

# Union of Saints,

## What Is Emotional Torture



### What is Emotional Torture?

Emotional torture refers to the systematic infliction of psychological pain to control, break down, or manipulate another person. It can be subtle or overt and may occur in relationships, institutions, interrogations, or even in seemingly "normal" conversations.

It's often used to:

- Control or dominate someone
  - Break their will or sense of identity
  - Instill fear or dependency
  - Punish or retaliate
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### How Emotional Torture May Come Up in Conversation

Below is a categorized list of **ways emotional torture might show up in conversation**, either directly or indirectly. These are not always labeled as such by the people involved, but the underlying tactics can be psychologically abusive.

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#### 1. Gaslighting

- "You're too sensitive."
- "That never happened."
- "You're imagining things."
- "Everyone else thinks you're overreacting too."

Purpose: Undermine someone's perception of reality.

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## **2. Silent Treatment / Withholding**

- Long periods of intentional silence.
- “I don’t owe you an explanation.”
- Ignoring messages or presence as punishment.

Purpose: Create anxiety, insecurity, or feelings of worthlessness.

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## **3. Blame-Shifting**

- “If you hadn’t done X, I wouldn’t have reacted that way.”
- “It’s always your fault things go wrong.”
- “You make me act like this.”

Purpose: Avoid responsibility while placing emotional burden on the victim.

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## **4. Love-Bombing / Withholding Affection**

- “I love you so much,” then completely distant.
- Hot-and-cold behavior.
- Affection as a reward or punishment.

Purpose: Create emotional dependency and confusion.

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## **5. Humiliation or Degradation**

- Sarcastic or cruel jokes at the person’s expense.
- Public embarrassment.
- “You’re worthless without me.”

Purpose: Undermine self-esteem, reinforce control.

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## **6. Threats or Intimidation (Emotional, Not Physical)**

- “You’ll be sorry.”
- “If you leave, no one will want you.”
- “I’ll tell everyone your secrets.”

Purpose: Induce fear and submission without direct violence.

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## 7. Minimization and Dismissal

- “That’s not a big deal.”
- “Stop being dramatic.”
- “You should be over this by now.”

Purpose: Suppress emotional expression and invalidate feelings.

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## 8. Isolation

- “Your friends are bad for you.”
- “Don’t tell anyone what we talk about.”
- Making the person feel like no one else cares.

Purpose: Remove external support systems and increase dependence.

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## 9. Control Over Basic Aspects of Life

- Dictating how someone should think, dress, speak, or behave.
- Monitoring communication or social media.
- Making all decisions for them.

Purpose: Strip autonomy, increase control.

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## 10. Persistent Criticism and Micromanagement

- “You never do anything right.”
- Nitpicking flaws in everything the person does.

Purpose: Lower confidence and create learned helplessness.

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### How This Might Come Up in Real-Life Conversations

- A friend says, “*He says I’m crazy whenever I confront him.*”

- A co-worker confides, *“She makes me feel like I’m always wrong, even when I know I’m right.”*
  - A client reports, *“They keep me emotionally on edge—it’s like I never know if they love or hate me.”*
  - A social media post states, *“No one believed me when I said I was being emotionally abused.”*
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### Important Note

People experiencing emotional torture may not recognize it immediately—it often builds slowly over time and can be normalized in toxic dynamics.

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## 1. How to Respond if You Recognize Emotional Torture

Whether you're the person experiencing it or you're witnessing it, the approach will differ — but the goal is always safety, clarity, and support.

### If It's Happening to *You*:

- **Name It:** Realizing it's emotional abuse is the first major step. Journaling specific behaviors and how they make you feel can help validate your experience.
- **Set Boundaries:** Even small ones (e.g., “I’m not going to continue this conversation if you keep invalidating my feelings”) can help reclaim your power.
- **Seek Support:** Talk to a therapist, trusted friend, or abuse hotline. Isolation feeds abuse — connection counters it.
- **Create an Exit Plan:** If it's an ongoing situation, especially in a close relationship or workplace, safety planning may be necessary.

