

EMOTIONAL MANIPULATION DEFINED

A Working Definition of Emotional Manipulation

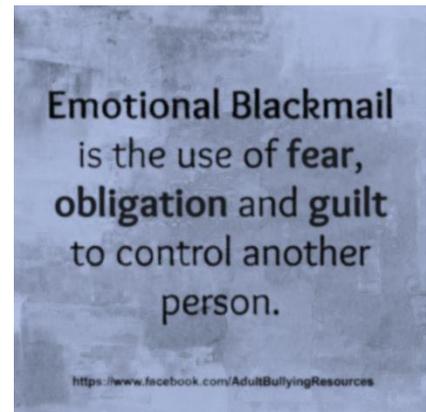
Emotional Manipulation is the act of manipulating another person into an intense desired emotional state (such as love, passion or anger) in order to take advantage of them.

Emotional Vampirism includes such practices as learning what someone needs in a mate or friend and becoming those traits so the person thinks he or she is in love, or sincerely cared about.

Emotional Blackmail is when the people in your life use fear, obligation, and guilt to manipulate you. It is a very powerful form of manipulation in which the person directly or indirectly threatens to punish you if you don't comply with how they want you to behave. An emotional blackmail artist will use your vulnerabilities and deepest secrets and fears against you.

Examples of Emotional Blackmailer's sayings:

- "If you really loved me..."
- "After all I've done for you..."
- "How can you be so selfish..."
- "I was your slave..."



Psychological Manipulation is a type of social influence that aims to change the perception or behavior of others through underhanded, deceptive tactics. By advancing only the interest of the manipulator, often at the other's expense, such methods could be considered exploitative, abusive, and deceptive.

Several authors refer to emotional manipulation in their books, all of which are recommended readings:

1. Dr. Robin Stern coined the phrase "Gaslight Effect." This phrase includes two participants: "A gaslighter who needs to be right in order to preserve his own sense of self and his sense of power in the world; and a gaslightee, who allows the gaslighter to define her sense of reality because she idealizes him and seeks approval." Her book is called The Gaslight Effect.

2. In his book In Sheep's Clothing, Dr. George Simon uses the phrase "covert aggression – the manipulation of the heart." He differentiates passive-aggression from covert aggression. "Passive - aggression is, as the term implies, aggressing through passivity. In contrast, covert aggression is very active, albeit veiled, aggression. When someone is being covertly aggressive, they're using calculation, underhanded means to get what they want to manipulate the response of others while keeping their aggressive intentions under cover."
3. Dr. Harriet B. Braiker in Who's Pulling Your Strings refers to emotional blackmail by saying "...manipulation is always one-sided, asymmetrical, or unbalanced in its motivation. Once the line between appropriate influence and manipulation has been crossed, relationships become disturbed and troubled."

OUR Working Definition of Emotional Manipulation:

A person with greater emotional intelligence than his or her victims who uses emotional intelligence to covertly manipulate (subtly and subconsciously) the vulnerabilities of others for his or her own personal satisfaction/gain with a total disregard for the needs of their victims is an emotional manipulator.

Emotional Intelligence: Emotional Intelligence is usually a very good quality. Dr. Daniel Goldman in Emotional Intelligence has five essential qualities of Emotional Intelligence:

1. Knowing one's emotions: self-awareness about how you feel about the issues of your life
2. Managing emotions: handling your feelings appropriately
3. Motivating oneself: emotional self-control
4. Recognizing emotions in others: empathy
5. Handling relationships: requires social competence and interpersonal effectiveness

Ten Types of Emotional Manipulators

The following list describes the different types of Emotional Manipulators. I use this in counseling to gain insight about my clients. I also share this information with survivors so they can gain insight about their Emotional Manipulators.

1. The Constant Victim

No matter what happens, with many twists and turns, this emotional manipulator becomes the victim.



Features:

- They start “relationship fires” and irritate everyone or they pressure people for what they want.
- At first, people around them feel overwhelmed by their attacks/pressure. This causes the victim to get angry and respond with anger. Some victims become verbally aggressive. Suddenly, the Constant Victim feels victimized.
- They have victimized reactions.
- They seek sympathy from others and give very one-sided stories with distorted facts.
- They are advanced triangulators. They are effective in turning people against people.

Symptoms and distortions that drive a Constant Victim:

- A very fragile ego.
- Many have a true gifted talent – with a magical thought, “Since I am gifted, I should receive special considerations.”
- They have a strong need for one-upmanship and victimization at the same time.
- Some feel guilty that they have not been doing what they are supposed to be doing (such as work). They assume others are angry at them for not doing what they are supposed to do.
- Tremendous projection. (They project onto you what they are doing themselves.)
- Surround themselves with people who believe their lies.
- Constant victims have a blend of anger and fear. They can, and do, rapidly deteriorate.
- Some, not all, have paranoia.
- They often pull the ethics card.

