

# ARE EMOTIONAL WEAPONS CRIPPLING YOUR RELATIONSHIP?

Understand Your Unique “Go To”  
Emotional Weapons & How To Replace Them  
With Skills That Build Trust, Happiness, Care,  
Emotional Safety, Passion & Vulnerability

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When you see the phrase, 'emotional weapons', do you have visions of alien invasions? Maybe end of the world emotional bombs? Or perhaps a zombie apocalypse takes over your mind and emotions?

Well, maybe not a zombie apocalypse, but emotional weapons are quite dastardly. Why? Because they promote and grow the worst parts of a relationship. Emotional weapons lead to increasing upset, aggression, shut down, cold-heartedness, disconnection, division, anger, defense mechanisms of all kinds, frustration, blame, projection, escape, numbing out and ...well, you get the point.

Emotional weapons can create relationship environments conducive to emotional defeat and incite division and separateness - the exact opposite of what we desire in a relationship. Emotional Weapons, or EWs, is a phrase I coined years ago while working with individuals and couples and witnessing the interesting patterns and habits in which people ensure isolation, disconnection, and a gross lack of emotional safety; again, the opposite of what people want in relationships.

Let's dig a little deeper.

## Defining Emotional Weapons

Emotional weapons are truly weapons of mass destruction as they wreak havoc on the relationships in your life. EWs refer to a specific combination of internal and external emotions and behaviors that are designed to erode relationships, vulnerability, connection, collaboration and unity. EWs are often irrational, and comprised of limiting beliefs that drive defensive thoughts, actions and dramatic negative mental stories. The magnitude of pain, suffering, and calamity that results when EWs are unleashed can be significant and hurtful.

People learn the majority of his or her primary EW from the environments where they grew up. These weapons are unleashed when a person feels overwhelmed or powerless, or otherwise negatively triggered. We tend to do, be, feel and act in the ways we witnessed as children; what could be more natural than to mirror our environments?

Of course not everything learned growing up is an emotional weapon! We all learn many beautiful, encouraging, caring and inspiring ways to be in the world as well. But, it is the EW that causes the most, if not all, problems.

There is GREAT news! You can decide to consciously change old patterns that include EW, and replace them with new practices anytime you like.

## Understanding Types Of Emotional Weapons

Below is a list of the most common EW, and descriptions of each. There are many *variations* not listed, but this outline will give you a solid framework to begin identifying your 'go to' emotional weapon behaviors. As you read each one, note which you deploy most frequently.

But remember this VERY IMPORTANT note as you read through each EW: do your best *not* to engage self-shame or guilt as you read. Everyone engages in EW until a specific decision is made to learn to stop. If you are indeed serious about having a truly great relationship and releasing EW, then you are already successful and on your way. Focus on progress, not perfection. Becoming aware of these patterns will empower you in amazing ways!

Also, maintain a self focus the best you're able as you read further. It's all too easy to begin thinking about how *others* in your life might use the various EWs. It's far more beneficial to remain focused on you and your journey. Remember, it is *you* working to become a more healed, authentic, and liberated version of yourself. You are the only one you have power over. Focus on changing your life and relationship by changing YOURSELF!

Let this be a beautiful time where unconditional self love and compassion are applied as you learn, change, grow and remove unwanted habits.

As we examine each EW, let's consider what we're unable to experience in relation to others while weapons exist in your life and relationships. People literally miss out on the most amazing pieces of what make life juicy and relationships inspiring by being stuck using EWs. EW serve only to push others away. People do this because they are either afraid, don't yet know how to be vulnerable, engaged, and connected, or to utilize healthy self-protection like boundaries or asking for what one wants and needs in loving ways.

EWs are defense mechanisms designed to keep people at arm's length, and are driven from the subconscious belief that to be vulnerable and deeply connected is too risky. People mean well, but in reality, EWs keep you from giving and receiving the love, unconditional care, connection, a sense of belonging, vulnerability and the depth we so deeply desire. Let's look at eight basic emotional weapons.

## Emotional Weapon 1) Emotional Shut Down

A armor, walls, emotional collapse, tongue tied, afraid to speak, the silent treatment, diverting eye contact... all possible elements of emotional shut down. Shutting down is among the saddest of all EWs. It's indicative of being filled with complex, confusing, frustrating and angry emotions, yet, feeling completely incapable of speaking, sharing, opening up, or self-protecting in healthy ways. When a person shuts down, it feels like someone pushing the 'off' button to our mouth, body, and other modes of healthy self expression.

