



A Journey to Healing After Emotional Abuse

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Author of

A Journey through Emotional Abuse: from Bondage to Freedom

Dedicated to:

The survivors of emotional abuse I've had the privilege to know and work with. You have inspired me with your stories of survival, courage and hope. I pray this book will inspire you to strive for the healing you desire and deserve. May you feel God's love and peace as you read.

My second husband. Your unconditional love has taught me much about Jesus' love for us, and guided me along my journey to healing.

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*Do not gloat over me, my enemy!
Though I have fallen, I will rise.
Though I sit in darkness,
the Lord will be my light.*

Micah 7:8

Terminology

This book is written primarily for women who have been abused by and have left their male intimate partners. Many of the principles would be the same for a man who had been abused by a female intimate partner, or if the abuser and victim were of the same sex. To make the book easier to read, and to maintain focus, I will refer to the abuser as “he” and the victim as “she.”

The term “pastor” is used for the leader of a church. Other churches call their leaders “minister,” “priest,” “father,” or “rabbi” (in Messianic congregations).

Whenever names are used, they have been changed to protect the anonymity of victims of abuse.

Foreword

Thank God you have found the strength and courage to leave the emotionally abusive relationship that bound you. Now what? You may have already done the hard physical work of setting up a new life – finding a new home, a new job or church. But now comes the challenging emotional work of processing all you have experienced so you can move forward to a healthier you.

Caroline shares her story of healing and provides hope as she outlines the process of thriving after abuse. As a psychotherapist, it has been my honor to walk alongside many women as they strive to work through their pain, often while providing support to their children. I have watched my clients struggle to process the pain of the past, live in the moment and plan for their promising future. This book provides you with practical ideas on how to do all three.

A Journey To Healing provides you with a blueprint as you remember and forgive hurts of the past, while setting up boundaries and healthy habits for your new path. As she did in her first book, *A Journey Through Emotional Abuse*, Caroline shares helpful information and suggestions on how to protect and nurture yourself. In addition, she provides you an opportunity at the end of each chapter to ask yourself insightful questions. I encourage you so sit with these questions and search your heart for honest answers. It is in the reflective and contemplative moments of applying these concepts and asking yourself the difficult questions that God often speaks words of healing and peace.

This book will also be helpful for those who are seeking to support you through this time of adjustment. It may be difficult for some of your friends and family to understand the extent of your pain. They may need information to be able to see things from your perspective or help you navigate the emotional rollercoaster that is trauma. You may struggle to find concise explanations for your feelings while you are experiencing them. This book may give you the words you need to help your loved ones gain insight into this chapter of your life.

Healing is a longer and more arduous journey than we would like. But the journey is well worth the effort. Safety, peace and contentment can be gained along the way. May God bless and direct your heart and mind as you work through the trauma of the past, so you can find freedom in the hope of your future.

Amy Craig, Licensed Professional Counselor
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Introduction

Someone once said, “It’s hard to look for the light when you’re lost in darkness.” I have found healing from abuse can sometimes feel as if I am lost in the darkness. Other times, I feel wonderful. At those times, I barely remember the dark times.

I was married for twenty years to an abusive man who claimed to be a Christian. Because of my faith, I took my vow to remain married until “death do us part” very seriously. My goal was to remain married no matter what the cost to myself. As a result, I tried to ignore his abusive actions for many years. When my life became unbearable, I was finally honest with myself about how he was treating me. I searched for a definition of abuse, and realized I was being abused. I hired a lawyer, petitioned a judge for a restraining order against my husband, and had him removed from my home.

We fought a contentious divorce. My church’s leadership did not support me, causing me additional pain. My first book, *A Journey through Emotional Abuse: from Bondage to Freedom*, tells the story of my journey from denying I was being abused through the end of my divorce. I wrote it to help other Christian women experiencing abuse in their marriages, and also to help with my own healing. When I began helping former abuse victims via Facebook and my website, I realized other women were struggling with healing from the abuse they had suffered, just as I was. Hence, the idea for this book was born.

I took many years to heal from the abuse I have suffered. I discovered my road to healing wasn’t a straight line from point A to point Z. Instead, it seemed to happen at random. You may find your road to healing will also not follow an orderly path. Because of this, I recommend you read the chapters I present in this book in whatever order you need. Give yourself the freedom to read this book, and walk the road to healing in the order that seems best to you.

No matter which chapters you read first, you will see I recommend you do some writing, or journaling, to help you during your healing process.

Recent psychological studies have proven that directed writing can help people make sense of their traumatic life experiences. This is because the brain stores traumatic experiences differently than other experiences, without a beginning, middle and end. Writing about your trauma helps put your experiences into a linear form, organizing them in a way the brain can process what occurred.

How you write doesn't matter; neither does your grammar or how nice your handwriting looks. No one will see what you write except you. You can type it or handwrite it. You can buy a lovely bound journal, or staple some lined paper together. None of these matters. What matters is that you write down your feelings and thoughts. If you write down your answers to the questions I ask at the end of every chapter, this will help your healing process.

As you read this book, you may begin to feel strong emotions, such as anger, depression, or guilt. These emotions are normal for someone who has survived emotional abuse. If you discover your emotions are so strong you are having a difficult time handling them, or you become afraid for yourself or others, please seek the help of a professional counselor, or call for emergency help, (dial "911" in the United States) immediately. If you find you feel a mild amount of stress as you read, consider doing one or more of the relaxation exercises I describe in Chapter 3 before you read.

Emotional abuse causes trauma. Our trauma will not magically disappear; it must be healed. I believe the only way to be truly healed is to turn to the author of healing, Jesus. Perhaps your abuser claimed to be a Christian, or other Christians have hurt you. You may feel betrayed by Christians or by God, and you feel distant from Him. As a result, you may not want to turn to Him for healing. This is understandable given the pain you've experienced. After all, God could have prevented your abuse, but for some reason, He allowed it. Part of your healing will be looking at why this has happened to you and why God didn't prevent it. Healing is a process. You will never "arrive," but being abused does not destine you to a life of trauma and misery. You can learn much along the journey, and you can live a productive, happy life after abuse. Your abuse

is in your past. You do not need to be a victim for the rest of your life. Instead, you are a survivor. A large part of the healing process is changing your attitude toward your past, and actively engaging in the healing process.

God loves you and cares for you. He wants to see your life, which has been broken by the sinful actions of someone who claimed to love you, brought to a place of restoration. God is the god of redemption. If you allow Him, He will help you as you take on the difficult task of healing your brokenness.

Through God's inspiration, Isaiah wrote these words in Isaiah 61:

*The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor
and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn,
and provide for those who grieve in Zion—
to bestow on them a crown of beauty
instead of ashes, the oil of joy
instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise
instead of a spirit of despair.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
a planting of the Lord
for the display of his splendor.
They will rebuild the ancient ruins
and restore the places long devastated;
they will renew the ruined cities
that have been devastated for generations.
Strangers will shepherd your flocks;
foreigners will work your fields and vineyards.*

*And you will be called priests of the Lord,
you will be named ministers of our God.
You will feed on the wealth of nations,
and in their riches you will boast.
Instead of your shame
you will receive a double portion,
and instead of disgrace
you will rejoice in your inheritance.
And so you will inherit a double portion in your land,
and everlasting joy will be yours.
“For I, the Lord, love justice;
I hate robbery and wrongdoing.
In my faithfulness I will reward my people
and make an everlasting covenant with them.
Their descendants will be known among the nations
and their offspring among the peoples.
All who see them will acknowledge
that they are a people the Lord has blessed.”
I delight greatly in the Lord;
my soul rejoices in my God.
For he has clothed me with garments of salvation
and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness,
as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
For as the soil makes the sprout come up
and a garden causes seeds to grow,
so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness
and praise spring up before all nations.*

I love these words of healing and blessing. Please allow me to come alongside you in your journey toward healing. From my own life, I know you can experience joy after being emotionally abused.

Caroline

Chapter 1: What is Abuse?

*The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.*

Isaiah 61:1a

No one should ever have to experience the heartache of being abused, especially by someone they love and who claims to love them. You may be surprised by the conflicting feelings you now have, both positive and negative. No matter how long you have been apart from you abuser, you may be feeling:

- Terrified
- Angry, resentful
- Guilty, ashamed, stupid
- Relieved, free, hopeful, joyful, peaceful
- Confused, lost, empty, numb, frozen
- Like you miss him and want him back; heartbroken and lonely
- Worthy, able to think with clarity
- Destroyed, worthless, depressed
- Exhausted, drained, overwhelmed
- Reborn, like yourself for the first time in years.

Having many conflicting feelings is not unusual. Part of the abuser's purpose in abusing you is to make you feel uncertain about your own thoughts and feelings.

Many people picture physical beatings when they think about domestic abuse. But being physically harmed is only one type of domestic abuse. The main dynamic of an abusive relationship is that the abuser wants power and control over his victim. He will use any method to gain this power and control. If your abuser was able to keep you "in line" by calling you names, (verbal abuse), that would be his main tool. He might have used emotional abuse, making you feel alone by isolating you from family and friends, or withholding attention and affection from you, giving you the silent treatment. He might have kept you trapped in the relationship by telling you the bible says you had to "submit" to him in

“everything,” even when he treated you disrespectfully. This was spiritual abuse. Perhaps he used economic abuse, forbidding you to work, or keeping control of all your money. He might have sexually abused you, forcing you to have sex against your will, forbidding you to use birth control, or making you get an abortion. He might have tried to make you think you were going crazy by psychologically abusing you.

