manipulation you will be targeted with if and when you announce your decision to split.

"You must trust your gut instinct, he won't change and abuse will probably get worse. I ignored many signs in the hope that things would get better. One day I realized that enough was enough, and after 20 years of marriage I just upped and left. I have been away now over 3 years and am rebuilding my life from scratch, its very hard at times, but it is worth it!, I am my own

boss and no longer have to worry about him or his moods. My only regret is that I wasted so much time, i should have left years back."

Before Planning Your Departure

Here are some basic things you need to check off your list in planning to leave your relationship.

A) Learn to practice self-love

Our whole life depends on having vital connections with other people: we are healthier, more prosperous and more successful when surrounded by others who love us. Science provides lots of research that support the proposition that being alone and sad is not a good thing for your health, your pocket or your life.

An abuse situation will prevent you from feeling loved. Thus, when your loved one is abusing you, your priority should not be to wait around for better love from them! You need to break through the fog that your abuser has created, the one that has told you that you "deserve" mistreatment and that your abuser is the only person in the entire world who can love you, while at the same time delivering emotional misery each day.

The first step in healing from abuse and saying "I will take it no more" is to learn how to appreciate and love yourself.

A common comment we hear from abuse victims is "I'm just incapable of loving myself or anyone else." This is, of course, a false conclusion borne

from the abuser's negative opinions about the abused person's characteristics, repeated until they were accepted as truth.

The corrosive effect of abuse is humiliation; in this situation, one believes that everybody else is better and that one deserves nothing. Learning to love yourself in the face of humiliation and disrespect can be a hard mountain to climb. Don't be afraid of the challenge – its worth every drop of sweat!

"Love is what we were born with. Fear is what we have learned here. The spiritual journey is the relinquishment – or unlearning – of fear and the acceptance of love back into our hearts. Love is...our ultimate reality and our purpose on earth. To be consciously aware of it, to experience love in ourselves and others, is the meaning of life." Marianne Williamson

Remember that as you learn to love yourself, you will begin to trust in the future of your self and in your ability to love again. Once you love and respect yourself, any abuser loses the ability to hurt you emotionally – they can no longer convince you that you are worthless, and your self-fulfilling prophecy can end!

B) Some ways to learn a self-loving attitude:

- Put on your favorite clothes (or costumes!) for a few hours or all day. There doesn't have to be any occasion except making yourself feel special;
- Cook for yourself – household duties can be drilled into women as a "duty." Release yourself from that oppressive mentality by cooking just for yourself. Go all out and put the finest dishes out, and enjoy the

table set for you;

- Treat yourself to body care – use essential oils to bathe and massage your feet, or make a calming face mask. Pretend you are treating someone you love – because you are;
- Make a collage of yourself – Go through your first pictures, and recover the baby you were, the toddler, the girl, the teen....all your beautiful stages, and create a collage of images and words that describe “you.”
- Hang it on a very important wall, look at it each day and soak in the things that you love about yourself. You’re looking at an image of your inner self, so send your love to all those different stages of you;
- Learn to see beauty in everyday life – seeing beauty in the world will help uplift your worldview and see yourself as a beautiful participant in a beautiful world. Nature is a good place to start – and if you don’t have any flowers to smell, plant your own;
- Forgive yourself – for past mistakes you feel you made. Perhaps it was as a child, perhaps it was as an adult. Abusive behavior can make us internalize our guilt about things we did a long time ago, and make simple mistakes seem like damning ones. Let go the past! (And ask yourself, too – “what have I really done, not just what I’ve been told I’ve done?”);

C) Start building love in your external relationships

You can do this by identifying trends in your relationships, through writing about your past in a journal, or speaking to someone who has known you a long time. How many similarities are there between your current partner and your past ones? Between your current partner and one of your family leaders?

