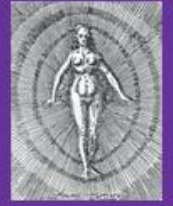


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Encouraging Self-Discovery and Empowerment



Toxic Strategies: Identifying the Deadly, Emotionally-Abusive Attacks That Cause Us Anxiety

Important Message from Mother Earth

<https://youtu.be/cGm6VYU6iPw>

The fears due to climate change, the insidious spread of the coronavirus virus along with the current United States presidential election has many people on edge. Therapists around the country are reporting spikes in patients dealing with election anxiety. *The Wall Street Journal* has stated that political anxiety disorder is definitely a “thing.” In my private practice a concern on the top of the ladder is not just the Coronavirus, but *political anxiety*.



When we turn on the TV news, we witness people yelling and shouting, and being emotionally abusive. Bullies deliberately use these and other abusive *toxic tactics* to put opposing views down and stir up chaos which gives the bullies a sense of power and control. These tactics are powerful, emotionally forceful, and purposefully used to disarm and shut down their victims/opponents whether in the home or in the political arena.

If you happen to be a survivor of emotional abuse in your current relationships or in your past experiences, then these public displays of political anger and rage can retrigger earlier emotional traumas. Alice, an author and screenwriter, and a survivor of childhood abuse, writes, “In my father’s house I was always being told that I couldn’t do things, that I wasn’t smart enough; I didn’t have enough sense. My parents argued bitterly. The house was filled with their tension. I was abused physically, sexually, verbally, spiritually, and emotionally.” It is not surprising that Alice now finds the current political scene both triggering and frightening. Her body reacts with abdominal pain and

headaches just as if she is still living in her abusive situation. What helped her was recognizing the *connection* between her current anxiety and labeling the tactic that used to cause her to curl up in a protective shell.

Identifying and Labeling the Toxic Strategies

To decrease the high level of political anxiety many are experiencing, I thought it would be helpful to educate, offer information, and identify some of the most common toxic tactics so we're not brought down by them. Education, information and a support system can really help keep us grounded in the midst of chaos. If we know what kind of attack we're facing, then we can protect ourselves. Verbal attackers want to throw us off-balance; so what we need is to learn how to stay centered and aware.

*With the goal in mind of shedding light on these emotionally abusive strategies, we are going to identify and label them. Knowing what tactic you are up against helps take its power away. The next step is to **retrain the brain** in responding from a *learned, victim position* to one of *empowerment*.*

I have identified certain toxic tactics used to stir up internal chaos, shame, and self-doubt personally and during this political campaign.

Gas-lighting — is a manipulation tactic used to gain power and manipulate others into doubting their own reality. And it works too well. Yes, it is possible, over time, to get so beaten down and so sure you might be at fault that you can't identify the truth. The Gaslight Effect happens gradually. Often, by the time you are deep into the dance you do with your gas-lighting partner, where you allow him to define your reality, you are not the same strong self you used to be. You lose the strength of your intuitive wisdom. In fact, your ego functioning has been compromised and, no longer being certain of your reality, you may become unable to accurately identify when something is "off" with your partner.

Gaslighting in Relationships: 7 Signs to Watch Out For

www.menshealth.com/sex-women/a28433513/gaslighting-in-relationships/

Lying — One of the first and most disarming tactics of an emotional abuser is lying. Even when there is clear proof or recorded evidence, liars will often lie without flinching. Nothing of importance be discussed intelligently (finances, economy, climate), when facts are denied or ignored. Liars are adept at telling a stream of untruths so that it is impossible to stay focused on track. When facts and truth are twisted, deemed irrelevant, it's extremely difficult to have a normal conversation with someone for whom the basic rules of a discussion are eliminated.

Denial — Related to lying is denying. Denial, like lying, changes the rules of fair discourse. Unfiltered, whatever pops up in the head and then cutting you off or refusing to continue to engage, makes it very difficult for the abuser to be held accountable for their words. Even when facts are easily verified, the speaker continues to deny them and ignores the facts. Denial, like lying, is one of the key tactics of toxic abuse.

Blame Shifting — In one of the first and most important books on verbal abuse, *The Gentle Art of Verbal Self-Defense* written by the late Suzette Elgin in 1980, one of the central toxic tactics named is blame shifting. Some politicians have mastered this technique to such an extent that they never hold themselves at fault. Whatever the problem is, they will find a way to blame others, "Maybe they just didn't do a good job."