### If It's Happening to *Someone Else*:

- **Listen Without Judgment:** People in emotionally abusive situations may not recognize or admit it. Avoid saying “Just leave them!” or “You should’ve known.”
- **Validate Their Feelings:** “That sounds really painful,” or “No one deserves to be treated like that.”

- **Offer Support, Not Control:** Let them lead their process. Offer resources, a place to talk, or even go with them to therapy or HR if needed.
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## 2. Where Emotional Torture Shows Up



### **In Relationships:**

- Romantic partners using manipulation, guilt, or control.
- Parents emotionally abusing children (e.g., through neglect, constant criticism, or excessive control).
- Friends weaponizing secrets, excluding, or using shame.



### **In Workplaces:**

- Toxic bosses micromanaging, gaslighting, or shaming employees.
- Colleagues using exclusion, sabotage, or passive-aggressive tactics.
- HR inaction on repeated emotional abuse can create institutional complicity.



### **In Institutions / Systems:**

- School systems punishing vulnerable students disproportionately.
  - Governments using psychological tactics to oppress or control (e.g., propaganda, fear-based messaging).
  - Religious or spiritual leaders emotionally manipulating followers (e.g., shame, fear of punishment, love-bombing).
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## 3. Recovery from Emotional Abuse

Healing from emotional torture takes time and intentional effort.

## Key Elements of Recovery:

- **Rebuilding Trust in Yourself:** Abuse often teaches people to doubt their thoughts or feelings. Therapy, journaling, and affirming your reality can help.
- **Reconnection with Others:** Abuse thrives in isolation. Rebuilding safe, healthy relationships is vital.
- **Learning to Set Boundaries:** Even if they weren't respected before, learning to name and hold boundaries is a major part of healing.
- **Therapy (Especially Trauma-Informed):** Professionals trained in emotional abuse recovery can help unpack patterns and move toward emotional safety and strength.



## 1. How to Recognize & Respond to Emotional Abuse in Yourself



### Red Flags to Watch For:

- You constantly question your memory or sanity (gaslighting).
- You feel like you're always walking on eggshells.
- You're often blamed for things that aren't your fault.
- Your emotions are dismissed as "too much" or "irrational."
- You feel isolated from friends, family, or support.
- You're afraid of their reaction when you express yourself.



### What You Can Do:

- **Track Patterns:** Keep a journal or voice notes. Record what was said, how it made you feel, and any recurring patterns.
- **Name the Behavior, Not Just the Feeling:** E.g., "They're blaming me for something I didn't do" vs. "I feel guilty."
- **Try Small Boundaries:** Practice saying no, taking space, or voicing your thoughts without apology.

- **Reach Out for Support:** Abuse often warps your sense of self. An outside perspective can ground you.
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## 2. How to Help Someone Else Going Through It



### What Helps:

- **Believe Them.** Many victims are afraid they won't be taken seriously.
- **Stay Calm & Grounded.** Don't panic or rush them to act—they need safety, not pressure.
- **Ask, Don't Tell:** “Do you want to talk about it?” or “How can I support you right now?”
- **Offer Resources Without Forcing:** Share hotlines, books, or therapy info gently: “I found this article—let me know if it feels useful.”



### What to Avoid:

- Don't say: “Why are you still with them?” or “Just leave.”
  - Don't downplay: “It's not that bad” or “I'm sure they didn't mean it.”
  - Don't push them into confrontation—they need time and safety.
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## 3. Where It Shows Up: Relationships, Workplaces, Institutions



### In Romantic or Family Relationships:

- One partner or parent uses manipulation, control, or emotional neglect to dominate.
- Abuse can be masked as “concern” or “love”:

*"I only control your finances because I love you and want to protect you."*



### **In Workplaces:**

- Gaslighting by a boss:

*"I never said that," even when you have an email proving it.*

- Micromanaging or public shaming.
- Withholding praise, sabotaging success.



### **In Institutions:**

- Schools punishing neurodivergent or marginalized students more harshly.
- Religious institutions using fear, guilt, or shame to control behavior.
- Immigration or policing systems using long-term psychological pressure to extract compliance.