Here is an example of psychological abuse, called “gaslighting.” He moves your keys from the place you always put them. When you can’t find them, he seems empathetic, and helps you look all over the house for them. After quite a while, he “finds” them in the place he had previously hidden them. He might play this game with your purse in two weeks, the papers you need for a presentation next month. Each time he “helps” you find them, then seems concerned you might be “loosing your mind.” Later when he does something that is clearly abusive, if you challenge him, he will remind you how often you “loose” things, so perhaps you don’t really understand what is happening, or maybe you don’t remember it clearly.

The examples I’ve given are only a few of the ways your abuser might have treated you in order to control you. (For a more extensive list of tactics your abuser might have used, see Appendix B.)

The terms verbal, psychological, and spiritual abuse are often used interchangeably with emotional abuse. Victims who have suffered from both physical and non-physical abuse often say the non-physical or emotional abuse took them longer to heal from. This is because bruises, cuts and even broken bones heal quicker than the longer lasting hits to a victim’s self-worth, which is injured by a “loved-one” emotionally abusing her. As a result, this book will focus mainly on healing from emotional abuse.

Another characteristic about domestic abuse is that it goes in cycles. At times, your abuser behaved in ways similar to those I described above. This is called the explosive stage of abuse. But after that, he might have behaved wonderfully, much like he did when you first met. He might have bought you flowers, took you on special dates, and told you how much he loved you. Unfortunately, this wasn’t the end of the abuse, only

a stage of the abuse cycle called the honeymoon or hearts and flowers stage. Your abuser behaved this way to keep you from leaving him. No one wants to live with a person who is cruel all the time.

The honeymoon stage may have lasted a few hours, weeks, months, or years. It was usually followed by a buildup of tension, where you felt like you were walking on eggshells. This part of the cycle is called the tension building stage. In this stage, you probably did anything you could not to upset your abuser. You may have told him anything he wanted to hear, and withheld any information, feelings, or thoughts that might have set him off again.

In my marriage, the honeymoon stage was wonderful, and I occasionally did forget some of the awful things he had done. This “forgetting” made it difficult for me to be honest with myself about what was really happening. Did you find this to be true in your abusive relationship? Many abusers are so good at the “honeymoon” stage they can convince their partners they’ve actually changed. This isn’t unusual. He may really act like he has changed. He may behave kindly toward you, tell you how much he loves you, consider your ideas, allow you to visit your friends and family, get a job, etc. Sadly, this doesn’t mean he’s really changed. Even if you have left your abuser, he may try to get you to return to him by going into the honeymoon stage of the abuse cycle.

Thinking of the abuser’s behaviors as the repetitive, round-and-round cycle of abuse diagrammed by the Bridges Domestic and Sexual Violence Support Group can be helpful. They describe the three emotions that keep the cycle going: love, hope, and fear:

- You loved your partner, and the relationship had its good points.
- You hoped the behavior would change because the relationship didn’t start out like this.
- You feared your partner would follow through with threats he made against you or your loved ones.

Some abusive relationships don’t follow the honeymoon-tension building-explosion pattern. Some don’t have a honeymoon stage. These abusers move from the explosive stage directly into the tension build-

ing stage. Other abusers are so unpredictable they sometimes skip the tension building stage and move from the honeymoon stage right into the next explosion. Perhaps you're wondering why you never recognized this abusive pattern before, and why you stayed in your abusive relationship so long. Maybe you are angry with your loved ones for not seeing the pattern and trying harder to protect you. You aren't alone. Abusers are very wily and manipulative, and strive to keep you confused. Your abuser's goal was to lower your self-esteem so he could gain control over you. Did you begin to feel less attractive over time, less worthy of his love? Did you begin to think even his abuse was your fault? Maybe if you had done something more perfectly, or if you hadn't said ... he wouldn't have called you names, broken your treasured items, made you feel worthless? Why would he want to treat you this way? In *Why Does He DO That? Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men*, Lundy Bancroft says in the mind of an abuser, he:

- Likes being in control.
- Has convinced himself it's OK to act this way toward you.
- Gets you to do whatever he wants by this behavior.

In *It's My Life Now*, Meg Kennedy Dugan and Roger Hock opine that your abuser worked to lower your self-esteem to guarantee you would stay with him. Perhaps your abuser was able to convince you that you were ugly, fat, stupid, and no one (but him) would ever want you or love you. He was doing you a favor by staying by your side, right? WRONG! You are not ugly, fat, or stupid. It is not true that no one will ever want or love you. For starters, the God of the universe loved you so much He was willing to leave heaven, come to earth as a squalling baby in a smelly barn, live a life as a nobody, and die a humiliating, painful death, for you.

Romans 5:8 says: *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

I pray you will regain your self-esteem, and you will realize how wonderful you are, and how very much you are loved as you read this book. Please read on my friend!

A Drink of Water for the Journey

*"I have a message from God in my heart
concerning the sinfulness of the wicked:
There is no fear of God
before their eyes.*

*In their own eyes they flatter themselves
too much to detect or hate their sin.*

*The words of their mouths are wicked and deceitful;
they fail to act wisely or do good.*

*Even on their beds they plot evil;
they commit themselves to a sinful course
and do not reject what is wrong.*

*Your love, Lord, reaches to the heavens,
your faithfulness to the skies...*

How priceless your unfailing love, O God!

People take refuge in the shadow of your wings."

Psalm 36:1-5, 7

1. Make a list of some of the feelings you had when you first left your abusive relationship, and some of the feelings you have now. All feelings are acceptable, none are "wrong."
2. Which abusive behaviors did your abuser use to control you? Can you think of others not listed here?
3. Did your abuse seem to happen in obvious stages and cycles? Did you find you hid parts of your life from your abuser to prevent the explosive stage from happening?
4. Did your abuser try to pretend his abusive behavior was your fault, or never happened? Did you ever feel confused about what was happening? Describe what that felt like.
5. Do you believe your partner abused you to get what he wanted in the relationship, and that part of what he wanted was to lower your self-control to make you stay with him?
6. What lies did your abuser tell you to make you think you were unworthy of his, or anyone else's love? Do you believe you are worthy of God's love? Do you believe God does love you? Why or why not?

Chapter 2: Set Boundaries with Your Abuser for Your Physical and Emotional Safety

... to proclaim freedom for the captives...

Isaiah 61:1b

What Are Boundaries?

In order to be safe physically and emotionally, you must set boundaries with your abuser. What do I mean by setting boundaries? In their book *Boundaries, When to Say Yes, How to Say No to Take Control of Your Life*, Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend explain how relational boundaries show where I end and someone else begins, just as the boundary lines in my yard show where my property ends and my neighbor's yard begins. I am only responsible to mow, fertilize, and water the grass on my property, not that of my neighbor's.

Relational boundaries are like the boundary of the skin on my body. My skin is designed to keep good things in my body, and keep harmful things out of it. So, too, a relational boundary helps me keep in the good things in my life (happiness, joy, and peace, for example), and keep the bad things (pain, abuse, sorrow, and similar negatives) out. Unfortunately, while I was being abused, I didn't use boundaries to protect myself in this way. I kept the bad inside myself. I allowed pain, abuse and sorrow to exist in my abusive relationship, and I kept the good (happiness, joy and peace) that I might have received from friends and family outside myself. Perhaps you had a similar experience. As I learned to use boundaries effectively, I began to switch these patterns so that the bad flowed out and the good flowed in.

Boundaries rely on the law of sowing and reaping, Galatians 6:7 says: *Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.*

In the natural world, if a farmer plants poor seed, he receives a poor crop. During my abusive relationship, however, my abuser planted poor seed, (poor treatment of me), and received a good crop, (more loving treatment) in return. The worse he treated me, the better I behaved in

return. I did this to try to protect myself from his abuse, but it didn't work. His abuse only escalated. Finally, I set the ultimate boundary with him; I got a restraining order against him, and had him legally removed from my home.

Learning to Set Boundaries Can Be Difficult

Now that you have left your abuser, you have also set the ultimate boundary with him, and your abuser has reaped what he has sown, the loss of your relationship. By leaving your abusive relationship, you have created a very distinct boundary line with your abuser. You have said, "My life exists on this side of the line, and your life exists on that side of the line."

Learning to reset your boundaries takes practice. You may set your boundaries too tightly and keep everyone out, or too loosely and find others taking advantage of you. Do you have someone in your life that is good at setting boundaries? Perhaps you can use this person as a role model, and watch how s/he sets boundaries with others.

Setting boundaries with your abuser, even after you have separated from him can be difficult. I will use myself as an example. My emotional abuse came from my ex-husband. He used emotional, psychological and verbal abuse to break my self-confidence, which allowed him to slowly gain power and control over me. During the last years of my marriage, I followed his every demand; yet, I didn't fully realize I was being abused, only that I was deeply unhappy.

One day, he asked me to tell our children he had never abused me. I began looking for a definition of abuse, and realized he had been abusing me for many years. My spirit balked at the idea of lying to our children, so I refused to do it. Secretly, I visited my local women's crisis center and found a lawyer. Together with my lawyer, we petitioned the court for a restraining order. Later that day, a process server delivered the restraining order to him.

Though I had demonstrated courage in removing him from our home, I

hadn't yet learned to change the dynamics of our relationship. He continued to try to control me any way he could, and I had little self-confidence. He first tried to "get me back" by going into the honeymoon stage of the cycle of violence. Though my restraining order forbid using other people to contact me, he called my parents, our pastors, and our children to try regaining control over me. He told them how much he loved me, he had been wrong, and he was going to change. This was from a man who had not spoken to me for the entire previous year, except to rage at me.

Though he had broken my trust continually for years, I was confident the Lord didn't want me to continue accepting his abuse, and I had no love left for him, his seemingly "loving" behavior caused me to stumble. I began to second-guess my decision to leave him . . . had I made a mistake? Was he really willing to change? Had I given up too soon? Perhaps this has happened to you.