The cycle looks like this: Person A displays emotion (says something, or does something) that Person B isn't comfortable with or finds upsetting to a small or large degree. Emotional shut down is triggered and emotional collapse occurs in Person B (or person A for that matter- both people could experience emotional shut down simultaneously). Person A then becomes even more upset, trying desperately to get Person B to engage, but this causes Person B to retreat even more... then more volatility from A and more retreating from B... eventually, Person A or B, does something to stop the cycle temporarily. Someone cries, walks away, or gives up. Not a winning combination, is it?

This cyclical loop will perpetuate until one or both parties are able to recognize the cycle and take ownership of his or her role by choosing to participate in more productive ways of displaying emotions and communication.

People prone to shutting down find it helpful to begin journaling at the first sign of shut down. This helps to begin getting *some* feelings and ideas out and down on paper. Often people who struggle with shut down don't even know how they're feeling. Accessing feelings can take time and practice, so be patient if this is you.

At this point it will be possible to share feelings in an email or letter to get the communication ball rolling. And then actually speaking your feelings. But, please, no more depriving yourself of experiencing all that is happening internally. It is very unhealthy for your body, mind and spirit.

Setting better boundaries, speaking your mind, and asking for what you want are nearly always skills that can be practiced to begin to heal the wounds and challenges of emotional shut down.

## **Emotional Weapon 2) Blaming (shouting, shaming, guilt, projecting)**

Any form of blaming is a dominance tactic born out of a feeling of powerlessness. Certainly, aggression, anger, and frustration will be present as well when blaming, (even if masked or expressed with a smile or laugh), and are also used to assert dominance. However, it is the sense of powerlessness that you will want to address and will allow you to efficiently remove this extremely destructive challenge.

Powerlessness is the virus and things like anger, blaming, and shouting are the symptoms and expressions.

Blaming is the most common way to play the victim and to abdicate responsibility. Blame says: 'If you would do, (be, act, or speak ) the way I want you to, then I can be happy, (satisfied, feel good enough', and so on). Blaming is a control tactic and a way to trigger guilt and shame in others. Most of the time, blaming is nothing but a projection: a way of expressing one's own inner self-doubt, insecurity, or lack of self love and confidence.

Usually when we use blame of any kind, it is because we feel unheard, rejected, abandoned, unloved, undeserving or unimportant. The amazing (and sometimes difficult) news here is - you and only you are responsible for healing and removing these any feelings or beliefs tied to feeling or believing you are rejected, abandoned, unloved, undeserving, unworthy, or unimportant. I can say with the utmost confidence that when you become disciplined in your self-protection skills, i.e. set strong and resilient boundaries or speak your mind in loving assertiveness, the various forms of EWs begin to dissolve to a fairly high degree.

(More to come on self protection skills later.)

During my childhood and into my late twenties, I was actually a big blamer, door slammer and yeller (blush...). I grew up in a home where all forms of this EW were present. Thus, it became a primary form of communication for me. My parents also grew up with aggression and yelling, and so the cycle went... It becomes quickly apparent that EWs typically initiate in the childhood environment. However there's no value in blaming our families for our crappy adult habits! They are yours now, and yours to handle. We need only to choose to stop the cycles that no longer serve your best life. And this is a choice, your choice. Isn't freeing!?

### Emotional Weapon 3) Right-Fighting

Do you find yourself struggling to win conflicts? Do family, friends, children or co-workers wonder why you “always hafta be right?” Does conflict you engage in typically end with you having the last word and with others feeling bullied, punished, or otherwise *less* than encouraged? And do your disagreements frequently escalate to angry shouting matches? If you have said yes to these questions, you might be a right-fighter.

What is a right-fighter? A right-fighter is someone who struggles to win arguments, even when she/he secretly doubts her/his own views. Right-fighters become overly emotional, defensive or angry when others don't agree with their opinions or beliefs. A right-fighter insists on having the last word and refuses to back down from conflict regardless of potential damage to relationships. Right-fighters are masterful at turning situations around and laying *blame* (EW #2) on another. At the core of right-fighting is PRIDE-fullness.

A right-fighter often invites feedback then punishes for that requested feedback when it suits his/her situation or motives. Because, the right-fighter's main goal is only to win, s/he often forgets what the argument was even about. These destructive behaviors are present for right-fighters in varying degrees. Right-fighters have their personal value and worth directly attached to the perceived outcome of *being right*.