## **4. Recovery & Healing from Emotional Torture**



### **Mental Healing:**

- **Therapy is key.** Look for trauma-informed or abuse-focused therapists.
- **Name your experience.** Journaling, art, or speaking aloud what happened helps de-shame it.
- **Rebuild self-trust.** Abuse undermines your judgment. Practice small decisions: "What do I want?"



### **Emotional Healing:**

- **Validate Your Feelings:** What you feel *matters*, even if others downplayed it.



- **Express Without Justifying:** Practice saying things like, “That hurt me,” without defending why.
- **Process Grief:** You may grieve the loss of who you were, what you believed, or the relationship itself.



### Physical & Social Healing:

- Reconnect with safe people.
- Practice body-based healing: walks, breathing, stretching.
- Join support groups (online or in person) — healing in community is powerful.



## Summary: What You Can Do Next

Here’s a menu of next steps depending on where you’re at:

Need	Action
I think I may be experiencing emotional abuse	Start journaling patterns; consider talking to a therapist
I want to help someone else	Focus on listening, validating, and offering gentle support
I want to understand how this shows up around me	Pay attention to emotional dynamics in relationships, workplaces, and communities
I’m ready to heal	Begin self-compassion practices, boundary work, or therapy



## 1. Real-Life Scripts You Can Use

These are **conversation scripts** for situations involving emotional abuse — either to protect yourself, support someone else, or call out manipulation gently.



### Setting Boundaries (When You’re Being Emotionally Harmed)

- “I’m not okay with how you’re speaking to me right now.”
- “If this continues, I’m going to walk away from the conversation.”
- “I need time to think before I respond.”



These help *regain control* when someone is pushing, invalidating, or gaslighting you.

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### Supporting a Friend or Loved One

- **“What you’re describing sounds really hard. I believe you.”**
- **“You don’t deserve to be treated like that.”**
- **“I’m here if you ever want to talk or make a plan — no pressure.”**



Avoid rescuing. Just being a nonjudgmental presence can be life-changing for someone in emotional pain.

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### Calling Out Emotional Manipulation (Gently or Directly)

- **“That sounds like you’re blaming me for something that isn’t my responsibility.”**
- **“When you deny what happened, it makes me feel like I can’t trust myself.”**
- **“It feels like you’re using guilt to control this situation. Can we talk honestly?”**



These are best used when you feel *safe enough* to confront the behavior. If not, emotional distance is the safer path.

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## 2. Recommended Resources



### Books

- **“The Body Keeps the Score” by Bessel van der Kolk** — Deep dive into trauma, healing, and the brain.
- **“Why Does He Do That?” by Lundy Bancroft** — Focuses on emotional abuse, especially in intimate relationships.
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### Online Support

- **Love is Respect** – For emotional abuse in romantic relationships (also supports teens/young adults).
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### Hotlines (U.S.-based, confidential)

- **National Domestic Violence Hotline:** [1-800-799-SAFE](https://www.thehotline.org/) (7233)
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### 3. Simple Grounding Tools for Healing

Even if you're not ready for therapy, **small self-regulation tools** can help.



#### Reconnect With Yourself

- **Daily check-in question:** *“What do I feel right now? What do I need?”*
- Use this instead of people-pleasing or silencing yourself.



#### Grounding Exercises

- **5-4-3-2-1 Method:** Name 5 things you can see, 4 you can touch, 3 you can hear, 2 you can smell, 1 you can taste.
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- Anchor to this when feeling triggered, scared, or confused.



**You are doing great, with love US.**



## Starter Plan: Emotional Safety & Clarity



### STEP 1: Awareness — Identify the Patterns

**Reflect on these questions privately or in a journal:**

- Do I feel confused, blamed, or “crazy” after conversations with this person?
- Are my emotions often dismissed as “too much” or “irrational”?
- Am I afraid to speak honestly because of their reaction?
- Do I feel emotionally unsafe, even if nothing “bad” is happening?



Don't rush this part. Awareness takes time. You're not being dramatic — you're getting clear.



## STEP 2: Emotional Protection — Create Space

If you feel overwhelmed or manipulated:

### Try This:

- Take 24 hours before responding to texts/calls.
- Limit what personal info you share with the person.
- Practice saying:

“I need time to think about how I feel.”

