

Abandonment

No matter how many times you tell them you'll be there for them, they don't believe you. No matter how many times you tell them you love them, it's never enough. We've all met someone with abandonment issues.

[Some common signs that someone has abandonment issues are:](#)

- ◆ They get attached to certain people quickly. They may have a series of short but intense attachments, either with friends or lovers.
- ◆ Other times, people with abandonment issues might cycle through a series of shallow relationships. They seek out new connections because they are lonely, but then cut the other person off before they have a chance to hurt them. Their loneliness drives them to find someone else, and the cycle repeats.
- ◆ They have a constant fear of unfaithfulness. In a relationship, this presents as a fear of cheating. With friends, this presents as a fear of emotional distance.
- ◆ They jump to worst case scenarios. When you frown at them, they fear that you're secretly seething with anger. When you don't text them back, they fear you hate them. They are not always able to recognize that these worst-case scenarios are irrational.
- ◆ They cling to unhealthy relationships, because they don't want the other person to leave.
- ◆ They even sabotage their relationships. When the other person leaves because they are being toxic, they can ease their pain with the knowledge that they caused it through bad behavior.

This is comforting to someone with abandonment issues because if they did not sabotage the relationship, and the other ended up leaving, it's a comment about their worth as a person. But when someone leaves because they're being treated badly, then it's only fair. It doesn't feel as much like abandonment.

- ◆ They look for flaws. With every new person in their life, they critically assess them. They may even put them through 'tests' designed to measure what kind of person they are. These tests often create drama where there doesn't need to be any.

These aren't the only signs. There are very subtle ways to tell if someone has abandonment issues, such as:

- ◆ They believe people are generally untrustworthy and/or not dependable and will tell you so.
- ◆ When they do find someone they connect with, they will say things like "*you are not like the others.*"

It can feel impossible to talk to someone with abandonment issues. No matter what you say, it's like they didn't hear you. It can drive you crazy. It can make you feel like you're talking to a brick wall. At the same time, the last thing you want to do is give up in frustration and make them think you're abandoning them.

Abandonment issues are a core part of someone's worldview. The person with abandonment issues feels like the world is fundamentally unsafe.

(They believe) that the world is an unsafe place, that people are not to be trusted, and that they do not deserve positive attention and adequate care.

Essentially, people with abandonment issues put the cart before the horse. They think others can't leave them if they're already alone, so they close everyone off.

And yes, that's true - sort of. You don't have to worry about being shot in the foot if you're **already** shot in the foot. But then you're, you know, shot in the foot. People with abandonment issues would rather be alone than deal with the fear of someone leaving them.

They believe everyone leaves them in the end. That core belief is not something you can fix.

You might be tempted to make promises to soothe their fear. "*I will always be there for you.*" "*You can always call me.*" People with abandonment issues will often prompt you to make these promises because they want to hear them.

Even if these promises are true, promises like that raise the defenses of someone with abandonment issues. They expect anyone who says those things to abandon them. Once their defenses are raised, it's impossible to get through to them. Even though they crave these promises, they are afraid once they get them.

So if you can't fix their problem, and you can't say what they want to hear, what can you say or do?

Leave the conversation when it turns unproductive, even if they beg you not to.

People with abandonment issues are vulnerable to the emotional heat of the moment. During a difficult discussion or fight, they are overloaded with fear hormones.

Do the both of you a favor, and step away from a conversation when it turns emotional and unproductive—even if it appears to drive the other person to despair. Tell them clearly and firmly that you are doing this for both of you, so that you are not in pain. It will feel like kicking a puppy, but it has to be done. The alternative means staying and enabling their abandonment issues to get worse.

After three or more hours, get in contact with them again. Ninety-nine percent of the time, you'll find the other person has calmed down. They will usually be able to identify that they got overemotional.

Tell them when you're feeling trapped or manipulated.

People with abandonment issues will often try and corner others verbally. Their goal is to make the person they're talking to say what they want to hear. They will use tricks like:

- ◆ Telling you what you think, feel or mean
- ◆ Using hypothetical questions to corner you
- ◆ Making leaps of logic which make no sense

For example:

Them: You are only here because you pity me!

You: That's not true. I'm here because I want to help you.

Them: Yes it is. I can tell.

You: That's not true!

Them: I can tell. You said "*You are here to help me.*" That means you are only here because you pity me.

In this example, the other person used an indefensible leap of logic to tell you what you mean.

Every time you play into their fears, you are making their abandonment issues worse. If you really want to help them, point out when they are doing this to you. Say things like:

- ◆ "*What are you trying to say?*"
- ◆ "*I'm sorry that's what you think, but that's not what I meant.*"
- ◆ "*I feel like you are trying to make me say something.*"

The person with abandonment issues won't necessarily agree with what you're saying. But saying that will derail the point they were trying to make, and force them to have a real conversation again.

Don't take their bait.

People with abandonment issues lay a lot of bait.

- ◆ They might have a sad facial expression, baiting you to ask what's wrong.
- ◆ They might sulk a certain way, baiting you to come to comfort them.
- ◆ They might send you an ambiguous text, baiting you to ask for more information.

Here is an example bait:

Them: *(sulking in a corner).*

You: *Is there something wrong?*

Them, clearly lying: No

You: Come on, I know there is ... you go over to sit by them. *What's wrong?*

Them, clearly lying: No

You and them go back and forth for some time, goading them to share what's wrong.

This bait is a ploy for attention. The longer you spend goading them to talk about what's wrong, the more they feel like you care. This makes them feel better in the short-term, but it reinforces their abandonment issues. The second you are not actively encouraging them, they go back to feeling abandoned.

You should respond to bait, but instead of saying what they want you to say, you should respond by prompting them to explain what they're feeling. If they do not clearly communicate back to you about what's bothering them, the conversation should end.

For instance, here is an ideal response to the same bait.

Them: *(sulking in a corner)*

You: *Is there something wrong?*

Them, clearly lying: No

You: All right. I'll take you at your word. Let me know if there is.

Them: *(sulking for some more time).*

Them: All right, this is what's wrong.

