



# *The* **Liberated** *Woman*

A QUIET GUIDE TO RECOGNISING CONTROL

## Love Shouldn't Feel Like This

Notice patterns. Trust what you are seeing. Move at your own pace.

# Begin with what feels familiar

If you have been feeling uneasy, second-guessing yourself or wondering whether you are overreacting, this guide offers language for experiences that can be hard to name.

## NO LABELS OR DEADLINES

You do not need to prove anything with a checklist. You can notice a pattern, ask questions and consider support without deciding what to call the relationship or what to do next.

## How to use these pages

Read slowly. Mark anything that resonates, or simply notice your reaction. The reflection space is for you; leave it blank if writing would not feel safe.

## Privacy first

A downloaded file can appear in your device history or cloud storage. If someone may monitor your device, consider reading on a safer one and use a contact method only you can access.

# Space and self-trust

These are examples of controlling patterns, not a score. A single experience can matter, and context matters too.

## Your world feels smaller

- ☐ You see friends or family less, even though you miss them.
- ☐ Invitations feel complicated because you expect tension at home.

## You are walking on eggshells

- ☐ You change how you speak or act to avoid a reaction.
- ☐ You rehearse ordinary conversations before having them.

## Your reality is questioned

- ☐ You are told your memory is wrong or your feelings are too much.
- ☐ You apologise to keep the peace even when you have done nothing wrong.

WHAT STOOD OUT TO ME?

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# Unpredictable rules

Notice how your choices and your sense of ease are affected over time.

## The rules keep changing

- ☐ Something acceptable yesterday suddenly crosses a line today.
- ☐ You cannot predict the reaction, no matter how carefully you act.

## Kindness comes with conditions

- ☐ Affection or attention is given and taken away without warning.
- ☐ You feel relief when things are good, but it never seems to last.

## Every decision feels risky

- ☐ You second-guess small choices about what to wear, cook or say.
- ☐ Letting the other person decide feels safer, even when it costs you freedom.

A CHOICE I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE FREELY

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# Why it can be hard to see

Control may be gradual, mixed with affection, or framed as concern. It can leave you questioning your own judgement.

## Look at the pattern

Consider whether the behaviour restricts your independence, isolates you, makes you afraid of consequences, or leaves you constantly adapting to someone else's demands.

## After separation

Controlling behaviour can continue through money, communications or arrangements involving children. The form may change even if the underlying pattern remains.

### THE NUMBER OF MARKS IS NOT A MEASURE

There is no safe or unsafe score in this guide. What matters is what is happening, how it affects you, and what support would help you understand your options.

IF A FRIEND DESCRIBED THIS TO ME, I WOULD SAY...

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# You have choices

There is no required next step. Pick one that feels useful and safe for your circumstances.

- Notice whether a behaviour repeats or intensifies, without feeling obliged to document it.
- Speak with someone you trust who will listen without judgement or pressure.
- Ask a specialist service about safety and local options before sharing sensitive plans or information.
- If you are living overseas, ask a qualified local adviser about any residency, children or cross-border questions.

## AT YOUR OWN PACE

You can seek information whether you are staying, considering separation, leaving, or rebuilding. Your decisions belong to you.

## ONE QUESTION I WANT TO ASK

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# Where to reach out

If you are in the UAE, these contacts can help you explore immediate and specialist support.

## IMMEDIATE DANGER

Police: 999. Ambulance: 998. Use a safer phone or ask a trusted person to call if your own device is monitored.

## Dubai Foundation for Women and Children

DFWAC provides a free, 24-hour helpline for women and children across the UAE. Call 800111 to ask about urgent help, its services and referrals.

DFWAC helpline and services

## Other sources of support

Depending on your circumstances, your embassy or consulate, a healthcare professional, an employer assistance programme or a qualified local lawyer may help with different questions.

## LOCAL ADVICE MATTERS

Residency, children and legal arrangements may depend on your location and personal situation. This guide cannot replace emergency, legal or clinical support.

# Support without pressure

We support women experiencing abuse, coercive control and difficult separation while living away from their home country.

## Talk it through

If you would like a private conversation about what you are noticing, you can book a free TLW Private Clarity Call. This is a space to explore your questions, not an obligation to join a programme.

[Book a 20-minute Private Clarity Call](#)

## Explore more resources

Find guides and support at [theliberatedwoman.com](https://theliberatedwoman.com). Choose a safe device and contact route if privacy is a concern.

[Visit The Liberated Woman](#)

### SOURCES CHECKED SEPTEMBER 2026

UAE emergency numbers:

[u.ae/en/information-and-services/justice-safety-and-the-law/handling-emergencies](https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/justice-safety-and-the-law/handling-emergencies)

DFWAC helpline: [dfwac.ae/services/helpline](https://dfwac.ae/services/helpline)