

# IS IT SUPPOSED TO BE THIS HARD?

Telling the Difference Between Emotional Abuse  
and the Hard Work of Relationship



**Media Kit**

# *“I never thought of it as abuse.”*

Most emotionally abused partners don't know they are being abused. They know that they are dealing with a difficult relationship and wonder, “Is it supposed to be this hard?”

This life-changing book:

- Explores the difference between emotional abuse and the hard work of relationship
- Helps emotionally abused partners understand themselves more and judge themselves less by showing how unconscious relationship patterns, subtlety, and denial make emotional abuse hard to identify
- Outlines steps people can take to recover from abuse, find their inner strength, and engage in better self-care
- Is gender inclusive and presented in gender neutral terms.

Of the twenty-eight people who tell their stories in this book—including women abused by men, people from the LGBTQ+ community, and heterosexual men abused by female partners—all have taken steps toward healing, and over half have gone on to enjoy healthy relationships. Along with compassionately presenting their experiences and the wisdom they gained on their path to recovery, Haffey provides insightful self-reflection tools to access hidden truths about emotional abuse, leading to greater clarity, inner trust, personal empowerment, and ultimately freedom from abuse.



**Genre:**  
Self-Help / Abuse



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# Mary Pat Haffey, MS, LPC (ret.)



Mary Pat Haffey, MS, is a retired Licensed Professional Counselor. She worked with emotionally abused people during her internship and became interested in studying emotional abuse early in her career. She published an article, “Spiritual Principles and Partner Emotional Abuse” in the *Georgia Journal of Professional Counseling* in 2001. That article planted the seed that, after twenty years’ experience, grew into this book, *Is It Supposed to Be This Hard? Telling the Difference Between Emotional Abuse and the Hard Work of Relationship*.

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## Professional Endorsements & Reader Reviews

### Claire LaBriola, LAPC, NCC, JD

As a clinical mental health therapist, I recommend this book for every therapist and for many, many clients. This book accurately portrays the sometimes subtle and difficult to pin down experience of emotional abuse. It truly helps to distinguish between emotional abuse and the normal, sometimes difficult, aspects of being in a relationship. Each chapter includes a summary as well as reflection exercises that can be used on their own or with a therapist. I know I will be continually recommending this book!

### Jordan bbb

I wish this book had been written when my daughter was in a toxic relationship! Instead of encouraging her to work harder on the relationship, I might have recognized their marriage to be the abusive situation it was. I could have been the support she needed instead of suggesting she just needed to work harder. I believe. “Is It Supposed to Be This Hard” will prove to be a valuable resource for not only those victims of abuse, but for their family members who want to support them. Buy one and share one.

# Chapter Previews

These chapter excerpts and previews are available online at [emotionalabusebook.com](http://emotionalabusebook.com)

## INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2: THE UNSPOKEN CONTRACT AND COMMON WISDOM - “I’m Doing What I’m Supposed to Do. Why Isn’t It Working?”

Chapter 2: STAY COMMITTED - How Common Wisdom Works Against the Abused Partner

Chapter 8: TELLING THE DIFFERENCE - “Could This Be Emotional Abuse?”

Chapter 9: NORMALIZING - “How Could I Have Let That Happen?”

Chapter 10: THE HEALING POWER OF ANGER - Anger, My Friend



# Sample Interview Questions

## What is emotional abuse?

Emotional abuse is a pattern of behaviors in which one person asserts power and control over another and systematically uses that power to demean and devalue them.

## How/Why did you choose your title? Is It Supposed to Be This Hard?

Because while most emotionally abused people don't know they are being abused, they do know they are in a difficult relationship. Many people who could benefit from this book don't know they need to read it.

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 [Introduction](#)

## Why did you write this book?

I have seen emotionally abused partners put a lot of thought and energy into the wrong questions, i.e., “How can I fix this relationship?” “What do I need to do differently to make things better?” “How can I reassure them that they are loved, so they don't feel the need to be hurtful?”

I wanted to help emotionally abused people see the abuse for what it is.

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I have seen emotionally abused people stigmatized for engaging in the same kinds of behaviors that would be applauded in a healthy relationship. I wanted to reduce or eliminate the judgement they experience.

 Page 217-220  [Ch. 9 Excerpt](#)

## What makes it hard to tell the difference between emotional abuse and the hard work of relationship?

- The subtlety of emotional abuse
- The unpredictable alteration between loving and hurtful behaviors coupled with the fact that even loving partners sometimes hurt each other
- The gaslighting, manipulation, and denial that are part of emotional abuse

# Sample Interview Questions (cont.)

## What makes your book different from other books on the topic?

- The focus on subtlety
- The contrast with healthier relationships throughout the book
- Gender inclusivity

## Ask me about The Unspoken Contract and Common Wisdom

 Pages 43-43 & 71  [Ch. 2 Excerpt 1](#)  
[Ch. 2 Excerpt 2](#)

## What are some examples of subtle emotional abuse?

- An attitude of entitlement and superiority
- Disdainful and rejecting looks
- Sideways criticisms

Even if people can identify these things, it is very hard to get anyone else to understand that they are abusive.

## What are some markers for subtle emotional abuse?

- One-sidedness
- Unilateral decision making
- Manipulation and gaslighting
- Unexplained Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde switches
- Habit of ignoring and/or dismissing
- Sabotaging problem solving
- Shutting down or sabotaging conversations

 Page 214  [Ch. 8 Excerpt](#)

## Ask me about becoming a compassionate warrior.

Compassionate warriors are people who have recognized that anger is an appropriate response to abuse. They have learned to use self-protective anger, not to retaliate, but to empower themselves on the road to recovery.

 Page 249-252  [Ch. 10 Excerpt](#)