



## **CONFIDENTIAL QUESTIONNAIRE**

This document contains a series of questions, in regard to the experience of verbal/emotional abuse. Please be assured that all information provided will be held in strictest confidence. If you choose to include your name/contact information, it will not be published, nor will it be disclosed to anyone.

I appreciate your taking the time to consider being part of this project.

Lisa Browning  
Publisher, *One Thousand Trees*

## INTRODUCTION

When I first thought about the concept for this book, it was shortly after I extricated myself from a very emotionally/verbally abusive relationship, late in 2012. In December 2013, my story about that relationship was published in *SHARING: our stories, our selves, our success*, the first anthology of women's empowerment stories published by my company, *One Thousand Trees*. At the time, I found the writing of my story to be very cathartic, and my plan was to expand upon the issue of verbal/emotional abuse in a book specifically geared to helping men and women recognize the situation as abusive, and find ways to heal.

In the majority of statistical reports I've seen, verbal/emotional abuse isn't even mentioned, whereas physical and sexual abuse stats are highlighted. "He doesn't abuse me; I have no bruises," emotionally abused women often say, not realizing the significant and frequently catastrophic damage that is being done.

A strange thing happened as I continued to work through my anger and bitterness towards my ex. Even though I found the writing of my story to be cathartic, I continued to experience the debilitating effects of the trauma I experienced, so I started to realize that there was far more to the story than I originally realized.

I have now come to understand that the relationship was a result of the underlying causal issue, the toxic shame that began during my early childhood. Because I hadn't dealt with that shame (not knowing that it even existed), I lived a life of hyper-vigilance, dreading the day that I'd be outed as the unworthy person I believed I was. It was that shame and core belief that led me to the abusive relationship in the first place, because it was "what I deserved."

As I worked through the process of recognizing, confronting, and healing from that toxic shame, I made a very important and, for me, life-altering discovery. Each of us has a unique purpose in this life, which is directly related to the life lesson we need to learn for our own highest good. That life lesson is, in turn, directly related to the pain or challenge we have experienced.

Because I know first-hand the healing that comes from telling our stories, and listening to others' stories, I want this book to be a compilation of the experiences of people who, like me, have experienced the debilitating effects of verbal and emotional abuse, and who have taken, or are taking, steps towards their own recovery. My own journey, from abuse to empowerment, has shown me that there is a path out of the darkness. In this book, I want to share that path with others.

## INSTRUCTIONS

Please answer all questions in Section One. These answers will be used to produce statistics re book participants, but the results will be anonymized.

Section Two contains more in-depth questions. Please answer all that you feel called to answer, or that speak to you. Your answers can be brief, or can be provided in the form of vignettes about your specific experiences. Maximum word count for vignettes is 200. Please type your answers to these questions on separate sheets of paper, making sure you include the question number in your response.

Completed questionnaires can be submitted by email to [lisa@onethousandtrees.com](mailto:lisa@onethousandtrees.com), or they can be mailed to One Thousand Trees, 3-304 Stone Road West, Suite 338, Guelph ON, N1G 4W4.

If you choose to provide your contact information, or you return the questionnaire via email, your identity will be held in strictest confidence. You will not be contacted by me, unless you have indicated that you would like to be.

### SECTION ONE: GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. What do you think are the most important issues to be covered in a book about emotional abuse?
2. How long were you in the relationship?
3. Were you: Married? Common-law? Dating? (circle one)
4. Have you healed?
5. Are you still in the relationship? Yes No
- 5a. If yes: What is causing you to stay?
- 5b. If no: How long did you stay? What caused you to leave? How long ago did you leave? Have you healed?
6. What emotions do you associate with your darkest times?
7. What emotions do you associate with your brightest times?
8. What is your age?
9. What is your gender?
10. What is your name and contact information? (optional)
  
11. Do you wish to receive followup correspondence about this project? Yes No

## SECTION TWO: IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS AND VIGNETTE PROMPTS

(200 words maximum for each response)

1. What is your innermost belief (core belief) about yourself or about life?
2. Where did that belief come from?
3. When/in what situation(s) was that core belief reinforced? 4. What lesson do you believe are meant to learn in this life?
4. What do you hope for?
5. What sparks your enthusiasm, makes you feel alive, or brings you joy?
6. Describe your "best life."
7. When did you realize you were in an emotionally abusive relationship?
8. Describe one of your darkest moments or memories.
- 8b. What emotion(s) did it bring to the surface?
9. What coping mechanisms did you use while you were in the relationship, or while you are still recovering from it? (self-medication with drugs/alcohol, self-care strategies)
10. In what ways have you self-sabotaged?
11. Describe one of your brightest moments or memories.
12. What emotion(s) did it bring to the surface?
13. What healing modalities have you used/do you use?
14. What else do you do for self-care?
15. Have you discovered your soul purpose? Yes No
- 15a. If yes, how? When?
16. How did you get from the darkness to the light?
17. The following are characteristics of an abuser: charming, delusional, never wrong, illusions of grandeur, sexual deviancy, no empathy, plays the victim, lies and cheats, twists your words, has to win. Write about any experience that pertains to your exposure to any of these characteristics.
18. The following are methods an abuser uses to control: humiliation, control and manipulation, deceit, "gaslighting" or crazy-making, threats, violating your privacy, isolation, limiting independence, harassment, intimidation. Write about any experience that pertains to your exposure to any of these methods.
19. Write about any experience, not covered in the preceding questions, that you would like to address.