ENCOURAGEMENT & ADVICE FROM EMOTIONAL ABUSE SURVIVORS
When you are coping with emotional abuse in your intimate relationship, you can feel completely alone, frightened, and confused about what is happening to you.

You may wonder if you are going crazy, if anyone else in the world is experiencing the same kind of abuse you are experiencing with your partner. You fear the pain and heartache of the situation will last forever.

One of the most important actions an emotional abuse victim can take is to reach out to others for support and feedback, even if reaching out feels embarrassing or frightening. Learning more about emotional abuse, recognizing that you aren’t alone, and educating yourself on how to rebuild your confidence and strength are essential to fostering change in your relationship.

For those reasons, I created a Facebook Support Group for those who have experienced emotional abuse, either in the past or currently, so that they can benefit from the combined insights, support, and feedback from a community of caring people.

I recently invited members to share their thoughts and advice on how to boost your confidence and self-esteem when you are dealing with emotional abuse in your relationship.

Here are the words of wisdom from 65 members of the group.

1. Building my self-esteem is important, so to do this I try and surround myself with positive people. I found positive people in my job, a patchwork and quilting group I joined, and I go to a church where I can just be me! Also, I went to a counselor over a period of time, and I moved from a wretched, angry victim to a joyful survivor. Belonging to this Facebook group has also helped immensely.
2. Putting myself first and foremost, increasing my exercise, and doing what brings me little moments of contentment has really worked. I was able to get myself back, and then I was able to start doing things properly for the kids. What I realized was that if I wasn't happy then how could my kids be happy?

3. Talking to friends and family has really helped, as I needed lots of validation, and sharing my experiences gave me that. Also talking to a homeless dude and buying him the odd coffee made me realize that what I have is actually fairly dammed good.

4. Being sociable and flirting!

5. Even though things are good, it's not all roses either. I still have odd moments where I will sit cry and feel confused. But I also know that they are just passing moments, and I go with the flow and tell myself I'm being overly emotional. I'll call a friend for support at that time, and yes we men do cry, and if we're not scared to show it, it's really helpful.

6. I try to remove the power of his negative words by trying to enjoy the things in life that he stole the joy out of with his constant criticism. I can now listen to the music I love, watch the shows I want, and eat what I want, when I want.

7. I try to only watch, listen, and surround myself with positive things. I constantly read the definition and examples of emotional abuse so I know when I need to not react and instead set up boundaries. I also take medication for anxiety which has helped tremendously. I am exercising and not holding myself back from doing things I enjoy and love.

8. Just getting out of the house, around people to just do some grocery shopping is a big step for me, and seems to boost my self esteem a bit. I am never hardly allowed to be out of the house alone to go anywhere, and when I do there is always a battle afterwards, it really isn't worth the trouble it causes, but occasionally I throw caution to the wind and go to Walmart or somewhere all by myself.
9. Prayer . . . lots of prayer. And being able to myself to others who are currently going through similar circumstances, and receiving feedback from them.

10. Deep breathing exercises sometimes helps calm me down when anxiety gets to me.

11. No contact with the abuser, ever!

12. Self talk in the mirror is powerful! "I AM awesome, I AM better than you (abuser), I AM a friggin fantastic person, I am ____ (insert whatever feel good words come to mind),” but say these like you MEAN them! Put positive and empowering feeling into all of them. Make sure they hear you across the world!

13. Going for walks and getting fresh air has really helped. Even though you might not want to be in anyone's company while you are trying to deal with your emotions, getting out of the house really works.

14. No contact and never believing what they say about you

15. I swim before work every weekday morning. I love it and find it really relaxing. I also struggle with my weight and was a comfort eater. It has really changed me and helped me to begin to take some control back.

16. I felt tremendous strength after I left my emotionally abusive ex-boyfriend. Leaving him was so difficult and scary. Even though I had a lot of recovery work to do after leaving him, including a lot of feelings of anxiety, loss, and humiliation, I also felt like I was finally standing authentically in my strength. I had power in my life again!

17. Finding a support group online also helped me to feel like I was not alone. Reading about emotional abuse and narcissism helped me begin to make sense of what had happened.
18. Processing my positives every day. Writing down ten positive things I have done and achieved that day. For example, I might say, “Today I made myself some breakfast. This means that I am looking after myself and keeping healthy, as I deserve to be.” Simple and effective.


