

GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN ROMANCE FRAUD

A Toolkit for Understanding the
Language

Prevent. Support. Empower.



INTRODUCTION WE HEAR YOU



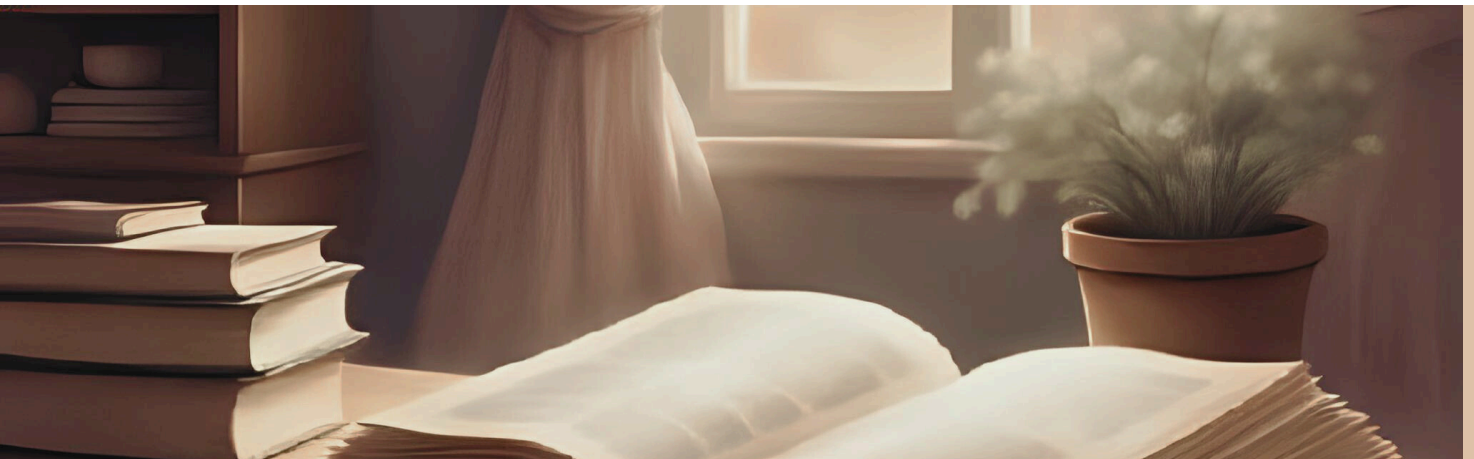
A friendly guide to help you and those supporting you, understand the language of emotional and psychological manipulation.

These terms are often used in discussions about romance fraud, coercive control, and abusive relationships.

Understanding them gives us the tools to name what happened and take back control of the narrative.

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GROOMING

What it is: Grooming is a calculated process where a person gradually builds trust, emotional connection, and dependency in order to manipulate or exploit someone.

How it looks:

- They listen closely to your fears, past pain, hopes, and values.
- They mirror your emotions and needs to appear like the perfect match.
- They give targeted affection and validation that feels healing.

Why it works: Grooming doesn't feel like abuse, it feels like understanding. It disarms suspicion and creates emotional reliance. That's why it's so powerful.

What to remember: Grooming is not a victim's failure to spot danger. It's an abuser's success in mimicking care to get close enough to harm.

LOVE BOMBING

What it is: Love bombing is when someone showers you with excessive attention, affection, praise, or gifts early in a relationship to quickly gain your trust and dependence.

How it looks:

- Messages from morning to night.
- Promises of a future together within days.
- "No one has ever made me feel like this" declarations.
- Unexpected gifts, poems, or public displays of love.

Why it works: Love bombing triggers powerful emotional and chemical responses; dopamine, oxytocin, and adrenaline. It makes you feel euphoric, special, chosen. It creates emotional addiction before trust is earned.

What to remember: Real love grows slowly and makes space for both joy and boundaries. Love bombing is about control disguised as devotion.

