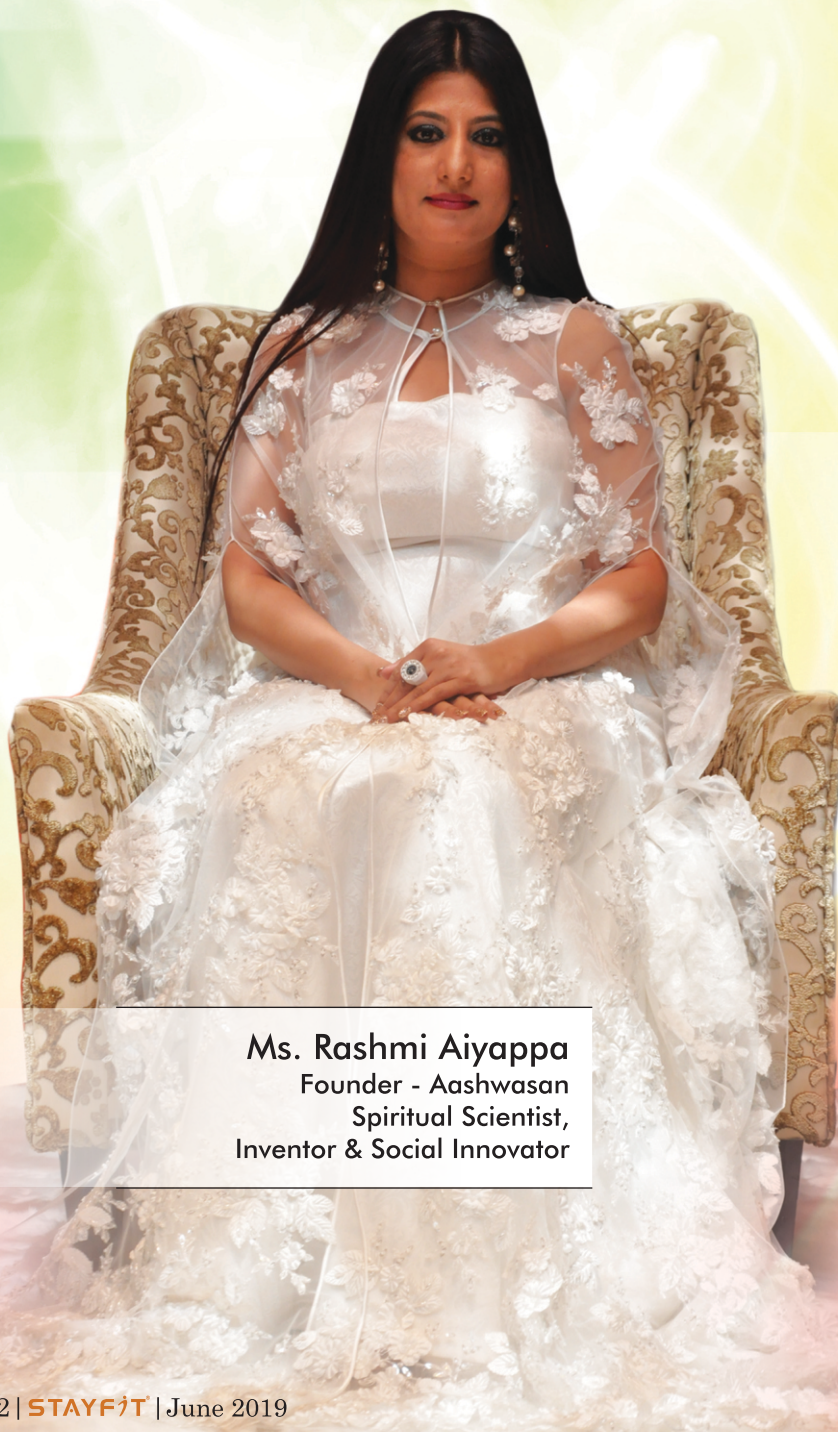


# Breaking Free from Emotional Abuse

## Reclaiming OneSelf



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**M**illions of people around the world are limited in their pursuit of happiness, of their dreams due to low self-esteem and lack of confidence. One of the most significant yet less evident factors contributing to this is emotional abuse.

Emotional abuse is often not seen significant enough to be as serious or as harmful as other forms of maltreatment and people still hesitate to believe or support survivors of emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is insidious in nature and has a damaging effect on the individual. The depth of the scars and the weight of the pain created by emotional abuse is something people around can't see. Mentally, it can kill one from inside and after a point, it can even start showing an impact on one's body in the form of ailments like migraines, autoimmune diseases, back pain.



