

Understanding Emotional Abuse Checklist



Recognising Red Flags, Coercive Control & Planning for Your Safety

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Red-Flag Behaviours To Take Seriously

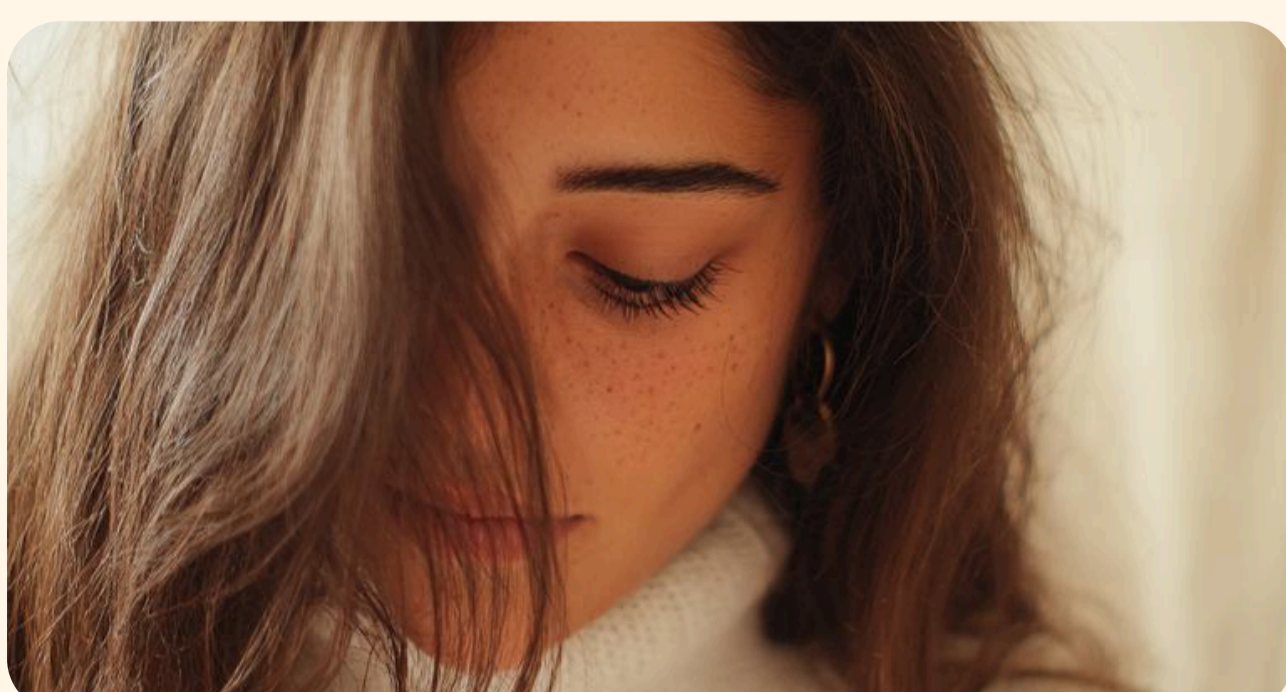
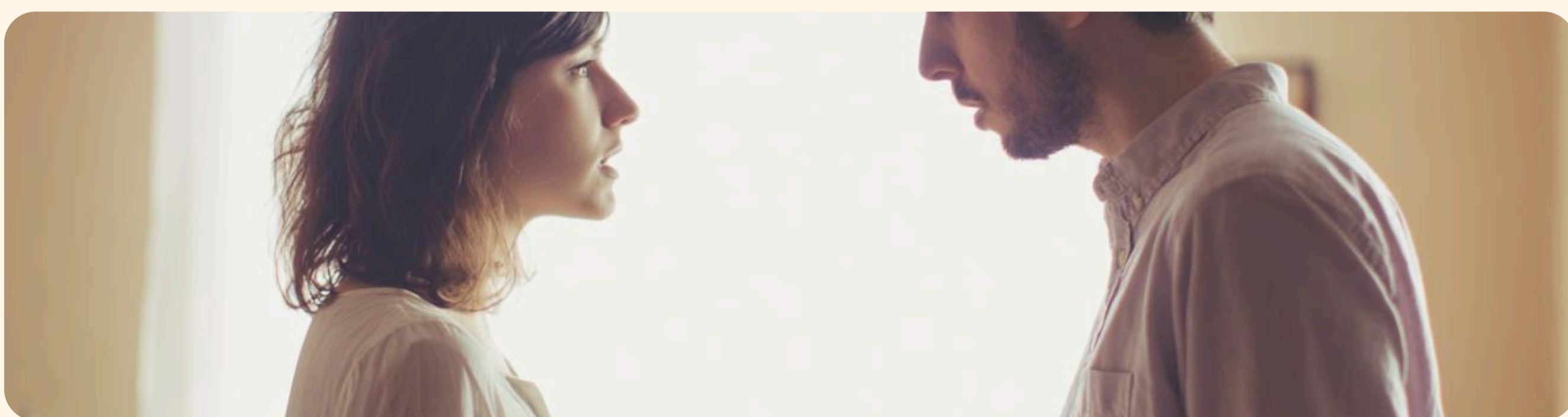
These behaviours may signal emotional abuse, especially if they happen regularly or escalate during conflict.