On a deep level (and unconsciously most of the time), a right-fighter believes that if s/he is not agreed with, then s/he is not valuable, lovable, important, or worthy. At the core however, we all want desperately to feel valuable. In the case of the right-fighter, the metaphorical “fight to the death” becomes all too true.

Unfortunately, fighting to win provides only short-term satisfaction and an actually lose-lose dynamic. The process is disheartening and damaging to relationships, especially children. But, the perceived comfort in being agreed with (in the same way people find temporary and false comfort in over eating, over working, or over drinking) is powerfully engaging, if not addictive for many.

Right-fighting ultimately leads to dependency upon others' agreement for “self-esteem boosts.” Therefore, bullying others into submission becomes a nasty habit of the right-fighter. Right-fighting is a draining roller-coaster of conflict, hurt feelings, justification, guilt, shame and growing resentment.

Learned submission and low self-esteem on the part of those who interact with right-fighters (spouses, children, friends or co-workers) is inevitable and disheartening to all.

### Emotional Weapon 4) Punishing

Most people I speak with about punishment initially believe that punishment is favorable, useful or deserved... at times. It's important to understand that consequences and punishment are NOT the same thing. Not even close.

Consequences are naturally occurring and follow any thought, expression, behavior, or action, whether negative or positive. For example, when I kiss and hug my husband or make him dinner, the consequence is reciprocating love and kindness. Love begets more love!

in the same way, if a person stays home alone night after night, the consequence of a lack of feeling connected or feeling socially isolated and alone can come into play.

Punishment on the other hand is born of aggression, blame, pride and control. Punishment is mean-spirited, angry and seeks to intentionally illicit hurt. From my vantage point, punishment is never ok. Even when very hard consequences must be given, for example, a prison sentence, it too can always be communicated and laid out with love.

Consequences are innately positive and rooted in love - always. Yet, this does not mean that all consequences feel POSITIVE. This is how we can easily tell the difference. I encourage parents to never act until they can come from a place of love as they deliver consequences. Otherwise, punishments can be unleashed instead - which only end in justifications and damaged relationships- there is no third direction.

There are numerous possible forms of punishment. Emotionally shutting down, avoidance, withholding love, care, or kindness, withholding sex are a few examples of emotional punishment. Verbal attacks like blaming or belittling are forms of punishment, as well as the more traditionally recognized types like bullying, pestering, intimidating, picking, even forced or unwanted tickling can feel like abuse or punishment to others.

Any form of bullying, withholding, or intimidation counts as punishment, and is an especially fine line within the parent/child relationship. Terrorizing, intimidating, taunting, overpowering, demoralizing, pressuring, alarming, or scaring another human are all forms of punishment and are never acceptable, even when disguised as 'play'. If *everyone* is not having a FUN, JOYFUL OR INSPIRING TIME, then it is *not play*, it's punishment.

## Emotional Weapon 5) Passive Aggression & Sarcasm

These two gems can be difficult to recognize, tricky to catch, and easy to justify. A passive aggressive person often comes across as a nice or funny while masking a great deal of inner anger. Using sarcasm as an effort to disguise passive aggression to seem playful or fun is a common defense. Sure, some (yet it is rare) sarcasm can be playful at times. But, it is a VERY fine line. And usually where passive aggression and sarcasm exist, a boundary needs to be established or a candid dialogue exchange needs to be had.

Passive aggression is very damaging. Here is a short list of common behaviors, tactics, and characteristics associated with a passive aggression:

- Withdrawing or shutting down, rather than sharing desires, wants, opinions or needs
- Saying things like 'fine', 'you pick', 'I don't care', or 'whatever,' in order to *stop* a discussion
- Procrastinating or completing tasks poorly or inefficiently
- Pretending to forget commitments to others to suit one's own needs
- *Forgetting* things your partner asked for from the grocery (or other errands)
- Placating or agreeing to a request from another while having no intention of following through
- Chronic lateness, especially to events that are important to loved ones

- Blowing up over minor things
- Lying regarding whereabouts
- Lying in general
- Giving the silent treatment
- Low self esteem / low self confidence
- Prone to underachieving despite aptitude
- Often drink to excess or engage in other escapism behavior
- Incites eggshell walking or other fears in family members
- Often *pretends* to be compliant, then retaliates later