2. One-Upmanship Expert

With skillful manipulation, this person needs to gain the high ground with others.

FUN FACT: The term “One-Upmanship” originated as the title of a tongue-and-cheek self-help book by Stephen Potter published in 1952. The thrust of the book is about creative intimidation, making one’s associate feel inferior and thereby gaining the status of being “one-up” on them.



© Can Stock Photo - csp11764701

Features:

- They quickly identify the vulnerable spots within people.
- They desire to be the “King of the Hill.”
- They love to use “put-downs” and manipulate people.
- This emotional manipulator loves using fear and intimidation.
- Not all but some display obvious arrogance.
- The most effective one-upmanship experts are not openly arrogant or narcissistic.

Symptoms and distortions that drive a One-Upmanship Expert:

- Some are driven by shame.
- Some are driven by anger.
- Most are driven by both shame and anger – especially from themselves.
- Their greatest need is to hide or to get rid of their shame and emptiness.
- The need for one-upmanship drives their minimizing the value of others.
- Labeling others, as pawns to feel good about self, allows them to manipulate others.

Magical Thoughts:

- “If I get one-upmanship, I have proven my competency/value.”
- “If I belittle you, I receive status.”
- “If I am focused on belittling you, I am not focused on my feelings of shame.”
- “When I can increase your distress and pain levels I can feel mine go down.”

3. Powerful Dependents

Powerful Dependents hide behind the guise of being weak and powerless, but gain considerable power in the lives of those they are dependent upon.

Features:

- They love learned-helplessness and practice it like a pro.
- They start relationships by acting inadequate and appreciating all of your wonderful assistance.
- They set you up for servitude by stroking your ego – making you feel very good about helping them.
- If someone resists their dependency, they quickly transition from nice to nasty in seconds to get others to cooperate.
- Their hidden message is “Don’t let me down.” Below are some of their favorite verbal manipulations:
 - “I don’t think it would be a huge bother for you to give me a hand with this.”
 - “It seems like such a little thing. I don’t understand why you are getting so upset.”
 - “You have so much help (money, resources) and I have so little.”
- Or to keep a hook in their victims, they pretend to have a meltdown:
 - “If you don’t help me with this, I’ll be so overwhelmed!”
 - “My entire life sucks!”
 - “I’ll just end it all.”
- Or they throw you under the bus:
 - “Oh great! Another person turns on me!”
 - “You are just like the rest. I can’t count on you or anyone!”

HELP !



Symptoms and distortions that drive Powerful Dependents:

- They have strong needs to feel another’s support – that someone is propping them up.
- Many really do not have the skills to manage life and they know it.
- Some exaggerate their dependency symptoms to motivate others.
- They are very self-centered – “Only my needs matter.”
- Decided inability to view another’s perspective.

4. Triangulators

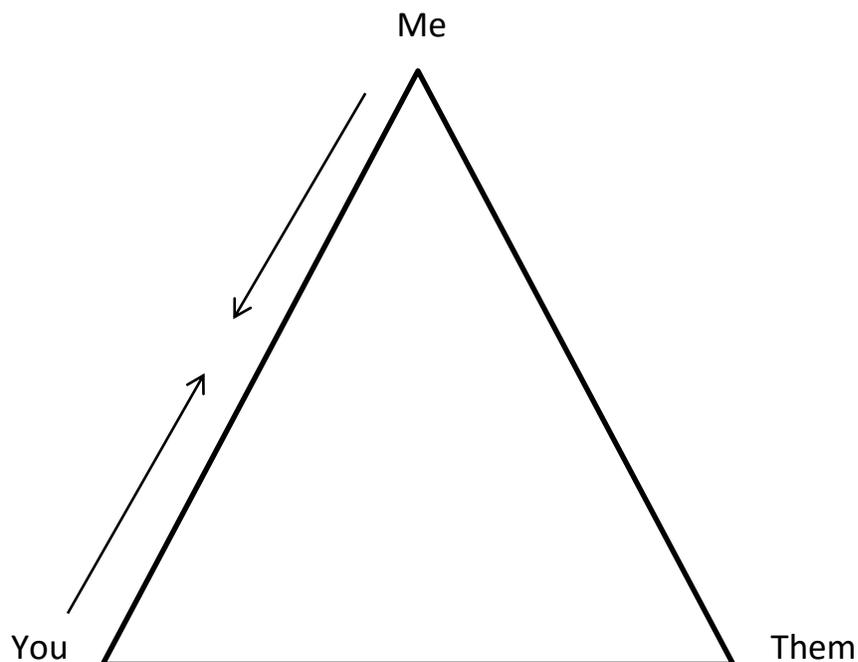
“You are so special. I’m so happy you’re on my side. Let me tell you what these terrible people are doing to me! Plus, they are saying nasty things about you too!”