20. Making declarations about how valuable I am and how much God loves me

21. Writing a letter to him to let him know he cannot tell me how I think, feel or believe. I will share it in the near future.

22. Be kind to yourself. Know that you are worth it.

23. I am jogging and walking every day to be able to deal with the panic attacks. My confidence is very low. Outside work hours, I prefer to be on my own, and when I think about another man or someone touching me, I’ve get very upset and scared. I am badly broken and trying very hard to fix myself.

24. Remember to write down all your achievements and strengths. Remind yourself that you are unique, you are beautiful, you are gifted, life is precious. Surround yourself with people who lift you.

25. I hadn't set foot in a church for years because my ex didn't like me to go. The day I walked in the entire service was about Jesus loving me no matter what and that we are made in His image. I now go regularly on Sunday, attend Bible studies, listen to Christian podcasts and read inspirational books. And whenever the old feelings crop up, I turn to my faith. It really helps.

26. Be mindful of who you are physically spending time with, talking to, texting, emailing, and talking to on social media. For me personally, if it isn't love or support, I choose not to communicate in any form until I get my spirit right. But mostly I try to be grateful for the blessings in my life and try to keep God first.
27. Weirdly enough, I started a challenge of reading biographies of all the U.S. presidents. It's made me realize I LOVE politics and foreign policy, and, as it turns out, understanding foreign policy is a lot like understanding marriage!

28. I have found breathing exercises and meditation help me most when everything gets too overwhelming. For the sadness that follows me, I'm thinking about a cute and furry and loyal puppy to take care of. Also writing what I am grateful for every day really helps.

29. Look at the progress you've made! Find a tangible change (however small) you've made for the better, and then take a moment to let that sink in and appreciate it. Maybe you were finally able to block your abuser on Facebook. Or maybe you got through something (however shakily) that would have previously triggered intense anxiety. Anything that you can look at and say, "Wow, a year ago, I couldn't have done that. And now look at me!" It's so empowering.

30. Surrounding myself with loving, wise people who support me really helps.

31. Telling my abuser how I feel when we're in therapy.

32. For myself, I never bought into the notion that I am stupid and worthless. I have been told that my entire life. I have a policy that if I am abused in any way, I end the situation immediately. I tell the other person I do not accept their behavior and go no contact. Simple as that.

33. My self-esteem improved after I chose my religion and followed its guideline to do everything to please Him. A person who serves God automatically increases her self-esteem because she knows she is right.

34. I cannot underestimate how important religion is. It is my touch point, my guide for living. I still have to interact with my ex because of our children, but I am able to set boundaries, react with compassion and/or respect no matter what he throws at me. And my self-esteem is high because I know I am loved.
35. At my very lowest points, I would force myself to come up with ten things worth living for. Sometimes it would take me all night, but it makes you focus on the good things in life.

36. What has been working for me is being honest about my feelings. I first had to get in touch with my feelings. I also began pointing out the abuse when it happens. I have said openly to my partner, “This is emotional abuse, and I am not going to listen to it any longer.” I also developed a plan to legally separate from him and shared it with him. This has his attention. I point it out and do not let him get away with it. Meditation has a calming effect for me, almost like taking a nice afternoon nap. I have learned how to "not react" in the moment. It took some time but comes naturally now. Stay calm, kind but firm and point it out saying, “I will not listen to this any longer and walk away.”

37. Do something for yourself, something you enjoy. Do it alone if you have to. Self-care is so important in these times.

38. I found a group of like-minded folks with whom I volunteer. It reminds me that good people think beyond themselves, and that I'm a good person. Plus, it gets me out of the house.

39. Exercise! It releases endorphins, the feel-good hormones.

40. Help other people as much as you can!

41. I felt strength after standing up and telling my partner to leave. He’s going tomorrow. No more tears, no more pain. Here’s to the beginning of the rest of my life!

42. I find that self-care, Bible study, self-educating online, and standing up for myself by making consistent boundaries have all really helped.

43. Spend as much time with people you love who are not toxic people. Have fun with the kids in your life. They are great.

