
*Emotional Abuse:
Silent Killer of Marriage*

A 30-Year Abuser Speaks Out

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What Others Are Saying About

“Emotional Abuse: Silent Killer of Marriage”

“This is the book that opened my eyes to the truth of my marriage. I bought it on a Saturday, read it over the weekend and found the name of a counselor on Monday. Over the years I stopped being a woman and became a workhorse, stopped being a person and became an appliance. Every hobby and interest was sabotaged or made so difficult to pursue that I gave up. Things I valued were ‘accidentally’ broken, lost or discarded until I gave up valuing anything at all. This book also explained what happened to my husband; how he was a little man at 12, painting the exterior of his mother's house, and supporting her since he was 16. After reading this book I realize it was all doomed from the start but I thought if I just tried harder, was nicer, did something different all would be okay. I am over walking on eggshells, keeping out of his way and being blindsided by explosive rages and unreasonable demands directed at me without reason or warning. I am over being belittled, bullied, blamed and abused. This book was the catalyst for me seeing the truth.”

H Muggins

“From an abused wife of 29 years (now divorced): Mr. James validated the ups, downs, and very unbalanced life of the abused while explaining the not-so-conscious behavior of the abuser. While not knowing him, I believe that his journey and change is real based on his willingness to expose himself and share all of the steps in his own recovery. Steps that I watched and waited for. I believe this book offers hope for those that are willing to see it and it validates the experience of the abused (when many others don't recognize it.) If you are curious about emotional abuse or if you think that you or a friend are involved in it (abused or abuser), this book does give insight, and points towards help.”

MS Lily

“...one of the most heartfelt, deeply moving stories I've read in a long time. The first words that came to my mind as I read his book were, "Insurmountable Courage." For it had to have taken him raw courage to write about such an emotional journey. James' honesty and candor are evident throughout. He paints powerful images of emotional/verbal abuse, and details the step-by-step recovery he went through, while offering a helping hand to others who suffer, or who are in pain and suffering as he and his family suffered. He apologizes for his part in the abuse throughout the book, yet offers tremendous help to the abuser and the abused alike.”

C Kaelin

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Thank you, please help

Introduction

Guilt is the very nerve of sorrow. __Horace Bushnell

My name is Austin James. I was an emotional abuser for 30 years. At the time of this writing I am 5 years into my recovery. Life is good!

My hope is this book will make a difference in the life or marriage of someone, regardless of which side of the emotional abuse equation they may find themselves on.

It has been on my heart for a while to share my marriage experience and the emotional abuse that destroyed it in the hopes someone, maybe you, can relate your experience to mine and find hope and hopefully, the path that leads to healing, in whatever form that may be.

I feel my journey needs to be told because with the aid of five years hindsight with a *much* healthier mind, I seem to witness emotional and verbal abuse in a surprisingly great number of relationships and marriages I come across, yet rarely is it “outed” for what it is—a silent killer.

I say *silent* because abuse is rarely talked about outside the confines of the relationship or marriage. I’ve witnessed repeated emotional abuse occurring in front of family members or close friends yet, just as in my own abusive marriage, not a word is spoken openly about the incident.

For that reason, I’ve labeled emotional abuse as a *silent killer* of marriages.

Is emotional or verbal abuse accepted by society? After all, who among us hasn't thrown a verbal barb or two at someone when we've been hurt by them? Who hasn't yelled and said hurtful things or put someone else down? These behaviors do not necessarily define one as an abusive person, only human.

Perhaps this is why we tend to look the other way when we witness this type of behavior toward others. When a recurring pattern of verbal barbs or put downs are witnessed, does it merely get labeled as a character flaw, or “It’s just the way they are,” rather than what it is, abuse—a psychological disorder?

There's no doubt most of us would get involved if we saw physical abuse taking place, yet do we choose to ignore emotional abuse because we mistakenly think the ‘blows’ of words or actions aren't as damaging to the victim?

Many times the victims of abuse try to merely cope and *hope* things will change and get better. Maybe if they would “try harder,” do “more things right,” or “give a little more” to the relationship things would calm down and improve. The victims of abuse begin to buy into the lie that somehow they are to blame.

Perhaps the victims of abuse choose to stay silent out of shame, guilt or because so much of the abuse happens behind closed doors. Maybe deep down inside no one feels abusive behavior can be altered or that an emotionally sick person *can* be healed.