You made a clear offer for help while at the same time not giving them the response to the bait they wanted. This forces them to acknowledge their needs and clearly communicate them, which is the antidote to all kinds of emotional issues.

You might also say:

- ◆ *"Is there something you want to say to me?"*
- ◆ *"I can't read minds. If there's something on your mind, you have to use your words."*

Positive responses to baits will not always work out so smoothly. It may take many days, weeks or months before they courage to communicate clearly. What you can do for them is be a steady presence, giving them constructive responses to their bait, until they are.

People with abandonment issues don't do these things on purpose. These responses are reflexes built up from being abandoned. They don't realize how destructive their behaviors are to relationships. If they did, they wouldn't do them.

I know, because I used to be the same way. These are the same things I used to say to others. I have many memories of sulking in a corner as a ploy for attention, waiting for someone to come out and talk to me. There are many times I verbally cornered people and told them what they think of me (and not believing their protests to the contrary).

What caused me to change my behavior was recognizing that these behaviors were causing me more harm than good. My abandonment issues kept me in a relationship with a man who was not good for me. Despite not being good for me, I derived a lot of comfort from this relationship because I knew he would never leave. But eventually, the damage became too much. To save myself, I had to face up to my abandonment issues. I had to be the one to leave.

This is how people get over abandonment issues. They learn that sometimes, the right thing to do is leave. Once we learn how to leave others, we have empathy for those who leave us.

Luckily, people don't have to leave to learn this lesson. They just have to learn how to put their foot down and establish healthy emotional boundaries. Some people may go, but others will be glad you put those boundaries down in the first place.

What you can do to help someone with abandonment issues is not to enable unhealthy behaviors. Make it easier to decide to respect themselves. Make it harder for them to cling. It sucks, sucks worse than disciplining a beat dog. But if you love someone with abandonment issues, it's the best thing you can do.

1. What is Abandonment?

Many people ask me, *“What is abandonment? Is it people in search of their mothers? People left on the doorstep as children?”*

I answer: *“Everyday there are people who feel as if life itself has left them on a doorstep or thrown them away.”*

Abandonment is about loss of love itself, that crucial loss of connectedness. It often involves **breakup, betrayal, aloneness**.

People struggling with abandonment issues include those going through the ending of a relationship as well as searching adoptees, recently widowed, and those suffering the woundedness of earlier disconnections. Left unresolved, abandonment wounds can express themselves unconsciously, causing the person to develop deeply entrenched patterns of self-sabotage.

Abandonment represents core human fear. We have all experienced it. When a relationship ends, the feelings harken all the way back to our lost childhoods when we were helpless, and dependent. Our adult functioning temporarily collapses.

We feel shattered, bewildered, condemned to loneliness. As we apply the tools of recovery, at the bottom of abandonment’s pain, we discover a wellspring of positive change.

Abandonment is a cumulative wound containing all of the losses and disconnections stemming all the way back to childhood.

Abandonment is:

- ◆ A feeling
- ◆ A feeling of isolation within a relationship
- ◆ An intense feeling of devastation when a relationship ends
- ◆ An aloneness-not-by-choice
- ◆ An experience from childhood
- ◆ A baby left on the doorstep
- ◆ A woman left by her husband of twenty years for another woman
- ◆ A man being left by his finance for someone ‘more successful’
- ◆ A child left by his mother
- ◆ A friend feeling deserted by a friend
- ◆ A father leaving his marriage, moving out of the house, away from his children
- ◆ A child whose pet dies
- ◆ A little girl grieving over the death of her mother
- ◆ A little boy wanting his mommy to come pick him up from nursery school
- ◆ A child about to be ‘replaced’ by the birth of another sibling

- ◆ A child needing his parents but they are emotionally unavailable
- ◆ A boy realizing he is gay and anticipating the reaction of his parents and friends
- ◆ A teenage boy with his heart twanging, but afraid to approach his love
- ◆ A teenage girl feeling her heart is actually broken
- ◆ A woman who has raised a family now grown, feeling empty, as if she has been deserted, as if the purpose of her life has abandoned her
- ◆ A child stricken with a serious illness or injury watching his friends play while he must remain confined to braces, wheel chair, or bed
- ◆ A woman who has lost her job and with it her professional identity, financial security, and status. Now she is left feeling worthless, not knowing how to occupy her time – – feeling abandoned by her life's mission
- ◆ A man who has been 'put out to pasture' by his company, as if obsolete
- ◆ People grieving the death of a loved one report feelings of abandonment
- ◆ The dying fear being abandoned by their loved ones as much or more as they fear pain and death
- ◆ Suicide is an excruciating form of abandonment
- ◆ Abandonment is all of this and more. Its wound is at the heart of the variety of human experiences, and is found in the uniqueness of each person's life.

Abandonment recovery reaches out to all abandonment survivors.

2. How is Abandonment different from other types of Grief?

The feature that distinguishes abandonment grief from all others is the damage to self-esteem. We turn our rage about being rejected against ourselves. This accounts for the severe depression and self-injury involved in abandonment, and the aftermath of self-defeating patterns that often result.

Abandonment overlaps with bereavement in that they both involve loss. For the abandonment survivor, the loss is just as disruptive and painful as it is for any other type of grief. Closure is incomplete because the person has not died, but has chosen not to be with you.

Rejection, withdrawal-of-love, criticism, and desertion create a devastating personal injury – a narcissistic injury. 'Being left' cuts us all the way to the core. We lose not only our loved one, we lose our sense of self. **We abandon ourselves.**

As abandonment grief progresses, it burrows deep within where it can silently leech away at our self-esteem. But abandonment has not been legitimized as its own special type of grief.

Everybody seems to know about the initial pain caused by abandonment.

It is the latter stages of its grief that have gone unrecognized. Yet it endures, generating sadness, self-doubt, insecurity, self-sabotage, and fear – sometimes indefinitely. Unresolved abandonment can interfere in future relationships.

Understanding this grief and the wounding process you have been through helps you assess damages from previous losses.

3. Unresolved Abandonment

Unresolved abandonment: the source of our insecurities, addictions, compulsions, and distress.

