

PART 2: THE VOICE OF WOMEN EXPERIENCING EMOTIONAL ABUSE

CHAPTER 5: WOMEN'S STORIES

It is difficult to put into words the emotional quality of an abusive relationship. Firstly, there is the undertone of emotional abuse that is constant but is not easily recognized by those on the outside of the relationship (Loring, 1994). Secondly, the abusive incidents are of an intermittent nature. Some are extremely subtle and others crudely overt. The danger one is faced with is that the more overt an abusive incident is, the louder it will speak, threatening to drone out the subtleties of the ongoing emotional abuse that is a constant. In this representation of the clients' stories, I will try and make them translucent, in order for both these aspects of the occurring emotional abuse to show through.

I have chosen to represent in as much detail as possible four case studies as told to me in a therapeutic setting. Overall, they are representative of a large number of the themes found in emotionally abusive relationships, but the magnitude of the situations women face in abusive relationships, is impossible to convey by means of a few case studies. I have assigned familiar names to my clients, their spouses and children although these are not their real names so as to protect their identities. I start with the story of Minette, a young professionally qualified woman, where the emotional abuse actually continued long after her separation from her husband. Then there is the story of Elaine, a young, inexperienced woman who had to find her own way, and Karen, who is still trying to find answers. Berna, as an older woman, had to confront tradition on her journey to a different future. I support the experiences of these women by the findings of other clients seen in my practice, as well as incidences related by friends and associates.

Underneath most of the paragraphs of the representation of the women's stories, I reflect and question. I deconstruct (take apart the texts) the story as a means of stimulating my own thoughts trying to understand and show the way in which the woman and her partner or spouse positioned themselves in the relationship (Burr, 1995). Billig (1995) argued that texts, also those created in close relationships, are constructed by using rhetorical devices, i.e. people attempt to persuade the other of the power of their arguments. I will therefore analyze the texts

to find the justifications that people use. In the margin, I briefly noted the positioning and themes (Discourses and discourses) as they appear. This is mostly an intuitive and interpretative process (Burr, 1995), and I refer to mechanisms of power and control as they emerge. At the end of the chapter, I present a short summary of the positioning, themes, and control mechanisms of the role-players.

Minette¹

A Professional Woman – The Abuse continuing after the Separation

*Beware of a man who praises women’s liberation: he is about to quit his job
Erica Jong, novelist, poet*

<p>Minette is a petite 33-year-old dentist who runs a <u>successful</u> private practice. She married Ian², a 34-year old Sports Administrator, after having known him for almost two years. In coming to therapy the marriage was in its third year. She is the youngest of three children from a “<u>traditional Afrikaans</u>” urban family. Her father is a retired lawyer, and her mother has always been a <u>housewife</u>. She describes the father as a man of <u>principles, strict, conservative, and authoritarian</u>, whereas her mother plays the <u>supportive nurturing role</u>. She has a good relationship with both parents and her siblings. Both academically and in cultural pursuits, she excelled at school and describes herself as a <u>driven and self-motivated person</u>. She enjoys her work, and being <u>successful</u> in her profession is important to her.</p> <p><i>Does her “good relationships” mean that she has always been the “obedient child”? Is there some dependency involved? Could being successful and having stereotypical and traditional role models lead to conflict?</i></p> <p>Minette starts the first session by commenting. “Emotionally I feel totally <u>depleted</u>.” Her manner is <u>anxious and depressed</u>. She bursts into tears and silently cries throughout the whole of the session, saying, “If only I can get some</p>	<p>Successful Assertive</p> <p>Traditional Afrikaans</p> <p>Stereotypical Roles</p> <p>Assertive Successful</p> <p>Positioning Depleted</p>
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¹ The name Minette is used as a pseudonym to protect the client’s identity.

² Minette’s husband is Ian – also a pseudonym.

<p><u>perspective</u> on what's happening to me. I think I've been depressed since Duncan's birth and he's six months old now. I have been on medication, but it doesn't really help. It feels as if I am applying band-aid and not dealing <u>with the real problem</u>. And my <u>husband is no help</u> at all. Even though he's at home while I'm at the practice, he does not help with the baby or around the house at all. Maybe this whole mess is <u>my fault</u> as I'm the one with the depression."</p> <p><i>Depression as result of abuse or individual circumstances or oppression? Why does she position herself as depressed? Does she thereby want the therapist to take on the Expert role? Or the husband? Perspective – wants to reason it out. What is the "real problem"? The denial or the aggression? Why position husband as rendering no help? Accepting the blame or being a "good" girl?</i></p> <p>Although the couple <u>discussed</u> starting a family, her falling pregnant came as a surprise. Ian was <u>upset</u> and reacted by saying the child probably was not even his. He "endlessly" <u>blamed</u> her and threatened her, insisting he will take the baby for a paternity test when born.</p> <p>Duncan was a couple of months old when I had to go back to my practice. He never gave me a good night's rest; crying ten, twenty times a night. Yes, I know Ian was doing a computer course, but still ...</p> <p>Now <u>he has me</u> and the baby <u>sleeping in the lounge</u> because we are <u>disturbing him</u> during the night and he has all this studying to do. This makes me so angry. And then at week-ends <u>he tells me</u> how tired he is and how much <u>he needs to relax</u>.</p> <p><i>What was the contract? Who broke the contract? Blaming because he wants the attention? Is he thus punishing her? "He has me" – Whose voice is she listening to? Why does she put up with this type of behaviour? Is she positioning herself as the "good wife" or "mother"? Issues of domination and control, as well as exploitation and/or physical abuse.</i></p> <p>At six o'clock in the morning I have to take Duncan out in the cold as my mom is helping me out by looking after him. Ian will <u>still be in bed, snoring</u> away, while I ready myself and the baby. Not once does he offer to take Duncan to them later – when it's a bit warmer. <u>Maybe</u> I am stupid. <u>Maybe</u> I am expecting too much.</p> <p><i>Is this "maybe" an indication of self-doubt, acceptance of the blame in being a "good wife" or an indication of dependency? How did she ask for help?</i></p>	<p>Reflection Trying to find answers</p> <p>Denial</p> <p>Positions the husband Contract</p> <p>Does not fully accept the blame</p> <p>Contract? PROCESS Negotiation Blaming Threatening</p> <p>Punishment Forcing</p> <p>Objection?</p> <p>Positioning as Victim</p> <p>Anger</p> <p>Blames partner</p>
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<p>Minette is “<u>uncertain</u>” as to how she is supposed to handle Ian’s lack of employment. Shortly before they got married, he suffered a back injury that prevented him from going back to his previous position. As he was actually considering a change of career <u>they decided</u> that he will take a year off, do a computer course, and then start afresh in the IT-business. But three years along the line he is still doing “yet another” computer course, relentlessly <u>complaining</u> about having to write exams as he knows much more than the lecturers do. He tells everyone how difficult these courses are and that he needs to study every second he can find. She tells a different story. Both her parents and sister are telling her that “this now is too much.” She says,</p> <p>Every time he wants to start on a new course, we have these <u>fight</u>s. I want him to go out and find a job; he wants to do another course. I have been <u>supporting</u> us for close on three years now, and the courses really cost an arm and a leg. So I stall and try and have him see my point of view. He tells me that I do not understand the IT-business, that there’s no work available, and that at his age, he’s not willing to start as an “appy” (apprentice). If I try to further reason with him he starts <u>screaming</u> at me that I’m <u>not really being supportive</u>, “All you ever think about is money. You’re such a <u>stingy bitch!</u> I suppose this is how you keep to your <u>marriage vows</u>. You’re such a money-grabbing bitch.” And in the end <u>I give in</u>. Then I feel all guilty, primarily <u>questioning myself</u>.</p> <p><i>Denial because she fears abandonment and rejection or because a conflict of roles? Is she positioning herself as dependent or the “dutiful, good” daughter? What was the contract? That she will take care of him, that she will comply with his wishes and be the supportive wife? He telling her that she does not “understand” – shifting the blame, cutting her back to her place as woman (“women do not know about things outside of the home”), plays on her guilt and self-doubt. Her not being “supportive” – Is the game that whenever she confronts, he shifts the blame? Asking for nurturance? Name-calling because she is not keeping to the contract of “supporting him”? Plays on her guilt and self-doubt as a “good” woman should take care of her man. “Marriage vows” – referring to the initial contract and blaming her for forsaking the patriarchal expectations. “Giving in” because she wants to be the “good” wife.</i></p>	<p>Victim Contract</p> <p>Role-conflict</p> <p>Self-doubt</p> <p>Emasculating</p> <p>Positioning</p> <p>Discussion Contract Fights Positioning husband</p> <p>Wanting her to go back to contract Blames partner Positioning/ emasculating</p> <p>Contract expectations</p> <p>Emasculating</p> <p>Justification</p> <p>Name-calling Blaming</p> <p>Giving-in</p>
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<p>They negotiate and he volunteers to help her out at the practice with anything computer-related. This started out working well, but soon his promised two days a week turns into two days a month. Still she pays him a retainer and he gets to drive the company car. “He persistently complains about the <u>“idiot personnel I hired and his having to cope with them”</u>. They now do not want him there giving orders anymore. He moans about the guy that does the software, saying he does not know what he’s doing, although there have not been any problems until now. Minette struggles to decide on what is “realistic under the circumstances.” <u>“How much longer must I pay up”</u> and “Am I being unreasonable in expecting him to find a job?” or “How do you (the therapist) know that what he’s blaming me for is not the truth?”</p> <p><i>Does this negotiating mean both parties committed to the deal? “Idiot personnel” – Is he challenging her authority and trying to position himself in the dominant position? Her questions – Rhetorical or is she positioning herself in the “dutiful” position by positioning the therapist as the expert?</i></p> <p>She finds some perspective herself.</p> <p>I think I would have <u>been willing to keep quiet</u> if he made any effort whatsoever to help me with Duncan or the house. He’s at home all day long, but he never as much as washes the dishes or offers to look after the baby while I do dinner. <u>If I ask him to do something</u>, the fighting starts, because how can I not understand the stress he’s under, how much he has to do, how hard he’s been studying that day? Sometimes I <u>try and reason</u> and tell him how difficult my day has been, and how I have to take care of the baby and my practice and still come home and cook dinner, how I <u>need him to help me out</u>, how he needs to bond with the baby. At times I go into this nagging mode, but mostly I end up <u>crying</u>. I wish I can explain how this <u>hurts</u>. I even <u>ask for his forgiveness</u> because I honestly in that moment believe him to be right.</p> <p><i>Did she read the contract as “I will help you and you will support me”? Is she only whining and nagging? Will the “asking” have any effect and if not, why not? Is the “reasoning” her way of saying “please help me”? Why does it have no effect? Asking forgiveness because of the anger she experiences, or to be “dutiful” Challenges him and is silenced. Power play succeeded. She asks, criticizes, reasons, and nags – he shifts the blame – she is beaten down. The power is restored.</i></p>	<p>Emasculating</p> <p>Exploitation</p> <p>Role conflict</p> <p>Positioning himself PROCESS</p> <p>Rhetorical or positioning herself in the dutiful position</p> <p>Sense Making</p> <p>Traditional Positioning</p> <p>PROCESS Justifying</p> <p>Challenge</p> <p>Dependency Asks support as expected Objects Challenges</p> <p>Nagging</p> <p>Giving-in</p>
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<p>She explains herself to be “<u>cooling off</u>” towards Ian and questions whether she still loves him. She finds their lovemaking intolerable, and says, “I realize that this is going to bring further problems, but I just cannot open up and give my all anymore. How can one trust another human being, if he’s constantly out to hurt you?” In describing their sexual relationships, she explains, “I cannot call it making love, its plain sex. To be honest, <u>I think its rape</u>. He uses me to answer to his physical needs. There’s no cuddling or fore-play or intimacy. And I’m <u>always the guilty party</u>. He asks me: “Why don’t you feel anything, why are you hurting?” <u>Maybe</u> it is all in my head. The gynea explained that it will be better the more sex we have. I feel <u>dirty and used</u>. Sometimes I just cry, but never ever does he stop. He goes on with whatever he’s doing, <u>hurting me more and more</u>.”</p> <p><i>When hurt cannot give freely. Secondary abuse as the male professional does not understand, makes her the guilty party, blames the woman. Violence. Symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress</i></p>	<p>Sexual exploitation/ Physical abuse and aggression</p> <p>Sense Making</p> <p>Secondary abuse</p> <p>Punishment Aggression</p>
<p>Sometimes during the day I will reach out and hug him. But then he just stands there, <u>stiff and completely unapproachable</u>, and in the end he will just walk away without saying anything. At times, Ian will <u>not once talk to me</u> for a whole day, or ask me something, or even acknowledge my being there. She describes experiencing <u>no emotional support</u> in the relationship, saying, “<u>If only we could talk</u>. He simply doesn’t speak to me. We’re like two people sharing space. It’s as if he doesn’t care, he’s merely not interested to work things out.” Even when consulting him on run-of-the-mill decisions, he refrains from answering her or discussing the options. Should Minette assert herself and decide by herself, Ian retaliates with, “That’s just like you, always <u>wanting to control</u> everything.” Recently she consulted him about something, and they ended up having a fight, with Ian hitting out, sending his <u>fist through a cupboard</u>. Or she asks him to look after the baby as she wants to quickly slip out and buy bread and milk, but he screams at her. Another fight starts up with him again hitting out. He calls her “<u>a whore</u>” and “a fuckin’ useless mother.”</p> <p><i>Silence and rejection used to regain dominant position. He dictates the relationship – “If you do not do it my way, it’s no way.” Contact - Her needs not met. How will the rejection affect her? Is it true that every time she takes a stand, he turns the tables on her? To what extent are both struggling with traditional role models? Is he handling his own guilt by shifting the blame (“If you do not</i></p>	<p>PROCESS Rejection</p> <p>Punishment No emotional support</p> <p>Contract Emasculating Challenge</p> <p>Assertiveness Justification Name-calling</p> <p>Challenge</p> <p>Sees her as unfair? Physical aggression Not a good woman</p>

