



Walking on Eggshells, A Resource to Help Clear the Fog

This resource discusses patterns of emotional manipulation that can be painful to revisit. Please take time and pause if needed. Engagement with this information is entirely within your control. Safety and well-being are what matter most.

Living in a relationship with an emotional or psychological abuser can feel like walking on eggshells every single day. The choice of words is pondered endlessly. Monitoring and maintain a very calm tone when speaking, trying to anticipate their moods (there will be many) and constantly in a state of caution because there is a risk of volatility or silence. Home is supposed to be a safe space, a sanctuary. Yet home, in this relationship becomes a place where anxiety grows and senses are on high alert.

Are there apologies when nothing has been done wrong? Is there a loss of voice to avoid any argument that might arise? Are plans changed out of uncertainty? Are friends being intentionally distanced or avoided? Is a favorite outfit hiding in the back of the closet now because last week a comment was made about one of the colors? Any of these can become a reason for criticism, anger, blame or punishment.

Over time, this constant tension will cause questions and a lot of overthinking. Was there too much sensitivity in the last response? Did tears really need to flow? Was this caused by me and all my fault? Emotional and psychological control involves many forms of manipulation, gaslighting, blame-shifting and the constant walk on eggshells. When the receiver is repeatedly told that feelings are unreasonable or that events happened differently than remembered, it can become difficult to trust your own judgment.

The challenge for the receiver is ... when kindness, affection, apologies and or promises - lots of them - reappear, the anxiety and eggshells momentarily disappear. There are glimpses of the person who captured their heart. Those moments create hope. The hope that things will finally change. Human nature is to hold tightly to the good while trying to survive the manipulation. This cycle is incredibly confusing and emotionally exhausting.

Walking on eggshells is not what love is supposed to feel like. A healthy relationship does not require living in fear of the simplest of things; expressing an opinion, wearing a certain color, answering a call from a friend or eating dessert because you want to. Relationships need boundaries and there should never be a loss of self. Friendships are normal, feelings are

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normal, needs are normal, sharing thoughts and opinions is normal. In an emotionally abusive relationships, normal turns to fear and anxiety because of intimidation, humiliation and manipulation. This causes the “walking on eggshells” reaction.

If there is recognition or resonance in these words, please remember: walking on eggshells it is not weakness, it is a survival mechanism. The responsibility for the manipulation, emotional and psychological abuse lies with the one causing all the broken pieces of eggshells.