Unresolved abandonment: the insidious virus invading body mind and soul – the culprit for the anxiety we are forever trying to self-medicate with food, alcohol, shopping, people and a host of other self-defeating behaviors.

Unresolved abandonment: the roadblock to reaching our potential ... the invisible wound that drains self-esteem from within the hidden trap that keeps us stuck in patterns of self-sabotage.

Unresolved abandonment: the chronic insecurity that becomes the scourge of human relationship. Unresolved abandonment ... the internal barrier to fully connecting to others. Fear short-circuits our attempts to find love – we struggle to find and keep relationships. We become abandoholics.

Abandoholics are those who are attracted to the unavailable and get caught up in cycles of abandonment.

Unresolved abandonment: the elusive grief so many seek therapy for and can't seem to overcome – an undifferentiated emptiness often mis-diagnosed as depression and inappropriately medicated. Sometimes its stress and agitation are persistent enough to create chemical imbalances that do, in fact, respond to drug therapy.

Unresolved abandonment: simplistic methods like 'positive thinking' or just going to therapy do not deter it. Programs like Co-dependency, Alanon, and Adult Child have attempted to assuage the erosion of energy and self-worth caused by unresolved abandonment. But for all of their other positive benefits, like self-responsibility and 'affirmations', they have not been able to repair the system of drainage that lies buried within.

Likewise, Alcoholics Anonymous, Alanon, and Over-eaters Anonymous, etc. have been extremely effective in dealing with the addictive and co-addictive problems secondary to abandonment, but are unable to go beyond the symptoms and treat the underlying abandonment wound itself.

Self-help books have tended to have a placebo effect. They offer reasonable enough sounding advice, like "*Find happiness from within.*" But these truisms are easier said than done. Many abandonees feel inadequate when they try to perform them and are not able to "*Just let go*" and "*Move forward.*"

Unresolved abandonment: people continue searching for one more book, one more lecture, one more CD that will finally free them. But all of the self-medicating and soothing words in the world will not eradicate the distress, disturbance and dysfunction caused by unresolved abandonment. For that you must go beyond insight. You must take action.

Abandonment survivors need more than symptom management and feel-good relief. They need an approach that facilitates not the illusion of change, but real change.

This can only happen when you realize that the magic bullet is not in any book or program. It is within you. It is your ability to integrate awareness with action — your ability to **behaviorally** reverse self abandonment.

4. What is an Abandonment Survivor?

Abandonment survivors are those who have experienced the anguish of love-loss and have the courage to go on believing in life and in their own capacity for love.

This is a select group of survivors, but membership is not restricted to those who have achieved success in their relationships.

On the contrary, it's members are those who continue to struggle to remove obstacles in the way of finding love. There are many crushing feelings rising out of the unresolved abandonment wound that make it difficult for many to get to a place of trust and security within a relationship.

The membership also includes those who become securely and happily coupled. But for all abandonment survivors, the impact of abandonments past or present, is evidenced by the fragments of un-lived life, unreached potential, and unfulfilled dreams still waiting to be redeemed through abandonment recovery. HELP is available.

5. Why do we carry a torch for so long when someone has broken up with us?

NEW SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH EXPLAINS WHY HEARTBREAK HURTS SO MUCH. Someone who leaves you becomes very powerful to your emotional brain. He or she becomes powerful simply by being able to inflict so much pain by being absent!

Being left is perceived by your mammalian brain as an attack upon your personal being. It etches an indelible impression in a primitive part of the brain that acts automatically to protect you. It conditions your mammalian brain to react with fear each time you encounter the person whose absence it perceives as dangerous to your well-being. If your caretaker had left you all alone as a young child, you wouldn't have survived.

Acting beneath your conscious awareness, your mammalian brain maintains a constant vigil on your abandoner. You experience this as being temporarily obsessed with the person. Your nerves are set to 'go off' if you should unexpectedly bump into them later on or see them with a new love. This makes you think they are very powerful indeed, that they, alone, hold the key to your wellbeing!

This enduring emotional reactivity toward the person is known as 'carrying a torch.' You are confused into thinking that if the pain can last that long and feel so strong, he or she must have been very special. But this is not so. You can feel this way over anyone, even someone who had nothing special to offer. It is just your mammalian brain efficiently trying to warn you not to make the same mistake again, to caution you in its primitive way that this person is dangerous (caused pain).

6. What is an Abandoner?

Abandoners come in every possible size, shape, shade, age, social form, and disposition. It is often difficult to tell who is safe to attach to and who is not capable of being emotionally responsible ... who is worthy of trust, and who is an abandoner.

What complicates the picture even more is that one person's abandoner might be another's permanent partner. Also, many abandonment victims, depending upon certain conditions, go on to become abandoners themselves. The circumstances surrounding relationships are so complex and variable, that it is neither wise nor fair to make moral judgements, point fingers, nor draw generalizations.

But there are serial abandoners ... abandoners who get secondary gain from inflicting emotional pain on someone who loves them. For them, creating devastation is their way of demonstrating power. They get off on it, whether consciously or unconsciously. At any rate, being the abandonER rather than the abandonEE, preserves their self esteem.

But even abandoners who are not motivated by the need to be on top, might experience a heightened sense of self-importance as an unintentional by-product. As regretful as they may feel about having to pull away, they can't help but go on an ego trip as they witness the protests and agony of the person who still wants to be with them.

In the light of the other person's pain, abandoners will not usually admit to feelings of triumph. Instead they tend to speak about their more humble feelings, like their regret over having caused another person to be disappointed. They are usually easily distracted from regret however, as they get caught up in their new lives with greater sense of freedom, perhaps with a new lover, and with a larger ego than before.

Many abandoners, however, are able to by-pass regret by remaining oblivious to the pain they have caused. They blame the other person for the break-up -- attempting to justify their actions and avoid guilt. Their agenda is to sustain their image of themselves as a decent, caring person. This denial and blame often come across as callousness and cruelty to the one they left behind. The abandonee must grapple alone with the pieces of a broken relationship, further wounded by unjustified blame.