Does this mean we are weak? No. It does mean we have experienced emotional abuse at the hands of someone we once thought we loved, and may still love. We also thought he loved us, and we built a life with him. In my case, I had been married to him for twenty years, had children with him, and gone to church with him. Everyone I knew thought of me as his wife and the mother of his children. My status at church came from being his wife. Suddenly, in one day, my reputation and self-worth were wiped away, and my children were without their father. Fortunately, I wasn't dependent on him financially, as most abused women are.

Given that you have so much to lose when you leave your abuser, and your self-esteem is probably low, is it surprising you might be second-guessing your decision to leave?

Abuse victims leave and then return to their abusers seven times on average before they finally leave and don't return. The fact they continue leaving demonstrates how unlikely their abuser will make substantial changes in his behavior. However, the fact they return so many times demonstrates how difficult it is for them to leave and not return.

In addition to our abuser, we have another foe that doesn't want us to succeed in our healing. Satan will use:

- The abuse you've experienced
- Your feelings of low self-worth
- The love you have felt for your abuser, and
- How much you have to lose to cause you to doubt your decision to leave your abuser.

Ephesians 6:12 says: *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*

The Apostle Paul, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, correctly identified our real enemy as we fight for healing; the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms: Satan and his demons. They will use the words and actions of our abuser to try to keep us in bondage.

Because of the difficulty former victims have in leaving their abusers, I recommend you set boundaries around any continued relationship you might have with yours. As long as he continues to be a part of your life, you will find it difficult to begin your journey toward healing.

Protecting Your Physical Safety

The first question to ask yourself is, "Are you afraid your abuser might physically harm you, your children, your family, your pets or your property?"

People may say you should no longer be afraid of your abuser; after all you are out of the relationship, right? Wrong. The most dangerous time for an abuse victim is when she leaves the relationship. Your abuser has lost something very valuable to him – a person he can control. He views you as something that belongs to him, and he will probably be angry when it's gone.

This doesn't mean you need to live in fear, but it does mean making every effort to keep yourself safe is wise. You may feel so relieved to be

free that you are not concerned about your safety. Ask yourself if people who know you well are concerned. This would be a sign you should be as well. Sometimes the opposite might be true. Family and friends who are uneducated about domestic violence may not be good judges of violence risks – they may think you are safe now, while you are still frightened. Your local women’s crisis center would be a good resource for helping you discern your risk level. Contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or 1-800-787-3224 (TTY) to find the nearest women’s crisis center. Domestic violence advocates at your local crisis center can go over a Danger Assessment with you. The Danger Assessment is a tool created by Dr. Jacquelyn C. Campbell that puts a numeric score to your risk of being killed by your abuser.

Once you know your score, you will be better able to discern whether you should take extreme precautions, or whether you should simply be mindful of your safety.

What is a Civil Restraining Order?

If your risk score is high, you might consider getting a civil restraining order (sometimes called a protection order). A judge will issue this order if you can prove you have reason to be afraid of your partner. The initial order is usually temporary, and lasts between two to four weeks.

Your partner is not in the courtroom when the initial temporary order is issued.

The temporary order will have language similar to the following, stating your abuser is not allowed to:

- Harass, stalk, injure, intimidate, threaten, molest, or use any physical force against you.
- Contact you, nor is he allowed to contact you through any third party except an attorney.
- He must keep a distance 100 yards (or some specified distance) away from you.
- He may not enter a home, workplace, school, or any other place you might be.

- Your children may or may not be added to the order, depending on whether the judge feels they also need protection.

The temporary order will be fairly easy to obtain. A process server or law enforcement officer must serve it to the restrained person (your abuser). If your abuser does any of the actions listed on the restraining order, the protected person (you) are allowed to call the police, and if you can prove he has in fact broken the restraining order, he can be arrested.

A permanent restraining order is more difficult to get. Before the temporary order expires, both parties must appear before the judge, and each gets to explain what has happened from their perspective. In cases of emotional abuse, and even in cases of minor physical abuse, a judge will rarely order a permanent restraining order. This usually requires documented proof of repeated physical abuse. However, if your abuser has broken the temporary order and you have called the police, you will find it easier to get a permanent order. In many states, the restrained person can petition the court to have the permanent restraining order removed every four years. The result is entirely up to the judge.

Note that if you are the protected party, you should never try to contact the restrained person, except in the ways the restraining order allows. For example, you may be allowed to email your abuser concerning scheduling the children. Other than this, contacting him would appear to the court that you were not really afraid of him.

Should You Try to Get a Civil Restraining Order?

A civil restraining order could be very helpful to you if your abuser is the type of person who would follow an order like this. Many abusive men refuse to follow the restraining order until they are arrested for breaking it. After that, many follow the order because his abusive actions finally cause him discomfort.

However, some abusers become much more violent when issued a restraining order. They are not deterred by the threat of going to jail. In fact, they see it as a challenge, and may behave much worse than if you

simply left. For this type of man, getting a restraining order does not help, it only makes things worse. You are the best judge of your abuser's potential reaction to this. Your local women's crisis center can help you think through what is best for your circumstances.

If you do decide to get a restraining order, be prepared to enforce it. A restraining order will do you no good if you are unwilling to call the police when your abuser does something the order has forbidden him to do. You may struggle with this. I know I did. A few weeks after the court granted my restraining order; I went to the gym to workout with my kids. My husband came into the gym, and began working out 10 feet from me, though our restraining order specifically said he must keep 100 yards from me! I should have called the police at that moment, but I was too embarrassed. Instead, I walked to him, and said, "You are not allowed to be here according to the restraining order." He looked smug and answered, "My lawyer said I could." I went to the locker room and called my lawyer. Her advice? "Call the police." I wish I had, but I did not have enough self-esteem to make the call.

Whether or not you have a restraining order, you will want to keep your safety in mind. Be aware of your surroundings. Ask a domestic violence advocate to help you come up with a safety plan. Some things to consider are below:

- What will you do if your abuser enters your home?
- What will you do if he shows up at your workplace? Consider speaking to your boss or your Human Resources Department proactively to ask if your workplace has any policies in place that can help you stay safe. For example, move your desk away from the entrance, have a security guard walk you to and from your car, or change your shifts around so your ex doesn't know when you'll be there.
- What will you do if he finds you at another public place, such as a store or movie theater?
- Do not share your plan with the general public, but do include close family members, your children and neighbors in your plan.
- Do not be embarrassed to call the police if you feel afraid of your abuser, even if you don't have a restraining order – better to be safe than sorry.

If You Must Still Have Contact with Him

If you must have some contact with your abuser because you have children you must parent together, try to limit your exposure to him as much as possible. You can try these ideas:

1. Change Your Locks - Once you are separated, he no longer lives in your home; therefore, he should not have a key to it. This is a reasonable boundary line for you to insist upon. I recommend changing the locks on every door in your home. If you have a garage, change the code used to program the opener. If you have an alarm system, change the alarm code, and the password. You should also change the key to your car if possible, and any storage unit you might have. Keep your windows shut and locked, and your alarm system armed at all times. Keeping him out of your life and his negative words out of your head will be much easier if he is not allowed in your home.

Your children may make this harder. They might invite their father into your home when he picks up or drops them off. Or, they may beg you to include him in family get-togethers. Explain to them he is their father, and always will be, but he no longer lives in your home, and you are no longer a couple. Allowing him in your home gives them false hope, and allows him power over you that you are trying to regain.

One former abuse victim I know succumbed to the pleading of her children to allow her soon-to-be-ex-husband into her home to open Christmas presents with her and her kids. He was there for one hour. She was distressed in the following days when he began emotionally abusing her again. Before Christmas he had rarely contacted her. After Christmas, he began texting her several times a day, getting involved in minor disputes between her kids, saying he was going to come over and “fix” the problems she was “unable to handle.” She vowed to never allow him in her home again. The hour he spent there undid several weeks/months of hard work she had put in setting boundaries with him.

2. Cancel Your Bank Accounts - I recommend you cancel any bank or credit card accounts you own together as soon as possible. He could

easily empty all your joint accounts at any moment. One friend's ex-husband pretended to be very conciliatory while they were going through their divorce. Without warning, he took all of the money from their joint accounts and closed them. Closing or changing the passwords on any individual accounts you own would also be wise, since he might try to empty those accounts as well.

3. Change Your Phone Numbers and Social Media Accounts - Your abuser may continue to contact you through your phone(s). Unless you absolutely must speak to him, you may want to change your cell, home and even work phone numbers (speak to your work supervisor). If you decide not to change your numbers, you can block his number from ringing yours. You may choose to change your email, Facebook, twitter and other social media accounts, or block him from those accounts. I strongly recommend you change your passwords so he cannot sabotage you, or read personal messages you might receive.

4. Limit Co-Parenting Conversations - Though you may be forced to co-parent with him, this does not mean he should contact you 24 hours a day. You might try to limit your contact to text messages that only concern scheduling for the children. If your abuser takes advantage of this, and sends you text messages about other things, such as:

- Trying to “get you back”
- Speaking abusively toward you
- Threatening you, or
- Any other reason besides scheduling the children

You may want to block him from your phones completely, and only use email communication. Acquire a new email address for everyone else, and use your old address to communicate with him. This way, you will only need to look at it when you decide to. He could email you ten times a day, and you might decide to look at this account once a day or once a week. This will relieve you from being bombarded by his correspondence ten times a day.

When you do look at his emails, try not to take his emotional abuse too seriously. Skim the emails for content that's important to you, and teach

yourself to ignore the rest. You will likely find this difficult at first, but you will find it easier over time as you become less emotionally tied to him.