I’m living proof that healing can happen.

Many deep psychological hooks, webs, traps, patterns, and behaviors are developed and ingrained during the time of abuse that's for sure. Decoupling, untangling or trying to make sense of the mess is not an easy task and normally best left to professionals.

The mind is a terribly complex organ and I'm certainly NOT qualified to try to explain its makeup or its workings. Nor am I qualified to speak as to why as a society we seem to turn our backs on this dysfunction that affects so many people and families. It is clearly an epidemic in my opinion.

What I do feel qualified to say, however, is as long as the ones impacted by abuse - giver, receiver, family or friend - choose to stay quiet and make excuses, try to cope, or simply wish and hope for things to change, this silent killer, and its devastating effects, is destined to be repeated. Our lives, the lives of our children, and our children's children for generations to come will be impacted.

The epidemic of low self-worth, broken lives, broken children, and broken families will continue to spread like a cancer, killing everything it touches along the way.

So if I, one who has caused incalculable devastation in the lives of the people I love the most, can somehow start a discussion by sharing my experience and thoughts as a former emotional abuser, then the pain of reliving the past, and the misery it brought on me and my family is worthwhile. It can hopefully begin the healing process for others

It's the least I can do.

As I look back, I'm mortified at the person I was for nearly two-thirds of my life but it's a fact I can't escape. I imagine the recovery will last the rest of my days I suppose. Some abusive patterns are dead but some are deeply entwined in my soul and psyche; they constantly "nip at my heels."

On rare occasions, I resort back to a form of the person I used to be. The major difference today is when those patterns of behavior re-emerge, I'm consciously *aware* of them and can take corrective action FAST—that's the plan anyways.

As I continue to travel further away from the man I was and journey towards the man I am to be, I've discovered there isn't much written from the perspective of the abuser. Perhaps if we, the ones who wounded mercilessly, are willing to step forward and say, "I am he" or "I am she," more awareness of this epidemic will take place and over time, the killer known as emotional abuse can be stopped or minimized greatly.

It's important to realize as you read what follows, I had *no idea* what or who I was during all the years I was abusive, as unfathomable as that may seem. I am amazed at that fact myself, but I was *completely* blinded to the man I had become during my 30 years of abuse. I hope to clarify this fact in more detail in the pages that follow.

My wife and I never once heard the word 'abuse' during years of seeing both secular and Christian counselors. Anger was *always* brought up as the underlying problem in our marriage, but those conversations, sadly, never escalated to the *real* problem facing our marriage—emotional abuse.

To this day, I'm completely floored by those two facts yet it seems to add more credibility to the word 'silent' in "silent killer."

Whether you see yourself when reading these pages, or see your spouse, boyfriend, girlfriend or significant other, I want to tell you there IS hope. Recovery and healing from abusive behavior *can* happen. I'm proof and I've witnessed others who have been set free as well, even after decades of destructive behavior.

Abuse is a psychological disorder that usually has its roots traced back to an earlier traumatic event during the childhood years, when the brain has not developed to the point of being able to cope with such trauma. One is not simply born abusive. It is a learned behavior and anything learned can be unlearned by those willing.

Yes, recovery is a long and painful road to travel at times, but in many cases it is well worth the journey. Wounds *can* heal... slowly. New healthy patterns can be formed and those patterns can transfer to your children over time, regardless of their age. The generational cycle of abuse can be stopped.

So perhaps this book will give you time to pause and reflect before you take the next step in your relationship, one that maybe you've been hesitant to take. Maybe it will compel you to seek help from professionals who are not afraid to talk abuse and are willing to help you attack this silent killer head-on before it has more opportunity to destroy your life or family.

On the other hand, maybe that next step has already occurred and you're reading this in an attempt to heal the wounds abuse has inflicted deep within your soul that NO ONE can know except you.

Either way, I wish you good luck and protection from further harm during your journey.

It's important to note that I'm not a doctor, psychologist, or counselor, nor have I ever played one on TV. I hold no degree in the sciences of the mind.

I simply have a thirty-plus year *Degree of Life* as an abusive man. My experiences I talk about, the way I went about my recovery, and what I learned along the way are *my* experiences alone. They may not align with conventional wisdom amongst professionals—so be it.

The methods I used worked for me and I am confident some of what you will read in these pages will work for you too—IF you are ready.

