

THE BIOSOCIAL THEORY OF DIALECTICAL BEHAVIOR THERAPY

(OR WHY I HAVE TROUBLE WITH EMOTIONS)

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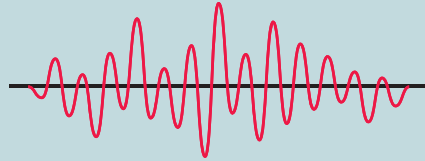
*Adapted from Marsha M. Linehan, 2010

BIOLOGY

Some people are born more **emotionally vulnerable** than others.



They have more intense emotions.



They experience emotions more frequently.



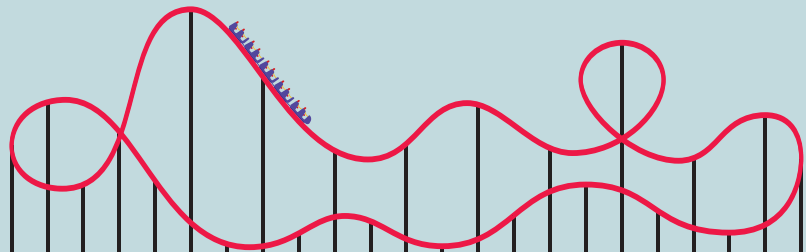
Their intense emotions last longer.

INTENSITY + **FREQUENCY** + **DURATION**

=

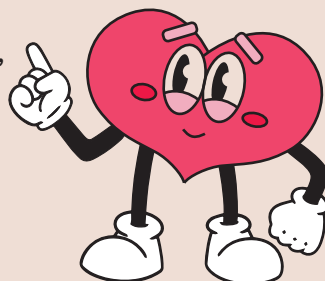
EMOTIONAL VULNERABILITY

EMOTIONAL VULNERABILITY CAN FEEL LIKE AN EMOTIONAL ROLLER COASTER



THE GOOD NEWS

The upside is, you may be more sensitive to subtle emotions in your environment so that you can be more responsive to others. You may also feel *love*, *connection*, *passion*, and *joy* more strongly.



THE NOT-SO GOOD NEWS

The downside is, you may feel **distressing emotions** more strongly. People are often uncomfortable around strong emotions. They may try to get you to stop having emotions for their own comfort.



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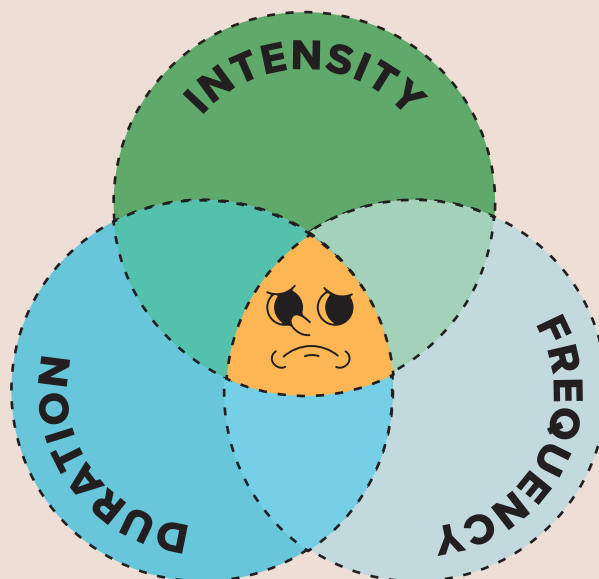
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ENVIRONMENT

An invalidating environment can be **PAINFUL** for someone emotionally vulnerable.

People in your life may be uncomfortable with emotions that are:

1. Intense
2. Frequent
3. Long-lasting



They may (unknowingly) **invalidate** you by asking you to stop having emotional reactions. They may say that your emotional reactions are:

WEIRD
WRONG
CRAZY



You may hear things like:

Don't be such a baby! Quit your complaining.

Why can't you just get over it?!