<p><i>have sex with me, you must be a whore”)?</i></p> <p>She describes Ian as always having been <u>extremely jealous</u>. Even before their marriage he scolded her for being “too friendly” with her male patients. When her friends do show up he is rude and afterwards tells her he either doesn’t like them visiting or he criticizes them, implying something to be wrong with her for keeping such company. She remembers, “Like I used to go jogging with this sixty year old friend I had since varsity, but Ian thought we were having an affair. In the end I just stopped jogging.” He <u>didn’t want</u> to visit her family, so she usually <u>excused them</u> from family get-togethers. Minette relates, “In the beginning I used to ask my mom to help me out, but then he’d be so rude that she leaves and he <u>would complain</u>, “You and your family. She has never really liked me””.</p> <p><i>She does x w and y, he shows disdain, she complies, and the dominance is restored. His complaining – asking for nurturance/attention.</i></p> <p>Ian <u>insists</u> that Minette takes him on all shopping trips or if she has her hair cut. He is quite adamant that she has no dress sense, and will <u>not be able to tell</u> the hairdresser what to do. Ian says, “I don’t know how you do it, but <u>you never manage to look nice</u>.” She goes on to say that she sometimes wishes she could explain to others what she was dealing with.</p> <p>If it’s physical abuse or something more tangible, you can tell people and even if they do not really understand it, they are able to see your logic, but this is different. Like at the family barbeque, in front of everybody, he tells you how good you look, and you explode. Now everybody looks at you, thinking you’re gone over the bend. But they do not know about everything that has gone before; how he’s been complaining that you again will not be a proper host, how he’s been criticizing you since you woke up the morning because “you’re so fat” and “your hair’s a mess” and “look at you, a real old hag”.</p> <p><i>The abuse lies in the context of the relationship, and not in the content of the messages.</i></p> <p>Minette tells about Ian’s constant <u>boastfulness</u>.</p> <p>He laughed at me and bragged about his being the intelligent one in the family and that he earned much more than I can ever dream of earning. He</p>	<p>Isolation Assertive</p> <p>Blood line Jealousy versus Possessive- ness</p> <p>Tries to Isolate her</p> <p>Justifying PROCESS</p> <p>Domination Control Possessive</p> <p>Verbal aggression</p> <p>Breaking down self-esteem</p> <p>Narcissism Emasculating</p>
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<p>never once remembered that when we got married I paid off his debt on his car, because he couldn't afford it. After the marriage, he was spending money like it was going out of fashion. When I <u>dared to talk</u> to him about our money situation, <u>he lashed out</u>, "You're just being selfish. You always want everything for yourself. Aren't you ashamed of how you treat me?"</p>	<p>Positioning himself</p> <p>Positioning herself as Victim</p> <p>Verbal Aggression</p> <p>Selfless support</p>
<p>"Selfish" – meaning "you do not give me what I need or ask." <i>"Dared to talk" – unequal power/ traditional gender roles/ previous experiences.</i></p>	
<p>Minette reasons, "I think something in me changed since the birth of the baby. He's made me see matters differently. Now it's not only me, I have to see to the baby's <u>emotional well-being</u> as well. Even <u>physically</u> it's different. I don't feel that secure with Ian any more. There's the <u>constant</u> bickering, the fighting and the screaming. I see his little body stiffening up – this is not a good place to be." <i>The pattern is constant, continuous.</i></p>	<p>Children: His attention</p> <p>PROCESS</p> <p>Stereotypical expectations</p>
<p>She contemplates getting a divorce, but <u>immediately checks</u> herself, "No, I believe divorce <u>is a sin</u> in the eyes of God. This is not how God intended it to be. Maybe I <u>should be more</u> submissive, more supportive of Ian. The Bible does tell us that the <u>husband is the head</u> of the house and I am not supposed to question that." <i>What is the influence of religious programming?</i></p>	<p>Entrapment by Religion</p> <p>Positions self as obedient</p> <p>Stereotyping</p>
<p>She tries to bring Ian around to see where she is coming from by insisting that he come and see me. In therapy, she gives her reasons as her fear that his aggressive outbursts will escalate in terms of intensity and will become more physical. It also becomes clear that she sees Ian's committing to therapy as <u>proof that he still cares</u>. <i>Needs him to take responsibility for the relationship.</i></p>	
<p>Ian does show up for a session and physically he impresses as the exact opposite of his petite spouse. He is <u>tall, muscular, and overpowering</u>, and speaks in an <u>abrupt, irritable tone of voice</u>. He starts the session off by saying, "<u>She is</u> totally withdrawn. She doesn't want me near her." Asked why he thinks she withdraws, he says: "I think <u>Minette wants me to be as successful as her father</u>. She looks down on me because I haven't got a job. Everyone is</p>	<p>Domination</p> <p>Justifying</p> <p>Stereotypical Afrikaner</p> <p>Positioning</p>

<p>pushing me to find a job, <u>but I know</u> that after getting this diploma, I will be able to pick and choose.” He continues, “I have always been a <u>workaholic</u>, and lately I have really put everything into it. I’m studying, and on top of that I’ve sorted out the computers at the practice. I don’t know what Minette is complaining about, I cannot do more. On a Saturday <u>she even wants</u> me to keep Duncan busy while she takes a bath or reads a magazine. I mean, for heaven’s sake, woman!”</p> <p><i>Men usually do not show up when asked to go and see the therapist. Attempts to gain sympathy from therapist. Blaming her – and thus shifts the attention from him not working. Victim/perpetrator triangle</i></p>	<p>Justifying</p> <p>Victim</p> <p>Positioning the therapist</p>
<p>He changes the subject,</p> <p>You know, <u>she started</u> with all this <u>nonsense</u> on our wedding night. I really don’t know, but to me her reaction looks like that of a woman who has been sexually molested as a child. <u>I hope you know what you’re dealing with</u>. She promised me she will change, but we’re still only having sex once a month or even once every two months. I know she’s tired, so I even help her with Duncan. He wakes up every 30 minutes and I do get up, but he keeps on screaming. <u>He wants his mother</u>. I really don’t know what more she wants. <u>She complains</u> to her parents and never gives them the true story. It’s the same with household duties. <u>She thinks</u> she can throw things around, and then when she comes home the house will be sorted out and dinner will be on the table.</p> <p><i>Women’s things are “nonsense” – stereotypical. He questions the therapist’s abilities; thereby wanting to take control? Destabilization of the subject. Does he blame her for being a “working mom”? Unrealistic – if she does not work, will he then? Influence of sexual rejection? His understanding of gender roles.</i></p>	<p>Justification</p> <p>Blaming</p> <p>Finding excuses</p> <p>Justification</p>
<p>When asked about the incident where he slammed his hand through the door, Ian replies, “Ag, that wasn’t really anything. I just get so frustrated by her constant talking, nagging, wanting me to do more. She just goes on and on. I don’t know ... I’m sure it’s her parents putting her up to all this nonsense. Especially her mother, she never did look me in the eyes.” I tell Ian that I’m a bit worried about him not working as it usually gets harder to find re-employment</p>	<p>Shifting the blame</p> <p>Justification</p> <p>Re-directing attention</p>

<p>the longer one has been out of the job market. The remainder of the session is taken up by his telling me how little we (women?) know about the IT-business, how much effort and commitment it takes, and how difficult the courses are.</p>	
<p>Minette comes to the next therapy session (the third) already having seen a lawyer, and firm in her decision to divorce Ian. He apparently went home after our sessions and reported that I confided in him that she is losing her mind, “Even your psychologist can see how silly you have become.” She rallies on, I know it’s wrong, but I cannot take this any longer.</p>	<p>Conflict, being dutiful</p>
<p>I don’t know how I’m going to face up to society. I mean, just kicking your husband out and saying that he’s not good enough, all because he’s not working.</p>	<p>Positioning Self-doubt Fear: not being “good enough”</p>
<p>Who says it’s not my fault.</p>	
<p>How am I going to cope with Duncan all on my own, especially when he grows up and starts asking questions about why I divorced his Dad? What harm am I doing to my child? How can a mother do this to her child?</p>	<p>Guilt Fought back</p>
<p>This is wrong, I tell you – this is not the moral way I’ve been brought up. How am I going to face going to church again?</p>	<p>Guilt: religion</p>
<p>Who says Ian is not going to change?</p>	<p>Hope remains Guilt</p>
<p>How am I to know if it wasn’t something I did that had him react in such a manner?</p>	<p>Self-doubt</p>
<p>Deep inside I knew his blaming is not even logical and realistic.</p>	
<p>Nevertheless, I’m leaving. I cannot take this any further.</p>	
<p><i>Every woman has her point of no return.</i> <i>Conflict between “right and wrong.”</i> <i>Conflict between the self and the programming of society.</i> <i>Finding own answers.</i></p>	

<p>She informs Ian of her decision to divorce him. He then makes their home unbearable to both mother and child. For days on end he screams at her, he swears at her, he keeps her awake. The baby reacts by sleeping even less. Minette now fears that Ian might lose control and do something to harm her and the baby. “He looks at me and I see the contempt in his eyes, saying, “I will not let you bring up our son to be like your father.””</p>	<p>Escalation of violence</p> <p>Emasculation</p> <p>Verbal aggression</p>
<p>Hearing the threat in his voice, having him threaten to shoot himself previously and having seen his total reckless driving when the baby is in the car, she fears for their safety and decides to temporarily move out of their house; a house registered in her name. An emotional drama ensues, with Ian screaming, “You can go, but you will not take the baby. You can just as well relax, take your medicine, and then realize the stupidity of your decision.” The police, the therapist, and her parents are called. His brother intervenes, and in the end Ian agrees that she and Duncan can temporarily move in with her parents. She is ashamed of the scene that was played out in public, and Ian is fuming with anger. He turns vindictive and the struggle continues over the following two years.</p>	<p>Trying to regain power</p> <p>Fears physical aggression</p> <p>Blaming Threatening</p> <p>Humiliation</p>
<p><i>Aggression used as the last resort to regain power?</i> <i>Power locked into the vindictiveness.</i> <i>Double bind situation – cannot let go. Dependency issues.</i> <i>Why was it necessary to get his permission?</i></p>	
<p>The first couple of weeks after she moved out, the following interplay between the partners ensues:</p>	
<p>Firstly: Ian comes to visit Duncan every afternoon after Minette gets home from work. As he has never really given attention to the baby (and how long can you play with a seven-month old baby, anyway?) these visits are used to taunt Minette. He takes the baby, and as soon as Duncan makes a sound, he hands him back to his mother. Later on, he would either blame Minette when his son cried implying that she was making the then one year old up against his father, or he would hand the child back and spend the rest of the afternoon on his cellphone, but not leaving. If, in the end, she does get a court order to restrict</p>	<p>Domination Aggression</p> <p>Vindictiveness</p> <p>Blaming Working on her guilt</p> <p>Setting her up</p>