I learned this lesson the hard way. My ex-husband was a great arguer. When we were married, I never won an argument, because he could “logically” talk me out of any position I held, no matter how well thought out. When we first separated, he would attempt to talk me out of things I wanted to do for our kids, like purchasing a bicycle for one of them.

I read his controlling emails, and got angry. Then, I would make the mistake of trying to explain myself. He would shoot back an email telling me I was wrong and stupid. This would make me more furious, so I would send back a scathing reply. This could go on indefinitely. I eventually realized that I would never “win” an argument with him, nor would I get him to see my side of a situation. I was wasting my time, and I was giving him what he wanted – my attention. I began asking myself, “Why am I allowing him to ruin my days with his abuse, when I am divorcing him to get away from it?”

A friend of mine, who had been through this with her ex-husband, gave me excellent advice. She said, “Only respond to the emails you absolutely must, such as questions about schedule changes for the children. Don’t defend yourself, your decisions, and your actions – even as they apply to the children. This only adds fuel to his fire, and keeps you engaged with him. Your goal is to disengage. If you feel you must respond, give a one-word answer such as, ‘OK,’ ‘yes,’ ‘no,’ ‘sure,’ etc., but not a curse word. Making him angry won’t help you disengage with him, but will keep you tied to him.”

I found this difficult at first, but finally realized the less I responded, the less he emailed me, giving me a more peaceful life. One way to visualize this is to see your interaction with him like a TV show. When you argue with him, your interaction is vivid, in living color. Imagine your interactions in black and white. You are trying to drain the color out of the communication. Make it as fact based, boring and brief as possible.

A word of caution: abusers who tend to be violent may become enraged as you disengage. Speak to a crisis center domestic violence advocate if you are concerned for your safety.

Protect Your Emotional Safety

Just as setting physical boundaries with your abuser helps keep you physically safe, setting emotional boundaries helps keep you emotionally safe, and helps you begin healing. Below you will find some common tactics abusers use to emotionally hurt their former partners. Once you are prepared for these potential landmines, you can guard yourself against them.

1. He may make threats against you, your family, your property, your pets: if he threatens you, take him seriously. Yes, he might do this just to upset you, but it's also possible he plans to carry out his threats. Read the previous section on protecting your physical safety.
2. He may flaunt one or more new girlfriends: while you may not care if he finds someone new, you may care, for several reasons:
 - a. You may feel jealous because you still love him.
 - b. You may have heard bad things about her, and worry about her influence on your kids.
 - c. You may worry about her safety, given your abuse.

If you are jealous of, or dislike the new girlfriend, there is little you can do. You will have to handle these emotions as best you can, without allowing them to affect your children.

If you feel compelled to warn her, carefully consider why. If you warn her because you still love him and want him for yourself, this will likely hurt you in the long run. If, however, you are sincerely afraid for her, think it through. If you warn her, and your ex finds out about it, he may come after you. If he doesn't, he will probably tell her you are "crazy," and she will not believe you, but may at least file this information for the future.

One of my friends told the new girlfriend she wished her luck, and suggested she take self-defense classes. The new girlfriend broke up with him three days later. Should you warn her? This is a difficult question. In reality, you are responsible only for your safety and the safety of your children, not for another adult woman. She is responsible for her own life and decisions.

3. He may bad-mouth you to your friends, family, work acquaintances and church body:

In fact, he probably will, and this will be painful for you. You may love his family members, and consider them your family. Suddenly, they are no longer yours. You may have friends together as a couple who will choose to side with him, and suddenly they don't return your phone calls. If you worked together, your place of work may feel unbearable as your former work "friends" talk behind your back. Finally, your church family may turn their back on you, which may be the most painful loss of all, as this may feel as if God is turning His back on you. All of these are painful losses, and there is very little you can do about them. The more you try to defend yourself to these people, the more desperate you will look. People who side with an abuser will probably not change their minds no matter what you say.

I recommend you hold your head up, be as kind to them as you can, and distance yourself from the drama. You may find changing jobs and churches will be your best choice in the long run, but I don't recommend you do this immediately. Hang in there for a while and see what happens. Don't talk about him behind his back, don't defend yourself and don't take revenge. Go about your work or church duties to benefit your boss and bring honor to Jesus. People will often realize over time who was the perpetrator, and who was the innocent party.

4. He may try to ruin your reputation via social media:

He may use his Facebook, twitter, or any other social media accounts to bad-mouth you in a very public way. While social media can be a blessing, sometimes it can be a curse. He may post negative comments

about you 10 times a day. My recommendation would be to block him from all your social media accounts so you can't see anything he posts. Friends and pseudo-friends might tell you what he's doing, but you don't need to see it every time you get on your social media accounts. If any of your "friends" repost any of his posts, block them as well. The less you respond to this, the faster this will stop.

If he posts anything offensive or pornographic such as nude pictures he has of you, contact Facebook and twitter, and report him. They will take charge of kicking him off their site.

Protecting Your Emotional Safety If You Have Children with Your Abuser

1. When dropping off/picking up your children from visits, he may harass you, order you around, question your parenting, or threaten you, much as he did when you were together.
2. Or, he may return them late, or not return them at all for days or weeks.

If he harasses you when dropping off the children more than once or twice, I recommend you find a neutral place to drop off the children. My city has a Safe Exchange Program that provides a safe and comfortable place for children to wait for contact with the other parent, under the supervision of the Safe Exchange staff. You can drop off your children early, and safely leave before your abuser arrives to get them. If your city doesn't have a Safe Exchange program, you may be able to use a police or fire station in a similar way. Your local women's crisis center can help you decide how best to safely set these boundaries.

If he doesn't return them to you at the agreed upon time, you can report this to the police, your Custody evaluator, or Social Services. Make sure you show them your custody agreement in writing. If he is apt to do this, don't agree to change your parenting time. Keep to the agreement as much as possible, then ask the authorities to help you enforce it.

3. He may attempt to turn the children against you by:

a. Placing the blame for the breakup of your relationship on you – You know what really happened in your relationship with their father, and you may think it would be obvious to your children that you left the relationship because their father was treating you abusively. Your children may surprise you by siding with your abuser, especially if they see you as “weak,” or if he convinces them he has changed, and you are at fault for not reuniting the family.

b. Refusing to discipline them, so that you look like the “bad guy” – abusive parents have little interest in disciplining the children for their good. They might swing between giving harsh, abusive discipline, and being very permissive. If your kids tell him you said “no” about something, he might tell them how “mean” you are, and they “don’t need to do that at his house, this will be our little secret.”

c. Giving them things you cannot, or have decided are not good for them – often your abuser may have more income than you do and may use this money to “buy” your children. He might take them out to eat every night, or to the amusement park every weekend, while you struggle to buy enough food for all of you to eat without going hungry. You must buy them school supplies, while he is buying them the latest fashionable clothes and computer games. (Then he lets them stay up late playing the games on school nights instead of doing their homework.)

How does a good mother handle being the “bad guy?” It may be tempting to speak badly to your children about their father. I strongly recommend you don’t do this. This will only lead to heartache for all of you in the long run. Why?

- Your abuser is your child(ren)’s parent. No matter what his faults, they see themselves in him. Perhaps they have his hair or eye color. Perhaps they talk the same, or walk the same. If he is worthless, they are worthless. This may not make sense to you, but this is how your children will see it, however sub-consciously. By bad-mouthing him, you are bad-mouthing them.

- If you choose to bad-mouth your abuser the children are left with two choices. They can side with you and begin telling your abuser his actions are wrong. This may open them up to his anger and it also makes the child a parentified adult, taking on the role of your emotional partner. Or if the children defend your abuser, you will feel hurt. This may cause a rift in your relationship.
- You could try to ask your kids not to repeat what you say about their father, but this wouldn't be emotionally healthy for them.
- In the long run, your children will respect you if you don't bad-mouth your ex. They will also begin to see his faults for themselves. On the other hand, if you do bad-mouth him, they will lose respect for you.
- This doesn't mean you cannot periodically correct blatant lies your children have heard from your ex. But don't spend a lot of time doing this. Work on being the bigger person.

4. He may treat the children badly to upset you:

Abusers often see their children as objects to be used, rather than as people. After all, isn't that how he treated you? Therefore, he may have little interest in being a good father. He knows you love your children and want to protect them. Because of this, he may harm them just to hurt you. This may take several forms:

a. Being inconsistent in their lives. While many abusers fight for full-custody of their children in order to hurt their mothers, others allow their mother full-custody. If your abuser is one of these, he might promise to pick up your children for his regularly scheduled visits, but rarely, if ever, show up. You might be secretly pleased that your children don't have to spend time with their abusive father, and that they can see what a "bad guy" he is. At the same time, watching your children's pain as, yet again, they are left sitting at the door waiting in vain for him to arrive, will be painful. Also, you won't be able to get time for yourself because you never know if he will show up.

b. Refusing to help you with child support, or paying it inconsistently so you can't count on it.

c. Neglecting them during his parenting time by leaving them alone, sitting them in front of a television for most of their visit, or ignoring them while he entertains friends or a girlfriend.

d. Abusing them emotionally, physically or sexually during his parenting time with them.

What Can You Do if Your Ex Does These Things?

a. If your ex is an inconsistent father, try to be as loving and consistent as you can. When he doesn't show up for a visit, don't wait all day for him to arrive. Have another activity planned for your kids. Try to be as positive as you can under the circumstances. Don't talk negatively about him, but don't try to invent reasons why he didn't show. Just be matter of fact and say truthfully you don't know why he isn't there; then move along to the next activity.

Because you can't count on him to give you a much-needed break, plan to get time for yourself on another day. If you can afford it, hire a babysitter. If not, enlist a family member, or exchange time with another single mom. Get creative. However, make getting time for you a priority. You're worth it, and your kids need a relaxed, rested mom.

