



TRAUMA BONDING

Trauma bonding is a form of Stockholm Syndrome. When abusers use techniques such as gaslighting, emotional abuse, criticism, or physical violence, victims use many methods as a survival mechanism. These include:

- Shows ongoing symptoms of trauma or PTSD
- Very grateful for small acts of kindness
- Denies that the abuser is threatening or being violent
- Rationalises violence
- Denies anger toward the abuser
- Believes one has some control over abuser
- Blames self
- Hyper-vigilant to abuser's needs
- Seeks to keep the abuser happy at a cost to oneself
- Tries to get inside pimps/traffickers/customers' heads
- Experiences a sense of self through the abuser's frame of reference, not one's own
- Interprets outside help as interference
- Sees the abuser as a protector
- Considers the abuser to be a victim
- Thankful that the abuser has not killed them

It worth noting that this change of perception and loss of self is a conditioned response driven by a mixture of fear and a strong desire to protect themselves—and in some cases, children—from the abuser.

Clients who are experiencing trauma bonding need a compassionate and patient therapist who will help them understand the reality of their situation as recovery from abuse can be a slow and difficult process.

Researchers Walby and Allen point out:

- On average, victims experience 50 incidents of abuse before getting competent help.
- 68% of high-risk victims try to leave in the year before getting practical help, on average 2 or 3 times each.

The organisation [Safelives.org](http://www.safelives.org) points out that on average:

- High-risk victims live with domestic abuse for 2.3 years and medium-risk victims for 3 years before getting help.

References

Walby, S. and Allen, J. (2004), *Domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking: Findings from the British Crime Survey*. London: Home Office.

Safelives.org.uk. (2019). *How long do people live with domestic abuse, and when do they get help to stop it?* | *Safelives*. [online] Available at: <http://www.safelives.org.uk/policy-evidence/about-domestic-abuse/how-long-do-people-live-domestic-abuse-and-when-do-they-get> [Accessed 16 Oct. 2019].