Let it be said that many abandoners do not set out to abandon, to hurt-by-intention. Many are just human beings struggling to find the answers to life's difficult challenges along with everyone else.

Features of PTSD of Abandonment

PTSD = Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Please see my comments at the end of item # 40.

- 1) An intense fear of abandonment.
- 2) Difficulty forming primary relationships.
- 3) Intrusive insecurity that interferes in your love life, social life and goal achievement.
- 4) A tendency to repeatedly subject yourself to people or experiences that lead to another loss, another rejection, and another trauma.
- 5) Shame – any feeling of rejection or failure can trigger deeply embedded feelings of shame.
- 6) Difficulty with trust.
- 7) Tendency toward self-defeating behavior patterns that sabotage your love-life, goals, or career.
- 8) Anxiety with authority figures.
- 9) Heightened memories of traumatic separations and other events.
- 10) Conversely, partial or complete memory blocks of childhood traumas.
- 11) Intrusive reawakening of emotional memories stemming from childhood losses – i.e. feelings of helplessness, vulnerability and dread – without being able to recall the original events.
- 12) Low self-esteem, low sense of entitlement, performance anxiety.
- 13) Feelings of emotional detachment, i.e. feeling numb to current or past losses and disconnections.
- 14) Conversely, difficulty letting go of an ex, difficulty letting go of feelings of rejection, longing, and regret.
- 15) Difficulty letting go period (like a dog with a bone) over a conflict with another, a disappointment, etc.
- 16) Episodes of self-neglectful or self-destructive behavior.
- 17) Difficulty withstanding (and overreacting to) the customary emotional ups and downs within intimate relationships.
- 18) Reaching impasses – trouble working through the conflict with others.
- 19) Extreme sensitivity to perceived rejections, exclusions or criticisms.
- 20) Emotional pendulum swings between fear of engulfment and fear of abandonment: i.e. On one hand you feel ‘the walls close in’ if someone gets too close, and on the other, you feel insecure, love starved – on a precipice of abandonment – when you become unsure of the person’s love.
- 21) Tendency to feel hopelessly hooked on a partner who is emotionally unavailable.
- 22) Conversely, tendency to ‘get turned off’ and ‘lose the connection’ by involuntarily shutting down romantically and/or sexually with a partner is fully willing.
- 23) Emotional anorexia or emotional bulimia: difficulty feeling the affection and other physical comforts offered by a willing partner, i.e. you ‘keep them out’ or ‘push them away.’

- 24) Tendency to have emotional hangovers ‘the morning after’ you have had contact with an ex.
- 25) Difficulty naming your feelings or sorting through an emotional fog.
- 26) **Abandophobia**: a tendency to avoid close relationships altogether to avoid risk of abandonment.
- 27) Conversely, a tendency to rush into relationships and clamp on too quickly.
- 28) Difficulty letting go because you have attached with emotional epoxy, even when you know the person is not good for you.
- 29) An excessive need for control, whether it’s about the need to control others’ behavior and thoughts, or about being excessively self-controlled; a need to have everything perfect and done your way.
- 30) Conversely, a tendency to create chaos by avoiding responsibility, procrastinating, giving up control to others, making messes, and feeling out of control.
- 31) A heightened sense of responsibility toward others, rescuing, attending to people’s needs, even when they have not voiced them.
- 32) Tendency to have unrealistic expectations of others coupled with heightened reactivity when they don’t live up to them.
- 33) Self-judgmental, self-critical: unrealistic expectations toward yourself.
- 34) People-pleasing: excessive need for acceptance or approval, setting yourself up for a lack of reciprocity within your relationships.
- 35) Fear response to people’s anger, which unwittingly sets you up to being disrespected by or even ‘controlled’ by them.
- 36) Co-dependency issues in which you give too much of yourself to others, put them first, and feel you don’t get enough back.
- 37) Tendency to act impulsively without being able to put the brakes on, even when you are aware of the negative consequences.
- 38) Tendency toward unpredictable outbursts of anger, sometimes burning bridges to important social connections.
- 39) Conversely, tendency to under-react to anger out of fear of breaking the connection, or out of an extreme aversion to ‘not being liked’.
- 40) Negative narcissism: preoccupied with self-criticism and worry over how you are perceived by others.

Any of these issues can emerge in the aftermath of abandonment trauma stemming from childhood and adulthood losses and disconnections. The post traumatic symptoms of PTSD of Abandonment share sufficient features with PTSD to be considered a subtype of this diagnostic category.

As with other types of post trauma, PTSD of Abandonment is neuro-psycho-biological condition, a so-called “*limbic disorder*” or “*disease of the amygdala*” with symptoms that range from mild to severe. Its earmarks include:

- ◆ Intrusive feelings of insecurity – a major source of self-sabotage in primary relationships and in goal-achievement.
- ◆ Tendency to compulsively re-enact abandonment scenarios through repetitive patterns (i.e., abandoholism – being attracted to the unavailable).

- ◆ Diminished self-esteem, heightened vulnerability, and an easily triggered sense of shame.

PTSD of Abandonment leaves its victims with a need to buttress their flagging **sense of self** with defense mechanisms that can be automatically discharged and whose intention is to protect the narcissistically injured self from further rejection, criticism, or abandonment.

These habituated defenses tend to become maladaptive in that increase the need for immediate gratification which forestalls the achievement of long-range goals – a vicious shame cycle.