Finally, bring other, more consistent men into your children's lives. This could be family members, husbands of your friends, mentors from church, coaches, or scout troop leaders. However, keep an eye on your children's relationship with these men. Sexual predators sometimes prey on children of single mothers, especially if they think you aren't paying attention. Watch your children for signs of unease around them, or hints that they don't want to be alone with them. They needn't spend time alone with men to build strong bonds. You can spend time with your kids and other families, including other moms and kids. Your kids can learn about healthy families by watching some in action.

b. If your ex refuses to pay court mandated child support, you can take him back to court. Many states will take the child support he owes you out of his paycheck before he receives it. Of course, even if you represent

yourself without a lawyer, it takes time and effort to go to court – time away from a job you may have. Yet, you may decide it's worth the effort.

Some abusers purposely quit or lose their jobs so they don't have to pay child support. If this happens, you may find it difficult to make him pay the money he owes you. In this case, I recommend you decide to live without the money. I know this is easier for me to say than for you to do. However, if you can't make him pay you, counting on it, but never receiving it will make you miserable. If you plan your life as if you will never receive it, you will be more at peace. Then, if he ever does pay you the money he owes you, it will be a bonus. You can use it for a vacation, to put toward savings, or for a big expense that you couldn't normally afford, like a car repair or new piece of furniture.

c. If he neglects your child(ren), try to discern to what extent this is happening. If they are physically safe, but he parks them in front of the television or video games while he entertains himself elsewhere, there is little you can do. You will have to deal with your emotions about this. For example, if keeping your kids away from junk television or violent video games is really important to you, this will be especially difficult. Alternatively, if your ex is spending his time having sex with the woman he cheated on you with during your marriage, this situation will be doubly upsetting.

How can you deal with these (very understandable) angry feelings? Try to keep busy while your children are spending time with their father so you aren't dwelling on what they are (or aren't) doing while they are with him. Use the time to visit friends, go see a movie, read a book, take a long bath, anything you enjoy.

Once the kids are back with you, try not to pepper them with questions, as this can feel like they are tattling on their father. If they ask you questions about what their father does while they're with him, answer them with as little emotion as possible. Then try to focus on giving your children the best environment possible when they are with you.

d. If he abuses them, or seriously neglects them (such as leaving young children completely alone), try your best to get proof. If you have a Custody evaluator on your case, you should report this. Most authorities will do very little if a parent emotionally abuses their children. However, physical and sexual abuse should be taken seriously. Consider calling Social Services or the police. I will discuss this further in Chapter 8.

5. He may encourage the children to harass you by:

- a. Passing messages to you from him.
- b. Telling you what he “thinks of you.”
- c. Giving you orders from him.
- d. Teaching them to disrespect you, call you curse words.
- e. Encouraging them to be abusive toward you.

How should you react if your children begin harassing you in these ways?

You and your children are creating a new family unit, of which their father is no longer a part. You are their mother, and the only authority figure in your home. Remembering these things will help you. If your ex wants to give you a message, let your children know he has a way to do this, via email, or text message. Refuse to listen to any message they deliver to you. If they tell you anyway, don't act on the information. Remind them their father can deliver the message himself; then drop the subject. Let your children know they have many important jobs – going to school, doing homework, chores around your home. But passing messages between their parents isn't one of their jobs.

You may also be tempted to ask the children for information about your ex, or to pass information to him through them. Please resist this temptation. This will only delay your children's healing process. Though you may be intensely curious about your ex's actions, using your kids in this way will hurt all of you in the long run.

If your children insist on telling you what dad “thinks of you,” you can calmly let them know that dad has a right to his opinion, but you don't

want to hear it. Your ex has no right to give you orders. As the only parent in your new family, you deserve respect. You need not allow your children to treat you abusively, with disrespect, or to curse at you. I discuss this further in Chapter 7.

You may find your children act out most right after returning home from a visit to your ex. This transition is difficult for children of any age. Be aware this is a time they need to let their defenses down and settle back into your safe home with proper expectations, and give them an extra measure of grace.

In conclusion

Putting boundaries around your relationship with your boundariless abuser will be difficult, especially at first. However, this is an important step in taking back your life, and healing from the emotional abuse he has caused you. Setting and keeping these boundaries will get easier and you will find yourself less emotionally attached to him over time.

A Drink of Water for the Journey

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God – having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.

2 Timothy 3:1 - 5

1. How many times did you leave and then return to your abuser? Do you still struggle with wanting to return to him?
2. Are you afraid your abuser might physically harm you, your children, your family, your pets or your property? If so, what steps have you taken (or can you take) to ensure your safety?
3. Has your abuser tried to contact you more often than you would like him to? How? Could you try using any of the suggestions made in Chapter two to prevent him from doing this?
4. What way(s) has your abuser tried to emotionally hurt you since you separated? What have you done (or could you do) to put limits around this emotional pain?
5. If your ex's attempts to hurt you have also hurt your child(ren), how have you handled this? Is there any way you can make this better for all of you? Watching him hurt your kid(s) is painful. How can you handle your emotions about this?

Chapter 3 – Practice Self Care

He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted...

Isaiah 61:2a

What is self-care? This simply means taking care of you. This may be a foreign concept to you. For a long time your life revolved around your abuser, making him happy, anticipating his needs, avoiding his anger. If you're a mother, you probably now focus on the needs of your hurting children. Or, you may be taking care of your aging parents, or seeing to the needs of your boss at work. The idea of taking care of you may seem laughable.

You may think taking care of yourself is selfish. Many girls learn at a young age to take care of others, putting the needs of others before their own. I believe this is built into girls from birth. When my first daughter was born, I was determined not to force her into stereotypical feminine roles. I bought her a small toy truck, and a little baby doll. I gave them both to her at the same time, with equal excitement. She looked at the truck, and watched with disinterest as I rolled it back and forth, making "vroom, vroom" sounds. When I handed her the doll, she immediately grabbed it and pulled it to her chest. From that moment on, her doll was rarely out of her arms. She was not yet walking, but she dragged it behind her everywhere as she crawled around. When my son was born, I gave him the same choice. He didn't even look at the doll, but he loved that truck!

Given that we women are born nurturers who are often trained to put the needs of others before ourselves; and you have recently left an abusive relationship where his needs took precedence over your needs; learning to take care of yourself may be a challenge. However this is an important step in your healing process. Why?

1. You must value yourself in order to focus on your journey to healing. Healing from emotional abuse will take time and energy. It won't happen overnight, or by wishful thinking.
2. You have been through a terrible ordeal. No one should be abused, especially by someone they love. You will need to be kind to yourself

to begin making up for the cruelty you've suffered.

3. In the midst of the trauma of emotional abuse and then the stress of leaving and setting up a new household, your body can literally forget how to relax. God gave us the ability to go through hard times and to emotionally and physically carry a heavy load for a time, but they weren't wired to carry that load indefinitely. Our minds and bodies need permission and time to practice relaxing.
4. Though you may not think you are worthy of time and care, God disagrees. He loved you enough to send his only son to earth to die a horrible death so you could be with Him in eternity. As it says in John 3:16-17: *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*
5. You need to learn self-care so you can be emotionally healthy enough to give of yourself to your children, coworkers, friends, family, and later on, possibly a mate.

Have I convinced you yet that taking care of yourself is important? I hope so. Lets look at how you can begin to do this.

Work to Free Yourself from Any Addictions You May Have

While most of the advice I describe in this chapter will be considered "fun," the first one isn't fun, but painful and difficult. Ask yourself if you're addicted to any substances. Do you rely on alcohol to get you through the day? Do you look forward to your first drink? Does that first drink come earlier and earlier in the day? If so, you're not alone. Many abuse victims struggle with addictions. You've been abused, which was a harrowing experience. You may be suffering from depression and/or anxiety. Perhaps your abuser used drugs or alcohol to keep control over you. Your addiction is not something to feel guilty about, but it is something to do something about.

If alcohol isn't a problem for you, what about drugs? If you are using marijuana, or any illegal substances, you must work to free yourself from these right away. These substances are a dead end road to despair. While

you may not take illegal drugs, you may be addicted to prescription drugs or even over-the-counter medications. Be honest with yourself. Do you use these to excess? If you told your mother, best friend or pastor the number of pills you take daily, would you be embarrassed?

Perhaps you don't struggle with these things, but you do struggle with what is known as a process addiction. Process addictions are anything you do repeatedly and to excess to make yourself feel better, such as gambling, eating, sleeping, shopping, having sex, watching television, spending time on the internet and social media, watching any pornography at all, even exercise can be an addiction if you do it to excess.

Yes, you have been through a terrible ordeal. When you were being abused, your addiction helped you cope with your pain and stress. Now you are free, and your addiction is no longer a coping mechanism, but a vice standing in the way of your healing. You are taking an important step toward healing by reading this book. Next, you will have to disengage yourself from your addiction(s).

This will be difficult, and you cannot do it alone. Best results come from joining a support group such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, or Celebrate Recovery. There are many others, depending on your addiction. Be honest with yourself, and seek help immediately. The advice I give in the rest of this book will be worthless while you are strangled by an addiction.

Resist the Temptation to Isolate Yourself.

You may want to isolate yourself from friends and family because you are depressed. Some signs of depression include:

- Change in sleep habits (sleeping more or less than usual), fatigue
- Change of appetite/weight (eating more or having no desire for food)
- Indecisiveness and decreased concentration
- Feelings of worthlessness and guilt
- Having thoughts of suicide or death
- No longer finding pleasure in things you used to enjoy

- Depressed mood
- Constantly feeling worked up/keyed up.

