

Barbara Meister Vitale, who spoke June 25, 2017 at the Spiritual Light Center, has provided these notes about her talk, "Why is this Happening to Me Again?"

Emotional abuse can manifest differently

It leaves scars, pain, and sorrows that you don't remember having. Especially when it happens in your childhood. As an adult you have the stability to handle it, but as a kid? It stays with you for the rest of your life.

But how exactly do you behave when you're emotionally abused as a child? TheMighty recently asked their community about it and the results were heartbreaking.

#1 Conflict

"[I] can't stand conflict, loud sudden noises, shouting and screaming or aggression in any form. [It] triggers my fight or flight, instantly."

#2 Compliments

"I can't accept compliments. When someone [compliments] me, my response would just be 'umm yeah' or I'll just smile awkwardly. I just figured out why. During my childhood, people just [noticed] my mistakes and not my achievements. So now it is hard for me to accept compliments."

#3 Achievements

"I'm an overachiever. At everything and anything. I still feel the need to prove I'm good enough. I obsess about doing a job/task to perfection. And then I obsess about how I could do it better. [I worry] about others' opinions way too much."

#4 Paranoia

"I always feel like I am doing everything wrong. It's very hard to convince me I am good at something."

#5 Apologetic

"I become apologetic over everything. If someone doesn't text back, I'll believe they're upset with me, and I'll apologize. If I ask for something and annoy them, I'll apologize. Everything becomes a situation where I feel like I'm to blame."

#6 Asocial

"I'm basically a hermit. My home is my fortress. I have BPD, PTSD and anxiety. It's so hard to work or apply myself in school or just life when every time I want to apply myself, I can't help but run to the nearest exit to catch my breath. I constantly fear everyone around me."

#7 Trust issues

"I have problems trusting people. I keep people at [an] arm's length. I never really let them into my life. I don't allow them to know of my health problems and my mental illnesses. If I do let them in, it is rare and they [will] have known me for years. It takes a long time [for me] to build trust."

#8 Incapable of making decisions

"Indecisiveness. [It feels like] every choice I make is wrong even if I choose the option I'm told to take. I'm afraid to [be a] parent because I don't want to 'mess up' my kid."

#9 Prefer not to hurt feelings even if it's true

"I avoid saying anything that others might not agree with, which means I'm never being myself. I wear a mask of complete neutrality in any situation, because I'm so scared of anyone feeling negative towards me."

#10 Defensive

"I'm very defensive which can come across cold or nasty. I also portray quite a lot of negativity which seems to be my barrier so I don't get hurt."

#11 Rejecting love

"I have trouble accepting any kind of love because growing up, it was always given with strings attached or used a tool for manipulation. I don't trust that others have the capacity to love me unconditionally, so I hide away parts of myself, never allowing myself to experience the vulnerability that comes with being loved, chosen and accepted by others."

#12 People pleaser

"I feel the need to please everybody I deem 'of authority' and thus have a hard time getting my needs met. I strive too hard for [a] perfection that doesn't exist, and then eventually, melt down when too many things are not up to the standards held in my past."

#13 Explaining everything

"I find myself always explaining my every move. I explain why I bought something, why I did what I did, etc. I feel like people think I'm lying to them, so I owe them a detailed explanation. Also feeling as though if I say 'no' to someone, they'll hate me. So even if I'm inconveniencing myself, I'll say 'yes.'"

#14 Don't ask for help

"I avoid asking help from anyone because I don't trust anyone. I believe if someone offers me a hand, there will always be something they [want to] ask in return. I have friends but I don't have a best friend. I keep my distance from people. Automatically, my wall blocks anyone."

#15 Growing attached

"[I have] attachment issues, trust issues [and am] paranoid that everyone will leave me. A lot of this is part of my BPD. My sudden divorce also contributed to these behaviors."

#16 Shy

"I'm overly shy around people and struggle [with] having a voice. [I believe] no one wants to hear anything I have to say."

#17 Hiding parts of yourself

"[I] won't let anyone see the 'bad' side of myself."

#18 Low self-esteem

"I constantly think I'm not good enough and I'm not smart enough. [I] was told [this] all my childhood. I've gone back to university to prove to myself that I am smart enough, but it's always there in the back of my mind, like a poison, reminding me I'm not good enough, not smart enough."

#19 Low self-worth

"My whole childhood was emotional abuse. It is extremely hard for me to accept I have people in my life who actually care about me. That's the worst one. I am nothing to myself so why would I matter to others?"¹

#20 Don't make eye contact

"I have a hard time making eye contact with people. I look away a lot when I'm speaking. I get startled very easily and it takes me awhile to get my heart rate back to normal."

#21 Anxiety and depression

"I have major issues with anxiety and depression because of my childhood. The biggest factor is I cannot communicate well and I don't know how to express my feelings with others because I am so used to just holding them inside because I wasn't allowed to share how I felt. When tense situations arise, I get nauseous and uncomfortable, [and] my anxiety levels sky rocket. Definitely have a lot of emotional scars from my past, it's been the hardest thing to conquer."

#22 Pacifism

"I never, ever fight back. I may cut toxic people out of my life with the help of amazing friends and professionals, but whenever a conflict is actively going on that involves someone attacking my character. I completely shut down. I let whatever they want to say wash over me until they tire themselves out. That's what I had to do when I was younger. It was so much worse to fight back. I learned to let them yell themselves out."

#23 Take responsibility for things not your fault

"Blaming myself for everything. I have to fight the urge to beat myself up constantly. I've also struggled with feeling like I'm not good enough, which makes things like school, dating and applying to jobs really hard."

#24 Don't know the kind of person you are

"I don't really know who I am or what I truly think. Virtually everything I say seems to me to be a lie I've just fabricated for that particular situation. I have real problems trying to identify what I'm feeling."

#25 Unbridled anger

"Several things, but the main one was lashing out on social media for years. Controversial and angry statuses, just due to the anger inside of me. I have texts I sent my friend where I described just how much I felt this unsettling anger in my chest. Emotional abuse from peers at school to family [can] really [mess] you up. I then finally found a therapist who could help me and I've come a long way."

Source unknown