Frequent put-downs, criticism, or mocking	Dismissing your feelings as “too sensitive” or “crazy”
Controlling your friendships, whereabouts, or social life	Monitoring your phone, email, or online activity without consent
Making decisions for you or withholding important information	Explosive anger, followed by love-bombing or guilt-tripping
Threats to leave, harm themselves, or punish you if you express boundaries	Walking away during arguments to assert control, not to regulate emotion
Gaslighting (denying things they said/did, making you doubt your memory)	Blaming you for their bad behaviour (“If you weren’t so difficult, I wouldn’t get mad”)

Therapist Note: A healthy partner doesn’t make you afraid to speak up. If you constantly walk on eggshells, something deeper is going on.

Coercive Control Indicators

Coercive control is a pattern of behaviours aimed at isolating, intimidating, or dominating another person. It’s often subtle, but dangerous.



In Australia, coercive control is increasingly recognised as a serious form of domestic abuse. Some states have introduced or are developing legal protections against it.

Look out for:

- 1 Dictating who you can see, what you can wear, or where you go
- 2 Withholding money or tracking every dollar spent
- 3 Requiring constant check-ins or punishing delayed replies
- 4 Threatening to take the children or report you to authorities
- 5 Making you feel you’re “lucky” they tolerate you
- 6 Undermining your confidence so you won’t leave
- 7 Using spiritual, cultural, or gender norms to justify control
- 8 Punishing independence (e.g. new job, haircut, hobby)
- 9 Creating a world where their needs always come first

Safety Planning Notes (Even If You're Not Ready To Leave Yet)

You don't need to be ready to leave in order to start protecting yourself.



Steps You Can Take Now:

- Store important documents in a safe place (passport, ID, Medicare card)
- Keep a small amount of emergency cash or a separate bank account if safe to do so
- Save helpline numbers under a disguised name in your phone
- Share a code word with a trusted friend to signal you need help
- Avoid confronting an abusive partner without support, it may escalate risk
- Document incidents (dates, what was said/done, how you felt) in a password-protected file or offline journal
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You are allowed to protect yourself, even if you're not yet sure what you want to do next.

24/7 Support Services (Australia)

You can talk to someone confidentially, day or night.

1800RESPECT - 1800 737 732 | [1800respect.org.au](https://www.1800respect.org.au)

Australia's national domestic, family, and sexual violence support service.

MensLine Australia - 1300 78 99 78

Support for men experiencing family and relationship difficulties.

Lifeline - 13 11 14

Crisis support for emotional distress, including relationship breakdown.

QLife - 1800 184 527

Support for LGBTQIA+ individuals navigating abuse, identity, or isolation.

Final Words from a Therapist

If this checklist made your chest tighten or brought tears to your eyes, you're not alone. Many people live in emotionally abusive dynamics for years before recognising them.

You don't have to name it right now.

You don't have to leave today.

You *do* deserve to feel safe, respected, and emotionally free in your relationship.

Start where you are. Protect your peace. And know this: **There is help. And there is a way forward.**

Find your closest
Unified Lawyers office



Address

Sydney CBD

Level 5, 299 Elizabeth Street, Sydney NSW 2000

Bondi Junction

Level 22, Suite 2201, Tower Two Westfield, 101 Grafton Street, Bondi Junction NSW 2022

North Sydney

Level 25, 100 Mount Street, North Sydney NSW 2060

Miranda

Level 4, 29 Kiora Road, Miranda NSW 2228

Parramatta

Level 14, Suite 1428, 3 Parramatta Square, 153 Macquarie Street, Parramatta NSW 2150

Marrickville

Suite 3, 369 Illawarra Road, Marrickville NSW 2204

Brisbane CBD

Level 19, 10 Eagle Street, Brisbane City QLD 4000

Gold Coast

Level 13, 50 Cavill Avenue, Surfers Paradise, Gold Coast, QLD 4217

Melbourne CBD

Level 40, 140 William Street, Melbourne VIC 3000

Tel

+1300 667 461

Mail

info@unifiedlawyers.com.au