Emotional abuse is a *very* complex situation. To be frank, it is not just the abuser that needs to be helped, but many times victims of abuse have suffered some type of dysfunction during their childhood that has allowed them to unknowingly be controlled or put in situations where abuse can take root.

Many times the victims of abuse may have had a hard time with setting boundaries *before* they came into an abusive relationship. This does not imply that the victims of emotional abuse are to accept blame IN ANY WAY for the abusive behaviour they experience—they are not! Nor, is the victim enabling the abusive behaviour. An abuser abuses because they are broken within. The victim of abuse didn't do anything to 'turn on' the abuse, nor are they somehow enabling it.

I do not intend to recommend or suggest what you are to do in *your* situation; everyone's situation is unique of course. However, some basic characteristics of emotional abuse and the relationships it touches have common underlying themes across many situations. In discussing my situations and thought patterns I hope you will begin to see commonalities to your own situation. Perhaps that will allow you to start a dialog or to seek a professional who is familiar with emotional abuse to help you.

What follows is my story, in all its gory detail, at least as much of it as I can remember. Yes, I hope there is therapeutic help in these pages, but please don't take anything I say as professional advice, okay? We are just friends talking here and some things must be taken with a grain of salt.

I'm sure this will be a work in progress and only you, as the rightful judge, will determine if I made the right decision in coming forward with my experiences and what I've learned from them. I ask for your grace to cover the literary mistakes made through the pages that follow and simply *dive-in* to the experiences you're about to read.

Let's get on with it shall we?

Austin

Chapter 1

Transformation

Let no man trust the first false step of guilt: It hangs upon a precipice, whose steep descent in lost prediction ends. __Young

In twenty-four years of marriage to Teri there was a lot of pain sprinkled with some incredibly good times, *incredibly* good. To coin a phrase from a favorite movie of mine, when times were good Teri and I, "...went together like peas and carrots." These words, said with the appropriate Forrest Gump southern drawl of course.

We flat had a blast together.

Nevertheless, the pain reached a crescendo one-day in April years ago when my wife finally hit the wall and told me she wanted to end our marriage.

Ending the marriage wasn't something either of us took lightly. Of course, divorce should *never* be taken lightly. We, as Christians, believed in the sanctity of marriage and the Word of God. Moreover, we had two teenage girls to consider.

However, I suppose there comes a time when enough is enough and core beliefs can sometimes take a backseat to the realities of a relationship; years of emotional abuse, arguing and trying repeatedly to fix the same problems over and over finally take its toll. The marriage, from my wife's eyes, was terminal and divorce seemed to be her only option.

Though this phase of my life's journey didn't have the ending I was hoping and praying for—a total reconciliation with Teri without divorce—I hold out great hope that one day I'll witness the things that are very important to me: a loving wife, a great home, and children who grow up to be healthy and helpful to themselves, their spouse, and their community.

The journey, both today and since that horrible day I heard the dreadful word 'divorce,' has been the most incredible journey of my life. A journey that has taken me to the revelation of being an emotionally abusive man, husband, and father; to the despair of suicidal plans (twice), and finally to the incredibly delightful discoveries of learning how much my Lord and Savior (for me it's Jesus Christ) loves me.

On that note, though I don't intend to cram God or Christ down anyone's throat, the truth is after spending the first forty years of my life as an atheist, I realized 14 years ago that for me, Jesus is the way... the only way. Though I cannot nor will not deny Him (for his grace is what set me free from this bondage), I feel strongly you will find revelation and help in these words regardless of your spiritual beliefs.

As I stated in the beginning of this book, my journey needs to be told not only in the hopes that more public awareness of this devastating disorder will bring about healing, but also because what happened

to me from the day I learned the truth of what I had become until now has been a complete *transformation*. And if I can be transformed after being stuck in the torment of abuse for three decades, I feel confident you or your loved one can be released and transformed too!

I use the word *transformation*, defined as a *thorough or dramatic change in form or appearance*, to title this chapter because who I was for the first forty-nine years of my life changed radically, dramatically and *quickly* once I awakened to the truth.

For the majority of my life I was an extremely emotionally abusive man; a man who had control and manipulation down to an art form; a man who was *never* wrong—except maybe in poker; a man who didn't need to apologize for much of anything because, in his sickness, he could always justify *the truth* (his truth of course); a man who thought he was a *master communicator*, and a man who believed he was intellectually superior to most other people walking the planet.

