

A Framework of Healing from Coercive Control and Abuse

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In collaboration with women from When Love Hurts
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This framework does not tell anyone how to heal. It is not prescriptive. Rather, it aims to be descriptive. It is a collection of signs, feelings, actions, attitudes, states of mind, beliefs, shifting paradigms and so forth that indicate that healing is happening. I hope that women who have been subjected to coercive control and abuse and who are now rebuilding their lives can find themselves in this list, and recognize that amidst the pain and grief, growth and healing is taking place.

This is a living document, and I welcome and invite input. Please email me at shalom@shalomwiebe.ca with any feedback or ideas for what we can add to this list.

“When we have liberated ourselves we will have to find out who we are.” - Women Talking.

“The magic has come from learning how to hear myself again”
- Lauren Free

- I am getting to know myself / rediscover myself. I nurture myself.
- I am allowed to think for myself.
- I co-create safe, reciprocal relationships where I am accepted as I am. I am not too much, I am enough.
- I show up authentically more consistently.
- I value my inner life and connect with myself.
- I have a kind inner dialogue.

- I become reconnected with my core values and allow myself space to cultivate my interests.
- I am gentle with myself. I know how to support myself, including when to reach out to my support network.
- I have an awareness of what happened to me, of the patterns of abuse and coercive control I was subjected to, and the impact on me.
- I no longer blame myself for the abuse. My partner is 100% responsible for his abuse of me. I understand he groomed me into this.
- I recognize that the person who abused me does not reflect anything true about me in what he says about me. I know that he reflects a very distorted picture of myself that is not true. I do not overly self-reflect on anything he says about me. I will trust the safe people in my life to help know who I really am.
- His opinion of me is wholly inaccurate, and based on his belief system of being central, superior and deserving.
- I know I worked very hard on my relationship and abuse is what destroyed it.
- I shift the guilt and shame to the person who used abuse.
- I am no longer going to think that I "chose poorly" for my children or myself.
- I let go of feelings of shame around the abuse.
- No longer feeling confused. I have clarity about what it is I am experiencing and that I have had (and still have) normal reactions to abuse, terror, oppression and control.
- If there is post separation abuse I recognize that it is normal for me to have significant reactions in my body and emotions over time, even as I heal from past abuse.
- Overwhelming responses to ongoing abuse does not mean I am not healed, it means I am still being abused or controlled.
- I have language to describe my experiences and responses to abuse and stress, such as nervous system dysregulation, fear, terror etc.

- I recognize that parenting in general, and in particular doing it on my own while facing a counter parent and bravely navigating the immense challenges of life as a single parent is highly stressful, and this in itself creates dysregulation in my nervous system. I understand this is normal, and not a sign of not being sufficiently “healed”.
- I create a life where my sensitive nervous system is a blessing, not a curse. I honour and value my sensitivity.
- I have awareness of my patterns, nervous system responses to fear and terror, and normal dysregulation that comes from ongoing abuse and stress. I meet myself in each moment. I allow myself to step back. I am gentle and compassionate to myself.
- I work through situations that stir things up more intentionally and with more awareness
- I am able to respond rather than react more of the time.
- When I react I am gentle with myself. I make repairs with my children rather than descending into a shame spiral.
- I know how to do relationships. I am not broken because I was in an abusive relationship or have been controlled and abused.
- I accept that my struggles may be long lasting, perhaps due to forces outside my control. I choose to live my life as fully as I can anyway.
- I recognize grief is part of my healing and my future. I will carry disenfranchised grief for the rest of my life. I allow my life to grow around the grief over time.
- I understand that vacillating between grief and rebuilding is a part of the healing process.
- I can trust my intuition. I believe my intuition is one of my most powerful resources.
- Anger is our friend. I listen to it and don't try to quash it. Anger points me to what harm is being done to me and my children.
- Anger is directly linked to my intuition. It is a message from our body saying “no”

- I can appreciate and honour my anger, it lets me know when something is not ok
- I recognize my full range of emotions including anger, sadness, joy, as a full human expression.
- I have grown in my ability to be less destabilized by my ex's post separation abuse and attempts at power and control. I reach out to trusted support where once I had no place to turn.
- I know and cherish my worth. Where I was once diminished and made to feel small, I allow myself to be fully who I am. I know that I am not only enough, but I am a worthy, interesting, full person deserving of good things.