- Quite often, **abuse is cyclical**. You may have seen abuse early on, and unconsciously sought a relationship that mirrored your parent's dynamic. It is up to you to make those connections, in order to seek out people (and/or new partners) who **do not** have the same abusive traits as your partner.

D) Make a list of resolutions

Moving forward, it is important that you create (preferably on poster board, in big letters, what you will and will not tolerate in all relationships from this point on. This includes what you will expect from your partner, should they tell you they are going to make an effort to change.

E) Build a system of support

If you are going to leave, **do not leave to be alone**. The burden of emotional abuse is not easily dropped, and you need support from family and friends. If you can, move in with or as close as you can to, someone you trust. The emotional aftermath of abuse - loneliness, depression, low self-worth - should not be handled alone. It is also for your own security, so that you have a barrier between you and your ex-partner if you need one.

F) Seek support from a professional

Seeing a professional is important for your development going forward. They can help you recognize the patterns and trends in your abuse and teach you techniques for recovering your own sense of self. A professional can also help mediate between you and your partner, if you reach a point where you wish to do so.

G) Plan for the worst, even if you expect the best

Remember that this abusive situation has been **serving your partner greatly** this entire time. As such, they may not be willing to even admit they're the problem. Using the same tactics as before, they may whine, threaten, guilt-trip or otherwise influence you to come back.

Returning is okay, but only on your terms. Do not fall prey to the line, "**I'll work on it if you come back.**" This absolves your partner of their duty to change. If you haven't **observed a change in your partner** by yourself, before getting together again, going back will sabotage (again?) your own personal growth and development.

Saying Goodbye

Practical Steps for Leaving

- **Be very aware of who else you tell about your leaving decision.**

Anybody near your partner can tell them and put you in a difficult situation, so keep the decision under wraps. You also need some time to re-establish ties with friends, relatives and things you left behind. You will need their support during your next moves.

- **Prepare your speech**

You need think carefully when and how this separation will work. If you're leaving for good, be clear about it. If you're leaving for a certain amount of time, be clear about that too. Leaving that up for discussion or up for fate to decide leaves the door between yourselves open and easily pushed aside by your partner. Note that you do not have to tell your partner where you are going or who you will be with, in most cases it is a better idea not to.

- **Prepare for a backlash**

There might be a phase when your partner profusely promises to deliver from now on; it's likely you'll hear "I'm so sorry," repeated multiple times. Don't buy into it! You know that your partner will do whatever it takes to make you stay, and does not have an issue with lying. A time to clear the air and really think about the situation is what rational people need to do - even

if you're the only one capable of seeing that. Your partner may also skip straight to the second step, which is the violent outburst of verbal and emotional weapons, such as guilt over "destroying a romance with selfishness," insults about your intelligence and lack of commitment to the relationship, threats, or even tears.

- **Leave quickly, and alone**

Whatever the means for controlling you he could use, say that you will return to have a new discussion at a later time, and refocus him on the message that you're leaving **now**. Then walk out. End the conversation immediately and begin walking to the door. It's better to end the conversation abruptly, because this is one you will not win.

You don't want him offering to drive you somewhere (only to have car problems) or offering to do something else for you that they will not deliver... Nothing that your partner can offer to you at this point is a safe offer. Be gracious, say "Thanks, I don't need any help, I'll contact you" and keep moving.

- **Have everything prepared to leave at once**

In the end, it's still so hard to leave - particularly if you decided a face-to-face farewell was necessary. But the emotional reaction of your partner will usually require you to go fast. This step implies that you have prepared most of the things you need to take with you. Either everything is already in safe place, or in your car, but you can't be gathering things at the same time you are saying that you are leaving them.

- **Have your network prepared to receive you**

Quietly contact your family and supportive others. Determine what help they might be able to provide — a place to stay for the first week, protection and emotional support, financial help, etc. This is also the time, if you can, to seek professional help. You need some sessions to help you go through the initial fears of making the decision, such as:

- What will be of me?
- How can I cope being by myself?
- Will I suffer a lot of loneliness?
- Is there someone who will want me now?