<p>his visitation rights, Ian will have reason to tell friends and family that Minette is keeping the baby from him.</p>	
<p><i>Not taking a stand and setting boundaries.</i></p>	
<p>Ian emotionally taunts Minette during these visits, and as she is afraid of his aggressive outbursts, she does not want to leave the baby alone with him. She also does not want to further inconvenience her parents (both polite in handling Ian, but silently seething). During therapy, she bursts into tears, “I sometimes just cannot take this any longer. One moment he’s telling me how he loves me and that he cannot bear to be without me, and the next moment he is screaming, blaming, telling me how selfish I am and that I really must have my mind read. “You are hurting Duncan, you are depriving him of a father and a real home.” Then he has the audacity to invite me for dinner on our wedding anniversary.”</p>	<p>Aggression Fear</p> <p>Confusion Manipulations</p> <p>Bad mother Guilt</p> <p>Anger</p>
<p>Secondly: Minette never talks to his family or gives them her side of the story. This gives Ian the leeway to tell whatever he needs to cover his bases. So he tells them that she’s been sleeping around and later changes this story into her having lesbian relationships.</p>	<p>Shame and failure</p> <p>Justifying</p>
<p><i>Pattern of not taking responsibility? Because of a sense of failure or shame. If a woman is not interested in me, the perfect male, there must sexually be something wrong with her.</i></p>	
<p>Thirdly: Minette finds it difficult to handle the emotional upheaval which she experiences. She struggles to sever the emotional ties with Ian, and says, “I’m so worried about Ian. I think he’s going through a depression and he cannot get his head around the idea of a divorce.” Then there is the guilt, “Maybe I should have understood that he was studying. But I was so tired and had this little baby to take care of.” Or she would lament “Maybe I never did show him enough love” or “Maybe I am stingy” and “Maybe I did spend too much time at the practice and should have been home to make him a cup of coffee while he was studying.” “And then the doubt will come and I will start thinking that maybe it was my fault. I’ll remember him not wanting the baby in the first place, how he had blamed me for falling pregnant and accused me of having another man’s child.” And the fear as she suspects him of having killed her cat when she didn’t</p>	<p>Dependency Stereotypical nurturing role Guilt</p> <p>Self-doubt</p> <p>Self-blame</p> <p>Fear Threat present</p>

<p>comply with his wishes to move back and forcefully withholding things from her that she holds dear. All these feelings culminate when her sister-in-law phones, Ian was walking around holding his pistol to his head, screaming that I was ruining his life and that he's going to blow away his brains. How will I explain a suicide to his family? Everything is my fault.</p>	<p>Accepting the blame Guilt</p>
<p><i>She suffers from the guilt of allegedly not having paid enough attention - I remember him rejecting her advances. Takes two to play this game. Entrapment through the guilt and relational focus?</i></p>	
<p>Fourthly: Ian used the practical situation in a vindictive manner. He refused her access to the house, leaving her with the bare minimum she took the evening she moved out.</p>	<p>Domination Aggression Power</p>
<p>Ian refuses to let me come and fetch the camping cot. It's my sister's and I really need it. Duncan is sleeping even less since we moved out. He's not used to not sleeping in his own surroundings. Ian refuses me to come and get Duncan's clothes and toys, and will not bring them when he comes visiting. I'm not moving back, and he will not force me. What am I supposed to do? Go out and buy the baby a new wardrobe and all new toys?</p>	<p>Positioning self as victim</p>
<p>Ian knows all the right buttons to push. He would constantly phone her, only to scream obscenities in her ears. He would send twenty SMS messages in an hour, calling her "a bitch, a whore, a fucking bad mother." Then she would receive the twenty-first SMS reading, "Love u and good night." Or he would further yell obscenities and then the SMS would follow, "So if I asked u for a night of sex with no strings attached would u say no?" A typical voice mail sounds something like this:</p>	<p>Possessive Bad woman Verbal aggression</p>
<p>You are destroying me and I know you are enjoying every single moment.</p>	<p>Blaming Scapegoating Guilt</p>
<p>You are making my life into a living hell. All blame is laid at your feet and God sees everything.</p>	<p>Victim</p>
<p>For five years I did everything for you, and now you're using Duncan to get back at me.</p>	<p>Victim</p>

<p>You married me only to have a child, but in the end you will eat shit.</p> <p>You're blind if you do not see what you're doing to someone as little as Duncan.</p>	<p>Aggression Bad mother</p>
<p>I wish you find yourself someone new just to realize he has Aids and I want him to waste all your money.</p>	<p>Wishing ill health</p>
<p>You don't deserve to be a mother. This will be on your conscience for the rest of your life.</p> <p><i>Men have had much more practice in the games of power and domination. The need to gain control clearly showed in the abusive communication. He uses and had during their time together used her own guilt feeling as well as her self-doubt against her. He plays a vindictive game of using her gullibility or her wish to have things work out, wanting things to be fair, and confusing her.</i></p>	<p>Bad mother Guilt and self-doubt</p>
<p>He takes her to court saying she owes him a salary. After months of deliberation with legal representatives, forcing Minette to take time off to see to the issue as well as having her pay up thousands in legal fees, their decision favours her. She now comes up with the interesting observation:</p> <p>This is so scary. There actually is no one to fall back on. I only now realize that adult life is no playground. Now there is no man at my side to offer me some sort of safety. I'm on my own, and it's everyone for himself.</p> <p><i>Working on own dependency issues. Can stand on own feet. Re-evaluating gender and position with regards to men.</i></p>	<p>Aggression Vindictive</p> <p>Exploitation</p> <p>Dependency</p>
<p>She now learns that Ian was never found medically unfit after his back injury and that he was actually asked to come back to his previous position. When Minette confronts him he says, "But you don't understand. I did it for you and Duncan. I did it so that you could give your full attention to your practice."</p> <p><i>Conned her.</i></p>	<p>Exploitation Lies</p> <p>Excuses Justification</p>
<p>Minette often communicates her anxiety about taking sole responsibility for the upbringing of Duncan saying, "I'm so scared. Will I be able to really be a good parent to Duncan? Will I say and do the right things?" He knows her self-doubts, and therefore sues for custody of Duncan, saying to her, "You are emotionally unstable." Minette knows this not to be true, and reacts with both</p>	<p>Self-doubt</p> <p>Domination Aggression Vindictiveness</p>

<p>anger and self-doubt.</p> <p>How dare he, how dare he say I never wanted Duncan and that I'm an unfit mother! This after he wanted us to go for paternity tests when I fell pregnant. The cheek! He's the one who never lifted a finger to look after the baby. I remember Duncan having to go to hospital for grommets and I asked Ian to go with. He just picked another fight, "Why must I go with? It is totally unfair of you to expect me to take time off from my studies. You know how busy I am." Or the Saturday I had to go into my practice and at 11:00 he calls. "Where the hell are you? I cannot take this screaming child anymore." I can go on and on. It is 16:45 and I'm on the highway on my way home and he calls me. "Where are you? Come and take this child!"</p> <p>Now (This is now 18 months down the line, and Ian has visitation rights every Sunday at a children's playground) he either does not show for his visits with Duncan or the poor little thing sits playing in the sandpit while Daddy is constantly on the cell phone. Once Duncan was crying about something, so Ian just walked away and got into his car - without saying a word to me. I was sitting at least fifty metres from Duncan. Never once did he ask me about Duncan's development or adjustment to play-school. Never once did he comment when he started walking or about something new he did, or a new word that slipped out. I know what he says is not true, but I'm so scared. Why do I still have this intense emotional reaction whenever he does something to get at me? I cannot understand this.</p> <p><i>He knows her self-doubt and uses it. Trying to prove himself as the dutiful father by degrading her. Power in installing fear. Symptoms of posttraumatic stress?</i></p> <p>The case at the Family Advocate is settled in favour of the mother. The father's visitation rights will only be extended after submitting to therapy and guidance from a counselling psychologist. Ian does not adhere to any of these recommendations.</p> <p><i>He's not interested in either the child or the results. This was a game of control and power.</i></p> <p>When it comes to the financial terms of the divorce settlement he plays the</p>	<p>Anger Helpless</p> <p>Unfairness Fear Positioning him</p> <p>Control by frustration</p> <p>Control through child</p> <p>Dependency PTSD Anxiety</p> <p>Doubts the system</p> <p>Vindictive</p> <p>Helpless Entrapment</p>
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<p>same game. His first claim is for half her practice (saying that he helped her build the practice) as well as other assets. Again and again he makes minimal and unacceptable adjustments, until, out of the blue, Minette’s legal representative receives a reasonable offer and she is willing to settle. Immediately Ian starts another round of blaming and more or less returns to his first offer. Minette says, “It’s nearly two years now and still I haven’t managed to have him evicted from my home. It’s all this court mumbo-jumbo and nobody does what they say. I really don’t know where to turn.” Although after months of negotiating with Ian, she moved into a rented apartment, she refrains from buying new furniture and appliances, as most of what they have belonged to her when they got married. For months she stayed with her parents, but still she paid the bond, the electricity, and the telephone bill. Ian even phones, and instructs her to supply food for their dogs.</p> <p><i>Programmed to be “nice” and to take care.</i></p>	<p>Dependence Guilt</p> <p>Entrapment Exploitation</p> <p>Victim position</p> <p>Bad Mother</p> <p>Crazy making</p> <p>Playing for sympathy</p>
<p>Minette comments, “What a clever way to get back at you as through the divorce settlement.” She at times verbalizes the wish to hurt back. This feeling leads to immense conflict over the financial settlement. Again she struggles with deciding on what is reasonable and realistic, but also the feeling of “Why must I suffer alone? I will get back at him,” only to reign herself in again.</p> <p>There are times when I really wish I can get Ian out of my and my son’s lives. At least then I’ll know Duncan will be safe. There are times when I actually sit and think how to get back at him. I want him to suffer as I did, I want him to feel the pain, I want him to come crawling at me and saying he is sorry and then there are the times that I really need him to say he is sorry. I think it’s because I cannot believe that he wasn’t aware of what he was doing.</p> <p><i>Beginning the process of emotionally freeing herself. An apology will mean that he was the guilty party and will free her of the self-doubt.</i></p>	<p>Depression</p> <p>Frustration</p> <p>Powerless</p> <p>Doubts the system</p>
<p>So Ian calls me, trying to turn the tables on Minette, and says, “She’s taking all my money. She’s absolutely robbing me. This is plain theft. Please talk to Minette – she’s losing it. She’s keeping Duncan from me. You of all people must know how much damage she is doing to my boy.”</p> <p><i>Wants psychologist to take sides – she will again be isolated, losing some support. Ganging up against her as with his family.</i></p>	<p>Victim</p>