44. Hiking nature trails to or along waterways. Just a creek or hike to a waterfall does more than you would ever expect. Science backs this up!
45. By stepping out of my comfort zone, doing things I didn't do while with him, I feel stronger. I strive to live my life on my own terms. It's kind of scary but also empowering. Even little things make me feel like I matter.

46. First, love yourself.

47. Stepping outside of my comfort zone and remembering I deserve to enjoy life have helped me.

48. Telling him that I wasn't taking the abuse anymore, walking out, and following through was empowering.

50. I kept a gratitude journal every day for a long time. I wrote what I was grateful for and then what it said about me. So if I wrote, "My daughter made honor roll" as my gratitude, and I followed that up with,"I'm a good mom who helps her stay on top of her homework and gives her a safe and peaceful home where she can thrive." I no longer need to write these things down. But this journal helped me develop a habit of gratitude and positive self-talk.

51. Go where people who feel good about themselves hang out, like the gym, yoga studio, church, and support groups. Get around these people, and let them help reprogram you.

52. I started to wear bright colors and go with my instincts on what I wanted to wear, how I treated others, and what I enjoyed doing. I also make and wear bright chunky jewelry because it makes me happy. When asked why I did this, I just simply looked at my emotional abuser and said, "Because I wanted to and it makes me happy!" Last year for Christmas, I dyed my hair red, green and white. I felt pretty, and it made me happy!

53. I sing on karaoke — anywhere I can really. It has kept me strong and makes me happy and alive. I would recommend it to everyone because it gives you the feel good factor!
54. I’ve discovered that returning to the activities I used to love really helps in overcoming emotional abuse. I’ve gone swimming again, as well as going to restaurants, vacations, and lounges by myself. Starting tomorrow, I’m going to start writing a series of short stories. Considering that my emotionally abusive ex belittled my writing talent and self-esteem, the fact that I feel confident to write again is a huge step forward. Rediscover what you love and find a way to live again.

55. As quickly as possible, learn to detach lovingly and do not react!

56. Read as much as you can on emotional abuse. Knowledge is power. Also keep a journal of things that happened or were said by your abuser. This helps keep track of what really happened and can keep you sane!

57. Reading, writing, and doing anything you love to do is what can help you. Also understand that no love will come to you if you will not love yourself. Children are the greatest motivation. I only made a decision to leave when I saw my children tears and fear. I will never forget it, and thus I had to let go. I also read so many inspirational books where I learned that only you can change your life by changing your thinking.

58. Try hard to believe that your abuser is wrong to treat you the way he/she treats you. It's not your fault, and you don't deserve it.

59. I would say to get some really good therapy for yourself. Do not tolerate any kind of abuse and trust your gut. Life is difficult enough without having to deal with abuse. And remember abuse is a choice, regardless of how people are raised. Also love yourself totally.

60. I have taken sticky notes and placed them at my coffee pot and on my mirror. On my mirror I placed them around where my reflection would be and read them aloud daily. My favorite is "Every cell in my body is healing!"

61. I set up notification reminders four times a day, every day that say, "I am worthy. I am lovable. I am enough just as I am." It was hard to even read these in the beginning, and some days I got angry, but after time it got easier. Now I am starting to even believe it again.
62. Daily affirmations. I’ve been doing that too and it really helps!

63. I try to only watch, listen, and surround myself with positive things. I constantly read the definition and examples of emotional abuse so I know when I need to not react and when to set boundaries. I also take medication for anxiety which has helped tremendously. I am exercising and not holding myself back from doing things I enjoy and love.

64. I try to remove the power of his negative words by once again enjoying the things in life that he stole the joy from with his constant criticism. I can now listen to the music I love, watch the shows I want, and eat what I want, when I want.

65. Relearn how to trust your own judgment and common sense. Even if your emotional abuser tries to convince you that you’re wrong, remember that you are smart and capable, even if you don’t feel it right now.

If you would like to join my Emotional Abuse Breakthrough Facebook Support Group, please click here and ask to join.

For further support and help in understanding emotional abuse and deciding whether to stay in your relationship or leave it, check out my Emotional Abuse Breakthrough Course.