If you think you may be depressed, please read Chapter 6 about seeking counseling.

You may want to isolate yourself because you are embarrassed by your abuse, especially if you are a Christian. Domestic violence is a hard topic for many to discuss. Some people may not know what to say, and others may have strong opinions about your life decisions. You may be surprised by how little emotional support you have received from family, friends and other church members. They may never have seen your ex partner behave badly, and believe you should take him back. Many Christians may believe you have “no right to divorce,” and won’t hesitate to let you know it. Experiencing situations like these may make you hesitate to leave the house, for fear of who you might bump into, or make you afraid to open up to people because of the hurtful responses you have already received.

If you have experienced this type of thing, what should you do? I don’t recommend hiding out in your home. Prepare a gentle but firm response to use the next time someone feels they have a right to comment on your decisions. You might say something like, “I am sure you have my best interest at heart, and I thank you for your concern. However, you didn’t experience what I did, so you can’t understand what I went through. I made the best decisions I could, based on what happened in my life. I know you will honor my right to decide what is best for me, just as I allow you to decide what is best for you.” If they continue to harass you after you say this, smile and walk away. Part of the healing process is learning to make and stand by your decisions. You don’t owe anyone an explanation.

Alternatively, you may find many who support you and your decision to leave your abuser. You won’t know if you hide out at home. Many people today satisfy themselves with “cyber” friends, i.e. friends they find via their computer, as with Facebook, twitter, Snap chat and the like. While I believe these social media friends have their place, I strongly believe

“cyber” friends do not take the place of real flesh and blood friends we can see and touch. A hug from a friend is incredibly healing.

What if you don't have supportive friends? I recommend you find a domestic violence support group. Contact your nearest women's crisis center and ask them to recommend one. Churches in your area may also offer them. I have been in support groups in both settings and have experienced great healing from both. You might be surprised how similar your new friends' stories of abuse sound to yours. You will realize you are not the only person who has suffered abuse, and you will be encouraged to see how much your friends have grown from their experiences. Another great source of healing may come from finding a mentor at your church. Many churches will match older women with younger women. I asked my church for a mentor when I was escaping my abusive ex-husband. She met with me every week for years. Even though we no longer live in the same city, I still call her whenever I struggle with a problem.

My mentor helps me focus on the Lord, and I always feel better after I talk to her. Each mentor/mentee relationship will look different. You may feel comfortable sharing your past abuse, or you may not. Your mentor may or may not have experience with abuse in her past. Hopefully, she will be someone with healthy boundaries, who is mature in her relationship with the Lord, and will pray for and with you.

My friend Laurie Kelly looks for people in her life she respects, and thinks of them as role models. They could be friends, coworkers, relatives, or church members. These people usually handle stress well; have a positive attitude and a good work ethic. She learns from them as she observes and interacts with them. Doing this encourages her to associate with people she respects and admires rather than choosing friends who will tell her what she wants to hear about herself.

You may think you don't need people, but only need God for your healing. God disagrees. Hebrews 10:24-25a says:

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another.

God gave us each other to be His hands and feet. We are each a part of Christ's body, the church, as it says in 1 Corinthians 12:14 – 21:

Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"

No, we cannot say to one another, "I don't need you." We do need one another, just as our bodies need our hands, feet, eyes, etc. Spending time alone with God reading our bibles, in private worship and in prayer is important. But it isn't enough. We need to hear our pastors preach the word to gain new insight about its meaning. We need to pray for others, and have them pray for us. We need to serve others and be served to fully grasp how Christ serves us. The love of God is best felt through the arms and love of His people.

Indulge Yourself Daily

Plan to do at least one kind thing for yourself a day. Make a list of simple life pleasures you enjoy. These items don't have to cost anything, or take very much time. Here are some ideas:

- Take a hot bath
- Read a novel you've borrowed from the library
- Drink a cup of hot tea while you read a magazine article
- Call your sister or your best friend
- Exercise (more about this below).

The time you invest in yourself will have several benefits. You will find your self-esteem improving as you put yourself first, and your stress will decrease as you take these short breaks.

Take care of Your Physically Body

Leaving and healing from an abusive relationship is extremely stressful. Your body may show the signs of the stress you are under. While dealing with your emotions may make sense to you, you may unwittingly neglect your physical health, not realizing how much your physical health affects your emotional and spiritual health.

Due to your many life changes you may think you have no time to take care of your physical body. You may suddenly be working full-time, and be the only parent in your kids' lives. You may suddenly be caring for a home by yourself, not to mention all the emotional strain you and your children are experiencing. However, if you neglect taking care of your physical body, you will not be able to do all the things you need to do. In order to remain healthy, you should plan to:

1. Spend a few minutes outdoors in natural sunlight each day – this will help you absorb vitamin D, but more importantly, it will help you fight depression. People who get no natural sunlight are more apt to become depressed.
2. Learn one or more relaxation techniques to help combat stress and anxiety. Spend a few minutes a day practicing a technique.
3. Exercise three times a week – you don't need to join an expensive gym. Walk up and down the stairs of your apartment or office building, take your dog for a long walk, ride bikes with your kids.
4. Eat three well-balanced meals a day – lay off the caffeine and chocolate. While they may make you feel better in the short term, they often trigger headaches. Stay away from French fries, cookies and chips. These empty calories may taste good while you're eating them, but they do little to protect you from viruses, or strengthen your muscles and bones, and they add pounds you don't need. Instead, eat mainly lean meats, fruits and vegetables. They have less calories and preservatives. If you eat at home the majority of the time rather than eating out, you will also save a lot of money, and get more quality time with your kids.
5. Get at least seven or eight hours of sleep a night – make sleep a priority. Lack of sleep will have a negative affect on your body and your mind. Try to limit the list of things that “must” be done. If you have

- children, enlist their help – you don't have to be super mom.
6. See your medical doctor when you should. Schedule yearly check-ups with your gynecologist, and general/family practitioner. Make sure you get your pap smears, and mammograms when you should. When you get sick, don't suffer in silence, go to the doctor and get some medicine. Nothing will halt your healing more than finding out you have cancer you could have caught earlier, or having a simple cold turn into pneumonia.

Regularly Practice Relaxation Techniques

Healing from emotional abuse can be painful. As you begin to address difficult memories, and work toward healing, you may find yourself becoming stressed and anxious. This may even cause you physical pain at times. If you ever become afraid for yourself or others, call 911 immediately. To help relieve and/or prevent stress, you might find practicing relaxation wise. Some of these might sound “new age,” but they don't need to be. You can worship God while you learn to relax.

While you lived with your abuser, you were under continual stress. You may find your body has forgotten how to relax. These techniques can help reteach it. You can use them when you feel very stressed, before reading a difficult chapter of this book, and before or during a counseling appointment.

Relaxation Breathing

The key to deep breathing is to breathe deeply from the abdomen, getting as much fresh air as possible in your lungs. When you take deep breaths from the abdomen, rather than shallow breaths from your upper chest, you inhale more oxygen. The more oxygen you get, the less tense, short of breath, and anxious you feel.

- Sit comfortably with your back straight. Put one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach.
- Breathe in through your nose. The hand on your stomach should rise. The hand on your chest should move very little.
- Exhale through your mouth, pushing out as much air as you can

while contracting your abdominal muscles. The hand on your stomach should move in as you exhale, but your other hand should move very little.

- Continue to breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Try to inhale enough so that your lower abdomen rises and falls. Count slowly as you exhale.

If you find it difficult breathing from your abdomen while sitting up, try lying on the floor. Put a small book on your stomach, and try to breathe so that the book rises as you inhale and falls as you exhale.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Before beginning progressive muscle relaxation, consult your doctor if you have a history of muscle spasms, back problems, or other injuries that might be aggravated by tensing and relaxing your muscles.

This technique helps you learn how your muscles feel when they are tensed and when they are relaxed.

- Lie comfortably on the floor, take off your shoes, and loosen any restrictive clothing.
- Take a few minutes to relax, breathing in and out in slow, deep breaths.
- When you're relaxed and ready to start, concentrate on your right foot. Take a moment to focus on the way it feels.
- Slowly tense the muscles in your right foot, squeezing as tightly as you can. Hold for and count to ten.
- Relax your right foot. Focus on the tension flowing away and the way your foot feels as it becomes limp and loose.
- Stay in this relaxed state for a count of fifteen, breathing deeply and slowly.
- When you're ready, shift your attention to your left foot. Follow the same sequence of muscle tension and release.
- Move slowly up through your body, contracting and relaxing the muscle groups as you go.
- It may take some practice at first, but try not to tense muscles other than those intended.

You can go in any order you like, but the most popular sequence is:

1. Right foot
2. Left foot
3. Right calf
4. Left calf
5. Right thigh
6. Left thigh
7. Hips and buttocks
8. Stomach
9. Chest
10. Back
11. Right hand and arm
12. Left hand and arm
13. Neck and shoulders
14. Face

If you are left-handed you may want to begin with your left foot instead.

Visualization Meditation: Writing Exercise

My counselor called this “going to your happy place.” She asked me to choose a place I’d been where I was able to completely relax. Also, a place I had been alone (when you imagine yourself with others, sometimes your emotions about them get in the way of the relaxation.) My counselor asked me to write as much as I could about this place as I experienced it with my five senses, sight, sound, smell, touch and taste.

I chose the beach I went to every year as a child. I pictured the waves crashing on the sand, the sound of the birds calling to each other, the feel of the grains of sand and the hot sun on my back, the smell of the sun lotion, and the taste of my favorite ice cream cone. Being a writer, I wrote five pages. My husband wrote about a cabin in the woods, and wrote a paragraph. Do whatever feels right to you. The more detail you write, the easier time you’ll have imagining yourself actually there. I sometimes use this to get back to sleep if I wake up in the night stressing over things I can’t control.