<p>Time and again she is confronted with another ploy. Her reactions vary between a deepening depression because of the frustration and a feeling of powerlessness not being able to do anything else to change the situation. “Even if the judge understands some of what’s been going on, he will never be able to understand the full impact thereof.”</p> <p>Minette describes herself at this time and place; separated, but after two years still awaiting a court date to finally bring together Ian’s financial claims, the report of the Family Advocate, and the divorce.</p> <p>It was in finally unpacking the things I did get back from Ian that I remembered the illusion I was living under; the illusion that everything has a place in life. I bought every self-help book I could lay my hand on, hoping, trying to find some answers. I was so naive in believing the fairy tale.</p> <p>I don’t think I will ever be able to trust men again, or ever consider a relationship again. Never, never again (shaking her head). I cannot even imagine myself in a relationship. As for now, I’m in the process of finding a locum for my practice, as I’m leaving for this congress in Germany. So the agency asks me if I would prefer a man or a woman and I have this screaming-feeling of “How, can they even ask!” I will never appoint a man in my practice, never.</p> <p>I recently went on a course, and was so amazed by the reaction of people towards me. People talked to me and supported my input. I actually felt worthwhile again.</p> <p>I sometimes feel like walking out on the morning service at church. How can you believe anything these guys tell you? I sit there and am filled with abomination at the men around me. I feel betrayed.</p> <p>I cannot even pray. It’s more: “Oh God, I do not understand Your ways. I know You are there, but that’s about all.” I do not read books of a spiritual nature anymore. I only see them as the work of people, each with his own opinion, and how are we supposed to know it’s His will and His Word they’re</p>	<p>Loss of trust</p> <p>Regaining self-worth</p> <p>Trust Religion</p>
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<p>writing about.</p> <p><i>Losing trust can also be a symptom of posttraumatic stress.</i></p> <p>I only now realize how dependent I was on Ian. Even before our marriage, I was the one to call and apologize when we had an argument.</p> <p>I wish I can control my reaction better. I get a fright every time I receive an SMS or I see a car similar to Ian's. My mouth goes all dry, and my heart beats so quickly that I have this heavy, cramping feeling on my heart. Or at five to three he calls from the playground asking, "Where's my child?" and I go all whimpering. He informs me that the house telephone bill needs to be paid and my first reaction is that maybe he is right. Maybe I am supposed to pay the bill. It's this feeling of powerlessness in that he's able to manipulate my feelings, my thoughts, and my logic.</p> <p>An old friend recently called, and I realized I should have opened my eyes for the signs even before we were married. I can now remember him never really greeting anyone. He always had something negative to say about everyone, and pushed people away by his abrupt manner. How did I land myself in this mess? I suppose I will one day look back and hang my head in shame. Just after Duncan was born, I first hired a maid to help me out. After two weeks she wanted to leave, because she was afraid of Ian's aggression. I think I heard, but I denied the implications of what she said. I wasn't ready to confront the truth.</p> <p>I remember that just before we were married, I had this conference in America, and he spoiled the whole trip for me by making me feel selfish. I would dutifully phone him, a 3-minute call costing me whatever, and he would be most disagreeable. It spoiled everything for me. Why did I allow him to influence me to that extent? It's my fault for always being so pleasing. I have this "I'm so sorry for taking up space-attitude, sorry to be alive attitude". I allow others to use me.</p> <p>It still hurts every time Ian is supposed to visit and play with Duncan, and he doesn't really pay the child any attention. Why does he do that? Is he never</p>	<p>Dependency Obedience Stereotypical</p> <p>Bonding or symptoms of PTSD</p> <p>Coming to terms Denial Self-blame Pleasing Dutiful Obedient</p> <p>Sense Making Unfairness Victim Self-doubt Self-blame Sense Making</p>
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going to understand how much he hurts people? I think the main issue I am struggling with is how unfair and unjust Ian is and has been. I feel so victimized.

I fall into this trap of blaming myself. How could I have chosen this man as my husband? There must be something seriously wrong with me for having gotten myself in this mess.

The abuse carries on; both in the old relationship and a new one. To Minette Ian says, "You're so scabby you look ill. I can see you are suffering. Are you sure you can manage looking after Duncan on your own?" He brags that his new girlfriend, whom he intends to marry, is even more well-to-do than Minette. But the new girlfriend turns up at her practice, wanting to know the reasons of the pending divorce. The new girlfriend is worried, because after yet another argument she and Ian had, they ended up in his pushing her from the car. She mentions Ian constantly blaming her for being too fat.

Is this the usual pattern in emotional abuse – always finding a new victim?

Although, as a therapist, I believe in brief therapy, Minette has been to regular sessions over the last two years. Not wanting to constantly burden friends and family with the intricate details of the constant happenings between her and her "husband," she sees therapy "as the only place I can just let go, relax, and recuperate."

When asked what she needed from Ian, she replies: "Steadfastness."

When asked about her decision to leave after all that has happened after she moved out, she replies:

I'll do it all over again. This is still the best decision I have ever made!

Elaine³

A Young Woman – Finding her own Way

<p>I only saw Elaine, an unmarried 27 year old lawyer, for two therapy sessions, but her story poignantly illustrates the workings of emotional abuse. She impressed as a <u>highly intelligent, self-assured, and verbal</u> young woman. Starting a new relationship, she found some baggage from a previous relationship resurfacing, and felt she needed to address these issues. She started therapy by saying, “I was in an abusive relationship, and now I have all <u>these hang-ups</u> about men.”</p>	<p>Strong & Successful</p> <p>Assertive Positioning: Problem lies with me</p>
<p><i>This is not your stereotypical passive, submissive woman.</i></p> <p>She related her story as follows: “I was born in Cape Town as the eldest of four girls. My father, although a medical doctor, came from a religious family with more than one brother and uncle being in the ministry. My dad himself was an exceptionally religious and <u>intellectual</u> man. We were always debating everything. Whereas Dad comes from Irish stock, my mom is from an extended, <u>rural Afrikaans family</u>. She has 10 brothers and sisters, and they all are <u>extremely conservative</u> in their outlook on life. I’ve always had these hassles with my mom. I was <u>headstrong</u>, and no matter what she said, I always had to now why. I wanted to go dancing and to her this was a sin.”</p>	<p>Conservative Patriarchal?</p> <p>Programmed assertiveness Cold father?</p> <p>Afrikaans Conservative</p> <p>Assertive Positioning: Headstrong</p>
<p><i>What role will spiritual issues play here? What will the role of the father-figure be? How will she position herself in connection with gender-roles?</i></p>	
<p>When she was sixteen years old, her father was accused of embezzlement, and the family’s world fell apart. The father tried his hand at one or two businesses, but “he trusts too easily” and things never really worked out again. During her last year at school, he was even imprisoned for a couple of months. At that stage, Elaine took on most family <u>responsibilities</u>, as her mother had to start working on a full-time basis. Elaine recalls, “All I can remember was that during this time she used to physically lash out at me for whatever reason. We were</p>	<p>Abandonment</p> <p>Humiliation</p> <p>Resilient</p>

³ Elaine is a pseudonym to protect the client’s identity.

⁴ A pseudonym.

<p>constantly at each other's throats."</p> <p><i>Will there be issues of abandonment? What will be the later influence of her taking responsibility and taking over the nurturing and mother role? Her views on her father and the paradox of him trusting too easily. What will the influence be of "losing" the strong father?</i></p> <p>Elaine talks about school and calls herself "the typical <u>overachiever</u>." She excelled at an academic level and received colours for a number of cultural activities as well. "I was <u>strong-willed</u>, and knew precisely where I was heading, and that was law school. Instead, and because of my dad's mishaps, I ended up doing a one-year secretarial course. I still largely took responsibility for my younger sisters."</p> <p><i>Issues of failure and success? Anger at male abandonment?</i></p>	<p>Success buys acceptance</p> <p>Not stereotypical Strong-willed</p>
<p>She describes the ensuing emotionally abusive relationship</p> <p>And then I met Quintus⁴ - <u>27 years my senior</u>. I was bowled over by this guy who had seen the world; who had seen and done everything. He previously was in the <u>Special Forces</u>, and had this mysterious link to high-ranking officers in the force. He was such an amazing man, strong-willed and shrewd. An astute businessman, <u>someone I could learn from</u>. He had everything I aspired to in life; a man of action, driven to succeed.</p> <p><i>Is there a theme of an "older man"? What will be the contract? Looking for the "Expert" or confirming self-worth? He is, he has what I want to be and want to have. Comfortable as the "dutiful"? Giving away her power. Stereotypical role of "living through the man if you cannot do it yourself."</i></p>	<p>Traditional</p> <p>Older man</p> <p>Military</p>
<p>Oh, Quintus was a <u>charmer</u> for sure, and he turned the charm on to me. Looking back, I realize how, as a nineteen year old, I was influenced by this successful businessman lavishing his charm on me. I felt so <u>appreciated, so special</u>; having this older, self-made man taking an interest in me. He had this magnetism; if he walked into a room, people paid attention. What charisma.</p> <p><i>The need for security and nurturance. Is he or will he be able to fulfil this need?</i></p> <p>When we started dating I once met his previous wife. She told me she</p>	<p>Dependency Dutiful</p> <p>He will listen and take care</p> <p>Under his spell Dr. Hyde and</p>

<p>divorced him because of him emotionally abusing her, and I secretly sneered at her misplaced jealousy.</p> <p><i>Entrapment – handing over power to the other. Women should start telling or will no-one listen?</i></p>	<p>Mr. Clyde</p>
<p>Elaine’s story of entrapment unfolds. He owned more than one IT-company, and she started working for him.</p> <p>Within a couple of months I realized that he was screening all my phone calls - asking the secretary to put all my calls through to him first. When I confronted him, he admitted to it, and said he was doing so because I happened to be his future wife. I was angry and taken aback, but also so flattered.</p> <p><i>By allowing the first act of domination, she gives the permission for future acts. Issues of self-worth to be explored. Plays to her insecurities.</i></p>	<p>Hooking</p> <p>Domination & Control</p> <p>Self-worth affirmed Confrontation</p> <p>Challenges Objects</p>
<p>We started dating, and it was not long afterwards that he sort of made it clear that <u>he did not like me going out</u> with my own friends. I ended up having contact only with my family and losing contact with all my friends. I was so happy I did not notice what was happening. He was constantly on the look-out; to whom was I talking, or was I perhaps flirting with someone. I was frequently accused of flirting, but as I’m such a strong and outgoing personality, <u>I thought that maybe</u> I was coming on too strong. In the end, I was talking to no-one.</p> <p><i>Accepting the blame – culturally programmed or self-esteem issues? Listening to the voice of authority. Being “dutiful,” being the good wife.</i></p>	<p>Domination</p> <p>Entrapment</p> <p>Possessive</p> <p>Obedience</p>
<p>Then he asked me to move in with him and I did – so in love and flattered. He convinced me that I really didn’t have to work. Why don’t I stay at home, do the reading I always wanted to do, do some gardening, laze around at the swimming pool, even start on my studies, and of course I complied. Being the <u>caring person</u> he is, he didn’t want me to do a thing, not even go out and do food shopping – he arranged everything. I didn’t have to cook, he ordered in, but not having to cook also meant I didn’t have to go out shopping. There even were guards at the gates of the security complex with strict orders not to let anyone through. On a cognitive level, I sort of understood this to be</p>	<p>Domination Isolation</p> <p>Hooking</p> <p>Accepting the blame and the authority</p> <p>Sense Making</p>

<p>because of his history in the Special Forces, but, there I was in my little prison, even over time losing contact with my family.</p>	<p>Contract Control and power</p>
<p><i>What was the contract? In what way will he take care?</i></p>	
<p>For months on end I didn't see anyone, but I denied myself the truth, because we were, after all, getting married, and this was a wonderful dream come true.</p>	<p>Hooking Domination Isolation</p>
<p><i>Living the stereotypical dream. Living according to the expectations of society and culture so it must be acceptable and okay.</i></p>	
<p>Elaine explains,</p>	
<p>I always wanted to get married, and I had this picture in my head of how a married woman should act; a demure wife. I wanted to be a good wife. Should I have laughed or talked too loudly at a party or family-do, he would have criticized me for my behaviour not being ladylike. And all I wanted to do was act ladylike. So I ended up as this insipid little mouse.</p>	<p>Stereotypical Roles Accepting his version of the truth Finding excuses</p>
<p><i>Caring behaviour that entraps. Programmed to fit. Being dutiful and obedient.</i></p>	
<p>Then he needed my car because his was being serviced and I never got my car keys back. He urgently had to borrow my cell phone, and unfortunately it fell and was broken. Of course I was promised a new and updated replacement, it just never realized.</p>	<p>Denial Entrapment Domination Possessiveness</p>
<p><i>Doing as asked – dutiful, obedient, good wife. When does one start thinking?</i></p>	
<p>He lavishly spoiled me, bought me expensive presents, and we had such good times. I had all the loving attention a woman could wish for. When I was "good," I had everything. Only later did I realize the price I had to pay.</p>	<p>Stereotypical entrapment Constructing self Self-esteem</p>
<p><i>Manipulations – conning.</i></p>	
<p>She enlightens on the above</p>	
<p>If I perhaps said something he didn't like, he would disappear for a couple of days, leaving me without a car or a cellphone, with no food and no money. So, I didn't say anything, I didn't go anywhere. All I did was make sure that he didn't get cross. I was so young.</p>	<p>Domination Isolation</p>
<p><i>Knows what she fears most. Entrapped by the fear of abandonment?</i></p>	
	<p>Entrapment</p>