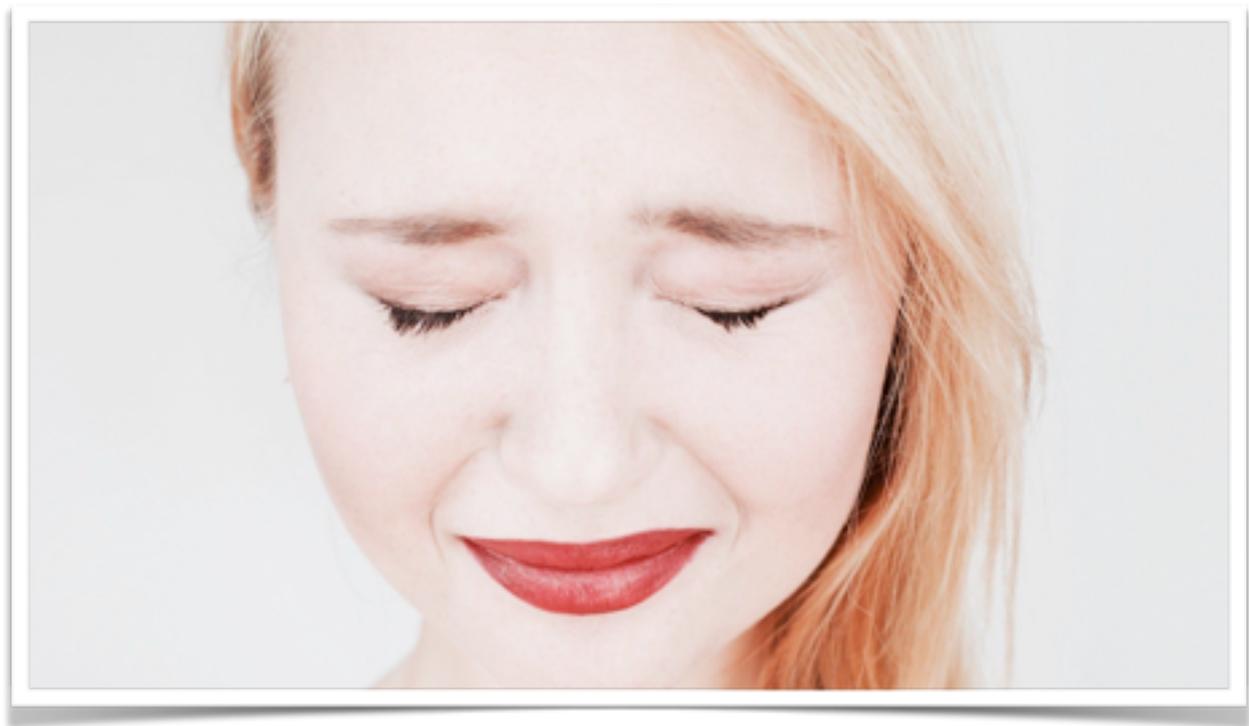
Victims tend to have emotional flashbacks, flooding them with feelings ranging from mild anxiety to intense panic in response to triggers that they may not be conscious of.

Once abandonment fear is triggered, they can feel momentarily overwhelmed, and some experience what Daniel Goleman calls “*emotional hijacking*” – a difficulty reining in one’s emotions.

If emotional hijacking occurs frequently enough, its chronic emotional excesses can lead to unsparing self-criticism, as well as give rise to secondary conditions such as chronic depression, anxiety, obsessive thinking, isolation, negative narcissism, and addiction.

Article: <http://www.abandonment.net/faq.frame#a1>

Five (5) Signs Someone Has Abandonment Issues



“Being abandoned or given up on is the most devastating emotions we can cause in another human being.” – Gary David Currie

Abandonment issues can crop up in people with both traumatic pasts as well as people who suffer mental illnesses or personality disorders. They can exist on their own, or as a symptom of something else. Abandonment issues are characterized by the intense fear of being rejected by other people.

The fear can cause people who experience these issues to put up emotional barriers between themselves and the rest of the world. This can cause problems connecting with the people around them, including friends, family and romantic partners. **Anyone can experience abandonment issues: men, women or even children.**

The causes of abandonment issues are numerous, and can include emotional trauma, past verbal or emotional abuse, or even divorced parents. The signs of abandonment issues can be obvious as well as subtle, mistaken for quirks in someone’s personality. Being able to effectively recognize abandonment issues in someone else, as well as yourself, is the first step to being able to find the correct path to healing from these issues.

1. Unhealthy Attachment

A sign of abandonment issues can be sudden and intense attachment to another person. Instant attachment can be caused by abandonment issues, due to the fear of being alone and rejected. If you or someone else you know is often found to experience intense and instant attachment after meeting someone, or very soon after the end of another intense relationship, this could be a sign of abandonment issues.

Recognizing this as a sign of potential issues is one of the first steps to changing your pattern of behavior, or being able to name the problem so you can seek out help.

2. Fear of Unfaithfulness

Being concerned once or twice that your partner may become unfaithful is a routine concern, and nothing to be worried over. However, the fear of your partner cheating on you **becomes a problem when it is a constant presence in your thoughts**, and you are unable to rationalize the thought process, especially if your partner has never been known to be unfaithful.

If you are in a constant state of paranoia over your partner's activities, it can be a sign of unhealthy thought processes. Communicating openly with your partner can help alleviate these fears and help you learn to trust them. Being able to recognize this in others will also help you be able to steer them towards the kind of healing help that they need.

3. Staying in Unhealthy Relationships

If you, or someone you know, refuses to leave their partners even when the relationship is bad, or unhealthy, it could be a huge indicator of abandonment issues. The **fear of being rejected and alone will drive someone to stay in a relationship that isn't making them happy**, because they often feel like it is better than being alone.

Staying in a dysfunctional relationship can intensify the abandonment issues. Sometimes, the relationship is just simply not working, rather than being a source of trauma. Either way, staying in a bad relationship can often intensify the feeling of abandonment and the issues once the relationship ends. Recognizing when you, or someone you know, has stayed in a relationship long past its expiration date can help you recognize unhealthy patterns.

4. Sabotaging Relationships

Despite being desperate to be needed and loved, people with abandonment issues can often be found sabotaging their relationships even when nothing is going wrong and relationship stress is low. They will often pick fights and make a big deal out of the few negative things in the relationship.

It is often a way of justifying their own feelings of abandonment, because if the relationship ends, it's proof to themselves that people will always leave them, even if they were the driving force of causing that person to leave in the first place.

