

Post-Separation Abuse

Your Guide to Safety and Self-Care

Acknowledge The Emotional Burnout and Start Nourishing Yourself

Expect to feel worse before you feel better. Leaving an abusive partner will trigger exhaustion, a sense of collapsing, and emotional overwhelm once the survival mode ends.

Normalise what you're feeling. Anxiety, panic, numbness, self-doubt - these are all trauma responses, not personal failings and they are very common at this stage.

Seek out therapy to help you navigate this period - preferably with a practitioner that understands the dynamics of coercive control. Therapy can help you make sense of what has occurred, provide strategies to manage trauma symptoms and assist you in regaining confidence to pursue personal goals. Trauma-informed yoga, gentle movement, breathing exercises, or even self-defence classes can help you reconnect with your body and regain a somatic sense of safety.

Ground yourself in small nurturing routines - tea in the sun, petting a dog, listening to calming music, a walk in nature. All of these help fill your empty cup one little drop at a time.

You don't have to do it all. Give yourself permission to skip social events, let the house be messy and say no to things that drain you to preserve some energy. Consider taking some time off work to re-calibrate. Enquire about accessing the **10 days of paid Family and Domestic Violence** leave through your employer (it's easier than you think).

Keep catching the daily glimmers. Look for moments of goodness, even in a hard day - a kind smile, a peaceful moment, a small act of self-kindness. These are signs that you're alive, present, and slowly healing.

Combat Self-Doubt, Guilt and Shame

Notice when you question your own perceptions - "*Was it really that bad?*" "*Am I being unreasonable?*". Internalising and repeating to yourself the messages that originated from your abuser is a lingering effect of emotional abuse. Keep noticing and labelling these negative messages as remnants of the abuse and make a conscious decision to disengage from them.

Learn how emotional abuse operates. Understanding the patterns helps you separate your voice from the abuser's narrative. Read books, listen to podcasts, or seek online resources to validate your experience and regain clarity.

Write down what happened and why it was harmful. Review it when doubt creeps in. Journaling helps remind you of the harm when you start minimising it and prepare for legal matters with more confidence.

Combat isolation. Loneliness fuels self-doubt whereas being around others who are supportive helps restore perspective. Consider joining a support group (in person or online) where other women share their stories and healing journeys.

Lean on other trusted people. When you lose trust in your own judgment, others - such as a therapist, friends, or support workers - can help you regulate and reality-check.

Set Boundaries in How You Communicate with Your Ex

Begin legal planning before you leave. Early legal advice helps protect your rights and reduce panic later. Know your options before contact or mediation begins.

Limit communication and any unnecessary contact. You no longer have to respond to every email, text, or call from them. Use your lawyer or professional third party as a communication buffer.

Control exposure: Think of your ex like toxic air - you can't change their behaviour, but you can limit your exposure to them through firm boundaries.

Don't take the bait: When your ex sends provocative or guilt-tripping messages, remember: your audience is the court, not your ex. Keep responses brief, factual, neutral. No emotional language, no explanations.

Respond Strategically, Not Emotionally

Communicate safely. Only use email or communication apps like OurFamilyWizard or MyMob to maintain a written record. Ignore responding emotionally to manipulations disguised as co-parenting. Avoid phone or in-person conversations.

Don't rush to respond immediately. You are not obligated to match their urgency. Learn what types of communication must be responded to (e.g. child safety concerns, school emergencies, court-mandated contact).

Who is the real audience for this message?

The key is to respond strategically, keeping communication brief, professional, and child-focused. Manipulative messages are designed to provoke you.

Sample responses to use:

"Your false statement has been noted."

Acknowledging a false, inflammatory statement without engaging in a debate.

"My objective is to collaboratively co-parent with you. I am hopeful that you will join me in my efforts, for the sake of our shared children."

Reinforces your commitment to co-parenting while subtly calling out their lack of cooperation.

Minimise shared spaces. For mediations, court, or supervised visits, you can request separate waiting areas, staggered arrival times and security plans or alternate entrances/exits. Communicate your needs in writing to mediators, report writers, and lawyers in advance.

Attend appointments or hearings with a support person. A friend or family member can help you feel safe, grounded, and stay focused on your strategy.

Mindset Shifts for Empowerment

Reality-check threats. Many of your ex's legal or emotional threats are exaggerated. Educate yourself to separate fear from facts. **The Divorce Course Podcast** is an excellent resource of information, as well as their **DIY Divorce Blueprint** document.

Know what's urgent. Not all demands from your ex are urgent. Their urgency is often another manipulation, learn to respond as needed. For example, if they book mediation the week after you have separated, you can request that this is delayed by several weeks to give you time to prepare.

Don't let them drain you emotionally. Abusers thrive on prolonging conflict. Prioritise your health, time, and resources to outlast the manipulation.

Nourish Yourself to Sustain the Long Legal Battle

This isn't over quickly. Abusers thrive on dragging things out. To last the long distance, you must strengthen your inner and outer life.

You don't have to be "on" all the time. Court hearings come in intervals so use the in-between time to restore and focus on other parts of life too.

Pursue self-affirming actions. Trauma-informed yoga, exercise, therapy, education and career development, hobbies - these are all important for recovery.

Hold onto hope: Leaving an abusive relationship may be exhausting, but it's also a turning point toward freedom, dignity, and peace.

Invest in your life outside the legal battle, that's where true recovery happens.

Listen to the full discussion on this topic

The Divorce Course Podcast

Divorcing and Abuser: Coping with Post Separation Abuse - episode 199

Relevant Books:

Surviving Your Split: A Guide to Separation, Divorce and Family Law in Australia by Lucy Mannering and Rebekah Mannering

Effective Co-Parenting or Parallel Parenting with a Narcissist by Claire Brown

Divorcing a Narcissist: Advice from the Battlefield by Tina Swithin