Physical abuse leaves bruises on the surface and scars in the heart, however with emotional abuse, the victim experiences that "frog in the kettle" journey of being killed emotionally by degrees without being aware of what is happening. Many victims are brainwashed, manipulated and conditioned over time into believing that they are the 'problem' and it becomes a deeply ingrained belief system within them, tampering with their sense of self and reality. Through this type of persecution, your very soul feels attacked - hearing words and mannerisms that cause much pain and suffering and over time, systematically eroding your self-confidence and self-worth.

Here is an experience shared by Sujatha (name has been changed due to confidentiality) a doctor, who went through an abusive marriage and how she didn't even realize that it was abuse until she hit rock bottom - emotionally, professionally and at the fundamental level of self belief.

*"I never realized that I was in an emotionally abusive marriage even with my education, experience, knowledge, family and friends on my side. I recognized there was something off early on, but not that it had slowly chipped away parts of me until after years of marriage.*

*I was over the moon to meet someone who was just like me, a vegetarian by choice, inclined towards Indian classical music, deeply interested in spirituality, somebody who made me believe that I am the one for him. Things moved quickly and we got married within months of seeing each other. Initially, I felt blessed to be sharing the rest of my life with this amazing person who idolizes me although I would notice that sometimes he alternated between telling me how much he admired my intelligence and then berating me about how stupid I was. Here and there, there was also criticism which I thought was healthy towards my career and growth.*

*But slowly it spread to my dress sense; 'my family who didn't bring me up well', to the friends I chose to hang out with and how I spent my money. Thinking that these are all normal teething troubles in a relationship, I didn't pay much attention.*

*Things started going downhill after my son was born. It was difficult for me to balance my work and taking care of my newborn. My husband didn't want to take up any responsibility but there was constant criticism, belittling and anger if I was not available for our son. Soon he convinced me to quit my job. While I was happy that I could spend all my time with my little one, there was always this niggling feeling about what I was doing to myself. Also the actions of my husband confused me even more. He convinced me to quit my job and then refused to give me access to his bank account and only letting me use the money that he gave me and shamed me if I ever asked for more.*

*He would lie and withhold information about important matters regarding our finances and when I would question him, he would tell me that I had misunderstood, misremembered, or was just "wrong" about my own memories. I'd spent months doubting my own perceptions of reality because he kept telling me that I was too sensitive or too suspicious. Any mention of feeling bad meant that I was 'hysterical' or 'overthinking' things. If he stayed out all night instead of helping me take care of our newborn, I couldn't bring it up in the morning without being told that I was ruining his day and having a door slammed in my face. His constant accusations and his dogmatic way of speaking always made me feel like an unequal, rather than an equal participant.*

## WELLNESS

*If I ever told anyone about how much I was struggling, it was a 'direct betrayal' of him and his family. I was not allowed to talk about them and express my feelings even to my parents or sisters. I was told that I was being immature for feeling or reacting the way that I did. Without ever hitting me even once, he rendered me powerless. It was becoming highly impossible for me to stay sane. I no longer trusted my own emotions. Not wanting to give up on myself, I started my journey with Aashwasan.*

*It was my sessions that helped me to understand that we are all born equal and we are all born free. That we are entitled to speak our voice, to feel every emotion, to be seen and heard, to feel beautiful, brilliant, worthy, valuable and successful!*

*My Aashwasan journey helped me understand that unless I break free, I would never be able to end the cycle of abuse and the anguish it brought me and my son. I found the courage to move away from him. It was more like an internal, almost unconscious life-preserving shift of pulling away from a toxic bond and I am ever grateful for it. With the intention of bringing up my son in a healthier environment, I felt I should move in with my parents and I did. Away from him, I noticed that people liked me. I realized*

*how valued I was in my family. I noticed how happy I was, how capable I was, what a good job I was doing at work. I learnt that my talents and gifts are not meant to be buried. Recovery from such an abuse takes time and effort and I gifted myself both. I know I deserve to feel all that I feel now and I deserve to shine and embrace all my amazing qualities that make me stand out. Even as a doctor, I feel recognised for my worth. I feel respected and valued. I love my new identity.*

For those who reach Aashwasan to resolve the impact of emotional abuse, it becomes a journey of self-discovery. They go deeper with themselves to experience their true self. They find their own strengths and rebuild their lives based on their sensibility. The unconscious wounds left behind by blame shifting and the perceived weaknesses, flaws or deficiencies that one is pushed to internalize, are given a reality check. The deleterious consequences of emotional abuse on the victim's body and mind are addressed from the root to bring back holistic health. The journey becomes that of anchoring in themselves and experiencing their glorious selves.



*"Love is where it all begins"*

*Rashmi*

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