



**Your Essential Guide to Dealing
with Narcissistic Abuse and Toxic
Relationship Breakdown**

by

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The Divorce Coach

Welcome to my Essential Guide for helping you cope better when breaking up from a toxic or narcissistic relationship

As a survivor myself I know how tough it can be. When I was at rock bottom during my divorce and struggling to find help, I decided that I would create tools and techniques to help me find a way through.

These are the very tools I share today with millions of people around the world in my books (Uncoupling and The Split), my podcast Heartbreak to Happiness and my coaching school.

In this guide you will learn my top tips that will give you more clarity and understanding so you can start to take your power back and move forward. Please know that if you are in a domestic abuse situation:

1. IT IS NOT YOUR FAULT
2. YOU ARE NOT ALONE

I know it feels lonely and like nobody really understands what you're dealing with. Friends and family can be a great support but they cannot appreciate the real extent of what you are dealing with unless they have been in an abusive relationship themselves.

It's normal to feel isolated and alone. In fact the abuse is designed to make you feel this way.

However you really are not alone.

I created daily FREE online support groups run by my accredited Coaches where you can find your tribe, get your questions answered and finally make sense of what is happening. Anyone can join our sessions and meet our friendly coaches and likeminded others dealing with similar situations. We offer coaching support and tools to help you navigate the rollercoaster of emotions in a relaxed and welcoming environment.

It's important to have some support in place for you. To access scan the QR code for FREE coaching support from my specialist Coaches.



Free Online Support Groups



FREE ONLINE SUPPORT GROUPS

Join our FREE ONLINE SUPPORT GROUPS run by Coaches who specialise in domestic abuse:

- Find your tribe
- Share your story
- Get your questions answered
- Make friends who are dealing with similar situations
- Learn simple tools that will give you more clarity
- Speak with specialist Coaches who really understand
- Coaching support from Accredited Breakup, Divorce & Domestic Abuse Coaches.

Scan the QR Code to access your FREE support



1:1 COACHING

Book a 1-1 online session with one of our Accredited Coaches. All our coaches have specialist areas of expertise including heartbreak, co-parenting, domestic abuse, work productivity during a breakup, neurodiversity, toxic exes or specific community stigmas. **Scan the QR code to visit our Coaching Hub and choose your Coach.**



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TRAIN TO BECOME A COACH

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So what is a toxic relationship?

A "toxic relationship" is any relationship that significantly damages your mental health, self-esteem and overall well-being, characterised by behaviours like controlling actions, constant criticism, disrespect, dishonesty, lack of support and manipulation, leaving you feeling drained, insecure and often helpless.

A question I am often asked in the media is "How is breaking up from a toxic relationship different to a healthy relationship?"

With a healthy relationship both parties are looking for some form of compromise and a fair resolution.

With a toxic relationship, even if one partner would like to compromise, the other is hell bent on causing maximum pain, suffering and even total annihilation at any cost.

The reason is POST SEPARATION ABUSE.

Post-separation abuse refers to ongoing patterns of coercive control, harassment or manipulation that an abuser continues after a relationship has ended. It often occurs in situations where the abuser seeks to maintain power over their ex-partner, particularly when there are shared responsibilities like children, financial ties or legal proceedings.

Forms of Post-Separation Abuse:

1. Legal Abuse – Using the court system to control, harass, or financially drain the victim through unnecessary lawsuits, custody battles, or false allegations.
2. Financial Abuse – Withholding child support, refusing to divide assets fairly, sabotaging the victim's financial stability.
3. Child and Victim Abuse – Manipulating children against the other parent, interfering with visitation or making false abuse allegations.
4. Stalking & Harassment – Monitoring, following, excessive calling/texting or using social media to intimidate.
5. Emotional & Psychological Abuse – Gaslighting, spreading rumours, threatening or using fear tactics to maintain control.
6. Coercive Control – Continuing to exert control through intimidation, threats or manipulation, even without physical violence.

This type of abuse can be especially harmful because many victims expect the abuse to stop after leaving, but instead, it often escalates. If children are involved, abusers may use them as leverage to maintain control.

How to spot the signs of an abusive relationship

Abuse is not a one-off incident because it is typically a pattern of behaviour rather than a single event. It often involves repeated actions that establish control, fear or harm over time. Here's why:

- Patterns of Power and Control** – Abuse usually follows a cycle where the abuser asserts dominance, whether physically, emotionally, psychologically or financially. Even if there are long gaps between incidents, the underlying control and manipulation remain.
- Escalation Over Time** – Many forms of abuse start subtly and worsen as the victim becomes more entangled. For example, emotional abuse might begin with small criticisms before turning into constant belittling and gaslighting. Physical abuse often starts with threats or minor aggression before escalating.
- Psychological Conditioning** – Abusers often use tactics like gaslighting, blame shifting, and love bombing to make victims doubt their own perceptions. This creates a long-term impact that doesn't disappear after a single event.
- The Cycle of Abuse** – Many abusive relationships follow a repetitive cycle:
 - Tension building phase (walking on eggshells, small incidents of aggression)
 - Explosion phase (verbal, emotional, or physical attack)
 - Honeymoon phase (apologies, excuses, promises to change)
 - This cycle repeats, making abuse an ongoing issue rather than a one-time occurrence.
- Emotional and Psychological Damage Lingers** – Even if an abuser only physically harms someone once, the emotional and psychological effects—fear, anxiety, PTSD, CPTSD—persist. This long term trauma is evidence that abuse isn't a singular event but a lasting harm.



