

11 Key Signs You Are in an Emotionally Unhealthy Relationship

People who generally externalize their feelings share a certain set of characteristics. This cluster of characteristics, seen here and there without identification, could appear random or even to be an aspect of these people's personalities. However, when you see this cluster identifiably together, you are most likely dealing with or are in a relationship with an externalizer.

Not Responsible

An externalizer somehow has feelings happen to them. They do not have a clue why they feel the way they do almost all of the time. I think we all experience this from time to time; however, the externalizer lives with regular cycles of emotions bubbling up, suppressing them and sometimes exploding with them.

When you ask externalizers why they are acting a certain way, they often respond by telling you they do not know. If you ask if they had a choice regarding their feelings or behavior, they often become confused or defensive. At their core, they do not believe they are responsible for their feelings. This childlike emotional development is challenging to live with since they cannot predict an emotion or know how expansive it is going to get.

Others Make Them Feel

Since the method of control is believed to be outside of the externalizer, others make this person feel whatever they are feeling. This might be other people specifically or generally, and might be due to circumstances or even abstract groups of

people.

The externalizer believes you make them feel angry, insecure or whatever emotion they are experiencing. So what you do outside the externalized emotional person causes their feelings. This dynamic can also work with positive emotions and affect their thought, too. The externalizer can feel appreciated or loved based upon what another person does or says to them.

Blame

If others make you feel whatever you are feeling, it is perfectly logical to blame them for your feelings. The externalized person feels he or she gets to blame others or blame circumstances.

An externalized person is angry because you made him angry. He is afraid because you made him afraid. Sadly enough, the externalizer will almost always blame others for his less than positive feelings, but may not as often attribute his positive feelings to others.

Victim

When you live in a world where others control how you feel and act, you not only get to blame them, you get to play the role of victim. Since you are constantly being jerked around by others' control of your emotions, you feel you are a victim—a victim of your spouse, your family, and your friends.

Critical

Criticism is commonly found in those whose method of emotional control is mostly external. The externalized person tends to focus on weaknesses or unfavorable attributes of a person or group.

This behavior may help the externalizer justify his inappropriate feelings of rage, hurt, prejudice and

unforgiveness toward a person or group of people. The externalized emotional person is quick to see what is wrong with others and tends to see people more in a static way (like a photograph) than as a process (like a movie). Their judgments tend to be quick and their emotional responses to those of whom they are critical are, of course, the other person's fault.

Easily Offended

The tendency to be easily offended can show up in any environment: home, work, school or elsewhere. This tendency can show up in any and all relationships. If you happen to be in a relationship with an externalized emotional person, relax. You are in no way responsible for his feelings or how he chooses to express them. His reaction is not personal, and there is hope if he chooses to become emotionally fit.

Primitive Responses

I have spent many years around teenagers and noticed that due to their hormones and emotions, they tend to display primitive emotional responses. Their intensity is high. They might yell, slam a door, get loud or curse. They might be abrupt, rude or cruel. Usually, after a little while, they acknowledge their extreme responses and apologize. I find that externalized emotional people display similarly primitive and intense emotional expressions on a fairly regular basis. This is due to a lack of skill and control of emotions (all of which can greatly improve as the process of emotional fitness is applied).

Anger/Sadness

Anger is a huge catchall for any strong emotion. Strong emotions like confusion, frustration and misunderstanding get confused and communicated as anger. The emotionally externalized person can so overuse anger that people may describe him or her as an angry person. I choose to think of

these people as less skilled or emotionally blocked.

Sadness can also be a catchall for stronger feelings that have yet to be identified or mastered in any significant manner. If the externalized person feels unvalued, discounted, alone, lonely they tend to express the emotion as sadness. Sometimes this externalized person cannot tell you why she feels sad; she just does. As in the case of anger, she can become more emotionally fit, needing sadness less and less.

Gullible

A simple comment about how smart, attractive, hardworking, creative, well-dressed or good a person or parent he is can make an externalized person turn off all reason. *They like me*, he thinks and feels. Once an externally emotional person feels liked, loved, appreciated, wanted, noticed or seen by another person, he will then like and want to be around that person.

This makes externally emotional people very susceptible to those who want to manipulate or use them. If a person can make him feel very positive, he becomes gullible or more easily influenced.

The externally motivated person can easily be taken for a positive ride and find himself not only making purchases, but returning to the same store for that positive feeling. This same dynamic can apply to relationships as well. Since others make him feel a certain way, he can even return to a bad, illicit or financially, emotionally, inequitable relationship to feel a certain way.

Prone to Medicate

The soul of the externalized emotional person has something to do with the pain in which they find themselves. This pain often starts off small, as feeling different and separate, but can get deeper as the person moves toward feeling rejected, unwanted, unworthy or unacceptable.

Depending on access to medicines, she can choose food, alcohol, drugs, codependency, caffeine, sugar, exercise and spending or making money. The list goes on and on. Herein is a significant future problem for the soul that is externalized emotionally. The pain remains constant and, over time, more intense unless the person becomes more emotionally fit. Without intervention that leads to emotional fitness, the medicine becomes used more and more until it becomes a problem as well. I know many people on their way to emotional fitness who have had to address the roadblock of addiction.

Passive/Aggressive

The last characteristic of the externalized emotional person is a relationship style I have seen repeatedly in two extreme relationship styles. The first style is passive. In this style, the individual thinks less of himself and overvalues others. This person usually has weak boundaries and takes more dysfunction from others than he should. Generally, this dynamic indicates a lack of love, honor and respect toward themselves. This person will easily be controlled by what someone else thinks or supposedly thinks of him.

Having a new paradigm can help you see yourself and others from a different perspective. You shouldn't necessarily tell them what you're learning; the information is largely for your use. As you become more emotionally fit, you will naturally tend to attract more emotionally fit people into your life.

Doug Weiss, Ph.D., is a nationally known author, speaker and licensed psychologist. He is the executive director of Heart to Heart Counseling Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and the author of several books including Emotional Fitness. You may contact

Dr. Weiss via his website, or on his Facebook or by phone at 719-278-3708 or through email at heart2heart@.