<p>I think he <u>wanted</u> to punish me and by disappearing he thought he could show me how dependent I was on him, and in the beginning it really did work. Boy, was I scared!</p>	<p>Stockholm syndrome Fear</p>
<p><i>Fear of abandonment keeps her in line, under his control.</i></p>	<p>Confrontation</p>
<p>I then happened to find out that he had not sent out the wedding invitations. I <u>confronted</u> him and all I can say is that, at that time, being in such an isolated place, his explanations seemed all so reasonable.</p>	<p>Punishment Aggression Abandonment</p>
<p><i>Reasonable because of the isolation</i></p>	<p>Entrapment Stockholm syndrome</p>
<p>Although we had all these especially wonderful times, the realization of what was happening to me slowly dawned. I suffered from depression. I <u>couldn't sleep</u> and I even considered suicide. Every time I <u>wanted to leave, he came</u> with a new gift, "Look what I bought you." At other times, he threatened to kill me should I leave, or he threatened me, saying I will regret it if I leave him. I was so frightened; I knew he had all these contacts.</p>	<p>Punishment works Aggression Fear Threats PROCESS Denial</p>
<p>In the end she only managed to escape with the help of one of her sisters, who smuggled her out in the trunk of a car. Elaine is presently working 12-14 hours a day; managing her day-time job as a secretary, as well as her final year law studies. Quintus found himself a new partner, even younger than Elaine. Elaine comments,</p>	<p>Hooking</p>
<p>They (meaning the abusive men) are so clever. He learnt from me leaving. Now he's getting married and apparently he and his future wife sat down and did some future planning. She owned a duette which her late father had bought her. So they decided that she'll sell her duette and they will use part of the proceeds to buy her an engagement ring – this while he's loaded! She is signing away her independence and she is buying her own ring!</p>	<p></p>
<p><i>Is this finding a new woman a tendency? Same pattern – same contract.</i></p>	<p></p>
<p>Asking her how she kept going, Elaine says,</p>	<p>PATTERN</p>
<p>You go on with your day-to-day life. The abuse occurs, but the rest of your life is good – even fantastic. So you choose to <u>overlook</u> the negative part. I</p>	<p>Denial Naiveté Losing the self</p>

<p>was so naïve ... You just <u>ignore</u> what you do not want to see, until it gets so glaringly obvious. Now thinking back I think it's just like childhood abuse, "because I enjoy it, it doesn't make it less wrong" ... I lost myself in this relationship; in the end it was hell.</p> <p><i>Is entrapment a process?</i></p> <p>Now it's like I was an <u>object</u>; just something he could push around as it pleased him, an object to be used. Sometimes I could feel the cold contempt if I didn't do as expected.</p> <p>Elaine says, "I stayed long after I should have left." I asked her if, in looking back, she finds the reasons why she stayed.</p> <p>I think it's a <u>woman thing</u>. <u>Cultural indoctrination</u> I will call it. We live in a culture dominated by men's ideas. Since day one you are <u>taught how to behave as a girl</u>, especially with regards to "your man." Our culture says, "Stick to your man" and we do. We're trained to please, trained to be the least – always to take the second position when it comes to men.</p> <p>Women <u>work harder</u> at relationships. They are all <u>self-sacrificing</u> – the Bible says so, and therefore it is the right thing to do. I amaze myself; even now in this new relationship I find myself packing him lunch. That's what my mother used to do. I never thought I would be that way.</p> <p>I think I hung in because I love so much. I hung in because it's a woman thing!</p>	<p>Rejection Denigration Fear Aggression</p> <p>Blaming self</p> <p>Stereotypical programming</p> <p>Pleasing Dutiful Obedient</p> <p>Programming Stereotyping</p>
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Karen⁵

Finding the Answers

<p>Karen, 38 years of age and married to Johan⁶, comes into therapy saying: “I’m so <u>scared</u>. I’m so afraid of what might happen. God <u>must please help me</u>, because I don’t know.” The whole first interview is taken up by her uncontrollable crying, <u>describing incidents of emotional abuse</u> directed at her by her spouse, asking: “Why, Heleen, I ask you why, why?”</p> <p><i>Asking for help by positioning as helpless? Positions the therapist as the “Expert” helper. Is the “whining” the only way one can show rage?</i></p>	<p>Fear</p> <p>Positioning self</p> <p>Positioning spouse</p> <p>Sense Making</p>
<p>Karen started therapy about six months after going back to work. She was appointed as a part-time personal assistant to a senior consultant at a financial institution and immediately started receiving well-earned positive feedback. She says: “Nobody at work finds me stupid, and I’ve realized that at work I’m <u>never criticized</u> for my looks or my work, or even my attitude. This really started me thinking and <u>brought another perspective</u> to seeing myself.” She interspersed her story with “I’m not really as ‘stupid’ <u>as I know you might think</u>. I’m really quite okay. People really like me and feel attracted to me because I’m friendly and I joke a lot.”</p> <p><i>Has authority come to mean criticism or that you have to defend yourself? Positioning self - trying to build self-esteem.</i></p>	<p>Breaking the isolation</p> <p>Authority</p> <p>Positioning self</p>
<p>Not realizing the contradiction, she describes Johan, a game farm manager in his middle forties, as being “good” at everything. She says, “You know he has studied and has <u>two degrees</u> and he has such a <u>strong personality</u>. I think <u>my personality</u> also got stronger, otherwise I would have gone completely mad, but <u>I know I should be more submissive.</u>”</p> <p><i>Sings his praise – as women are expected to do. Programming. Being a “good” wife. She growing stronger – is this where the conflict escalated? Or is she rationalizing her behaviour as a “strong personality” is not seen as feminine? If I accept the blame, maybe I’ll divert your anger or rejection.</i></p>	<p>Power warrants voice</p> <p>Domination</p> <p>Stereotypical</p> <p>Challenging?</p>

⁵ Karen is a pseudonym to protect the client’s identity.

⁶ A pseudonym.

⁷ Karen and Johan’s daughter. A pseudonym is used.

<p>Sometimes she breaks out of the submissive role, however, and can then relate,</p> <p>I <u>didn't</u> see the signs, but it <u>already started before</u> our marriage. He first had a go at me for <u>daring to have an opinion</u> that was different from his mother's, and then he started telling me the way <u>he wanted</u> the curtains to be hanged.</p> <p><i>Outwardly accepted the domination – being obedient and dutiful. He positions himself as master of the house.</i></p> <p>He was already indirectly <u>finding fault</u> with my body. There I was, rather flat-chested, and as petite as can be, and he was whistling at any pair of boobs he saw. He had a relationship with this shapely lady before our marriage, and so he would constantly refer to her, not by name, but as the "<u>one with the boobs</u>" or he'll look at me and say "We must have your boobs enlarged."</p> <p><i>Although she told him how she felt, about his behaviour, acceptance is shown in not leaving when he does so again. Not only the domineering, but also the criticism and the fault-finding started early in the relationship. Objectifying women.</i></p> <p>Since the first day of our marriage <u>he decided</u> on everything. He does not, for example, like pictures on the walls or frills on the curtains, and he made it clear that it will not happen in <u>his house</u>.</p> <p>I was going on for 27 when we got married. The moment we were married <u>he changed</u> completely. If he now saw a drop of water on the kitchen floor, he <u>pulled me</u> by the hair <u>and banged my head</u> against the wall, <u>screaming</u>: "Can't you see the water on the floor? Must I constantly show you what to do?"</p> <p><i>Forcing her into subordinate role. Positioning himself as the master in a master/slave relationship.</i></p> <p>Karen <u>denies the physical part</u> of the abuse saying, "He's never really hit me, but I'm so <u>afraid, so scared</u>. I can only say, Please, God help me. I never know what to expect."</p> <p>Apparently there were only <u>two more incidents</u> of similar behaviour, but she</p>	<p>Beginning of relationship</p> <p>Domination & Control</p> <p>Challenges</p> <p>Beginning Critique</p> <p>Domination & Control</p> <p>Physical aggression</p> <p>Verbal aggression</p> <p>Aggression Cold rage Escalating of the physical Threat Anxiety</p> <p>Domination & Control</p>
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<p>says, “I believe Johan to be capable of <u>murder</u>. You can see it in his eyes and he’s as <u>strong as an ox</u> (and about thrice her size). I am <u>not allowed</u> to oppose him or disagree with him. <u>If I differ</u> from him in anything, there will be trouble.” Asking her what she usually does in such situations, she says, “I <u>cry and beg his forgiveness</u>.” Asking her about her views on obedience she says,</p> <p>Of course men <u>expect</u> you to listen. In his eyes a woman is always wrong and he proves it by stating that <u>The Bible</u> tells us to be submissive and listen to our husbands. He never ever wants to hear that he might be wrong.</p> <p>Johan always jokes and says he <u>raised me to fit his hand</u>, so now he can just click his fingers and there we go.</p> <p><i>Even in his size there lies a physical threat. Women programmed to be subordinate to authority. She internalizes the expected submission.</i></p> <p><u>Before the marriage</u> Johan pleaded with Karen “to be the mother of my children.” <u>After the marriage</u>, he said that he wanted her <u>only for himself</u>. But she fell pregnant and suffered a miscarriage. Then he <u>wanted a divorce</u> as he said <u>she could not adapt</u> to having lost the baby, and she cannot give him children. She fell pregnant again and Johan retaliated, “Don’t think because you’re pregnant you can’t do everything or can <u>expect anything from me</u>”. For this reason, she physically did everything in the house until an hour before going into labour. Karen suffered from <u>depression</u> after the birth of all three the children, “as he was constantly saying that he didn’t <u>want them</u>. <u>Nothing made sense</u>.”</p> <p><i>Uses her own desire for having children to entrap her. Miscarriage – did this mean that he saw her as not living up to her obligations? Failed to prove his virility. Taints her happiness and expectancy. Punishes her for lavishing her attention somewhere else. Depression is also the only means she has of getting back at him and showing/ not showing her anger.</i></p> <p>Karen finds it difficult to relate the way in which she was asked to leave her previous work,</p> <p>He would <u>sit outside</u> in the car, and if I were 5 minutes late in coming, he would storm into the offices and <u>demand that I leave</u>. In front of everybody</p>	<p>Physical Threats Challenges</p> <p>Giving-in</p> <p>Patriarchy Religion</p> <p>Needs her only to himself</p> <p>Punishment</p> <p>Depression/ Rejection</p> <p>Confusion Making sense</p> <p>Jealousy Possessive Blaming</p> <p>Verbal aggression</p> <p>Claims her time</p>
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<p>he would <u>scream</u>, “They are using you. This is not fair. You have a husband and children to go to.” Then he would accuse me of <u>flirting</u> with the guys at work saying, “I promise you I will come into your office and smash their heads in.” In the end – after nine years of working at the company – <u>I had to</u> give up my well-paying comfortable job, because the <u>rest of the personnel could not take it anymore</u>. I suppose I <u>didn’t listen</u>. I didn’t give him enough <u>attention</u>. I had <u>four small children</u> to take care of, the maid had left, and I was faced with this entrance exam, a prerequisite for a job I had applied for.</p> <p><i>She submits in the face of abusive communication, verbal aggression, threats, and overt aggression.</i> <i>As she quits, he entraps her in the isolation of home life again.</i> <i>She accepts the blame, tries to understand, denies the anger, and rationalizes her action without weighing his. The blaming was there after the exams as well as before the maid left, but one does not question the voice of authority.</i></p> <p>Since four years ago Johan had from time to time <u>threatened her with divorce</u>. She explains,</p> <p><u>First I thought</u> it was because the children were small and I was studying for my bank exams at the time. Perhaps I <u>didn’t really listen</u> to him or <u>pay him enough attention</u>.</p> <p>Some time previously he said that the moment Louise⁷ finishes her schooling, <u>I can pack my bags and leave</u>. I’m <u>only good enough</u> to look after his children.</p> <p>This past holiday he said: “You <u>do as I say</u>, or you get out.” I’m not a <u>skorrie-morrie (riff-raff)</u> that you can kick out whenever you feel like it. He said he would give me three days and then <u>I would have to go</u> and see a lawyer. <u>Something died</u> in me. Something just <u>went missing</u>. It’s <u>dead inside me</u> as I can still hear his voice, “I don’t need you under the same roof, get out!”</p> <p>If the church didn’t say that <u>divorce was a sin</u>, I would long ago have gone through with it.</p> <p><i>Some self-worth is beginning to kick in.</i></p> <p>Although this was supposed to be couples therapy, I ended up seeing Johan</p>	<p>Aggression Harassment Degrades Guilt Threat implied</p> <p>Entrapment</p> <p>PROCESS</p> <p>Threat Fears rejection</p> <p>Maybe the fault lies with me</p> <p>Rejection to gain control</p> <p>Stereotypical</p> <p>Domination Power</p> <p>Objects Aggression Rejection</p> <p>Murder of the soul</p> <p>Entrapment by religion</p> <p>Positioning himself</p>
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<p>only once after Karen's first interview. He was reluctant, <u>not willing to</u> explore his own responsibility to the relationship, and throughout the interview <u>laid the blame</u> on Karen. He <u>resisted</u> any feedback to the contrary.</p> <p><i>He believes in his male power and in its being stronger than that of the female psychologist. Why listen to anyone or anything if you believe yourself to be in the power seat.</i></p>	<p>Justification Blaming Positioning wife</p>
<p>Johan starts the session with, "<u>I must tell you</u> that I'm a <u>man of the Bible</u>. I believe in facts and approach everything from the perspective of the Bible. The <u>man is head of his home and he looks after his wife</u>. She should be <u>submissive</u> to his authority. From the beginning I told her that when we marry <u>I will be her first priority; I will be number one in her life.</u>"</p> <p><i>Positions himself through The Bible - you cannot have the upper hand because I have the book of all books to back me up, and you cannot argue with that. Warrant voice. Justifying both himself and her submission. Narcissism. Contacting roles.</i></p>	<p>Positioning</p> <p>Justification Domination Entitlement</p>
<p>When asked about his wanting a divorce, he explains,</p> <p>She was working for a banking group and put in way too many hours. Even her <u>own mother</u> said <u>she worked too hard</u>. At that stage, I was still <u>drinking</u>, and it was war between the two of us. <u>She just lost it</u>. Once screamed at me "Just leave me." I <u>never hit her</u> but I did push her around once in a while, but come that Christmas and her whole family were onto my case, saying that I hit her. They said I strangled her, and this after <u>I had paid half of her brother's debt</u>.</p> <p><i>He shifts the blame and softens the issues because society allows him to. Playing for sympathy.</i></p>	<p>Justification Blaming</p> <p>Excuses</p> <p>Benevolent father</p>
<p><u>We went to see a pastoral psychologist and I stopped</u> my drinking, and for a while everything was okay, but then after Louise was born Karen suffered from <u>depression</u>. I was growing all the more calm. I read a lot and spent much <u>time in prayer</u>, but <u>she cannot forgive</u> and let go. I have had enough. <u>If she doesn't drastically change</u>, I am going to go for a divorce.</p> <p><i>Positions self as above blame. Positions wife as having the problem. The threat also implies that the therapist is now supposed to do her work or else it will be her fault and not his. Wants therapist to bite the bait as "all" women do. Crazy making.</i></p>	<p>Justifying self Blaming</p> <p>Playing for sympathy</p>