Checklist to spot the signs of an abusive relationship



- Gaslighting – when words or situations are twisted or spun or selectively omitted to favour your partner, or when false information is presented, making you doubt your own memory, perception or even sanity.
- Lies or explanations that don't make sense to you – the truth being distorted beyond recognition or your partner presenting a different version of the past to you.
- A slow erosion of confidence and self-esteem – when you partner is belittling you, sowing seeds of doubt about your abilities, and putting you down.
- Living a double life behind closed doors – the public perception is that you are a happy, loving couple but the reality at home is very different.
- Emotional, verbal, sexual and/or physical abuse – when your partner makes you feel 'less than' and vulnerable, as well as being threatening or even violent towards you.
- Lack of personal freedom – you're forced to run everything by your partner and denied the freedom to make your own decisions. This could include them controlling who you spend time with, how you dress and even where you go.
- Being hurt or intimidated during sex – but you partner excuses it as a 'sex game'. Or they refuse to be intimate with you because they say you are not attractive, or they withdraw physically to punish you.
- Financial control – your partner controls the amount of money you have access to or what you spend it on, whilst they can spend as they please without mentioning it to you. You may be prevented from having a bank account or not given access to the family's financial information and kept in the dark about money.
- Being forced to take out loans in your name or sign financial documents – without an explanation as to what they are.
- Attempts to get you pregnant – by hiding contraception or trying to persuade you to have a baby when they know you don't want one to prevent you from leaving.



How to know if your partner has an abusive personality

Abusers usually have a very identifiable personality and quite specific behaviours. Do you recognise any of these in your partner?

- A sense of self-importance.
- Living in a fantasy world related to their brilliance, abilities, power and attractiveness to others.
- A constant need for praise and attention.
- A sense of entitlement – whatever they want they should get.
- No shame or guilt about how they treat others.
- A lack of empathy.
- ‘God complex’ – inflated feelings of personal ability, privilege, or infallibility.
- They’re a convincing liar or con artist.
- They live in the moment.
- They never accept blame or the consequences of their actions.
- Bullying, belittling or intimidating others.
- Mirroring – accusing you of the things they’re doing.
- Addictions – drugs, alcohol and/or sex.
- An ‘all or nothing’ attitude to everything in their life.
- Huge insecurities, low self-esteem and jealousy issues, even though they may project the opposite to you and others.
- Charming but dangerous!

Tactics of an abuser during divorce

If you are divorcing a toxic ex it is important to be aware that the abuse will continue into this process. Tactics they often deploy include:

- Telling you that you don't need a lawyer
- Making unfair offers
- Not providing financial clarity
- Being late to disclose information – or not disclosing it at all
- Obfuscating the process by appearing to be compliant but sending confusing documents or documents with missing information
- Using legal professionals to be the mouthpiece for their abuse
- Using the courts to punish victims

Again if you are dealing with any of these you are not alone. Do join our online support groups free of charge find emotional support from people who really understand what you are dealing with.



Sara's practical essentials for peace of mind



- **Establish a Break-up Support Team** – a positive and supportive team of people who can help keep them going and give them a boost when they're feeling low.

This can include:

- carefully chosen friends and family members who can provide constructive advice
 - a legal advisor
 - a financial advisor
 - a coach who specialises in domestic abuse
 - an exercise buddy
- **Stop sharing ANY personal information with your ex.** This means no personal details about your life including how you feel, what you're doing or who you're spending time with. If you can go 'no contact', even better. This will protect you from getting triggered, drawn into any difficult situations or giving your ex any ammunition to use against them. However this is not always possible.
 - **Keep necessary contact with your ex to email** to create a record of interactions. You may also wish to set up a redirect so emails go straight into a separate folder allowing them to choose when to read them.
 - **Ask your lawyer to act as a line of defence.** For example, by:
 - Not sending non-essential emails on Friday afternoon which will impact on your weekend.
 - "Translating" all emails from your ex to soften the blow. If the ex's lawyer becomes the mouthpiece for the abuse, your lawyer can read the emails before forwarding them on and provide reassuring comments that will highlight the bullying tactics reveal the real intent of the email.
 - **Stop using your ex's full name.** A name carries a lot of emotion, so I recommend you shorten it to the first letter only, whether they're talking or typing it, and use small caps – for example, Robert becomes r. Let anyone else who may talk about your ex know too so they can follow suit.
 - **Keep emotions out of any communications.** Avoid reacting in front of your ex, stay neutral and avoid making barbed comments or subtle put-downs.
 - **Keep a diary of any abusive incidents,** including times, dates and what happened. Remove emotion where possible and keep it factual.