Yoga

I put off taking a yoga class for years, though many friends had recommended it to me. I knew it was often very “new age,” and even considered “anti-Christian,” and I didn’t want to deal with that. When I finally tried it, I found that to indeed be true. When instructors begin giving new age advice, I pray to Jesus.

Yoga movements are helpful for relaxation. What I found most interesting though was what that I started to cry at the beginning of my second class. I really wanted to weep, though I held back. This happened again at the end of the class. The instructor explained that we hold trauma in our bodies. He was excited his class had begun the process of releasing the emotions I had experienced over ten years ago. He said he would welcome me weeping during his class, though it might startle some of the class members. I look forward to trying it again to see if more healing happens.

Take care of Your Emotions

Taking care of your emotions is just as important as taking care of your physical body. You have been through a harrowing experience. Be patient with yourself and with the healing process.

Healing takes time. The longer your abuse lasted, the longer your healing will likely take. Don’t set unrealistic expectations for yourself. In fact, I would recommend not setting any expectations about your healing. Allow your soul to heal on its own timetable, and allow God to work through you as He wishes. Give yourself some grace.

You may feel wonderfully strong for several days in a row; then be surprised when you wake up feeling fearful, uncertain or depressed the next day, even wishing you were back in your abusive relationship. Or, you may feel great, and suddenly something unexpected “triggers” you, and you feel you are back in the midst of the abuse. This is normal. You can expect your healing process to feel like two steps forward, one step backward. You may even feel it is sometimes one step forward, two

steps backward. As long as you are generally moving forward, do not be alarmed.

If you find yourself sinking into a deep depression, thinking of harming yourself or others, or contemplating suicide, I recommend you get help immediately. Call 911 (in the United States) if you are in imminent danger. Seek counseling for less urgent needs. I discuss this further in Chapter six.

Stop Negative Self-talk

During your former relationship, your ex probably verbally abused you, saying negative things like:

- You are so stupid
- You don't do anything right
- You aren't smart enough to understand
- You're always picking a fight
- You have elephant thighs
- Your hair looks like a rat's nest
- You're so ugly; no one will ever want you.

Now that he is gone, chances are good you have internalized his negative comments without being aware of it. We keep a running commentary in our minds all day long. Try this exercise.

Writing Exercise

Write down everything you say to yourself over the course of a week. You might be surprised how often you say something negative to yourself. You might be repeating disparaging remarks your abuser used to say. You might also be repeating comments you heard as a child from your parents, teachers, or a bully. Writing down the statements is important, because you can clearly see what you tell yourself regularly.

Once you have a list of negative things you say to yourself, you can begin to substitute new, positive thoughts for your old negative ones. Often negative thoughts start with "I have to," or "I must," or "I always/never."

Be careful to frame the new thoughts in positive language instead of negative, i.e. don't use "don't." For example:

Old Negative Thoughts - New Positive Thoughts

I'm so stupid - I am so smart
I never do anything right - I am so capable
I'm not smart enough to understand - Look how much I am learning
I'm always picking a fight - I am a real peacemaker
I have elephant thighs - My legs are so strong
My hair looks like a rat's nest - I love my hair's natural curl
I'm so ugly; I'll never find a mate. - I am desirable

Whenever you find yourself thinking one of the old negative thoughts, purposely speak the new positive thought instead. You will find yourself thinking the positive thoughts about yourself more and more, and the negative thoughts will fade over time.

Schedule Stressful Thoughts

Are you a worrier? I am. In fact my favorite bible verse is Philippians 4:6-7:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

This verse helps me. I have recently heard of another idea that helps. I read it in *It's My Life Now: Starting Over After an Abusive Relationship or Domestic Violence* by Meg Kennedy Dugan, M.A. and Roger R. Hock, PhD. The authors call this idea thought partitioning. They base their idea on the elephant in the room game. Lets say I told you not to think about the pink elephant sitting in the corner of the room. You would have trouble thinking about anything else! Thought partitioning uses the same philosophy. If I tell you not to think about the things that worry you, your worries will be at the forefront of your mind. Therefore, rather

than worrying constantly, they recommend setting aside specific times to worry.

Writing Exercise

Write down all the things you worry about for a week. Don't censor them; just write them down as they come to you. Then look over your list. Do you see patterns? Do you worry about money, your safety or your kids? Next, schedule a "worry break" that works for you. Decide that you will work for 30 or 45 minutes, (whatever you think you can sustain), then set aside 10 minutes to worry. During those 10 minutes worry as hard as you can! Then, return to work. Eventually you can move your worry breaks farther apart. If a worrisome thought intrudes during your work time, you can say, "Not now, I'll get to you later!"

Writing Exercise

Prioritize your to do list

This goes along with scheduling your stressful thoughts. One of the things I stress about is having too many things to do. When you begin stressing about everything you must do, take out a sheet of paper and write down everything you need to do. For me, seeing it on paper sometimes makes it less stressful because the list isn't as long as I thought it was. Once you've written everything down, break the list into short term, medium term, and long-term goals. Short-term goals would be things you can realistically accomplish today. This would be tasks like:

- Call your mom
- Take a walk with your kids
- Wash two loads of laundry, or
- Go to the grocery store.

Prioritize the most important items. If you have no food in the house, your most important task would probably be go to the grocery store. If you have no clean clothes to wear, you would probably want to do some laundry. If you're feeling really stressed, don't try to do all of these things in one day, pick one or two. When you decide on the list for today, say to yourself: "Don't panic. Do one thing at a time. Do the best you can."

Repeat this as often as necessary.

Once you get the hang of setting goals for yourself and understanding how much you can accomplish in a day, you will know what you can expect from yourself. If you get to the end of a day and you still have several tasks on your list, don't fret. First decide if they really need to be done. If not, take them off the list. If so, add them to your list for tomorrow, or move them to your medium or long-term goal list.

Long-term goals may feel overwhelming. Break these tasks into goals you can reasonably accomplish in the short and medium term. For example, if your long-term goal is to find a job, your short-term goal for today might be to begin writing your resume. Your medium term goal for this week could be finish your resume, write a cover letter and apply for one job. Your goal for next week might be to apply for three jobs. Enjoy that feeling of accomplishment as you draw a line through a task when you complete it. One less thing to stress about!

Learning to Trust God with Your Anxiety

Scheduling your stressful thoughts and prioritizing your to do list are great ideas. But what about those big worries that just won't go away? You know the ones I mean, like:

- What if my ex shows up at my work, will my boss fire me this time?
- Will my son turn into an abuser like his father?
- Will my daughter forgive me for not protecting her from my abuser?

The summer my divorce became final, I had the opportunity to study *Calm My Anxious Heart* by Linda Dillow. The timing of the study was a perfect example of God giving me what I needed, exactly when I needed it, for I did have an anxious heart that summer. I was struggling with many what ifs.

Dillow says that for her, learning to trust God is like "playing catch" with Him. She tries to give her anxieties over to Him, (by throwing Him the ball), but pretty soon, she is asking for the ball back. Oh God, I know you have my children's best interest at heart, but do You know they are

having to spend half their time with their abusive father now? I know You clothe the lilies of the field, but how will I pay my bills this winter? Dillow says if we truly trust God, we must stop playing catch with Him. We must give Him the ball, (trust Him with the things we are worrying about) and not ask for it back.

Linda tells the story of Willis Carrier, the brilliant engineer who launched the air-conditioning industry. Early in his career, Carrier was given a job he thought was impossible. He was so anxious he couldn't sleep. He devised a three-step plan to handle his anxiety:

1. Ask yourself what's the worst that can possibly happen.
2. Prepare to accept it if you have to.
3. Then calmly proceed to improve on the worst.

Carrier said after deciding the worst that could happen (the company would lose money, and he would be fired from his job) and reconciling himself to accepting it, he felt a sense of peace. From that time on, he was able to calmly put his energy into trying to improve on the worst what if.

Linda thought this was helpful, but wasn't sure it was biblical. She searched the Bible, and decided it was! The apostle Paul had faced the worst his enemies could do to him and was able to say, *For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain* (Philippians 1:21). Because of this attitude, he was able to proclaim the gospel all over the world without fear.

Queen Esther is another example. She knew if she went before the king with her plea to take back his order to put all Jews to death, she might die. She said, *If I perish, I perish* (Esther 4:16). She faced the possibility of death, asked for prayer, then came up with a plan to try to keep the worst from happening.

Do you "play catch" with God? Try using Willis Carrier's three-step approach. Then, throw the ball to God, and trust Him with the results.

Allow yourself time to mourn

... to comfort all who mourn

Isaiah 61:2c

Finding you need to mourn the loss of your abusive relationship may surprise you. Even if you ended the relationship, and you are generally happy about it, you have experienced many losses that may need to be mourned. Lets examine things you may have lost:

1. A friend, companion – even though he was abusive, at times, your partner was someone you could share your highs and lows with, talk through problems with and find solutions.
2. Valued possessions – perhaps he broke or stole items that were precious to you, or you had to give them up when you separated.
3. Your home – you may have had to leave your home when you left the relationship.
4. Your Job – if you needed to move to escape your abuser, you probably lost your job.
5. Friends and Family – you may have been close to his family and friends, and now you’ve lost their relationship.
6. Your children or your dream of children – if you wanted children, but never had them, you may fear you never will. If you did have children with him, perhaps you had to leave your children behind to escape the relationship, even temporarily. Or, you must now share custody with your abuser, or your relationship with your children feels damaged because of your decision to leave. You may be mourning your dream of a healthy “intact” family in which to raise your children.
7. Your dream – perhaps you were sure he was “the one.” Maybe you feel like you have broken a promise to him, yourself, your friends and family, and/or God when you left the relationship.
8. Part of yourself – perhaps you are mourning the years you lost to the abuse, and the ways you acted because of it. Maybe you feel as if you’re not the same person you once were, you don’t like the person you’ve become, and believe you can never get that person back again. Take heart. Chances are good that the parts of yourself you feel are missing are not completely gone. They will begin to reappear as you journey toward healing. In addition, new stronger parts of you will emerge as well.