Features:

- They are experts at tag team wrestling.
- They create alliances, usually with them in charge, to attack others.
- They love to turn people against people.
- They want to unite with you to get one-upmanship together against someone, but they want to be in charge, at the top!
- They want to hurt someone, not physically, but emotionally or they want to retaliate against someone, getting revenge and especially one-upmanship.

Symptoms and distortions that drive Triangulators:

- Some have a strong desire to be a hero coming to the rescue.
- Some have very self-centered motives and feel every need to scorch and burn.
- Parent Alienation Syndrome is a great example of a scorching and burning triangulator!
- They can become great leaders with many followers because their followers feel ineffective.



5. The Blasters

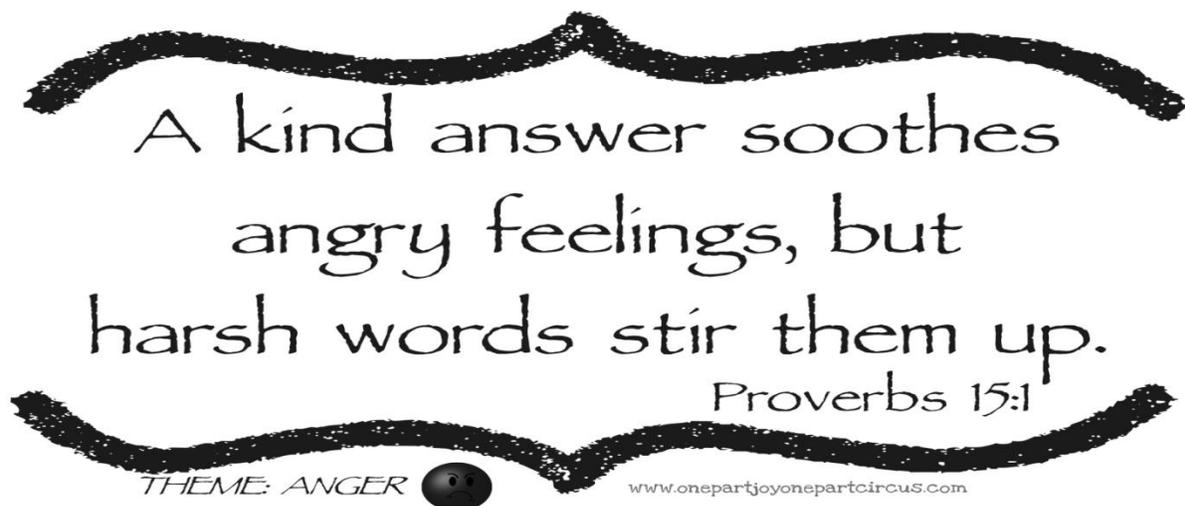
It is not uncommon that teenagers are Blasters! But most of them grow out of it. A few take blasting into adult life. Blasters have a goal. They want you to not confront them on issues they need to be confronted on. So, they continue with their dysfunction. They blast you with anger or a multitude of issues to throw you off of the topic that really needs to be addressed.

Features:

- You feel suspicious. You feel they are up to something, but you do not know exactly what it is. The issue may be an affair, embezzlement at work, credit card debt, poor grades, etc.
- They rant and rave when you try to discuss an issue they want to hide.
- The blaster works on your doubts, trying to convince you that *you* have a problem. They especially try to change the topic. Often they say that they are innocent and you are the problem because you have trust issues.
- When they finally get caught, they change their story and they project blame onto their victims. "I had an affair and it's all your fault!"

Symptoms and distortions that drive the Blaster:

- They use forced denial and severe pressure. They have an incredible need to deny their problems and they force others to go along with their denial.
- They derail their victims from the issue.
- Strong need to resist change.
- When they were children or teens, parents edited reality and never corrected them.
- They strongly need to continue with their hidden problem behavior.



6. The Projector

A Projector has a dysfunctional issue, but they believe that other people have this dysfunctional issue – not them.

Examples:

“She is such a controlling person,” said the controlling person.

“All he ever thinks about is himself!” said the self-centered person.

“She seems to be really nosey. Tell me more about her,” said the gossip.

“He is so greedy because he won’t give me what I want,” said the greedy person.

