

What's Love...?

emotional abuse in intimate relationships

health/ex-assault/consent
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What's Love...? / Ter Bad Relationship V. 2.0

emotional abuse-

coercion, humiliation, intimidation, When

one person manipulates another's emotional state for their own ends.

sound familiar?

emotional abuse, defined this way, is perpetrated everywhere- by police, the state, parents, even by friends and intimate partners (boyfriends, girlfriends, etc.). If not growing up in emotionally abusive households, most everyone in this culture is schooled in how to emotionally fuck up ourselves and everyone around us. So it's a given, then, that emotionally abusive relationships are very common. You're very likely to be a victim of or perpetrator, or both, of emotional abuse at some point. But! just because it's common doesn't mean it's ok! We're all hurt and abused in some way, and the abused become abusers. The only way to end cycles of abuse is to learn and talk about the signs of damage and hurt, but also as inexcusable hurt inflicted on others. Too often is abuse excused and allowed to continue, or alternately, are abusers put in an "other" category that "we" can exile instead of process with.

This information is for you to use to identify abusive patterns in relationships that might otherwise be overlooked. They are not the only signs of abuse, and do not cover physical or sexual abuse. Also included are tips for healthy relationships, and more of my ranting.

Feel free to copy and distribute this zine for free, and remember:

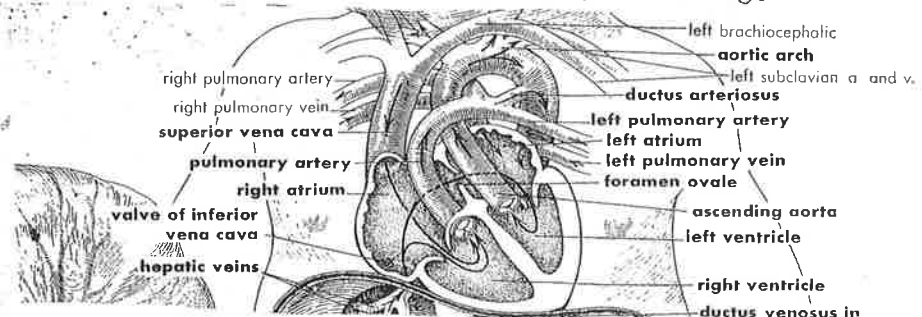
You deserve love + respect!

♥ - f. r. d. ♥

sometimes i think it'll never end- these cycles of abuse. Cycles that continue not just between lovers but throughout all aspects of society. Abusive systems create abusive families who produce abusive children who abuse or are abused by future partners. The powerful abuse and enslave the powerless, and the powerless abuse each other. It's an endless cycle that reinforces and strengthens itself every time around.

So what's love got to do with it? I really do believe that love is all that can save the world - love for each other, the planet, for strangers, friends, and ourselves. In this fucked up, hateful world, everyone has some way of expressing the hurt of being deprived of real love, respect, and autonomy. No sane, loved and loving person would manipulate their partner, hit their kid, or send thousands to war to kill millions more. It's insanity. We're all hurting and these forms of power-over others keep it all going. Think of how your day can be ruined by anything from being mugged, to being yelled at by your boss, or even a mean look from a stranger. Now think of how your whole day can be changed by one unconditional act of kindness kindness. The hate that fuels our abusive culture is a rational one. It's made up of rational responses to rational responses to an untraceable history of irrational hatred for life. But loved people don't destroy life for the hell of it, and loved and loving people don't abuse. So I guess the only power I want to use isn't a power over, it's a power with. An irrational power we all have, to love and to and to heal.

Keep loving, keep fisting!



what's sexier than you and your partner both being able to fulfill your needs in your intimate relationship? Also, you can talk about what you'd like to do in bed before you've even started being intimate, so that you already know each other's boundaries. Everybody wins!

Resources

This list is totally incomplete, but I promised some resources so here they are:

Phillyspissed.net

a group in Philadelphia that works to support survivors of sexual assault. The "downloads" section of their website has a bunch of great zines that you can download for free!

Unpacking the invisible knapsack by Peggy Macintosh

This is a great essay on privilege, mostly race and gender, it's easy to look up online.

www.reachout.com.au

This website is amazing! It's mostly teen-oriented, but can be useful to folks of all ages, with information about consent, sex, safer sex, communication, mental health, drugs, etc.

Redefining our Relationships by Wendy-O-Matik

A short, super informational book about negotiating polyamorous ("open") relationships.

positive.org

Some good safer sex information here. It's penis-oriented, sorry ladies! Use gloves!

eqi.org

More information on emotional abuse in the family.

