

Look out for manipulation tactics and emotional abuse

Although some forms of abuse are easier to detect early on, in a lot of cases, acts of emotional abuse have a tendency to go unnoticed, even by those who fall victim to it. Unfortunately, when it comes to those closest to us, we forget to pay attention to toxic patterns as we lack objective vantage points. This may especially be the case if the perpetrator adds positive reinforcement to the mix in order to keep those affected by their unhealthy behaviour catching on. Even though emotional abuse knows no gendered boundaries, women are disproportionately vulnerable to it.

Here are some of the harder to detect signs to look out for if you believe you may be in denial about potential emotional abuse.

broader society, gaslighting is a tactic which has various gendered implications.

Appreciation replaced by negging

Negging consists of the use of backhanded compliments, or insults disguised as passing remarks, jokes, and 'constructive' criticism. Even if the word is more often used in the case of romantic relationships, this manipulation tactic is pervasive through all types of relationships, be it work relationships or ones shared between family or friends.

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Gaslighting and other doubts

Gaslighting is a manipulation tactic used to make one question their own sanity, and in extreme cases reality itself. Gaslighting may take various forms. While some who gaslight have a tendency to invalidate people's emotions and feelings, others may try to get the victim to believe that their recollections of memories are fictitious altogether. One of the more common cornerstones of this tactic entails the perpetrator denying their past behaviour in order to plant seeds of doubt in the sufferer's perception of events.

Although gaslighting is also used to make one appear unreliable or unstable to others, the main objective of this tactic is to bring doubt into the sufferer's mind about their own sanity. This not only normalises future abuse but additionally breaks down their self-esteem and self-worth, helping enable co-dependency. Unfortunately, as labels such as 'crazy' or 'unstable' are more easily slapped onto women than men in

experiences may also exemplify negging. If they always react to achievements you share by following up with their own accomplishments in an attempt to trivialise your feat, it may be a red flag.

One of the most obvious forms of negging is the repetitive use of jokes to bring someone down. Whether it is offensive jokes about weight, skin tone, intellectual capability or skills, if someone knowingly keeps insulting you in ways which sting, it may be important to start creating a distance.

Ultimately, the usual goal of negging is to make the sufferer feel like they are never good enough. While rare instances of this may be compartmentalised as a slip of tongue, repetitive occurrences may be a warning sign of emotional abuse, or the beginning of it.

Constant guilt trips

Similar to negging, in some cases the very occasional guilt trip may be an excusable instance of unhealthy communication. Some

people just have issues with being direct. Nevertheless, if it is irrationally persistent to the point of having you continuously walk on eggshells, you may be a part of an unhealthy, or even abusive relationship.

Guilt trips may have various forms. Offenders may constantly bring up their own efforts or contributions to the relationship to make you feel as if you have fallen short. They may silence you whenever you try to address your wrong doings. Guilt trips may even entail hostile body language as an expression of displeasure. When such reactions are brought on by acts which would barely bother others in the same context, it may be time to re-evaluate the relationship.

Perpetrators of this manipulation tactic often carry it out to create unbalanced power dynamics in the relationship in order to make the sufferer feel indebted. It is also frequently used to make strictly established personal boundaries easier to transgress.

All balanced with love bombing

Those who use manipulation tactics often resort to overwhelming people they manipulate with periods of excessive love, affection, kind words or even gifts. This tactic, known as love bombing helps create safe spaces from time to time in order to keep sufferers bound. Love bombing leads to victims excusing toxic behaviour as short termed ruts, or as 'sides' of the offender which are not true reflections of their 'real' self. Regardless of the type of influence it creates, love bombing is not only a common phase in abuse cycles, but one of the main ways in which sufferers are blinded to their circumstance and made to feel indebted.

Even if infrequent instances of the previously mentioned manipulation tactics may be compartmentalised as hiccups in healthy communication, paying attention to possible patterns is crucial. When a few of the aforementioned behaviours are coupled together as a part of a well-established pattern, it may be time to reach out to someone you trust for help or guidance.

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