Bait and Switch — This is a tactic, similar to moving the goal posts, in which a manipulator pretends to be talking about one issue in order to end up talking about what he really wants to say. This is identified as a bait and switch, a sophisticated tactic in which the manipulator, in order to avoid having to answer for an issue, redefines the goals of the argument. The purpose is to humiliate the victim, to keep them preoccupied, or to simply wear them out, how "not nice" the other is acting. We observed this tactic in several previous political campaigns when the speaker, asked to account for his own record, accused the other of being "not nice." This tactic, in which the abusive one asserts that the victim is "not nice," is related to moving the goal posts — and it is an incredibly manipulative tactic and is very difficult to deal with. *When attacked, ignore the bait!*

Projecting — This is a tactic in which the manipulator, with astonishing efficiency, accuses the victim of doing exactly what he is being accused of. For example, we see this when one politician creates an entire campaign around the idea that his/her opponent is the most dishonest politician in history. Creating projecting manipulations around accusations creates a huge gap between perception and reality. But that's a function of a skillful projector — giving someone else the label of "dishonest" to avoid how dishonest he himself is.

Generalizing and Exaggerating — When there is no attention to detail, no plan of action, no proposals or plans to discuss, the tactic is to pull the listener off focus by using grandiose generalizations, exaggerations and hyperbole. Speeches are filled with words such as everyone and always, and language like "it's a disaster," "tremendous," "unbelievable," and "it's the greatest." Using claims with statements like "everyone tells me" — is very difficult to prove or disprove or fact-check. Generalizing is one of the classic abusive patterns.

Yelling and Shouting Over — For toxic manipulators and abusers, it is typical to use their voice as a tool of violence. They use their voices as weapons in order to ensure that their words are the ones heard most, literally yelling over the other in order to be heard. If you know what to watch for, it is easy to observe constant shouting over and interrupting the opponent. Also, the manipulator's tactic is to repeatedly refuse to stop talking when out of time, speak into the microphone to interrupt the other during their turn to speak, and refusing to let the other have the last word.

Fear-Mongering — Almost all toxic manipulators incite fear. In most of the key issues in the current campaign, the approach feeds into fear-mongering, inciting fear about the "other" into the audience. In discussions about policy and perceived differences are not okay. This is a very powerful tactic of manipulation, as it is very hard to fight back in an atmosphere of terror.

Body Shaming — Body-shaming is a painful emotion about criticizing yourself or others about some aspect of your physical appearance resulting in the recipient feeling shame about the self. It is a debilitating tactic that can have severe impacts, causing a person to be too humiliated to speak, advocate, or appear in public. Perpetrators of emotional abuse/domestic violence have a particularly troubling history of body-shaming women. It is caused by the belief that one is, or is perceived by others to be, inferior or unworthy of affection or respect because of one's actions, thoughts, circumstances, or experiences. There are negative attitudes in the media and elsewhere about celebrities who are "too fat" or who have not gotten rid of "baby weight." Messages from the media and from each other often imply that we should want to change, that we should care about looking slimmer, smaller, and thinner. Criticizing yourself or others because of some aspect of physical appearance leads to a vicious cycle of judgment and criticism.

Remember, “. . . Power hungry people who are addicted to the sense of power try to get under your skin by stirring people's emotions, it makes them feel powerful. Don't give them that satisfaction.” — from *The Gentle Art of Verbal Self-Defense* by Suzette Haden Elgin. Educate yourself about the tactics other people use (whether in your personal, professional, or community life), understand why you may over-react to certain tactics (childhood or current abuse experiences), know your political facts, know your triggers, know why they are triggers, and know how to respond to situations that used to throw you.

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Resources

Ann Diamond Interviews Yo-Yo Ma

[Viking.tv](https://www.viking.tv/)

May Every Woman Find Her Marty Ginsburg

[Michelle Ruiz](#)

[Ruth Bader Ginsburg is a beacon—but Marty should be too.](#)

Gaslighting in Relationships

[Video Results](#)

What Is Gaslighting in Relationships?

[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/)

How to Deal with Gaslighting In A Relationship

[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/)

10 Gaslighting Signs in an Abusive Relationship

[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/)

9 Signs of Gaslighting in a Relationship

[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/)

How to Spot the Hidden Signs Someone is Gaslighting?

[MedCircle](#)

Understanding PTSD's Effects on Brain, Body and Emotions

Janet Seahorn | [TEDxCSU](#) | [TEDx Talks](#)

Stonewalling

There are two myths most of us believe, one: that men do most of the stonewalling in a relationship and the second is that stonewalling is inherently bad for the marriage. The video packs a punch!

Find the video below on your favorite platform:

[YouTube channel](#)

[Instagram](#) (for Therapists—The Doherty Relationship Institute)

[Instagram](#) (for Couples-Modern Commitment)

[Facebook DRI Business Page](#)

[Twitter](#) (Bill Doherty's Account)

Biodiversity Day

[Exp#ScienceBeyondtheCenter](#) [#ScienceRocks](#) [#ScienceLearning](#) 

Join Dr. Chuck Kopczak, our Curator of Life Sciences, in the California Science Center's Southern California Ecosystems Garden (officially known as the Roy A. Anderson Blackbird Exhibit and Garden) as we celebrate the incredible biodiversity of our region. This video is part of our Science Beyond the Center educational series. Explore Science Center exhibits from behind the scenes, take in an amazing view, or learn something new from a scientist or astronaut.