Even when those are thoughts and feelings coming from the prolonged situation of helplessness you were under, you need to deal with them. If you can't find an individual therapist, or a support group offered by some organization in your neighborhood, you can always work on yourself using books, readings, writing on your diary and keeping a few good friends around. You don't want to be in this desperate situation:

"He is literally all that I have at this point. I took a step back the other day and realized I have no one but him. I picked up my phone and went through my contacts. No one that I knew on a personal level. No one that would care twice if I called."

- **Close the relationship for good:**

1. Stay away.

Don't accept phone calls, answer emails, IMs or text messages from him.

Doing so will only create false hope. It's likely to end in a terrible scene where you will be accused and blamed again, and things will be worse than ever - you won't just have an angry, upset ex, you will be charged with everything that went wrong in the relationship.

Remember again: this person has manipulated you for such a long time, now who will say anything to get you back, and that is all this contact will be about. It will be another edition of "promises and not facts," as you are used to, this time with a frenetic quality of conversation.

Once you have broken away, stay away. Having dinner, "just to talk" or "for the kids' sake" will destroy your resolve, and will also give your controlling ex the power he seeks again. Cut it clean, and let it go.

2. Avoid mutual friends who are still in contact with your ex for some time after the breakup. The last thing you need is the passing, even inadvertently, of fuel into the fire in the weeks and months after the end of the affair.

If you can't avoid contact with these friends, keep your remarks to them carefully neutral, and don't share details of the breakup, your feelings, or your insights on your ex with them - you can almost be assured these remarks will find their way back to your ex, and that will come back to haunt you.

3.- Remain focused on your new life. In order to build your new life, you need all the energies that you can muster; so don't look back, be open to new acquaintances and relationships, and watch yourself the next time someone makes a snide comment or a caustic joke on you, so you can

practice your self-defense tricks from the start!

B) Work on repairing yourself

1. A look at your deep needs:

What were your needs that supported the presence of this toxic relationship in your life? You could have deep needs about:

- To depend on someone;
- To be protected as when daddy protected you before;
- To be rescued from loneliness;
- To be spared the daily fight for life that adults have;
- To be given the appreciation and recognition you don't find inside

Here is the place to recover all of your aspects you were proud of: go back to the times of school, of college, of your first job, and gather without false shame all the compliments you did receive. How other people saw you, and what were the good qualities they told you had?

It's important that you recover the voice of external witnesses that saw you performing well. It has to compensate the poisonous comments of your ex about your invented weaknesses he made so much fun about.

Enjoy Your Own Recovery

Don't forget that you need to have a road map for yourself as you move forward into a new and healthier life. This last section covers the idea that you can map your own healing/recovery process. It is very important to have it, so that you always have a plan to refer to and fall back on when you feel your resolve faltering.

It is always uplifting to remember **who you are, where you've been, and where you're going to go**, by looking back on what's important to you, as written in your life plan. This is the plan you had for your future before this relationship derailed you with a demand for learning a lesson about self-love through abuse.

Women, especially, need to learn how to put them and their own needs first. Should we need to be reminded to take care of ourselves? The sad truth is, that many of us, especially during difficult times, relinquish our need for taking care of ourselves, for the pull to take care of others. This task is easy to do; we know how to do it; has merits of its own; and it allows to forget that we should be taking care of ourselves first.

While it is noble to want to care for those around us before, it is ultimately a poor allocation of our depleted resources to expend even more energy on others when we most need it ourselves. You need all your inner resources dedicated to your own healing now!

A basic plan for your own personal recovery has to include healing time, free of as much stress as possible. During your separation, there may be days when all you want to do is sleep, or laid in bed all day with a book. Day to day responsibilities may not allow you to indulge, but you still need to find a few minutes to support your body and mind's need for rest and recovery.