The person I am now is completely humbled as a man, husband, and father. A man who knows that his worth and accomplishments during his abusive years amounted to diddly-squat; a man who accepts full responsibility for his actions of the past, and a man who *rarely* has angry outburst or abusive tendencies. And for the first time in his life, a man who understands what it means to be a biblical husband, one who will lay his life down for his bride.

In short, for the first time in my life I can say I like who I am! It has taken me 49 years to be able to say that with honest intent.

Yet unfortunately, even with all the amazing transformations that took place over a few short weeks, it still was not enough to change Teri's heart or desire to stay in our marriage. I believe she simply did not have the will to continue nor did she trust that the changes she saw in me were real. She told me once, "I see the changes but I don't believe or trust them." I suppose seven months of the "new Austin" could not overcome thirty years of the old one in her eyes.

Yes, over 24 years of marriage I hurt Teri as well as our children. I hurt them badly. I didn't fight and leave physical wounds and bruises. No, far worse - I fought with the weapons of the mind where I thought I had a distinct advantage and knew I could "Win."

Some "Win."

Upon moving out of our beautiful house in the suburbs, I ended up typing most of the journal entries that comprise the core of this book while sitting in my new home: a 10'x10' room in the basement of a house belonging to a friend.

Regardless, I still hold great hope that what I learned on a practical level and what God revealed to me on a spiritual level will eventually heal what thirty-years of abuse, manipulation, and lies did to Teri and our two daughters.

That is my hope and prayer at least.

*our
story*

Chapter 2

“I Want a Divorce”

A sound head, an honest heart, and a humble spirit are the three best guides through time and to eternity. That man may safely venture on his way, who is so guided that he cannot stray. _Walter Scott

“I Want a Divorce.”

Teri and I had been silent towards each other for the previous two weeks or so which was not unusual in our relationship, but it was normally *me* who initiated the silence. This felt different for some reason. Teri was more prone to let everything out, get it over with quickly and to argue, yell, makeup, and be done with it. The Italian blood in her I suppose.

No, this was different. I could sense it. She's never been the silent type, especially for days on end.

I finally approached her early one afternoon, an April 1st if my memory serves me correctly. She was just getting ready to take a nap or waking up from one—something else she was prone to do when we'd been arguing and she felt depressed. I told her she had not said much of anything to me for the past ten days and I was wondering if she was going to silence this latest issue to death. This was my snide way of initiating some discussion.

Allow me to rewind the clock eleven days..

Teri mentioned to me one morning she was getting distant from me emotionally, yet didn't want to feel that way. I told her she needed to focus on her relationship with Jesus for a while and forget about the marriage - not in a literal sense but set aside the problems we'd been having and concentrate more on herself and her relationship with The Lord.

The next morning, as I approached her to say “Good morning” and give her my usual husbandly hug she responded by giving me one of those sideways hugs reserved for a co-worker, not the normal frontal S Q U E Z E hug we shared thousands of times over the years.

In my brokenness, I immediately got angry and communicated such by using body and facial expressions instead of words. That way I could deny any anger later by saying she must have read those expressions incorrectly.

Later, Teri came into my office and asked if I was mad. I blurted out without thinking, “Not so much mad but there comes a time when the constant ups and downs about how you feel about me becomes unfair to me. I am about ready to call it quits.” Ha! This made me the victim and shifted the blame to her.

Lose Teri - win Austin... the kind of fight I honed to razor sharp precision over the past few decades.

She immediately, without saying a word, calmly closed my office door and walked away. Wounded I am sure but hey, at that point it was more about *my* hurt not hers.

After all, I had been the one who consistently told her how much I loved her; even while enduring all the problems we had in our relationship and marriage. In addition, I was the one who was “working so hard” on my relationship with Christ in order to be a better man and husband.

Plus, I was the one who had all the answers, blah, blah, blah; *stuff a sock in it Skippy!*

I fought like this for years on an intellectual level. Teri always, ALWAYS, came to me and either apologized or initiated some conversation. This behavior let me know my ‘scolding’ of her had served its purpose and that it was time to kiss and make up. We would apologize to each other by having great makeup sex, and the world would be right again. However, very rarely did I verbalize any form of an apology to her.

This time, once she closed my office door, she was silent towards me for the next 10 days. Uh, Houston, we have a problem.

Fast forward back to the 1st of April, the exact conversion is somewhat hazy to me, but I remember the awful highlights.