TRAUMA BONDING

Trauma bonding is an intense emotional attachment formed through cycles of affection and abuse, often leaving the victim feeling emotionally addicted to the manipulator.

There are three common forms:

- **Fear-Based Trauma Bonding:** The abuser disappears or withdraws affection after love bombing, causing panic and confusion. When the victim changes behaviour to "fix" things, affection is returned as a reward, reinforcing compliance through fear and relief.
- **Shared Trauma Bonding:** The abuser claims a similar past experience (e.g., loss, abuse, war, widowhood) to create an emotional connection and appear uniquely understanding. This shared vulnerability creates fast-tracked intimacy and trust.
- **Manufactured Trauma Bonding:** The abuser deliberately creates or exaggerates crises (e.g., fake emergencies, arrests, family tragedies) to destabilise the victim emotionally or extract money, deepening dependency and sympathy.

These types often overlap and intensify over time, making it harder to recognise the manipulation and harder still to leave. . It's what makes leaving so hard.



GAS LIGHTING

What it is: Gaslighting is psychological manipulation where someone causes you to question your own memory, perception, or reality.

How it looks:

- They deny saying things you remember clearly.
- They accuse you of being too sensitive or imagining things.
- They twist facts to make you feel unstable or guilty.

Why it works: It causes you to doubt yourself so much that you become dependent on their version of truth. Over time, you may stop trusting your gut or even your own mind.

What to remember: If you're constantly second-guessing yourself in a relationship, it may not be overthinking, it may be gaslighting.

COERCIVE CONTROL

Coercive control is a pattern of behaviours used to dominate a partner through emotional, financial, or social manipulation. It includes:

- Isolating from support networks
- Monitoring communication or movement
- Making threats (emotional, financial, reputational)
- Enforcing rules and punishing disobedience

It doesn't always include physical abuse, but it causes psychological harm and erodes a person's freedom over time. A pattern of threats, intimidation, isolation, and manipulation used to dominate a partner emotionally, socially, or financially.

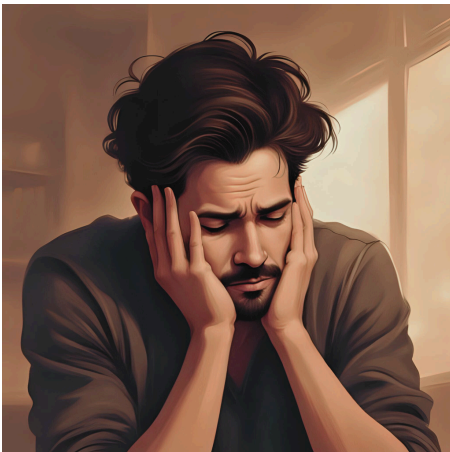
COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

Cognitive dissonance is the mental conflict we feel when our reality doesn't match our beliefs or emotions. In abusive relationships, this might sound like:

- "They love me, they wouldn't do this on purpose."
- "They're under stress, that's why they acted that way."
- "If I just try harder, it will go back to how it was."

Victims often rationalise or minimise *red flags* to reduce the psychological tension. This isn't denial, it's survival.

The inner conflict caused when your emotional experience doesn't match the facts, often resolved by rationalising abusive behaviour to protect the relationship.



If any of these sound familiar, know this: the tactics were intentional. Your response was human. And there is no shame in being manipulated, only courage in seeing it now.

LET'S WORK TOGETHER

Working together with LoveSaid offers valuable opportunities for collaboration with a victim-centred organisation that prioritises empathy, safety, and recovery. By sharing best practices, insights, and resources, organisations can not only improve outcomes for victims of romance fraud but also enhance their own support services and credibility. Partnership with LoveSaid ensures that interventions are trauma-informed and ethically grounded, fostering trust and consistency across the sector. Ultimately, this kind of collaboration strengthens our collective impact in protecting and empowering those affected by online fraud.

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