

How to know if it's an emotionally abusive relationship

COMMON TYPES OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE

GASLIGHTING

[Gaslighting](#) allows the abuser to avoid responsibility by denying reality, questioning the abused spouse's sanity or lying.

Gaslighting is an abuser's attempt to avoid responsibility and intentionally redirect the blame from themselves onto the victim. It's extremely manipulative and can be very psychologically destructive to the victim.

In a healthy relationship, people tend to own their mistakes and genuinely work to become better. In an emotionally abusive relationship, the abuser refuses to own their willful actions and hurtful reactions and doesn't want to change their behaviors. Their goal is to control rather than work things out in a healthy way.

Questions to ask yourself:

1. Does my spouse or significant other repeatedly deny conversations we've had?
2. Does my spouse continually refuse to take responsibility when they've made a mistake or hurt my feelings?
3. Do I often feel afraid or hesitant to bring up issues to my spouse?
4. Does my spouse continually make me feel like, or even tell me, things are always my fault?

RETALIATION

Retaliation can come in many types, but in its most basic form, it's an abuser saying, "If you do 'X', then I will do 'Y.'" At its core, retaliation is about punishment. It's a form of manipulation and control – or an unhealthy twisting of what appears upfront to be a boundary. But really retaliation is someone implying, "If you do something I don't want you to do, I will punish you for it – and it will hurt (emotionally or physically)."

It can include punishing a victim for doing something the abuser said not to do. In an emotionally abusive relationship, retaliation can be used to keep victims silent, keep them from seeing loved ones or force victims to do things they don't want to do.

In many cases, retaliation is designed to hurt the victim where they're most vulnerable. In an emotionally abusive marriage, abusers prey on a victim's fears and often tell them that "if they really loved them," they wouldn't do something that would "hurt them so much." They may even threaten them, their pets or the people they love – even if what the victim wants to do is relationally healthy, like going to lunch with friends.

In an emotionally abusive relationship, retaliation creates fear. In a healthy relationship, "perfect love casts out fear" ([1 John 4:18](#)) and there should be a level of safety to do healthy things and to not be punished.

Questions to ask:

1. Does my spouse often threaten to hurt me emotionally, physically or sexually if I don't do what they ask?

2. Am I afraid to tell my spouse how I feel or what I want?
3. If I do something my spouse doesn't agree with, do they find a way to hurt me emotionally, physically or sexually or excuse their own negative or immoral reactions by blaming me?
4. Have I stopped choosing healthy decisions because I'm afraid of how my spouse will respond?

PROJECTION

Projection is when an abuser accuses someone else of the negative behaviors that they themselves are actually doing.

Questions to ask:

1. Does my spouse repeatedly accuse me of doing things that I'm not doing?
2. Does my spouse act in ways that hurt, isolate or disrespect me and excuse their behavior by blaming their own insecurities?
3. Does my spouse continue to use their own past against me or tell me that I'm just like other people who have hurt them in the past?
4. Does my spouse try to use past events or personal insecurities to control me or keep me from doing things?
5. Does my spouse become angry or violent when members of the opposite sex speak to me or look at me? Does my spouse accuse me of trying to get someone else's attention by the way I look, dress or act?

Make the call:

If you answered "yes" to the questions above, there's a good chance that you're in an emotionally abusive relationship where projection is present – and it's time to make a call.

**Restoration Advocates is here to help
any victim of intimate partner abuse.
254-595-6413**