National Domestic Violence Hotline

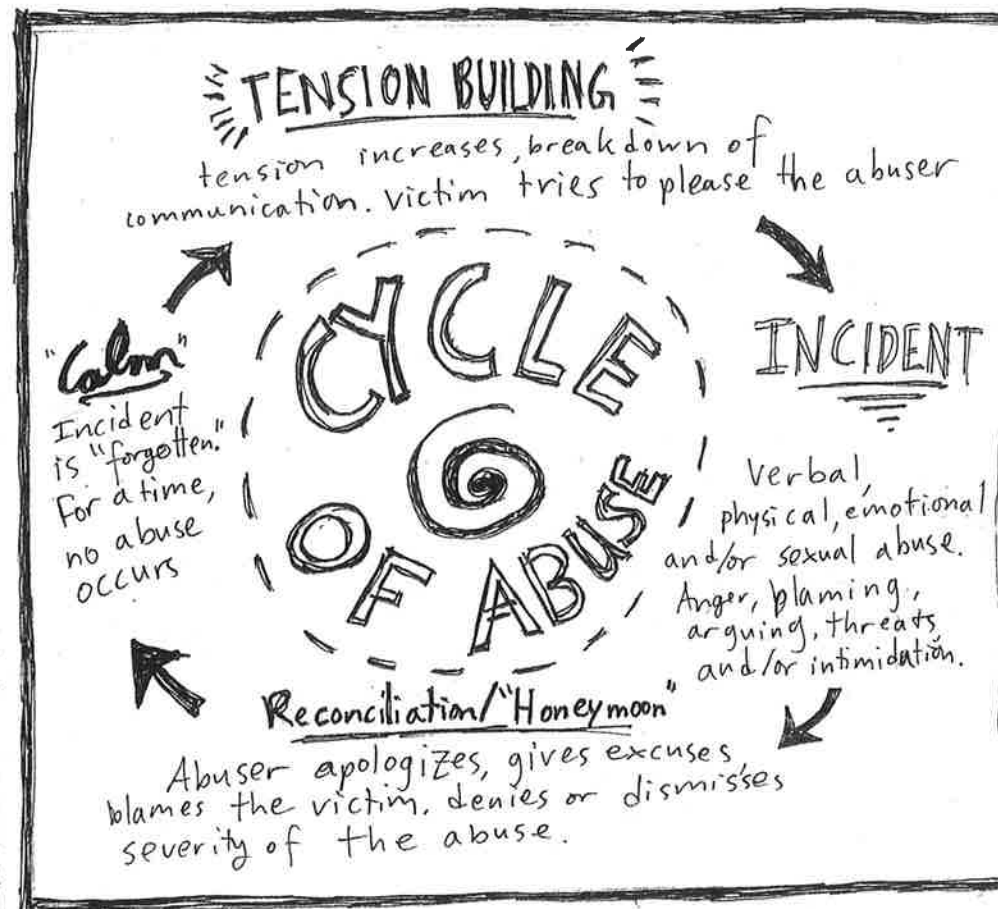
1-800-799-SAFE (7233) / 1-800-787-3224 (TTY)

The reference desk librarian

Seriously, if you have any questions about anything and are too lazy to/fed up with trying to research them, just call the reference librarian. They know everything!

coercion

coercion is one common aspect of emotional abuse. This is when one person uses force or manipulation (pleading, begging, threats of suicide, threats of rejection, twisting words, etc) to control another.



consent

consent is a very broad concept that, in essence, is the opposite of coercion. To get consent from someone is to make a safe space for them to express their desires and concerns, and to come to an agreement you are both comfortable with.

see "resources" for more info on consent

Symptoms of Abuse

you understand their feelings, but they never try to understand yours

W
they dismiss your problems as unimportant or overreaction; they don't listen to you

they always put their needs before yours

they expect you to do things you find unpleasant or humiliating

you "walk on eggshells" trying not to upset them

they ignore logic and prefer amateur theatrics to remain the center of attention

they manipulate you into feeling guilty for things that have nothing to do with you

they try to destroy any outside support you have (from friends, family, etc) by belittling the people/service/practice, in order to get exclusive control over your emotions

they don't take responsibility for hurting others

they blame everyone and everything else, for any unfortunate events in their lives

they perceive themselves as martyrs or victims and constantly expect special treatment

an abusive partner will railroad discussions, so that you don't have time to think about what's right or what's wrong in their behavior.

have they outed, or threatened to out part of your identity that you may want or need to keep secret (sexual orientation, gender, identity, legal or immigration status, etc.)?



What is Consent?