If you experience this with someone that you have a relationship with, a way to help them can be to have them question whether or not the things they are upset about are rational, and help them understand where their desire to pick fights is really coming from. If you find yourself on the other end, being the one who is picking fights when there is nothing to fight out, **you can practice asking yourself whether or not you are being self-sabotaging.**

5. Commitment Issues

Someone who is a serial dater can possibly have commitment issues, which is a sign of a greater abandonment issue. The honeymoon phase of a new relationship is appealing to someone like this, and they will often leave a relationship or sabotage it before the newness can wear off, or before the other person can, in their mind, get bored of them. **People with abandonment issues often invent reasons to end the relationship, once more justifying their reasons with circular, self-sabotaging thought processes.**

Recognizing the kind of behavior that coincides with abandonment issues is the first big step to being able to break out of that unhealthy behavior. If you recognize these in yourself, or in someone you know, then you will be better able to give them the emotional support that they need, as well as help them find help and support towards healing from whatever has caused the abandonment issues in the first place.

Understanding the Pain of Abandonment

Living with repeated abandonment experiences creates toxic shame.

When children are raised with chronic loss, without the psychological or physical protection they need and certainly deserve, it is most natural for them to internalize incredible [fear](#). Not receiving the necessary psychological or physical protection equals abandonment. And, living with repeated abandonment experiences creates toxic [shame](#). Shame arises from the painful message implied in abandonment: "*You are not important. You are not of value.*" This is the pain from which people need to heal.

For some children abandonment is primarily physical. Physical abandonment occurs when the physical conditions necessary for thriving have been replaced by:

- ◆ lack of appropriate supervision
- ◆ inadequate provision of [nutrition](#) and meals
- ◆ inadequate clothing, housing, heat, or shelter
- ◆ physical and/or sexual abuse

Children are totally dependent on caretakers to provide safety in their [environment](#). When they do not, they grow up believing that the world is an unsafe place, that people are not to be trusted, and that they do not deserve positive [attention](#) and adequate care.

Emotional abandonment occurs when [parents](#) do not provide the emotional conditions and the emotional environment necessary for healthy development. I like to define emotional abandonment as "*occurring when a child has to hide a part of who he or she is in order to be accepted, or to not be rejected.*"

Having to hide a part of yourself means:

- ◆ it is not okay to make a mistake.

- ◆ it is not okay to show feelings, being told the way you feel is not true. "*You have nothing to cry about and if you don't stop crying I will really give you something to cry about.*" "*That really didn't hurt.*" "*You have nothing to be angry about.*"
- ◆ it is not okay to have needs. Everyone else's needs appear to be more important than yours.
- ◆ it is not okay to have successes. Accomplishments are not acknowledged, are many times discounted.

Other acts of abandonment occur when:

- ◆ Children cannot live up to the expectations of their parents. These expectations are often unrealistic and not age-appropriate.
- ◆ Children are held responsible for other people's behavior. They may be consistently blamed for the actions and feelings of their parents.
- ◆ Disapproval toward children is aimed at their entire beings or [identity](#) rather than a particular behavior, such as telling a child he is worthless when he does not do his homework or she is never going to be a good athlete because she missed the final catch of the game.

Many times abandonment issues are fused with distorted, confused, or undefined boundaries such as:

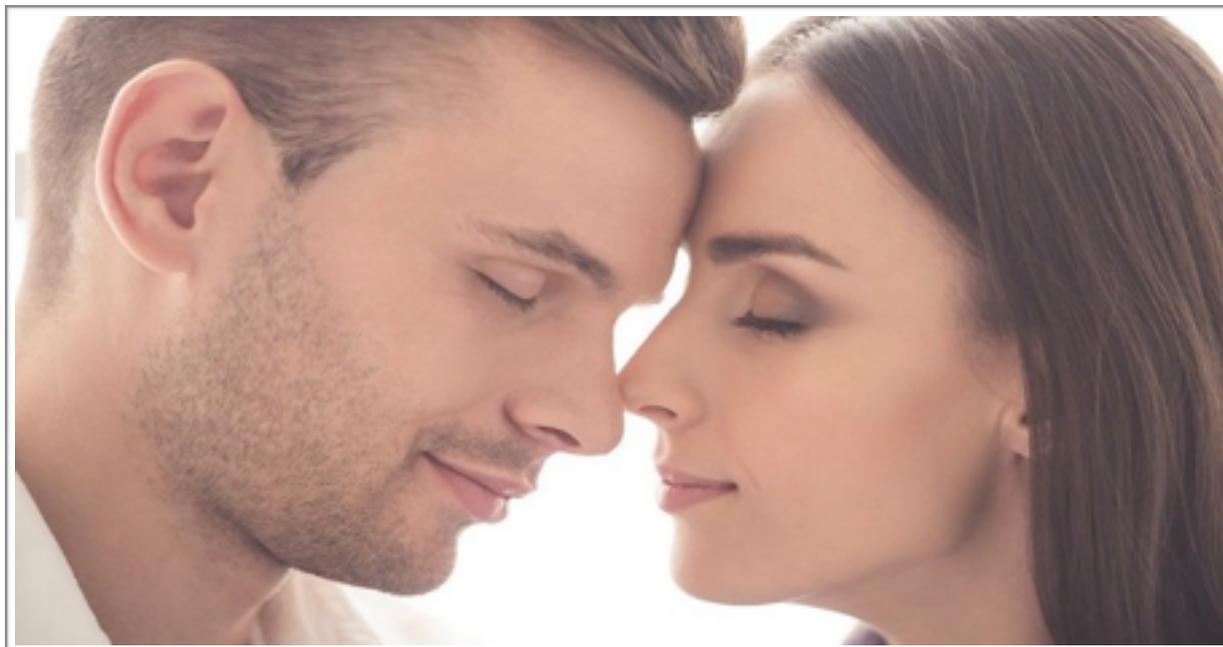
- ◆ When parents do not view children as separate beings with distinct boundaries
- ◆ When parents expect children to be extensions of themselves
- ◆ When parents are not willing to take responsibility for their feelings, thoughts, and behaviors, but expect children to take responsibility for them
- ◆ When parents' [self-esteem](#) is derived through their child's behavior
- ◆ When children are treated as peers with no parent/child distinction

Abandonment plus distorted boundaries, at a time when children are developing their sense of worth, is the foundation for the [belief](#) in their own inadequacy and the central cause of their shame.