A) Planning A Letting Go Ceremony

It is important that you make a clean departure from your previous situation. Here we will plan a ceremony where you are cutting the ties with the abusive situation and all aspects of it. Please, follow this plan as a starting point, and all what feels right to you.

- 1) Look at the objects you will take with you and leave behind all that reminds you of the abuse.
- 2) If there are pictures, letters and other symbols of the relationship, put everything in a sealed box. In the future, when you are strong enough, perhaps you will want to do a "burning the memory box" ceremony.
- 3) Try to get some new clothes, (you can even borrow them!) so you can see yourself as a changed person when you leave the place. Keep that memory of yourself in place.

B) Designing a Healing Plan for Yourself

Please take as much time as you need to complete the following questions. If you can, write them in your journal or other personal folio. This way you can look back on them when you're feeling lost.

1. What types of activities would you consider opportunities for self- care?

What do you remember doing in the past which brought joy and happiness to you, even when they were small things?

2. What does thinking about this idea of self-care stir inside you? Is it pleasure? Excitement? Guilt? Dread?

3. Now, really make a plan to indulge yourself. What would you consider decadent activities that you can barely remember being able to enjoy? Please, include taking walks alone, so you can experience joy in your own company.

4. Are there activities that can be done with others? Which do you prefer and why? Who would you invite?

5. How will you schedule the time, money, and/or energy to make at least five items from #1 a reality within the next two weeks?

6. What would it take for you to put you first in your list of people to care for?

7. Which of these suggestions sounds good to you right now?

- A delicious lunch at a favorite restaurant
- A walk in a quiet park
- Going to library to sign out a book you wouldn't normally read
- Finding an organization you always admired and volunteer
- Getting pampered with a massage, facial or getting your nails done
- Cleaning out a closet - ridding yourself of outdated clothes and the old image of yourself that went with it
- Having a purging ceremony, and eliminating from your environment

the clutter that prevents you from making room for a new life

- Sitting quietly in meditation and celebrating how strong you are and how you will come out of this experience a better person.

Ready? Go out and do it!

C) Design a Healing Plan for Future Relationships,

Know that you need new, declared terms for any relationship, linked to clear and consistently implemented consequences.

Establish with interested parties that, effective immediately, all interactions you get into will be honorable and peaceful, and will specifically and especially exclude: name calling, put downs, character attacks/judgments, yelling or screaming, spitting, grabbing other person's body, throwing things, etc. and that if either partner breaks the agreement, you will leave immediately, until mutual respect is restored.

If you have allowed this kind of behavior in the past, be clear that you have the responsibility to walk away if anything abusive happens. For each abusive action that could happen, you will need time and effort to forgive, and to go back to mutual respect.

Now, you are Ready to Celebrate!

Conclusions

To truly recover from emotional abuse, we must choose to stand for our rights and demand to be treated with the respect we deserve. Nobody can humiliate another human being without some degree of acceptance from the abused. Otherwise, we choose to accept an unhealthy relationship and agree to pay the price, which is delay in our own self-development, confusion and grief.

To close, we wish you a process by which you get to learn the lessons included in your own abusive relationship, to learn them fast and deep, and to have the courage to move out of this challenging situation, for good.

"I walked out on my boyfriend who was emotionally abusive, not knowing I was pregnant at the time which wouldn't have changed my mind at all. I go by a simple rule with all people and that is if it feels wrong then it is wrong. Would you treat someone the way this boyfriend treats you?. How do you expect to be treated, and what will you put up with? Think it's time you set some boundaries, and stick with them? Don't ever give up your integrity, dignity, or self respect to anyone.

When I left my boyfriend all I had was a truck that broke down constantly. I had no place to go, no money, I went to shelters and finally just before my daughter was due to be born I got hooked up with the right people, got an apt and started life over, except now I have a sweet adorable happy baby girl. It was a tough road but when you want something bad enough you will

get it. I don't have insults, bad names, constant lies, and all that misery is gone. I will never let anyone ever treat me like I'm not worth again. I hope you will do the same. Kacy"

Here you have your own path to healing....