What's wrong with you?!
Stop being so dramatic. Calm down!

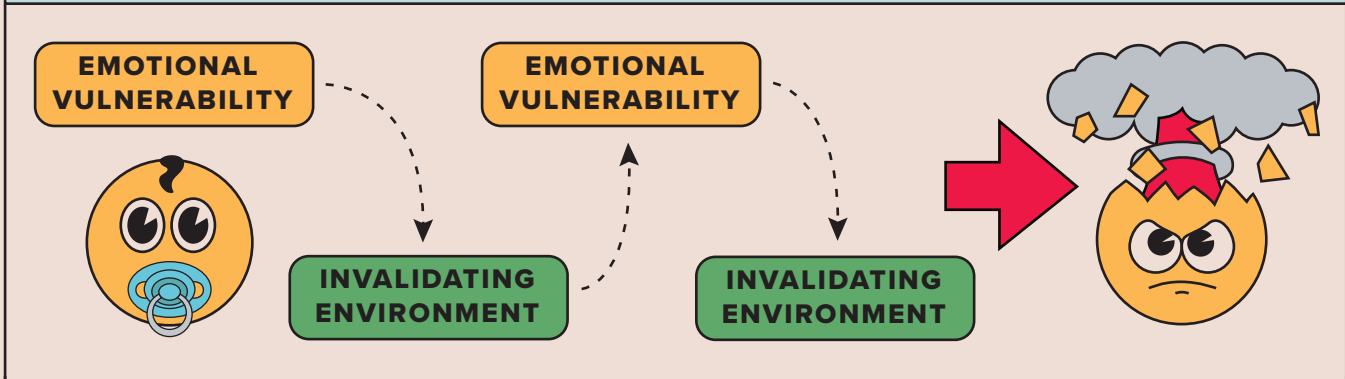
Other people don't act so emotional.


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TRANSACTION





Everyone experiences invalidation. Big problems arise when there is repeated conflict between emotional vulnerability and the environment, and each affects the other over time. This can be very hard when you're young and just learning about emotions.



 The transaction between a person with emotional vulnerability and an invalidating environment can look like this:

YOU	ENVIRONMENT
 I'm feeling sick.	You're fine. Stop overreacting. 
 Um, I'm feeling really sick.	Stop being such a baby. You're fine. 

OVER TIME, THE TRANSACTION MAY LOOK LIKE EITHER:

 I guess I'm not sick. (Why am I such a cry-baby?!)	OR	Good job! 
 HELP! I'm dying. Bring me to the hospital!		Oh, no!! Let me get the car! 

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CONSEQUENCES

You may start to believe that *you're not sick at all* OR that *you're dying*. You may not be able to find any middle ground.

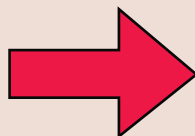
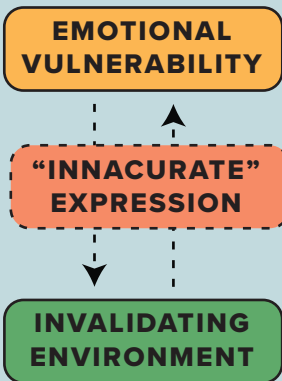
You may learn to mask or hide what you're really thinking or feeling.

Over time, intense emotions and "innacurate" expression make people in your environment more likely to invalidate you, because they don't understand or can't tolerate your emotions.

Environmental invalidation makes you more likely to invalidate yourself and/or overstate the situation to get help.

This in turn makes the environment *even* more likely to invalidate you.

TRANSACTION



LONG TERM CONSEQUENCES

You may feel shame and/or fear when you experience intense emotions.

You may believe you should avoid intense emotions entirely.

You may feel a different emotion like anger to block the first distressing emotion.

You may distrust your own reactions, because you're told they're crazy or inappropriate.

You may rely on others to help you understand how you feel, so that being alone can feel very scary.

You may become desperate and do **ANYTHING** to get rid of an emotion