



When Blame Shifts, A Resource to Gain Clarity Through the Confusion

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.

Conversations are a normal, everyday occurrence. They are essential to build rapport, build trust, learn and grow. In an emotionally and psychologically abusive relationship conversations change; there isn't a true "ebb and flow." There are moments that cause the thought – wait, what just happened? This conversation was about coffee and now it's about an action I never took and I'm somehow being blamed. When blame shifts, conversations that begin with one person's choices, actions or behavior somehow end with another person carrying the responsibility.

What is this thing that just happened? Is there a name for this? Yes, it's called blame shifting. And when it enters the conversation, the action is intentional and directed at the receiver to cause imbalance. Blame shifting begins with the abuser's words and behavior. Somehow, that behavior becomes the receiver's responsibility and fault.

When blame shifting happens, confusion is the first result – the "wait, what?" reaction. The receiver begins questioning what was said, what was meant and what actually happened. As the pattern continues, the receiver remains in a state of confusion. And, eventually accepts that an acceptable response today might cause an argument tomorrow. A behavior today is praised and tomorrow is chastised. When behavior is perceived as "good," a compliment might be given today and retracted tomorrow with denial. "I never said that." The conversation shifts, the facts seem to change and the receiver is left carrying the responsibility for something that was never theirs to own.

The motive for blame shifting is to keep the receiver on their toes, in a state of confusion, questioning how something became their fault. Simple conversations shift from "let's talk about plans and going to our favorite place this weekend" to "I never said I liked that place" and confusion immediately sets in.

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When blame shifts, clarity is lost and any semblance of logic disappears. The receiver is left trying to understand how an ordinary conversation about coffee was turned upside down and inside out. The original topic fades into the background, contradictions are intentionally

inserted and logic tells the receiver to defend. In defending the abuser's contradiction, blame shifts. It becomes the receiver's responsibility. They are told to "own" the shift in the conversation. It's their fault that a simple conversation about coffee has turned into an argument. Wait ... what? Over time, the question may change from verbalizing "What did I do wrong?" to internalizing "How did this become my fault?" The transition from verbalizing the questions to internalizing the thoughts is the beginning of recognizing the pattern of when blame shifts.

When there is recognition or resonance in these words, please remember: responsibility and blame are not the same thing. Hurtful words, intentionally introduced contradictions and abusive behavior that cause the most innate human response - to defend - belong to the person bringing them into the conversation. The receiver may be told to own what happened, accept the blame or carry the burden: "this is all your fault." Being told to own something is different than taking responsibility for it. The responsibility belongs elsewhere.