Features:

- They put templates on others that do not exist:
 - “You’re controlling.”
 - “You’re manipulative.”
 - “You’re a racist.”
- They have the potential of creating many victims.
- They get many secondary gains with their accusations.
- Many people are willing to join them in their accusations.
- If you ever say “No” to them, they make accusations because you are not giving them what they want. Usually their accusations reflect their projection. For example – they call you selfish when they are actually the selfish one.
- Their demands become more and more intense. They hammer and hammer, non-stop.
- If you do not give them what they want, they criticize you and put intense pressure on you.
- Some become more vocal and dramatic when making their demands.
- They turn people against others because many of them are extremely convincing.
- They never give up. They are relentless. They may pull back and wait for better timing, but they will demand and pressure you repeatedly.
- If they get what they want, they will consume your life and suffocate you.
- If they do not get what they want, they will try to destroy your friendships, business, or you.
- It is all about them!
- They continually see you as the source of their problems and they act like innocent victims.
- They lie. They will lie to your friends, family, and business associates. Then they will call you dishonest because they project.



Symptoms and cognitive distortions that drive the Projector:

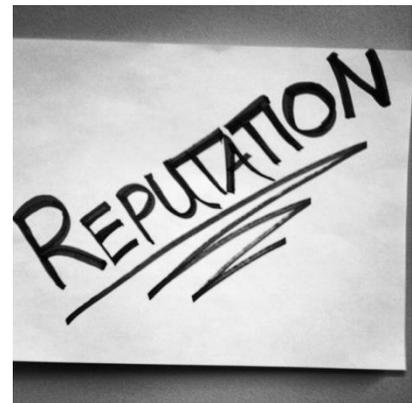
- They truly believe that their bad quality is your bad quality.
- Some have been extremely pampered, especially as children.
- Some enjoy creating victims – “I was victimized so I have a right to victimize anyone who does not give me what I want.”
- Their need for one-upmanship runs supreme.
- They have a strong need to retaliate.
- They have blinders to any ideas other than their own.
- They feel excessive hate, but they actually hate themselves.

7. The Intentional Mis-Interpreter

These people intentionally mis-interpret information to feed you bad information about others and themselves. Or they feed other people bad information about you.

Features:

- Their intent is to ruin reputations to enhance their position with friends, family or co-workers.
- They want to be Number 1.
- They give partial truth and slant information.
- They are very good at appearing trustworthy and getting people to feel safe with them, which gets them more information about people’s most personal issues.
- They are usually hard workers and try to make themselves invaluable to others.
- They, at first, appear friendly and fun.



Symptoms and cognitive distortions that drive the Intentional Mis-Interpreter:

- Incredibly strong needs to be the absolute favorite and only special person.
- In their mind, they create a justification that it is okay to change/slant a story. Many actually believe their slanted versions.
- They have a strong need to feel like rescuers because they are informing or coming to the rescue for a friend or relative.
- When caught, they use tears to stop confrontations.

8. The Flirt

“Look at me!” “Be attracted to me!” “I have plans for you!”

Features:

- They are very superficial people.
- They believe they are very attractive even when they are not.
- When being raised they were the little prince or princess.
- With their parents, they were usually the favorite child.
- Some are very sexually active or sexually tease to get what they want.
- They want feedback from everyone that they are attractive.
- They are very manipulative and use flirtation to get what they want.
- They will do a flirtation and quickly look to see if anyone is watching them.
- They test people to determine if others will have affairs with them.
- They seem to love to destroy families with affairs – emotional or physical.
- They are very competitive with spouses of people they are interested in.
- Once they get a new person, they still look to connect with others.

Symptoms and cognitive distortions that drive the Flirt:

- Some were the preferred children within their family and their need to be preferred and admired continues into adult life.
- Some were sexually abused and have learned to use flirtation to be in charge of their social interactions.
- Some just have a strong need to be the center of attention.
- “It’s all about me” is a very severe quality within them.
- They feel in-command when a family they are tampering with falls apart.



9. The Iron Fist (Intimidator)

“I demand that you give me what I want.”



Features:

- They use force and heavy manipulative games to get what they want.
- Some use their physical presence with a threatening attitude. Physically posturing by arriving at your door constantly!
- Some use their intelligence to enforce extreme pressure and open manipulation on others.
- They totally hate and ignore your boundaries.
- Some use their intelligence with hidden pressure and manipulation.
- They destroy those who do not give them what they want.
- Scorch and burn – some may become physical.

Symptoms and cognitive distortions that drive the Iron Fist (Intimidator):

- Their desires are the only priority and they are amazed that anyone might disagree with their priorities.
- They believe in forcing life to bend to their desires.
- Some are heavy-handed abusers and simply see force as another tool to get what they want.
- They are very focused on other's behavior and if that behavior is inconsistent with their desires, they feel justified in becoming heavy-handed.

10. The Multiple Offender

Most people who are emotional manipulators are a combination of the previous types of emotional manipulators. They usually have a blend of several types.

For example:

An emotional manipulator may be a blend of a constant victim, one-upmanship expert, and a triangulator or a blaster who is also an intentional mis-interpreter and an iron fist.