“I’m not ready to talk about that right now.”



Emotional distance is self-protection — not punishment. You’re allowed to protect your peace.



## STEP 3: Get External Validation

You don’t need to go through this alone in your head. Try:

- Talking to a therapist or counselor (even once).
- Telling a trusted friend, “I think I’m dealing with emotional manipulation — can I talk it out with you?”
- Sharing anonymously in an online support group.



Being believed helps rewire the damage caused by emotional abuse. You deserve that.

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## STEP 4: Begin Healing (In Small, Doable Ways)

Pick **one** of these:

- Start a private journal: “What happened / How it made me feel.”
- Read one chapter of a healing book (start with *Set Boundaries, Find Peace* or *Psychopath Free*).
- Practice saying “no” to something small this week — and notice how it feels.
- Do one body-based activity: go for a walk, stretch, or take a deep breath every time you feel unsafe or small.



Healing isn't about doing everything at once. It's about making one aligned choice at a time.

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## If You're in Crisis or in a Controlling Situation

Please reach out (confidentially) to:

- **Domestic Abuse Hotline (U.S.):** [800-799-7233](tel:800-799-7233) or [thehotline.org](https://thehotline.org)
  - **Text “HOME” to 741741** (Crisis Text Line)
  - Or tell me your country — I'll give you local support options.
- 



## Final Check-In: Where Would You Like to Go Next?

You can reply with one of the following (or anything else):

1. **“I think this is happening to me.”** (and I'll help you sort it out.)
2. **“This happened in the past, and I want to heal.”**
3. **“Someone I care about is going through this.”**
4. **“I want help creating boundaries.”**
5. **“Give me more tools to protect myself.”**



## Step 5: Build Boundaries That Protect You

Boundaries are **not about controlling others** — they're about **clarifying what's okay and not okay with you**, and then protecting your emotional safety when those limits are crossed.

Here's a breakdown of **simple, powerful boundary types** and examples for each:

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### 1. Emotional Boundaries

**Purpose:** Protect your feelings from manipulation, dismissal, or gaslighting.

**Examples:**

- “I’m not okay with being blamed for your emotions.”
- “I’m allowed to feel what I feel, even if you don’t agree.”
- “If you keep raising your voice, I’ll leave the conversation.”



These boundaries tell others: *You don't get to decide how I feel or treat me however you want during emotional moments.*

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### 2. Communication Boundaries

**Purpose:** Limit access to your attention, energy, and time.

**Examples:**

- “I don’t respond to texts right away — I need space sometimes.”
- “I’m not available for emotional conversations late at night.”
- “I’m ending this call now. We can talk when things are calmer.”



These boundaries protect you from being pulled into someone else’s chaos or urgency.



### 3. Information Boundaries

**Purpose:** Control how much personal info you share.

**Examples:**

- “I’m not ready to talk about that part of my life.”
- “That’s private, and I’m choosing to keep it that way.”
- “I’d rather not explain my decision — it’s personal.”



In abusive situations, oversharing can be weaponized against you. You don’t owe anyone explanations.



### 4. Physical / Space Boundaries

**Purpose:** Guard your environment and sense of safety.

**Examples:**

- “I need time alone — please don’t come into my space right now.”
- “I’m not comfortable being touched like that.”
- “I won’t meet you somewhere if I feel unsafe.”



Trust your gut. If someone repeatedly violates your physical space, it’s not a misunderstanding — it’s a tactic.

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## Step 6: Practice Responses for When Boundaries Are Challenged

People who benefit from your silence or submission often resist your boundaries. That doesn't mean you're wrong — it means you're finally being clear.

Here are some responses you can keep in your back pocket:

Situation	What You Can Say
They mock your boundary	"You don't have to agree, but I expect you to respect it."
They guilt-trip you	"That might be how you feel, but this is what I need right now."
They say you're overreacting	"That's your opinion. I still need space."
They refuse to stop	"I'm not engaging in this anymore." <i>(Then walk away, hang up, or disconnect if needed.)</i>

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## Step 7: Reclaim Your Inner Voice

Abuse disconnects you from your inner truth. To reconnect, try these daily prompts:

- "What *feel/s* true for me today?"
- "What did I need that I didn't get?"
- "What's one small way I can care for myself right now?"
- "Is this mine to carry — or someone else's?"