You may feel one, some or none of the above losses. There may be others I haven't mentioned. The point is that you have lost some things that were valuable to you, and overcoming these losses will take time. People around you may not understand your need to mourn these losses. They may say, "You are so lucky to be rid of that abuser! Why are you crying?" Our culture is uncomfortable with the idea of mourning. If someone appears sad, everyone tries to joke her into laughing. This is not the case in every culture.

In Orthodox Judaism, after the death of a parent, there is a ritual week of mourning when their children do not leave the house. During the first 3 days, mourners do not respond when spoken to. After the first 3 days, friends can come visit, but the friends are the hosts; the mourners' only responsibility is to mourn. For the next 3 weeks, mourners slowly reenter society, but often have a tear in their clothing, and do not shave. Full mourning does not end until an entire year after the death. During that year, entertaining and amusement is curtailed.

During the civil war era in the southern United States, a widow wore black from head to toe and a heavy veil for one year and a day, and sometimes for as long as two and a half years. For several months, she was not to go to any social events. After her time of "deep mourning" she went into "half mourning" and was allowed to wear lavender or grey. She was not allowed to remarry for up to four years after the death of her husband.

You have not experienced a death, but you have experienced the death of a relationship, and the death of a dream. Allow yourself to feel this loss. If you don't, you will never be fully healed. You must mourn your losses in order to heal from them. You may feel you will never stop feeling sad, or you may fear the extent of your sadness or rage. Crying is OK. Find someone (besides your children, they have their own grief with which to deal) who will listen to you and share in your grief. This could be a friend, a support group, or a counselor. The sooner you allow yourself to feel your loss; the better off you will be later on.

Perhaps you don't believe you have anything you need to mourn. Spend some time examining the list of losses I started this section with. Think through what your life looked like before you met your abuser, and compare it to what your life looks like now. Be honest with yourself. Are you better or worse off now? What losses have you experienced?

I had trouble learning to mourn. I had become a master at denying my feelings when I lived with my abusive husband. He would ridicule me if I ever cried in front of him. He accused me of manipulating him with my tears, saying I had no reason to be sad. Also, I tried to hide my sorrow from people outside our home because he would be furious if he knew I told anyone what he was doing at home. After years of living like this, I could laugh and smile easily, but had forgotten how to cry. Once I left the relationship, I would usually laugh when I described the worst abuse I had suffered.

If you, like me, have learned to deny your emotional pain, how can you begin to feel the pain you've denied for such a long time? Spend some time alone. Maybe you will do this in a dark room, in a coffee shop, or on a long walk, run or drive. Whatever works best for you. Think about the losses you've suffered. As you begin to feel sadness, anger, anxiety, guilt or other "negative" feelings, try not to talk yourself out of them. Don't allow others to either. Your family and friends may not like you to spend time in mourning, and may not understand why this will be an important part of your journey to healing. If you don't do it now, your grief will never fully go away, and you will never fully heal.

Writing Exercise

Write your feelings down in a journal. Each time you allow yourself to mourn, reread what you have written, and add to those feelings. Over time, you will hopefully see your grief dissolving. If not, please read Chapter Six, and seek counseling.

A Drink of Water for the Journey

“If you are travelling with a child or someone who requires assistance, secure your oxygen mask first, and then assist the other person.”

Airline Safety Speech

1. Are you uncomfortable with the idea of taking care of yourself? Can you see why self-care is necessary for your healing process? Why or why not?
2. Do you tend to isolate yourself or depend on “cyber friends?” What are some ways you can spend more time with supportive friends?
3. Have you been taking care of your physical needs? If not, what things can you commit to begin doing today?
4. Do you find you often speak negatively to yourself? What types of things do you say? What positive statements can you replace those negative statements with?
5. Do you often feel stressed? Do the suggestions about scheduling your stressful thoughts and prioritizing your to do list seem helpful to you? Why or why not?
6. Do you struggle with trusting God with your really tough anxieties? Would you be willing to try Willis Carrier’s three-step method for handling your problems without worry?
7. Have you already spent time mourning your losses? Will you commit to spending more time mourning the losses you’ve experienced?

List of Additional Chapters

Chapter 4 – Check Your Relationship with the Lord

Chapter 5 – Examine Your Past

Chapter 6 – Seek Counseling

Chapter 7 – Seek Healing for your children

Chapter 8 – Stand up for Your Children in Court if Necessary

CHAPTER 9 - Forgive Your Abuser and Others

Chapter 10 - Learning to Forgive Yourself

Chapter 11 - Bring God Glory as a Single Woman

Chapter 12 – Use Wisdom When Dating

Chapter 13 - Proceed Cautiously Regarding Marriage

Chapter 14 – God Promises Good Comes Out of Our Pain

Conclusion

Epilogue

Appendix A – How to Use *A Journey to Healing* as a Group Study Guide

Appendix B – Types of Abuse

Physical Abuse:

- Pushing, slapping, punching, biting, kicking, or strangling.
- Throwing or otherwise destroying valued objects.
- Harming children or pets.
- Hair pulling.
- Restraining or trapping.
- Forcing you to leave your home.
- Using a weapon to threaten or hurt you.
- Driving recklessly.
- Abandoning you in a dangerous or unfamiliar place.
- Preventing you from calling police or seeking medical attention.

Sexual Abuse:

- Views women as objects and believes in rigid gender roles.
- Insults you in sexual ways or calls you sexual names.
- Has ever forced or manipulated you into having sex.
- Held you down during sex.
- Demanded sex when you were sick, tired or after beating you.
- Hurt you with weapons or objects during sex.
- Involved other people in sexual activities with you.
- Withholds sex from you.
- Forces you to become pregnant, get an abortion, or kills your fetus.

Verbal, Emotional, or Psychological Abuse:

- Controls what you do, read, think, say, where you go, who you see.
- Expects you to ask permission, treats you like a servant.
- Calls you names, insults you or continually criticizes you.
- Humiliates you in any way.
- Does not trust you and acts jealous or possessive.
- Tries to isolate you from family or friends.
- Makes you think you are crazy, plays mind games with you.
- Intimidates you with looks, actions and gestures.
- Punishes you by withholding affection.
- Threatens to kill himself.
- Threatens to hurt you, the children, your family or your pets.

- Uses the children against you.
- Blames his abuse on you, or claims it never happened.

Economic Abuse:

- Keeps you from getting or keeping a job, or takes your money.
- Controls finances, refuses to work (for the home or outside the home).
- Gives you an allowance, or refuses to share money.

Spiritual Abuse:

- Twists or distorts biblical scripture to control you or make you feel guilty, or to prevent you from leaving him.

Appendix C – Resources

National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or 1-800-787-3224 (TTY) www.thehotline.org

A website of Focus on the Family: www.troubledwith.com

Cloud-Townsend Resources, 3176 Pullman Ave, # 104, Costa Mesa, CA 92626, 800-676-HOPE (4673) www.cloudtownsend.com

The website of RBC Ministries: www.rbc.net

John Piper's ministry at www.desiringgod.org

Author's website: www.carolineabbott.com

Books

Patricia Evans, *The Verbally Abusive Relationship, How to Recognize It and How to Respond* (Avon, MA: Adams Media Corporation, 1996).

Lundy Bancroft, *Why Does He DO That? Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men* (New York, NY: Berkley Books, 2002).

Jay Adams, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980).

Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend, *Boundaries, When to Say Yes When to Say No to Take Control of Your Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992).

Linda Dillow, *Calm My Anxious Heart, A Woman's Guide to Finding Contentment* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1998).

Jeff Rosenau, *Building Bridges Not Walls, Learning to Dialogue in the Spirit of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2003).

Joshua Harris, *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2003).

Kate McVeigh, *Single and Loving It, Living Life to the Fullest* (Tulsa: Harrison House, 2003).

Other Written Resources

Herb Vander Lugt, "God's Protection of Women, When Abuse is Worse Than Divorce" (Grand Rapids, MI: RBC Ministries, 2005).

Bill Elliff with Tim Grissom, *Forgiveness, Healing the Harbored Hurts of Your Heart* (North Little Rock, AR: Summit Church, 1998).



Let the journey begin.

A Journey to Healing After Emotional Abuse is a holistic journey of healing for the mind, body and soul. Caroline Abbott helps you examine your past, heal your present, and chart a path for your future.

“Caroline Abbott has faced her own trauma, fears and pain. She has embraced forgiveness, emotional and relational health with God’s grace and mercy. She will challenge you to be at peace and be your best!”

*-Debbie Stafford, M.A. CAC III, Domestic Violence Service Provider,
Former Colorado State Representative*

“Helpful and hopeful! *A Journey to Healing* is a practical guide both for the woman who has been the victim of emotional abuse and for those of us who want to love and support her well.”

-Amy Craig, M.A., L.P.C.

“Caroline leads survivors of emotional abuse on their journey to healing with sincerity and wisdom. She gives all who are brave enough to hope for change a vision of a future free from the trauma of emotional abuse.”

-Hattie O'Brien

Caroline Abbott is the survivor of an abusive marriage. She is a trained domestic violence advocate and the author of *A Journey through Emotional Abuse: from Bondage to Freedom*.

Follow Caroline Abbott and join the conversation at her website:

CarolineAbbott.com