Sara's practical essentials for peace of mind



- **Stop sharing personal details with mutual friends** who may pass on information to your ex. To eliminate this risk and protect yourself, it's advisable that you step back from these connections. You can do this amicably and it does not have to be forever – although in most cases this may be preferable.
- **Treat the divorce as a job.** Think of the process as a business project you have to complete, taking out the emotion where possible. An emotional divorce will be expensive.
- **Follow domestic abuse influencers and campaigners on social media:** people who understand what they're going through and who campaign to bring about positive change. This can be a great source of support and reassurance that you're not alone. You can follow me SDDivorceCoach on X and saradavisondivorcecoach on Instagram too.
- **Contact your local domestic abuse charity** as they can help with services, safety planning, advocacy and community support. These people are experts and will understand what you are going through. This can be a lifeline so do reach out.
- **Keep strong knowing that this will end.** You will get through it and come out the other side, even if you don't know how right now.



Self-Care To Keep You Sane

These are my personal suggestions for keeping body and soul together during stressful divorce proceedings and beyond.

- Take regular time-outs from thinking about your case. Put it in an imaginary box in your mind and lock it shut. Allow at least one hour a day to give you some peace. More if possible.
- Use Mind Movies to prep for any situation you are worried about. Picture it in your mind and then play it out with the outcome you're hoping for, seeing yourself smiling and successful in that leading role. It's a powerful visualisation technique, similar to that used by athletes before they compete in an event.
- Move your body. Even a brisk walk around the block will help you to manage the stress, change your state and help you dial down negative emotions. Fresh air is key and being in nature will also give you a boost.
- Keep your personal standards high. Put a morning routine in place and stick to it. Take a shower, get dressed and make sure you eat something to kick-start your day and get yourself into the right frame of mind. It's fine to have a down day when perhaps you don't even feel like getting out of bed. If that happens, don't be too hard on yourself but try to get back on track as soon as you can because you need to stay strong. Focus on being kind to yourself and know you will get through this.
- Don't stuff your emotions down. Make sure you have someone to talk to who understands and can support you through this. It may be a friend who isn't too emotionally involved so they can give you constructive advice, or a domestic abuse charity or a coach who specialises in this area.
- Avoid extremes: A glass of wine can take the edge off your emotions, but be careful not to lean on drink, drugs, sex or partying during tough times as these will actually make it harder for you to cope after the short-term fix.
- Make time to enjoy yourself: Schedule in a night out with friends, a warm bubble bath, a weekend away or a manicure. Things that make you feel good.
- Limit who you tell your story to: Telling everyone about your situation means lots of people will need updates. It also means that everyone knows your business, and this can get out of control. It may feel good to unload but choose your confidants carefully and make sure you can trust them.
- Speak to a Breakup and Divorce Coach. Many of my coaches have been through this themselves and have valuable experiences that they can share with you.

Sara Davison Breakup, Divorce and Domestic Abuse Support Services

Remember there is support for you and you are not alone. We really hope you join our online groups or join us on an online workshop. We look forward to welcoming you.



FREE ONLINE SUPPORT GROUPS

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Other support services for you

- National DV Helpline (UK): 0808 2000 247
Runs 24/7 and will connect you client to your local domestic abuse organisation and give you access to emergency accommodation.
- Samaritans (UK): www.samaritans.org
For 100% confidential support
- For information about domestic abuse (UK):
 - Women's Aid: www.womensaid.org.uk
 - Refuge: www.refuge.org.uk
 - Rights of Women Organisation: www.rightsofwomen.org.uk (also provides information on divorce and your legal rights)
- Forced Marriage Unit (UK): for anyone worried about a UK citizen stranded abroad by their abuser or if you're worried about forced marriage:
- Respect Organisation (UK): for people worried about their own abusive behaviour: www.respect.uk.net
- Surviving Economic Abuse (UK): for information and guidance on economic abuse: www.survivingeconomicabuse.org
- Re-Unite (UK): for parents whose children have been taken abroad without their consent: reunite@dircon.co.uk
- NSPCC (UK) to report concerns about the abuse of a child: www.nspcc.org.uk
- For men, call the ManKind Initiative (UK) on 01823 334 244
- In Australia, the National Family Violence Counselling Service is on 1800 737 732
- In the US, the Domestic Violence Hotline is 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
- Other international helplines may be found via www.befrienders.org

Disclaimer



- The coaching services provided in this leaflet are intended for guidance, support and personal development purposes only. They do not constitute medical, psychological, financial or legal advice. Coaching is not a substitute for professional counselling, therapy or any other regulated service.
- Results from coaching may vary based on individual effort, circumstances and commitment. The coach does not guarantee specific outcomes and accepts no liability for decisions made based on coaching sessions or materials provided.
- By engaging in coaching services, you acknowledge personal responsibility for your actions and agree to seek appropriate professional support when necessary.
- If you have any medical or psychological concerns, please consult a qualified healthcare professional before participating in coaching sessions.



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