Abandonment experiences and boundary violations are in no way indictments of a child's innate goodness and value. Instead, they reveal the flawed thinking, false beliefs, and impaired behaviors of those who hurt them. Still, the wounds are struck deep in their young hearts and minds, and the very real pain can still be felt today. The causes of emotional injury need to be understood and accepted so they can heal. Until that occurs, the pain will stay with them, becoming a driving force in their adult lives.

Things to remember when dating someone with Abandonment Issues

By [Catherine Winter](#), Last updated on 6th February 2019 [Relationships](#)



If you're dating someone who repeatedly pulls away, or freaks out with jealousy because you might be interested in someone else, or has jokingly said on numerous occasions that they're just waiting for you to leave them for somebody "*better*," then you're likely dealing with a person who has some serious abandonment issues.

These issues are usually caused in childhood, either from being rejected by a parent or caregiver, or even from losing someone close to them through illness or injury.

Some people develop abandonment issues after being betrayed or ghosted by a partner they cared about deeply, and experiences like these can cause some pretty deep wounds that can take a long time to heal.

That doesn't mean that a person with these issues isn't worthy of love: it just means that it takes a bit of extra care to break through their protective shield and show them that you truly care about them, and plan to stick around in their life.

Be Patient with them and Communicate with them

This is a person whose personal walls would put the Bastille to shame. They don't trust easily, and their guard will go up at the first hint that they might get hurt. Be prepared for this so it doesn't catch you off guard or offend you when it happens.

They usually bolt at the slightest whisper of uncertainty in a relationship, especially if they think that there are things going on that they're not aware of, so it's incredibly important to cultivate open communication.

Even if said communication is awkward or difficult, it'll go a long way to making them realize that they can indeed trust you, and that's worth both time and effort.

Realize that it's NOT about you

If they're being withdrawn or overly jealous, please understand that you haven't done anything to cause this behavior: they're likely seeing some kind of parallel between a current situation and something they experienced years ago, and they're reacting to the emotions being drummed up by that, rather than what's happening now.

They might freak out and behave really poorly, leaving you sitting there dazed, wondering what the hell you might have done to have elicited such a reaction, when in reality it's just them remembering what it was like to be hurt beyond measure and doing everything in their power to avoid hurting that much again.

Again, if you can, please be patient with them. Encourage them to talk to you about what they're feeling once they've calmed down. After they've had their panic attack and possible outburst, they'll likely feel very ashamed of their behavior. If you work together, they can grow from the experience, and your support and reassurance may in fact stop that kind of thing from happening too often again.

Always be Honest about your Feelings

Please don't feel that you have to walk on eggshells or swallow your own emotions in an attempt to avoid setting them off. They might seem very fragile and delicate at times, but that's mostly because they overthink everything and are constantly on high alert, trying to read "*between the lines*" to see if you're going to hurt them or leave them outright.

If this behavior is upsetting or frustrating to you, talk to them about it instead of bottling it up and either remaining silent, or trying to convince them that nothing is wrong. By doing that, they'll become even more insecure because they'll feel that you're hiding things from them, and that you're halfway out the door, walking away.

Don't hesitate to over-communicate, seriously. These people would prefer that you tell them about the minutiae going on in your life so they feel like they're an integral part thereof. The more you can do to reassure them that they're important, the better. They need that, and when they feel safe and secure in the relationship, they'll be able to open up to you and be the partner you need in turn.

Is a fear of abandonment wreaking havoc in your relationships?

Don't worry; you're not alone. Millions of people just like you are struggling with this self-sabotaging belief and its resulting behaviors.

In this article, we'll explore some of the main signs of abandonment issues to help you identify which apply to you. The first step to changing any belief is to identify it; only then can you begin to seek help and do the necessary work to shift your mindset to a more desirable position.

We'll also explore how these issues can potentially contribute to a relationship not working out (which then drives the fear of abandonment you feel).

So, let's now turn our attention to the red flags you can use to identify issues surrounding abandonment in yourself or others.

1. You Attach Too Quickly

Things progress at lightning speed as soon as you meet someone, and you go from first date to *"in a relationship"* in the blink of an eye.

You believe that if you don't do this, you risk them dating someone else they like more. You don't want them to be *"the one that got away."*

The problem with this approach to relationships is that you don't give yourself the time and mental space needed to really assess how things are going and whether this person is someone you could truly spend the rest of your life with.

After all, isn't that what we're all looking for?

2. You Move On Too Quickly

If and when one relationship ends, you barely give yourself time to breathe (and grieve) before you're on to the next one.

Instead of dealing with the emotional fallout of the breakup, you seek to distract yourself from the hurt and pain by jumping head first into something new and exciting.

You're one of those people who *"have to"* be in a relationship because you're a mess when single.

Unfortunately, you're not allowing yourself time to process your breakup, to grieve the end of your last relationship, or heal the wounds that it may have caused.

3. You're A Partner Pleaser

You aim to please people at every opportunity and this extends into your relationships. The result is weak personal boundaries and a willingness to go along with things just because they are what your partner wants.

You put your wellbeing second to theirs, fearing they will look elsewhere if you don't fulfil their desires.

This will eventually lead to conflict when you begin to resent having to do all these things. And this can cause you to jump ship, believing that things aren't ever going to work out for the two of you.

Or, alternatively...

4. You Stay In / Settle For Unhealthy Relationships

Rather than being alone, you are willing to remain in a situation that you know deep down isn't good for you.

Perhaps you realize that the match isn't as good as you first thought, or your partner lies, cheats, or is abusive in some way – somehow these things aren't always enough for you to call it quits.

5. You Look For Flaws In Every Partner

Sometimes it's not the case that the match isn't a good one; it's that you don't allow it to be.

Your abandonment issues mean you focus on the flaws in your partner and ignore all their positive attributes.

This way, when things finally go south, you can tell yourself they weren't right for you anyway. You seek a perfection that doesn't exist anywhere other than in your head.

What you probably don't realize is that this very approach is likely to contribute to the breakdown in your relationship.

6. You're Reluctant To Fully Invest In A Relationship

Sure you might be quick to take a relationship from zero to sixty, but this doesn't mean you are ready to invest in the more serious things.

