
RECOVERY & HEALING

Recovering from Emotional Abuse

Recognizing the patterns, understanding the damage, and beginning the healing process.

Boundary Agreement Resource Library

Dr. Hines Inc. | boundaryagreement.com

This guide is a coaching resource, not therapy or counseling.

IMPORTANT: If you are currently in an abusive relationship and feel unsafe, contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 or text START to 88788. Your safety comes first.

Emotional Abuse Is Real Abuse

Emotional abuse does not leave bruises. That is what makes it so insidious. The person experiencing it often does not recognize it because there is no physical evidence. But the damage is real: eroded self-worth, constant self-doubt, anxiety, depression, isolation, and a distorted sense of normal.

Gaslighting.

Making you question your own reality. 'That never happened.' 'You're being dramatic.' 'You're crazy.' Over time, you stop trusting your own perception.

Control disguised as concern.

'I just worry about you.' 'I'm only looking out for you.' But the result is isolation from friends, family, and independence.

The cycle of love-bombing and withdrawal.

Intense affection followed by coldness, criticism, or punishment. You spend all your energy trying to get back to the 'good' version of them.

Moving the goalposts.

Nothing is ever enough. You meet one expectation and the standard changes. You are always failing at a test you did not know you were taking.

Weaponizing your vulnerabilities.

Things you shared in trust get used against you during arguments. Your deepest insecurities become their ammunition.

Isolation.

Slowly cutting you off from friends, family, and support systems until they are your only source of validation and information.

Beginning Recovery

Name what happened.

It was abuse. Not a 'rough patch.' Not 'they had a bad childhood.' Naming it is the first step to healing.

Get professional support.

A therapist who specializes in emotional abuse recovery. Not couples therapy (which can be dangerous with an abuser). Individual therapy for you.

Rebuild your support system.

Reconnect with the people who were pushed away. You need voices outside the relationship to help you recalibrate what is normal.

Grieve the relationship you thought you had.

The person you fell in love with may have been a performance. Grieving that loss is legitimate and necessary.

Rediscover yourself.

Emotional abuse strips away your identity. Who are you outside of that relationship? What do you want? What do you enjoy? Start exploring.

EXERCISE: The Reality Check

If you are unsure whether what you experienced was emotional abuse, answer these.

Did I walk on eggshells to avoid their reaction?

Did I stop seeing friends or family because of their disapproval?

Did I feel like I was always wrong and they were always right?

Did they use my secrets against me?

Did I lose my sense of who I was?

Did I feel relief when they were not around?

If you answered yes to 3 or more, please seek support from a professional. You are not crazy. You are not dramatic. You deserve better.