In a personal level, you know now when you will have the inner conviction about the decision of staying and leaving.

If this is the time in your life that you decide to keep on growing up, developing your life purpose and being happy, then congratulations!

We are here to strongly support your needs for validation as a valuable person who deserves to be loved and respected. Please, don't accept anything less.

To your happiness, and wishing you the best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Nora F.", written in dark ink.

Nora Femenia

Resources

Coaching by Coach Nora:

You can have 30' of phone [coaching](#) with Coach Nora any time you are ready!
Have a free half-hour conversation with discuss about your goals, how coaching can help you to move forward and to answer any questions you have about your present challenges,

<http://conflictcoach.me/services/>

Connect with Coach Nora here:

<https://www.facebook.com/norafemenia>

<https://twitter.com/peacewonk>

<https://plus.google.com/peacewonk>

www.linkedin.com/in/creativeconflictresolutions/

About Creative Conflict Resolutions

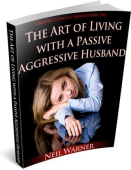
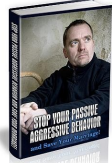
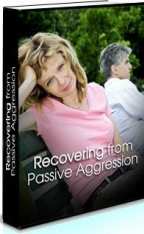
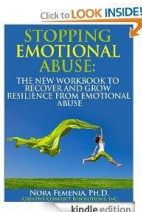
Creative Conflict Resolutions is a group of people working from Fort Lauderdale, Florida to promote more harmony and joy in your relationships.

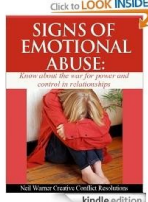
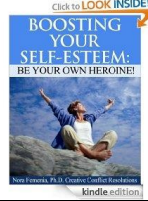
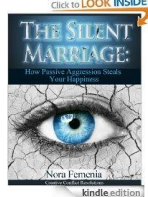
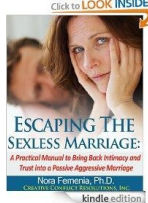
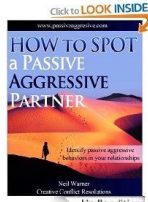
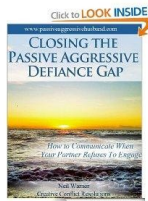
We care about:

- Providing fast and easy solutions for inter-personal conflicts;
- Managing and transforming anger into cooperation;
- Healing deep hurts that cause hostility to appear;
- Inviting people to reconcile and appreciate each other.

How do we do our work?

By developing educational materials, like our books:

	<u>The Art of Living with a Passive Aggressive Husband</u>
	<u>The Six-Steps system to Stop your Passive Aggression</u>
	<u>Love, Anger and Trust: Embracing the Passive Aggressive Relationship,</u>
	<u>Stopping Emotional Abuse: the New Workbook to Recover and Grow Resilience from Emotional Abuse</u>

	<u>Signs of Emotional Abuse: Know about the War for Power and Control in Relationships</u>
	<u>Boosting Your Self Esteem: Be Your Own Heroine!</u>
	<u>The Silent Marriage: How Passive Aggression Steals Your Happiness</u>
	<u>Escaping The Sexless Marriage: A Practical Manual to Bring Back Intimacy and Trust into a Passive Aggressive Marriage</u>
	<u>How to Spot a Passive Aggressive Partner</u>
	<u>Closing the Passive Aggressive Defiance Gap</u>

By inviting our clients to participate in live online presentations on issues of interest, like conflict solving techniques, parenting skills, listening skills, etc. By offering coaching sessions on the phone, in Skype, through <http://conflictcoach.me>

We would like to hear from you...and what are your interests and needs!
Feel free to write and tell us what are you concerned about in your
relationships, and how we could provide the help you need.

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