In fact, you are often resistant to anything that signifies genuine commitment: meeting their family, moving in together, even discussing a “future” together.

By doing so, you send a signal to your partner that you don't view the relationship as serious or long term. This may spell the beginning of the end of things between you.

7. You Avoid Emotional Intimacy

Perhaps it's no surprise that you feel unable to invest in a relationship when you shun any attempts your partner makes at emotional intimacy.

To let your guard down would be to show vulnerability, and you're simply not prepared to risk the hurt this may cause.

So you keep your guard up and compensate in other ways, such as through physical intimacy and the partner pleasing mentioned above.

The problem is that, while you may be happy to live without these things, your partner probably won't be. And if they aren't, they may question your future together.

8. You Feel Unworthy Of Love

The biggest thing that holds you back from being emotionally intimate with somebody is your own deep-seated sense of unworthiness.

You just can't see how anybody could possibly love you, so you never let anyone say those three special words to you. If they should ever cross a partner's lips, your response will be a quick and decisive "*you don't love me*" and that will be that.

9. You're More Than A Little Insecure

In your mind, there is no way that anybody could truly love you because you struggle to love yourself. Your self-esteem has gone AWOL, you doubt every decision you make, you suffer from anxiety about most things (not just your relationships), and this leads to...

10. You're Jealous Of Every Friend/Colleague/Acquaintance

It doesn't matter that every other relationship your partner has is purely platonic, in your head, there's a strong chance they are being unfaithful.

Much of your jealousy will focus on members of the opposite sex, but you are also known to get jealous when they spend time with friends of the same sex and of the enjoyment they get from it.

Assuming they really are innocent, this sort of jealous behavior will put a strain on your relationship, potentially causing arguments and ill-feelings.

11. You Struggle To Trust

Because your mind conjures up images of infidelity, you find it difficult to fully trust a partner. Trust is one of those things that makes you vulnerable and we've already discussed how you hate to let your guard down.

You tell yourself that it's better to assume the worst and be proven wrong than the other way around. That's the pessimist in your talking.

Unfortunately, your partner wants to feel trusted. I'm sure you'd agree, it's not nice to feel as though someone you love doesn't believe you.

12. You Get Separation Blues

You like to be with and around your partner as much as possible because any time spent apart is like torture.

To be separated for a few hours, a day, or even a number of days has the effect of resurfacing your abandonment issues and sending you into a downward spiral of doubt and despair.

Rather than "*out of sight, out of mind*," it's quite the opposite, and all you can do is ruminate about where they are, who they are with, and what they are doing.

This can lead to overbearing behavior where you feel compelled to message or phone your partner at least once an hour to "*check up*" on them.

13. You Visualize Your Partner Leaving You

Time apart provides the perfect mental environment for the fear of abandonment to thrive.

Your thoughts enter a dark and dangerous loop in which you literally imagine your partner ending things with you and the trauma and turmoil this will result in.

Your body reacts to these thoughts as if they were actually true and you suffer bouts of extreme anxiety and depression.

14. You Overanalyze Things

Your mind isn't one to let anything slip by unnoticed; you see and hear everything and then set to work trying to figure out the hidden meaning in it all.

There's no such thing as a small comment or an insignificant act when you're around because you're capable of taking every little thing and assigning far more weight to it than it probably deserves.

This, again, can be a source of conflict and your partner may feel the need to walk on eggshells around you for fear of upsetting you.

15. You're Hypersensitive To Criticism

A primary reason you are so keen to analyze every small detail about what your partner says or does is because you are on the constant lookout for criticism.

Your self-worth is so low that you convince yourself that your partner is somehow unhappy with you. And should direct criticism ever actually be forthcoming, your mind goes into a frenzy of defensive maneuvers and offensive counter-strikes.

You just can't deal with it in the way most emotionally mature people would.

16. You Have Repressed Anger

Though not always the case, there is a good chance that you hold some anger deep inside you which occasionally bubbles to the surface.

Perhaps you have outbursts over seemingly insignificant things, or you find yourself resenting your partner for no obvious reason. Either way, the source of these feelings is difficult to pinpoint.

Clearly when anger enters any relationship, it is going to put that relationship under increased strain.

It's fuel to add to the fire caused by any number of the points in this article.

17. You're Overly Controlling

You try to control your insecurities, but doing so requires you to control everything else, too.

Your abandonment issues likely stem from past experiences where you had no control over the outcome, and so you seek to micromanage your life and your relationship to try and avoid similar situations and the same outcome.

You fear the unpredictability of just letting go and sailing with the wind.

This can make your partner feel diminished as an individual because they have no freedom to make choices of their own.

18. You Pick Unavailable Partners

To help you avoid any situation that may result in emotional intimacy and require you to invest fully in a relationship, you pick partners who are either currently unavailable or wholly incompatible with you.

You may pick someone who you know has been unfaithful in the past, someone whose lifestyle doesn't match yours, someone who is moving away soon, or even someone who is already in another relationship.

You know nothing serious will ever come of it, but that's actually a relief to you.

19. You Sabotage Relationships At Every Opportunity

Many of the things we have already spoken about are examples of self-sabotage. You fear abandonment and avoid ever reaching a point where your heart can be broken the way it might have been in the past.

You push your partner away, you grind them down with snarky comments, you act in ways that aren't conducive to a loving relationship... and you do it on autopilot. It's an unconscious defense mechanism designed to prevent emotional pain.

20. You Blame Yourself For Every Breakup

If you have genuine abandonment issues, chances are you aren't very good at maintaining long term relationships (for the reasons described in this article).

And with every one that comes to an end, you can't help but shoulder all of the responsibility and blame. You tell yourself you were never good enough for them – not physically, not intellectually, not emotionally – and that it's your fault things didn't work out. So, do you really have abandonment issues? Here's a quick test: for each of the signs above, score yourself from 0-2 where 0 means it doesn't apply to you, 1 means it is kind of true, and 2 means it is very accurate. Scores of 20 or more signify a likely underlying issue while anything over 30 suggests that you have a strong aversion to abandonment of any kind.