Teri sat up in bed and without the slightest bit of emotion told me she wasn't sure how she felt about me anymore and wasn't sure that she wanted our marriage to continue. That was about all she got to say before I took over the conversation.

In my experiences since becoming healthy this is what an abusive person fears the most – that their mate will leave them. It's why we work SO HARD subconsciously to get our mates to a level of total submission and dependence on us; so they can never leave us.

Ah, but I jump ahead in the story...

Never had Teri so calmly told me her feelings about getting a divorce and I could sense the underlying resolve in what she said. I had to do something to deflect the conversation and find a way to go on the offensive or more precisely, get her on the defensive.

I asked, trying to shift guilt to her, “Why stay in the marriage if you don't love me and aren't totally committed to me and to us?” I also said something to the effect that if she did tell me our marriage was over, that it wouldn't affect me much. That I would keep chugging along with my life as if nothing happened.

I -D-I-O-T!

With my words I *dared* Teri to say she wanted out. I gave her every reason she needed to tell me it was over. After all, during the conversation, I told her the latest attempt to rescue our marriage had been going on for over a year and a half and it obviously wasn't working. It's as if my mouth had taken on a life of its own, blurting out things that my mind may have thought, but would never coerce my mouth to say out loud.

Teri had heard enough. After I spewed out all I had until my ‘spewer’ ran dry, she looked me straight in the eyes and said, “I want a divorce.”

“Back at ya Austin.” [My words, not hers.]

Once the shock of hearing those words set in, and knowing she was serious, the anger wasn't far behind. Anger was always my friend and constant companion for as long as I can remember. It was always my ace-in-the-hole, my go-to weapon of choice when I need a win. Yep, with anger by my side I could always pull out of just about any situation I got myself into with my wife and, if I was lucky, make it appear as if it was her fault.

However, this time the anger trump card didn't work. Nope. Teri calmly stuck by what she said and simply brushed off all my attempts to control her using my weapons.

With those words - "I want a divorce" - the last brick settled into the wall slowly built around Teri's heart due to my words and actions over the past 30 years. No matter what I said or did I was not going to get past that wall to harm her heart any longer.

Consequently, that day began the most painful and yet the most rewarding journey of my life. Never again do I want to experience the pain of divorce that I've experienced. There have been days that my heart has hurt so badly that I didn't know how it could continue to beat—nor did I want it to.

Looking back, I am grateful Teri had the guts to say those words to me that day in our bedroom. For those words put me on my path to freedom. Freedom from the demons of abuse, control, and manipulation that enveloped me nearly every day of my life up until that point.

I was about to come face-to-face with the ugly truth of the man I had become in order to transform to the man I am today.

Thank you, Teri.

*Thank you for viewing this preview copy of: **Emotional Abuse: Silent killer of Marriage – A 30-Year Abuser Speaks Out.***

The book chronicles my first-hand journey through 33-years of my emotional abusive lifestyle, showing glimpses into my twisted mind as I attempt to control my world and the people within it.

You will view from a very unique perspective into the crippling, cancerous, lifestyle of control, anger, and manipulation from a former abuser's point of view.

I'll reveal the actions that destroyed my 24-year marriage and crippled the woman and children I love. Come along as I detail the nightmare of “waking up” to the truth of who and what I was as I take a dark journey into the most inner core of my soul.

Discover what I learned during five years of recovery as I put my emotionally destructive lifestyle behind me, and later, discover that the horrors of my 3-decade abusive life stemmed from events that happened as a young teenager, following the unexpected death of my father.

Anyone trapped in a manipulative, controlling relationship full of anger, yelling, and arguments, yet who yearns to have a relationship and marriage full of love, respect, emotional intimacy, and trust will gain insight and practical knowledge and guidance from this book.

My message is simple – there is HOPE! One *can* recover from emotional abuse, restore relationships, and live a healthy and content life.

View the overwhelming positive reviews from both the abused and abusers on **Amazon** that brought insight, healing, and hope to those impacted by this crippling, yet all too common destructive behavior.

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Buy your copy of the book on my website and receive two pdf copies – the best of both worlds; a hardcopy print for note taking as well as an electronic copy for your favorite mobile device. Even email it to your Kindle. Complete instructions included – [check for latest price on my site](#) .

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to reach out to me:

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Thank you and God bless,

Austin