<p>She's <u>absolutely terrible</u> when it comes to ordinary household duties, <u>even her mother once said</u>, "My child, one cannot live like this." Her cupboards are overflowing. One keeps falling over whatever she is currently busy with. She will leave ten day's clothing lying on the floor in our bedroom. <u>If I talk to her about all this, she's always on the defensive.</u></p>	<p>Stereotypical</p>
<p><i>Finds justification because he's expectations were not met. She did not do as she is supposed to do because society tells her to. Contract not adhered to.</i></p>	
<p>I think Karen <u>feels unworthy</u>. She's so uncertain of herself. She has this low self-esteem problem that she needs to work on. <u>I constantly have to tell her</u> how to organize her own life. This week, for example, I had to tell her to finish up with cleaning out the cupboards in the corridor as she has been at it for ages. She <u>complains</u> about everything she has to do.</p>	<p>Blaming Justification Stereotypical roles</p>
<p><i>Playing for sympathy. Karen answer was, "He does not see me leaving everything and go fetch the children or take the lawnmower in for service. I have no maid, I work half-day and he never lifts a finger. At a stage, all four children were under ten years of age. Positioning self as caring and wife as "lacking" or the "nagging housewife."</i></p>	
<p>So <u>I told her</u>, "If you don't know how to manage the kids, I'll show you. I'll make you a list of all the chores in the house and you will see to it that it's done. I'm sick and tired of the children fighting about whose turn it is to wash the bath." She <u>screamed</u> at me, "I will not have my life regulated by your lists!"</p>	<p>Gaslighting Domination Teacher Authority Blaming</p>
<p><i>Positions him-self as caring and positions the wife to blame, crazy.</i></p>	
<p>Johan continues, "I don't know <u>why she cannot</u> keep the kids under control. I'm a <u>busy man</u> and I need my <u>own quiet time</u>. For example, Saturday-evenings I want to relax so I need no wife or child around, playing, asking questions. They know it's better not to bother me with anything, or even talk to me, on a Saturday-night."</p>	<p>Expert Authority Domination Belittles her Shifting the blame</p>
<p><i>Playing for sympathy. Positions wife as inefficient. Positions him-self as the one of importance. No emotional involvement.</i></p>	
<p>And as he is leaving the office, he turns around and says, "<u>And tell her</u> it's proper for a woman to come and greet her husband when he comes home. I need her to come to the door and greet me when I get back from work.</p>	<p>Entitlement Patriarchal Stereotypical</p>

<p><i>Wanting to establish his power over the therapist.</i></p> <p>As the sessions with Karen continued, further details about abusive situations in the relationship came to light.</p> <p>Karen describes the happenings in their relationship:</p> <p>I try to be <u>perfect</u>. I work <u>like a maid</u>, but still he finds fault. I <u>try</u> and wear my hair the way he likes it, and dress the way he wants me to, but still it's not working. If it's not my breasts being too small, it my waistline getting bigger. I really try.</p> <p><i>Obedient instead of listening to own self. Finds own sense of self. Whose needs are important? If I am good, I will be loved and accepted. Programming. But it is never good enough. This is rejection of the real person.</i></p> <p>All these years I was <u>trying to find</u> what I did wrong, telling myself that there must be something I did to cause this. You try and you try to change, but <u>nothing helps</u>. He asks this and you do so, then he asks thus and again you do as asked, but he always <u>needs something more</u>, something else. It never is good enough.</p> <p><i>Women need to find their own answers. He entraps her in this game by always finding fault. Women have been trained to find the fault within themselves and are then expected to make it right, but in the emotionally abusive relationship this will not happen.</i></p> <p>Johan <u>breaks me down</u>. He even said, "I could long ago have divorced you, but you will <u>never be able to cope</u> on your own. You <u>just don't have</u> it in you." Or he will always walk a <u>few paces in front</u> of me.</p> <p><i>Threat of abandonment because she is found lacking. Abusiveness lies in the gestures and in the emotional rejection of the self of the woman.</i></p> <p>He would sometimes just keep <u>screaming</u> at me until I can't think anymore. He will take no <u>disagreement</u>. In the end I'll <u>plead</u> with him, taking the blame ... anything, as long as I can get him to quiet down. You need to do so <u>for survival</u> sake. Most of the time I'm <u>so scared</u> I will burst into tears and ask for him to <u>forgive me</u>, and if I'm lucky he will calm down. Then he will ask me, "And are you <u>going to listen now</u>?" and I agree, because I'm too scared to say</p>	<p>Positioning self</p> <p>Obedient and dutiful</p> <p>Criticizes</p> <p>Domination Objects?</p> <p>Entrapment</p> <p>Denigrates her Breaks her down</p> <p>Verbal aggression</p>
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<p>no. Sometimes he will later <u>send me some flowers</u>, which I then want to <u>crush</u> petal by petal.</p> <p><i>The fear drives her into submission. Self-preservation. He talks to her as to a child. Threat of physical violence present because of track record. He knows what he is doing – or else why will he send her some flowers. Buying her submission. Tells her what kind of behaviour he expects and what her reward will be either way. Woman denies overt anger.</i></p>	<p>Domination</p> <p>Fear Accepts the blame</p> <p>Anger PROCESS</p>
<p>She tries to explain the undertone of tensions she <u>constantly</u> experiences in the relationship, "<u>How can you explain this?</u> You just <u>know and feel</u> it, and it <u>drives you crazy</u>. And then if you <u>complain or try and show him</u> what it does to you, he <u>denies everything</u>, and <u>you can prove nothing</u>.</p> <p><i>How can one explain something you don't know the words for? One cannot fight another's denial, especially when he has the power.</i></p>	<p>Sense Making</p>
<p>And speaking of affection and the showing of affect, Karen comments,</p> <p>It's like he <u>doesn't care or doesn't love</u> you. He would look at me with this <u>sardonic and malicious grin</u> on his face and say, "You know I love you." He would have this laughing-at-you grin on his face and then he will say, "I love you as much as the sand on the beaches and the stars in the sky." I'm not stupid; I see what he's doing. If I talk to him, saying all I need is a certain amount of respect, and he <u>bursts out laughing</u>. He criticizes me for not showing him enough loving attention, but <u>the moment I do</u>, he picks up a book and starts reading. You do as he asks, and he will always find something else you didn't do to his satisfaction. You cannot win.</p> <p><i>She's repositioning herself. Self-worth is kicking in. Always turning the tables on her.</i></p>	<p>Constant</p> <p>Helpless Frustration</p> <p>Sense Making</p> <p>Positioning husband Rejection Ridicule</p> <p>Aggression</p> <p>Cold contempt Vindictiveness</p>
<p>He says he loves me, but <u>where is the loving</u> behaviour? He <u>never gives you time</u> to state your case... he always leaves the impression that he's <u>never really interested</u> in what you have to say. This is so different from before our marriage when he used to find me such intelligent conversation and he couldn't take his eyes off me. I'm <u>shocked to realize how lonely</u> I've become in my marriage.</p> <p><i>Changing her perspective. Now sees his domination and rejection for what it is. Rationalizes her choice to soften the blow to self.</i></p>	<p>Rejection Contract</p> <p>Sense Making</p>

<p>I think Johan is a coward. His family can say anything about me, and he will never take my side. But I suppose <u>he's only showing his true colours</u>. I should actually realize that he <u>doesn't really care</u> about me.</p> <p><i>Perspective is changing. Coming to terms. Facing the rejection and the misuse. Facing own denial.</i></p>	
<p>He tells everyone that I am in <u>need of treatment</u> and that there is something <u>seriously wrong</u> with me. I would <u>get so angry at him</u> I would <u>rage</u> at him ... <u>wrong way of asking for his love, I suppose</u>.</p> <p><i>Her anger surfaces, but having no power her aggression does not stick. Facing up to own responsibility in the relationship.</i></p>	<p>Crazy Making Anger</p>
<p>I don't know how to ask you this, because I know even <u>sexually The Bible</u> says you're <u>supposed to please</u> your husband, but he is <u>breaking me down</u>. At first I refused, but then he quotes from The Bible, saying a man can do with his wife as he pleases. I <u>feel horrible</u>. He wants me to please myself and then he'll sit on a chair, watching, or he'll want to put a bottle up my vagina and see if I feel anything. He wants to use all these sexual aids. Is it normal? If I don't comply, he says, "<u>Women from the lowest of classes give their husbands more than you do. They give their husbands whatever they need. Their husbands don't need to go to prostitutes.</u>" <u>He forces</u> me into whatever position he prefers. If I don't immediately comply, <u>he slaps my face</u>. Now I <u>only complain</u> when my neck hurts. I feel like a <u>human guinea pig</u> that he uses as he pleases. Piece by piece he <u>breaks down my spirit</u>.</p> <p><i>Patriarchal systems programming and entrapping. Abuse by religious prescription. In the end she faces up to a different truth. Denial of self through being submissive. Objectifying wife and aggressive misuse.</i></p>	<p>Sense Making Guilt Religious entrapment Guilt and shame Sexual exploitation Denigrating her Physical aggression Dutiful and obedient Murder of the soul</p>
<p>I feel like the <u>hired help</u> in my own house. I <u>never have this feeling of the house being mine</u>. He <u>gives me no space</u> to, say, put up the curtains of my choice, or a frilly curtain in the bathroom. His always there, always has something to say about whatever I'm doing. To me it feels like he is <u>trying to take over the feminine part</u> of me. He <u>tries to change</u> my whole personality – and this from a guy who <u>wants me to believe</u> that he loves me!</p>	<p>Domination Master Puts her in Blaming</p>