Again, passive aggression is likely the most damaging of the EW simply because it is so challenging to catch. The partner of a passive aggressive often winds up feeling like a shell of a person by the end. And there is always and end. If this is you, I urge you to work on this. You will need help with this one. PA is very difficult to tackle on your own. Feel free to reach out [drhaywood@reimagineLove.com](mailto:drhaywood@reimagineLove.com)

## Emotional Weapon 6) Criticizing & Belittling

Efforts to criticize, judge, or belittle another person are the epitome of projection in action. It's the equivalent of holding up a mirror to one's own perceived shortcomings. What you criticize, you also find icky within yourself. If you criticize or belittle frequently, you likely have a LOT of work to do in learning self love and self compassion. What you belittle (or gossip) about, you most likely fear or judge about yourself. And what you judge, you condemn in yourself.

Criticizing and belittling are akin to judgment and condemnation. Each time we criticize, belittle, gossip, or judge another, you can from now on, think of it as a reflection of a perceived flaw that elicits feelings of fear or shame within yourself. It has nothing to do with the other person- EVER.

People criticize and belittle others because one feels bad about him or herself, and for *no other reason*. This is the time to grab that little pointer finger, and either turn that booger around or point it at a mirror. Picking out and naming what you deem wrong with another is just a sad diversion for fessing up to the underlying self loathing. And like all EWs, it is designed to push people away- because you may not find yourself worthy of loving. Criticizing and belittling others winds up leaving you feeling alone, sad, and isolated (like all of the EW). Even if there are lots of people around.

Instead, begin looking at what is good, kind, precious, innocent and loving in others. Simply practice shifting your focus to begin looking at what you *DO* like, admire, or appreciate about yourself and others. Re-routing this EW is all about intentional focus. What you CHOOSE to focus on will predict how you feel, behave, connect and relate to others. Put down this sword, its wounds are too deep.

Also, If you fall prey to this EW, it is time to dig deep and begin practicing a boat load of self love and compassion!

## Emotional Weapon 7) Contempt, Aggression & Resentment

Underlying subconscious feelings of disgust are the hallmark of this particular EW. The feeling state of this little combo pack is a bit like seething aggression meets aloof snobbery. It often includes behaviors like criticizing, blaming, punishing and belittling- so there is overlap with other EWs.

In action, this EW easily leads others to feel small or insignificant, because that is how the person dishing it out feels. With all negative EWs, the wielder feels rotten and seeks to spread the yuck around.

This EW is exemplified by such behaviors as eye rolling and other demeaning facial expressions that are laced with contempt, resentment and bitterness. Coincidentally, when a couple begins demonstrating contempt, divorce or break up is typically very near.

When interacting with another while dealing with contempt, it will feel as though we *really* don't like, even hate, the person with whom we are relating. But, when taken to the root, it is our own ways of relating to others and interacting with life that have been compromised. When we do not protect ourselves and our needs in loving and authentic ways, we leave an open door to be inadvertently (or sometimes intentionally) taken advantage of by others.

Contempt and resentment evolve because self-protection skills have suffered, but this EW subsides fairly quickly when self-protection skills are shored up. So please, begin to set boundaries, say no, speak candidly and ask for what you want and need with love and kindness- even when you really don't want to!

## Emotional Weapon 8) Defensiveness, Excuses or Justifications

Being defensive, making excuses, or justifying oneself encourages doubt - from self as well as others. I mean really, when was the last time you had to 'justify' a loving act, word or deed? Not likely, it's only our own crap that we tend to become defensive, make excuses or dive into justifications. Furthermore, this EW leaves us sounding and feeling like a little kid who has gotten in trouble and is being made to explain.

You may ask, why are these three ideas considered emotional weapons? Because when engaged, anger and resentment, blaming or other EWs are never far behind.

Being defensive looks and sounds like: making excuses, deflecting, justifying, or trying to explain in a defensive manner. When this happens, we can bet our sweet cheeks that we have indeed reverted to our 7 or 10 or 13 years old self!

We've all experienced that when we are in 'the zone,' or our calm, Zen self, there is no overreacting, defending, justifying or spazzing out of any kind. And in this zone, it seems obvious to simply state our feelings calmly, with confidence, and with neutrality. And... we've all experienced opposite as well: when feeling compromised, defensive, or erratic, expressing ourselves becomes confusing and further upsetting. This is a sign to step back, breath, re-boot and try again to communicate to a partner (or kid, or whomever).