Consent is when one person agrees to or gives permission to another person to do something. It means agreeing to an action based on your knowledge of what that action involves, its likely consequences and having the option of saying no. When it comes to sex in your relationship consent is really important. It's important to remember that both of you have a responsibility to make sure that you both feel safe and comfortable every step along the way.

Why is consent important?

Having mutual, clear consent from an intimate partner is important simply because you can't know what your partner's boundaries are without asking. Maybe your partner has a history of sexual abuse, or is uncomfortable with certain sexual acts, maybe she has a hard time asking for certain things while being intimate. There doesn't need to be a specific reason to ask for/give consent, it's always important to be able to say yes as well as no to any type of intimacy.

What does consent sound like?

Asking for and getting consent can sound like

"would you like me to ___?"

"is it ok if I ___?"

"do you want ___?"

followed by a clear "yes!"

And remember that, while there's only a few ways of saying "yes," there are a lot of ways to say "no," both verbally and through body language. "No" can be expressed by silence, by freezing up or pulling away physically. If someone is asleep or intoxicated, that is also an automatic "no."

That is sooo unsexy.

You might be thinking, "that's all nice sounding, but this consent stuff totally ruins the passion of intimacy." Or you might be thinking "if only someone asked me for consent, my sex life would be so much better!" If you're in the first camp, remember that for some folks, "going with the flow" in an intimate situation can also mean silence, or not having the chance to ask for certain things or to say no. And besides,

So now you know what to look out for in your relationships, but what comes next? How many of us have grown up in healthy, communicative households free of any sort of oppression? I certainly haven't. We need to start becoming healthy, non-violent role-models for each other in our relationships, cause mainstream culture sure won't do it for us! here's a list i've compiled from a few sources of healthy behaviors in relationships:

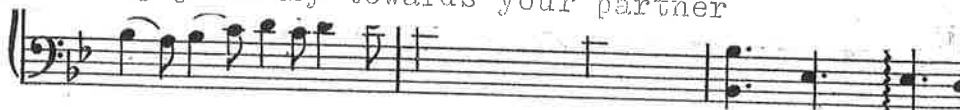


Communication:

- listen to your partner's ideas and concerns without judgement
- try to understand and value your partner's ideas
- express ideas without expecting your partner to always agree with you
- Allow the space for disagreements to be talked out peacefully instead of becoming an argument
- Aim to hear and understand your partner in discussions,
- Take responsibility for your emotions
- Let your partner know that you want her/him/hir to be honest with you, even if she thinks her ideas might offend you

Support

- Support your partner's goals in life, even if you don't agree with them/they aren't your goals
- Respect your partner's right to her/his/hir own feelings, friends, activities, and opinions
- Don't try to dictate your partner's personality or appearance
- Trust your partner to make good decisions for
- Have confidence in your partner's skills, abilities and intelligence
- Give your partner alone time
- Be honest about your feelings and desires
- Be sensitive to your partner's emotions, don't use coercion when making decisions, and ask if your partner seems uncomfortable with a decision
- If you feel jealousy towards your partner, first ask yourself why instead of acting out. avoid expressing jealousy towards your partner



Respect your partner's boundaries, even if you don't understand them

Acknowledge any past use of violence or abusive behaviour, and actively try to change it

Respect any abuse history your partner may have and ask how to be supportive/avoid triggers

★ Be aware of, talk about, and educate yourself about you and your partner's differing levels of privilege (race, class, gender, ability, sexuality, age, etc etc etc). this is a HUGE topic, but i'll keep it short: while possessing a certain type of privilege does not inherently make someone an abuser, it's easy to be insensitive to the privileges we have, and hurt a partner who doesn't have that privilege. Also, abusers will often use the privileges they have over a partner against them. for example, an abusive partner who is able-bodied might cut off their partner, who uses a wheelchair, from physical resources.

Also, because we all have unique and complicated identities, it might not be cut and dry who has "more" privilege in a relationship. Maybe you grew up in poverty as male and have a learning disability and are white, and your partner is a black transgendered woman who grew up incredibly wealthy. My point is, talk about it! ask about your partner's identity and experiences, and share yours. Also, your identity and privilege do not determine whether or not you will be a good partner.



SEX

take equal responsibility for STI protection and birth control if (necessary)

Talk about protection, STIs, sexual history, and abuse history BEFORE having sex

talk about CONSENT*

Take responsibility for your partner's pleasure!

> everyone deserves to enjoy sex, even if it takes

> takes a longer time or more effort. ask your partner what gets her/him/her off and do it

pay attention to how your partner/s are acting in bed. if s/he/they seems uncomfortable, stop