<p><i>Slave and master relationship. As the master, only his needs are of importance. She is suffocating and murdering her own self. She's catching on to his strategy. Less denial.</i></p>	
<p>At first <u>he wasn't satisfied</u> with my shopping. So <u>he gave me</u> R100 a week for fruit and vegetables, but we're five people and I didn't always make it. So I <u>needed to ask</u> him for more money. He used to retaliate with, "<u>You just ask</u> and ask and ask! <u>Where do you think</u> the money comes from? You're so <u>selfish</u>, always expecting something from me. You're such an <u>ungrateful bitch</u>." Now he buys everything. He will buy a box of carrots and either I need to freeze them or they don't keep. Or a box of green beans and <u>I have to spend the whole evening shredding</u> and freezing, long after everyone has gone to sleep. I just cannot manage having to prepare meals from whatever he brings, and if it's finished, there is nothing else. So we end up having porridge and milk for supper more than once a week. I have <u>become so clever</u> in saving money, 20 cents here and there, till in the end I can afford new towels.</p>	<p>Financial exploitation</p> <p>Vindictiveness</p> <p>Responsibility backfires</p>
<p><i>He puts her in a child-like relationship to him. Also master and slave relationship. Aggression and punishment involved. Selfish – true meaning "you did not give me the attention I asked for." Positions himself as justified as she didn't do as well as expected. She cannot rebel, because has been programmed to accept his ruling. Double-bind. Also her dutifully finding ways around the situation speaks of her obedience and her submission to the voice of authority. Women set themselves up for entrapment by their resilience and the strength of their pioneering spirit. Always ready to bear the brunt and find an answer.</i></p>	
<p>Once he was away on work and <u>me and the children</u> had a jolly time. We played around and went to bed late. So on Saturday morning he pitches up while we're washing dishes and joking with one another; laughing and talking, generally having a good time. Without any greeting, his first words are, "I cannot leave you for one second. Look what a <u>bunch of pigs</u> you turn out to be. Just look at the kitchen. <u>Can you people</u> never properly clean up something" ... and on, and on. And he turns around and goes to his study. <u>This is the man</u> who the previous evening told me how much he loves me and misses me and the children. I <u>should have known</u> it was too good to be true.</p>	<p>Jealousy Contract</p> <p>Possessive</p> <p>Master</p>
<p><i>He wants all the attention. He needs to be greeted at the door. Tries to establish his authority by criticizing and domineering. Strategy to bring them back under his control. She's losing her belief in him.</i></p>	

<p>Whenever I <u>help the children</u> with their spelling, <u>he always chips in</u>. Why do I do it this way and not that way? He's whole attitude is one of <u>disdain</u>, <u>disrespect</u>. He just takes over and dominates the whole scene. I think <u>he does it on purpose</u>, because <u>he wants to run the show</u>. I <u>know he's the boss</u>, <u>the Bible</u> tells me so. I <u>feel how I die</u>, piece by piece, but in the <u>end you just try</u> again.</p> <p><i>Angry at her paying attention to the children. Narcissism. He needs to be the most important.</i> <i>Abuse sanctified by the patriarchal church/religion.</i> <i>Again the resilience.</i></p> <p>Our whole family is quite musical, and so we often make music together. Lately I have <u>come to dread</u> these episodes. He usually plays the piano, so he will keep <u>increasing the pace</u>, <u>screaming and criticizing</u> whoever cannot keep up. Or he'll scream at Louise, "Why don't you sing louder? You're so <u>bloody timid</u>. Sing louder" – screaming, screaming. In the end one of the children or I myself will be <u>in tears</u>.</p> <p><i>Children learn from mother ways to appease the father. Submission to authority.</i></p> <p>The change in Karen was slow but steadfast. At the beginning of therapy she cried, "I have grown <u>silent</u>. <u>I do not talk</u> about anything personal anymore," over time she came to the realization that, "<u>I do not</u> want to grow old in this way. I <u>need to start</u> taking care of myself. <u>I will have to say</u> enough is enough and mean it." With unwavering determination she started making <u>changes</u>; changes inconspicuous in their nature. With every step she gained <u>self-respect</u>.</p> <p><i>Changing to "what do I need?"</i> <i>Taking responsibility for self.</i> <i>Changing her behaviour and does not focus on him.</i> <i>Gaining in self-worth.</i></p> <p>Karen and Johan are still married. Although their relationships may not be the best of marriages, it is functional and much less characterized by behaviour patterns that had Karen in the beginning say: "It's dead inside me. I have no feeling left for the father of my children." She has found the inner strength to set boundaries. <u>She has made the decision</u> as to what she needs in life, where she needs to be and her worth as a person. When last seen she said,</p>	<p>Possessive Jealousy</p> <p>Religious entrapment</p> <p>Soul murder</p> <p>Aggression</p> <p>Vindictiveness</p> <p>Name-calling</p> <p>Breaking down self-esteem</p> <p>Sense Making</p> <p>Resilience</p> <p>Assertiveness</p>
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<p>He still goes through life criticizing and giving me the cold shoulder if I do not comply, but <u>I decide what I want or must do</u>.</p> <p>By myself I usually think, "You can do whatever you like, Johan. You're not the only person. <u>If you're not satisfied</u>, you can leave."</p> <p>I'm really <u>not afraid of divorce</u> anymore. <u>I will manage</u>. <u>I will be able to</u> emotionally and physically take care of the children.</p> <p><i>She's back in control of her own life. Not shaken by his strategies for control. No more threatened by the idea of coping on her own/not having a man around. Belief in the self.</i></p>	
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Berna⁸

An Older Woman – Confronting Tradition

<p>Berna, a 48-year old ex-teacher and business-owner comes to see me, saying, "Emotionally I can't take it anymore. I've known him since I was 15 years old ... that makes it 33 years of which the last 18 have been hell." Berna impresses as one of those <u>pillars of the community</u> you find in the <u>Afrikaans</u> culture; <u>strong and efficient</u> – always the first to comply in any events at the local school or church.</p> <p><i>Stereotypical role fulfilment?</i></p> <p>After years of what she describes as "abuse," Berna finally decided to leave Kevin⁹ about six months ago. She flew down to the Natal to visit family, but Kevin suffered a <u>heart attach</u> and pleaded with her to come back. As she herself was riddled with <u>guilt</u> and had both their families <u>blaming</u> her, she returned.</p> <p>At that stage I was rather <u>depressed</u> and thinking that maybe I should go back and help him. Maybe he's also suffering – maybe even more than I</p>	<p>Positioning</p> <p>Traditional Afrikaans</p> <p>Entrapment Selfless nurturer</p> <p>PROCESS</p> <p>Guilt Nurturer Stereotypical</p> <p>Depression</p>
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⁸ A pseudonym to protect the client's identity.

⁹ A pseudonym for Berna's husband.

¹⁰ Berna and Kevin's first born

¹¹ Berna and Kevin's second born son

<p>myself did. Once or twice it also crossed my mind that this was just another of his ploys to have me come back, but how is one supposed to know? The children, on the other hand, were <u>furious when I went back</u>.</p>	
<p>As could be expected, no sooner was I back and he was on his feet, and we continued as previously – with both the good and the bad elements of our relationship still there. Nothing had changed.</p> <p><i>This first time she gave in to this type of manipulation she gave him the permission to continue.</i> <i>Conflict between traditional nurturing role and own self-preservation.</i></p>	<p>He plays the victim/dependent PROCESS</p>
<p>As a former language teacher, she was able to stand back and <u>analyze</u> her feelings and the happenings of the past, <u>trying to find some answers</u> in the process. She therefore evaluated their lives and concluded,</p> <p>I think the problems <u>came from his</u> sporadic drinking in the beginning, the affairs he had, the loss of security we suffered as he was twice declared bankrupt, and his <u>inexcusably rude</u> behaviour towards me.</p> <p><i>She has not yet realized that her answer lies not in understanding but in deciding if she can tolerate his behaviour any longer.</i> <i>Analyzing the possible reasons for his behaviour, and denying own responsibility.</i></p>	<p>Excuses Sense Making</p> <p>Challenges</p>
<p>It was only upon meeting Kevin in her sixteenth year and dating him that she and her parents had some differences. Kevin was older and already in his second year at university. She relates the exuberance of tasting some of the freedom Kevin as a student was allowed, and explains how this attracted her. She describes it “as something so different from the <u>conservative enclaves</u> of our town.” Her parents made her promise to finish her higher education, and so she did, “I was only studying to get my degree, so that we could get married. In the end we got married during my second year, and at the end of my third year Barry¹⁰ was due.”</p>	<p>Positioning Contract</p> <p>Special qualities</p>
<p>So we started her story from the beginning. She was born in a small rural town in the North West Province (the formerly called Western Transvaal) where her father was the <u>local pastor</u> and her mother a teacher. She relates a happy and contented childhood,</p> <p>The fact that my mother taught at the same school I was in spelt security to</p>	<p>Patriarchal Stereotype</p> <p>Conservative Religious</p>

<p>me. My dad brought me all the <u>steadfastness</u> I could have wished for. He was extremely <u>strict and conservative</u> in his outlook. My older sister was the one who rebelled. I was good at sports, but academically I wasn't that much interested. Thinking back, I think I should have worked harder. I was popular and excelled as a <u>student leader</u>.</p>	<p>?Strong</p>
<p><i>Elements of strong, self-reliant person.</i></p>	
<p>Berna describes her perceptions of Kevin in the beginning.</p>	<p>Stereotypical Positioning</p>
<p>He entertained me. He made me feel special. To me <u>he knew</u> what he wanted from life. I was so young and inexperienced, and he was the <u>all-knowing wise guy</u>. <u>I so much looked up to him</u>. He shaped my thoughts and my doings. His parents were the most respected and well-to-do in the district. Everyone sort of followed their lead and bowed low when they passed through town. I was totally smitten.</p>	<p>Positioning self</p>
<p><i>The stereotypical message: If you cannot be, marry the one who has proven himself or has the potential to be what you aspire to or that will be able to take care of you.</i></p>	
<p>They started their lives together, and according to Berna, Kevin always had a number of schemes running and “man, did they work out! He bought and sold the one farm and business after the other; always making a huge profit.” Kevin prospered and the profits flowed. Financially they had it made. They moved to Pretoria and bought a brand new home in an up-and-coming Afrikaans suburb, and Berna says, “We were well-to-do and respected in the community.”</p>	<p>Stereotypical gender roles</p> <p>Living the Dream</p>
<p>Eighteen months after Jay¹¹ was born, she went back to work of her own free choice. Teaching Afrikaans and Life Studies at one of the prestigious schools in the area, she enjoyed herself. After a few of years she started her own home-bakery and did so well she started doing it full-time. Then, one after another, Kevin's business schemes <u>started falling through</u>. They suffered huge financial losses, and Berna realized that Kevin had <u>not always been truthful</u> about the extent to which he had been wheeling and dealing. His deals caught up with him, and in the end he was forced to join her as a partner, but still pursued his ventures. Twice he was declared bankrupt. Berna relates,</p>	<p>Lies</p> <p>Manipulations Dr. Hyde and Mr. Clyde</p>
<p>He had these schemes that on two occasions led to bankruptcy, and <u>I had to support the family</u>. At first this was just the way life goes, but then – time and</p>	