Write or speak these aloud. Your voice matters. Your feelings matter. Even if they were dismissed before.

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## You're Not Broken. You're Rebuilding.

If you've endured emotional torture — past or present — it can make you feel:

- Confused about what's real.
- Afraid to set boundaries.
- Like you're "too sensitive" or "overreacting."



Let me be clear: **You are not too much. You were placed in too little care.**



## Daily Healing Practices (Simple, Real, Doable)

You don't need to do all of these every day. Just start with 1–2, and rotate based on what you need that day.

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### 1. Daily Grounding Ritual

**Purpose:** To reconnect with your body and bring your nervous system out of survival mode.

**Practice:**

- Sit or stand still.
- Take 3–5 deep breaths — slow inhale, even slower exhale.
- Say aloud or silently:

“I am safe in this moment.”

“I’m allowed to exist without fear.”



*Do this when waking up, before bed, or anytime you feel anxious.*

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### 2. Truth Journaling (5-Minute Daily Dump)

**Purpose:** To untangle thoughts from emotional manipulation and rebuild self-trust.

**Prompt ideas:**

- “What happened today? How did it make me feel?”
- “Did I notice any red flags or confusing behavior?”
- “What do I need to remind myself is true?”



*Use paper or a phone app. Don't edit — let it be messy and honest.*

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### **3. Mirror Talk / Affirmations for Abuse Recovery**

**Purpose:** To replace internalized criticism with self-compassion.

**Say to yourself (in a mirror if possible):**

- “What happened to me was not my fault.”
- “My feelings are valid.”
- “I do not have to earn love by suffering.”
- “It is safe for me to trust myself again.”



*Even if you don't believe it yet, say it anyway — your brain learns by repetition.*

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### **4. Digital Boundary Check-In**

**Purpose:** To reduce mental overload from toxic people or triggers.

**Daily check:**

- Did I scroll past anything that drained me emotionally?
- Did I feel dread opening a message from someone?
- Do I need to mute, unfollow, or take a break?



*Create a “safe feed” on social media — even if it's just puppies and quotes for now.*

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## 5. Daily Acts of Emotional Reparenting

**Purpose:** To give yourself what you didn't get from others (nurturing, protection, comfort).

**Examples:**

- Make yourself a warm meal and say, "You deserve care."
- Tuck yourself in at night and whisper, "You're safe now."
- When you feel shame, say, "You're not bad. You were hurt."



*Be the gentle, protective voice you needed. It rewires everything.*

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## 6. Future-Self Visualization

**Purpose:** To build hope and identity beyond survival.

**Imagine:**

- A version of you who feels calm, respected, confident.
- What they do in the morning.
- How they walk into a room.
- How they say "no" without guilt.

Close your eyes and *see them*. You are becoming them — one healing step at a time.

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## 7. End-of-Day Emotional Debrief

**Purpose:** To process your day instead of carrying the weight into tomorrow.

**Ask:**

- "What moment today made me feel seen or heard?"
- "Did I honor any boundaries today?"
- "What did I survive today that I didn't think I could?"



*This rewires your mind to recognize growth instead of just pain.*

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## Want a Simple Daily Flow?

Here's a 10-minute example:

Time	Practice
Morning (2–3 mins)	Grounding breaths + affirmation
Midday (5 mins)	Journal or voice memo about how you feel
Evening (2–3 mins)	Debrief: “What did I learn/survive today?”
<i>Bonus: Stretch, cry, pray, walk, draw — whatever feels natural to you. It counts.</i>	

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## One Last Thing: You Don't Have to Be "Fully Healed"

Healing isn't about becoming someone else. It's about becoming safe **inside your own skin**, day by day.

You don't have to:

- Forgive someone who hurt you.
- “Let it go” before you're ready.
- Be strong all the time.

You just have to **show up for yourself in small ways**, consistently. That *is* healing.