

ON DISCIPLINE AND ABUSE

How to tell a covenant from harm, and what to do if it is harm

A companion to the Covenant Set — For Adults 18 and Over

THE LINE IS NOT FINE

People say there is a fine line between what these documents describe and abuse. From outside it can look that way. From inside it is one of the brightest lines there is, and this library exists in large part to draw it. Nothing in these pages condones assault, coercion, or the harming of any person who has not freely chosen it.

Two acts can look identical and be opposites, because what separates them is not the act. It is consent, negotiation, recorded limits, the power to stop it, and what happens afterwards. That is precisely why every practice here is written down, bounded, and signed. An abuser needs vagueness. A covenant cannot function without clarity.

WHAT A COVENANT LOOKS LIKE

It is agreed in advance, in writing, by two sober adults. Limits are recorded before anything happens. There is a halt word that stops everything, always, and its use is never punished. Either party may pause or withdraw at any time. Correction comes from authority and never from anger. Care afterwards is a duty rather than a favour. Both parties are bound by a standard — hers is written into Article Eight precisely so this is never one-sided. Nothing is hidden from the other. And the person being governed becomes freer, more confident, and more himself over time.

WHAT ABUSE LOOKS LIKE

It is imposed, assumed, or extracted by pressure. The rules change without warning or agreement. Saying stop is ignored, mocked, or punished. Leaving is threatened against, or made impossible. Correction arrives with temper, and often with drink. Afterwards there is silence, blame, or contempt. One party is above the rules entirely. There is secrecy from friends, family, and doctors. And the person subject to it becomes smaller, frightened, and isolated.

The clearest single test is the halt signal. Where a word does not stop things, there is no covenant present — whatever has been signed, and whatever either person calls it.

FOR THE ONE WHO RECOGNISES THE SECOND LIST

If you have read that description and found your own life in it, that is worth taking seriously, and it is not a failure of yours. Abuse is not made acceptable by having agreed to something once, by having enjoyed part of it, by having signed a document, or by being a man rather than a woman. Support exists in almost every country, it is free, and it is

confidential. Search for your national domestic abuse organisation, and if a device may be monitored, use a different one.

If you are in immediate danger, contact emergency services. In the United Kingdom that is 999, and if you cannot speak, press 55 when prompted.

A NOTE ON THE LAW

Consent does not settle every legal question. In the United Kingdom and in many other jurisdictions, agreement between adults is not a defence to charges arising from serious physical harm, and the law differs sharply from country to country. Nothing here is legal advice. Anyone practising what these documents describe should understand the law where they actually live.

WHY THIS PAGE EXISTS

Not to protect an author. A framework that cannot tell the difference between devotion and harm has no business describing either — and a couple who cannot say which side of that line they are on should stop until they can.

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