<p>again – he went out and put me and the children through financial hardship yet again. I find it so <u>unbelievably insensitive and uncaringly arrogant</u>. He went and lost everything, and I financially pulled us through, working and seeing to it that we had food on the table.</p>	<p>Emasculating</p> <p>Womanly Resilience or Selfless</p>
<p><i>It is acceptable for the wife to be successful in her own home industry but not when his is failing. Is he playing victim or exploiting her?</i> <i>Would she have been less unforgiving if he had validated her efforts?</i></p>	
<p>She tells of three happenings that coincided and led to the final breakdown of the marriage. For the umpteenth time she was supporting the family, paying off his debts and trying to make ends meet,</p>	<p>Supportive Selfless</p> <p>Responsibility back fires</p>
<p>It was between the first and the second bankruptcy that Michelle, my longed-for daughter, was born. He was <u>absolutely ungracious</u> about me being pregnant again. I felt totally <u>unloved and rejected</u>, and so it ended up being a difficult pregnancy. His rejection during the pregnancy – and that while I was paying the bills – hit hard.</p>	<p>PROCESS</p> <p>Rejection His position is threatened</p>
<p><i>Supported as is expected of a “good” wife; as socially expected.</i> <i>Did the unwritten contract state that she will support, “in sickness and in health,” but then he had to validate her or financially support her?</i></p>	
<p>From time to time there always were stories, and looks and sniggering in our group of friends. There was always this uneasy feeling that maybe he was cheating on me. I went through the whole experience of being pregnant and giving birth on my own; there was <u>no sharing</u> and I positively knew he was having an affair.</p>	<p>Rejection</p> <p>Emotional Isolation</p>
<p><i>Rejection of her as a person as well as all her efforts. She was weighed and found wanting and therefore replaced.</i> <i>Objectifying women.</i> <i>He needs to find someone that will place him central to everything.</i></p>	
<p>I asked him about it and he denied. As the rumours escalated I confronted him and again he denied the whole issue. I then confronted them together. They both laughed at me and said they’re going to sue me for blasphemy, and what did I do? I apologized.</p>	<p>Submissive</p> <p>Giving-in</p>
<p><i>Where is own sense of self?</i> <i>Doing as expected - forgiving and therefore being a “good” wife.</i></p>	<p>Obedient Good Wife</p>
<p>Berna describes her experiences during the marriage:</p>	

<p>He treats us like slaves. It's a constant "do this, do that, why didn't you, must I always ask you to". I remember this one time we were moving again because another of all his brilliant business deals had fallen through. The children were still babies and I constantly had to look out for them. I made all the arrangements for the move, I packed, I organized; I did everything. He left for work on the day of the move and came back to the new house after work asking, "And when will dinner be ready?"</p> <p><i>He has probably chosen her because he saw in her the potential that she would obey and would dutifully support him. He chose her because he knew she would, and she wanted to show that she could.</i></p>	<p>Domination Master</p> <p>Extreme Domination</p> <p>Male Entitlement</p> <p>Good wife</p>
<p>Our children really suffered. After writing his final medical exams, my eldest phoned me in tears, "Mom, you know he didn't even phone me. I wrote the biggest exam of my entire life and he didn't even care to find out how things went." In the end he wasn't even interested in attending Barry's graduation. It's such a catch 22; on the one hand you truly believe in staying together to keep the children safe, and on the other hand you are <u>subjecting</u> them to this.</p> <p><i>Narcissistic</i></p>	<p>Starting on the children</p> <p>Entrapped by own "doing good"</p>
<p>In our house Kevin's sport takes priority. Come Saturday and he will watch three rugby games on TV and everything else has to be scheduled accordingly. But it's better now. It was much worst when the children were still small and they had a favourite program coming up or they had to spend the day indoors because it was raining. Dad has to have his private viewing – without any interruptions and without any unnecessary talking.</p>	<p>Narcissism</p> <p>Entitlement</p>
<p>Everything is organized around <u>his preferences</u>; be it birthday parties, shopping, or when to have supper. When the children were young I found myself making <u>excuses</u>, "Ag, you know that's just Daddy's way of doing." He always wants things to be done just the way he likes it. He makes it clear that "he's the man in the house and he will make the decisions." He will openly tell me I'm worthless and that when things go wrong "he will be the one that'll have to sort them out." Bloody hell, he will!</p>	<p>Entitlement</p> <p>Excuses</p> <p>Domination & Control</p>
<p><i>She sets the tone in accepting his demands as reasonable. Authority should be respected and not challenged. He is the master, the expert, the man in the house. She usually only show overt aggression as she begins to break free.</i></p>	<p>Aggression</p>

<p>Some men cannot stand it if someone or something else is important to you as well. Kevin cannot take anything other than himself getting any attention. I had this beautiful Siamese and he knew how much I loved her. He waited for her to scratch something so he could throw this big scene, and in the end he had all the reason in the world to get rid of her.</p>	<p>Jealousy Entitlement Vindictiveness Narcissism</p>
<p>For example, I can never sit still and read for a couple of minutes. You can feel his irritation build up and then he'll find something to scold me about, or he will want some coffee, and if I make some, he'll drink his all on his own, because all of a sudden he now is so busy.</p>	<p>Domination & Control</p>
<p><i>Being dutiful and obedient, she is taken in by his attention-seeking behaviour.</i></p> <p>Kevin would often say that he was only staying with me because of the children. "You're not worthy to be called a woman, maybe because you come from a family of loafers and ne'er-do-wells." I constantly have to hear, "Fuck off" (Vlieg in jou moer). Maybe I'm lucky; only once did he attack me physically.</p>	<p>Verbal Abuse</p>
<p><i>When asked she never mentioned the physical aggression. But is the financial hardship he put his family through not physical abuse as well?</i></p>	
<p>Having had an anti-depressant prescribed at one time, he persistently asks me, "Do you still take your medication?" Now I know he wanted me to believe there was something wrong with me. He would especially use this in front of the children, wanting to make me into the crazy one. He plays with my head, implying that I do not behave like a normal person, and implying that people who take medication are crazy.</p>	<p>Entrapment Crazy making</p>
<p>He would promise to go with me to a function at the school, but just by the way he turned around I knew that it wasn't going to happen. I think it all began when I started developing an own personality. All of a sudden I wasn't in the "yes, dear" mode any more and he couldn't take that. He brings out the worst in me. I <u>truly hate myself</u> for the things I sometimes say and do.</p>	<p>Domination Gestures Punishment PROCESS</p>
<p><i>If she keeps quiet, she loses respect for herself. If she is aggressive, she questions her own self-worth – because society says women are not supposed to be aggressive.</i></p>	<p>Guilt & Shame</p>

<p>I find it difficult to sexually respond to Kevin. Sometimes, when he wanted to make love, I could still hear his abusive words ringing in my ears, but mostly I think it's because with every major incident another part of your <u>heart sort of splits of</u>. If he feels me <u>pulling away</u>, he would often say, "There are many women out there who will be only too glad to have me as a husband, and will be only too pleased to see to my needs."</p> <p><i>Experiences guilt in pulling away, because she has been trained that one is supposed to submit to one's husband's every wish.</i></p>	<p>Master Domination</p> <p>Sexual Exploitation</p> <p>Naming and Blaming</p>
<p>But it's not the real abusive incidents that happen from time to time that gets at you. It's <u>something that's in the air</u>, you absolutely feel it. But then you're also reminded by the <u>constant flow</u> of his abusive words. You see it in his eyes and in the way he smiles at you. Sometimes there's just nothing when he looks at you, at other times there is mockery or slyness. Kevin can be extremely overt in his rejection but also so cunning that no-one else will notice.</p>	<p>PATTERN</p> <p>Emotional Rejection</p>
<p>I now find myself consciously withdrawing from people, as I have lost all <u>confidence</u> in my own social skills. Strangely enough, I'm okay when in my office and dealing with a client on a one-to-one basis, but out in society, I'm <u>constantly questioning everything I say and do</u>. This whole process has eroded my self-esteem. I find it difficult anywhere to stand up for myself, make decisions, take the initiative.</p>	<p>Isolation</p> <p>Self Doubt</p> <p>Erodes the Self</p>
<p>He's always telling me how <u>selfish</u> I am. I've <u>grown to believe him</u> so much that I cannot again make the decision to pack my bags and leave. If I leave, will that not prove that Kevin is right, and it is my fault because I am so selfish? But, I need to get my act together and leave this relationship. Why am I stalling? Why so unsure of myself? I've tried so hard, I really tried my best ... I think it has a lot to do with the perception of failure as a woman and thus being different from what society actually has brought you up to be. I wanted so much for the marriage to succeed; I wanted the children to have a real home.</p>	<p>Confusion</p> <p>Failure as a Mother/Wife</p>

<p><i>Selfish translated into "you do not attend to my needs as I prefer for you to do." Failure and conservatism.</i></p> <p>I had only seen Berna four times when she decided to make an end to their relationship. Kevin rather calmly counselled her, "This is the worst decision you have ever made. Your decision is truly ill-considered." Kevin stopped all of his threatening behaviour, and now the couple had these rather peaceful and meaningful conversations.</p> <p><i>Like with sexual abuse, he is drawing her in; grooming her. Usually she would have complied; being the dutiful and obedient wife.</i></p> <p>Kevin rushed off to see the therapist, only to go home and tell Berna that I twice invited him for drinks.</p> <p><i>If he can have her doubt the authority of the therapist, he can maybe win control back ("See what you will be missing out on").</i></p> <p>Berna is offered a position elsewhere, packs her and Michelle's things, and leaves.</p>	<p>Benevolent Teacher</p> <p>Positioning himself as still desirable</p>
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She leaves me with the following letter:

The moment I started reading the chapter on Destructive Relationships, I came to realize that it has actually been there since the very beginning. I suppose one never wants to come to terms with the fact that one dated and in the end married someone like this, but if I think rationally about it, this is precisely what happened.

All these years I had been trying to find the fault within myself, and I was telling myself that someday or another I was causing all this to happen. All those times he told me to go to hell! My hair was never cut the way he liked it, my clothes were never to his satisfaction. He always said that a woman who preferred slacks wanted to be the man about the house.

Oftentimes he told me he's only staying because of the children, and that I'm not worth anything as a mother; that I come from a family of ne'er-do-wells. That I do not support him or understand him, and that I must be under the impression that he works only for his own benefit. He's quite happy if he sometimes can buy himself some cigarettes and a bottle of whiskey once

in a while. He says that I did not know how half the women in Pretoria live. And all this, while at the age of 26 he already had his first Merc, followed by another ten or so, two BMW 740s, bought house after house, bought and lost a farm. He forgets that, for over two years, we lived below the breadline after another bankruptcy, and I had to support the family.

I'm not willing to spend another 40 years, denying and renouncing myself for the sake of an illusion that it might not work out in the end. There's no rose-hued horizon to disappear into. I never ever again want to hear that I'm not in a prison and that I can take my things and leave whenever I want to. That I can go and find myself a weakling and see if I will then be happy and satisfied. I do not need to put up with a cold shoulder on a Saturday morning if I did not offer to make breakfast long after we have both eaten something. I do not need a whole week-end to go to waste over bacon and eggs. I don't need the rebuffs.

I do not want to feel guilty if the dog jumps onto my lap and I'm made to believe that it's not okay. I do not want to hear that I love the dog more than I love him. What a compliment for my level of emotional intelligence.

If I can only come to terms with how I ended up in this position and whether this is what God intended it to be. Maybe then I will get on and start living my life again. Maybe this is life as intended after the Fall.

I'm sick and tired of his deciding which TV channel to switch to, and at what time one can go to bed. Slowly I was turned into a robot by all these irritations – going on with life, automatically – without a life. I'm tired of only existing – never living life. I'm locked up in a fortress in which I'm neither safe nor immune from all the hurt.

I do not know how to be efficient anymore. Everything is turning personal, and I find myself unable to make decisions. I feel threatened and I'm so tired. Every morning it's a battle to get up, make some coffee, bath, get dressed, drive to work, and battle through the day, just to be confronted by the same issues again and again. This is a horizon-less existence. I need to feel carefree again. All this, at the ripe age of forty-eight. It says a lot about one's maturity and one's accountability – doesn't it?

When later I had a call from Berna, she had started a new life and moved away from Pretoria. Although struggling on a financial level, she described herself as being much more at peace and content.

Conclusion

Except for the stories of Minette, Elaine, Karen and Berna, I collected data from another thirty-seven women involved or having been involved in emotionally abusive relationships. These women are listed in Appendix A: All Cases and I use excerpts from their stories to illustrate emerging themes, the ways in which both the women and the men's position of themselves, and in reflecting on identified patterns or processes.

In re-constructing the stories of these four women who I saw in therapy, I hope to have stimulated some thought on the emotional abuse women experience in close relationships. I will continue the conversation in the next chapter, but against the background of some of the themes, positionings and mechanisms I have identified in the stories above.