Being defensive is indicative of actually having *something to defend*, and its display is often fraught with anger and frustration. This weapon can have devastating effects on relationships, making it nearly impossible to be mutually vul-



nerable or unified, and for connection to take root and flourish within the relationship. Engaging in frank, calm, open discussions is one great cure for defensiveness!

## Identifying the Drivers of Emotional Weapon Behaviors

EWs are typically utilized when a person feels powerless or emotionally overwhelmed and negatively charged up. They are used in place of healthy vulnerability, authentic and candid communication, and healthy self-protection skills. Thus, as you learn and apply authentic self expression and healthy self-protection through raw vulnerability, you will naturally use EWs less and less. This is great news! By adding useful and self-loving practices and habits, you release destructive ones as a natural by product.

## Understanding Why Emotional Weapons Are So Harmful

EW are harmful for the following key reasons:

- They induce shame (the lowest level of emotion and most aligned with being stuck, depressed, suicidal, alone/lone-ly, apathetic, and underachieving).
- They ensure the impossibility of deep connection, vulnerability, closeness, unity, and harmonious co-existence.
- They provide additional (albeit false) evidence that others are untrustworthy, emotionally unsafe and unreliable perpetuating a faulty foundational belief system
- Because they are defense mechanisms, they serve as a false sense of security, and are cheap replacements for self-love and self-protection.

## Reaping the Benefits Of Removing Emotional Weapons

I'm guessing that the benefits of removing EWs are becoming fairly transparent, but let's take a look at the most valuable benefits anyway:

- Ability to share genuine and vulnerable connections
- Receive more of what you want (support, help, care, adoration, etc.)
- Freedom to become more and more of your authentic self
- Sense of true belonging
- Ability to communicate openly, candidly, and fruitfully
- Create a relationship that is filled with love, play and harmony

There are numerous other benefits and nuances that you will experience as you begin to ditch emotional weapons. I encourage you to take a moment, use your gorgeous imagination, and envision how life WILL be different in the absence of EWs before moving into the next section of material.

## Take Action To Reimagine Your Relationship!

Thankfully, there are so many ways to interrupt EW habits. In fact, all of the tools we cover in this program will chip away at our EW of choice. Envisioning our best lives and a life that is

emotionally calm, light, and free is a perfect start to begin making these changes.

Additionally, cleaning up our thinking by healing old hurts, meditating on a regular basis, practice letting go techniques, disciplining your mind/thinking, and removing the drama stories (which are almost always filled with EWs) will help enormously.

I promise that if I can disengage and discard EWs, anyone can. My brain and emotions were among the toughest to reclaim of any client I have worked with in over 19 years (I was very stubborn!)

And, of course, self-protection skills are paramount in any quest to eliminate EWs and have a beautiful healthy relationship. In fact, they go hand in hand.

Now, let's identify a few action steps to liberate yourself and your loved ones from emotional weapons of mass destruction!

## Step 1: Identify Your Most Commonly Used Emotional Weapons

What are the 2 most frequent EWs that you engage?

- 1.
- 2.

## Step 2: Understand & Replace Emotional Weapons

Now, define which EW you would like to eliminate first and then second. Next, identify *why* you want to eliminate these habits. Lastly, jot down a new habit or practice to be added in place of the former behavior. (Without a replacement practice, it's all too easy to fall back into old patterns.) ***Hit me up if you need some help: <https://www.reimagine love.com/contact>***

EW-1st to disengage:

Why?

New habit:

EW-2nd to disengage:

Why?

New habit:

## Step 3: Benefits Of Removing Emotional Weapons

How will you and others benefit when you have replaced your top 2 EWs with habits and practices that are fruitful and loving? DO NOT skip this step. If you do not get very clear about the benefits, rewards, pay offs, you will not last long in your efforts to change your habits. List 5 benefits.

- 1.

- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

## **Great job! You're on your way to increased emotional freedom and a much healthier and happier relationship!**

Emotional Weapons are simultaneously unleashed upon ourselves and those with whom we are interacting. They are also equally damaging to both parties. They cripple your heart and mind and diminish your ability to connect with others.

We must become willing to lay down our weapons and engage life on a deeply vulnerable level by connecting with others through open truth and sharing. In becoming willing, the motivation, insight, and compassion needed to successfully lay down our emotional weapons becomes available and we will find ourselves on the path to emotional freedom.

Congratulations! You are on your way to living a more beautifully joyful and connected life!