

# Lisa Merlo-Booth

## Working with BLATANT WOMEN

A Guide for Mental Health Professionals  
by Lisa Merlo-Booth

### Define “Blatant”

Blatant women are women who tend to be perfectionistic, highly reactive, righteously angry and controlling. They are on the love-dependent side of the equation and can be very difficult to work with. At the extreme, they can have borderline features. Some blatant women can be calmer, yet highly controlling.

### Key pieces to remember

1. Perfectionism is often a **core issue** with blatant women.
2. Blatant women want and need to feel heard. If they do not feel as though you “get” it, they often become more angry and self-righteous.
3. They are often right on about their complaints about their partner—so listen to them. They just have little insight into their own edges and behavior.
4. They have a difficult time taking in feedback (due, in part, to their perfectionism and need to be seen as having it all together) and can be **highly defensive**.
5. A very common combination is blatant women **married to passive-aggressive men**. Look for this combination in your couples.

### What **TO** do

1. Hear them, believe them and let them know they are heard.
2. Show her that you “get” what she’s saying by calling her partner on his issues—put yourself in her story
3. Interweave the following into your work with them:
  - a. **Normalize**: Let her know that we all have our edges and this is hers. She has to feel you pulling for her, not judging her or condemning her.
  - b. **Empower**: “When women get big, they play small. Their yelling leaves them ineffective and people write them off. I know you can be so much stronger and more effective”.
  - c. **Compassionately hold them accountable**: Almost always interweave accountability in with empathy and/or normalizing (i.e. “You’re right on that. He’s passive aggressive. But when you’re raging at him, he just looks at you and says to himself, ‘You think I’m bad? Look at you.’ Your rage gives him an excuse not to look at himself. Many women rage because they’re so damn frustrated that the man isn’t listening. The problem is, though, that it’s just not effective.”

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- d. *Leverage*: Leverage is about how she's hurting herself, how she plays small, how she insures she won't be heard by the way she speaks/threatens/yells and how her behavior keeps people at bay
  - e. *Empathy*: You have to "get" her pain and have empathy for her loneliness.
4. First goal is to get them to own their issue of control/anger/moderation and not defend or minimize it.
  5. Once they are on board and able to see their piece, much of your work is about moderation, boundaries and control (which is also about moderation).

## What **NOT** to do

1. Don't patronize her.
2. Don't take her on as you would a blatant man or *you will lose her*.
3. Don't use the marriage or her husband as leverage unless he is rock solid in his decision to leave her if she doesn't change (seldom are the men strong enough to take this stand).
4. Don't allow your fear of her leaving or getting angry result in you not giving her honest feedback...know that your fear is what he feels.
5. Don't go one-up on her. *Have compassion* for her struggle and constant internal pressure to be perfect and speak to her from that place.

**MODERATION:** The ongoing work is about moderation.

## Blatant women are immoderate in their:

1. *Reactions*: Educate them on their reactivity
2. *Need to control*: Teach them that their need to control is a misplaced attempt to reduce their anxiety.
3. *Degree of micro-managing*: Work with them to let go and to see there is more than one "right" way.
4. *Boundaries*: Help them to contain their reactivity and to protect themselves emotionally.

Working with blatant women can be one of the most difficult types of work you can do. It can also be some of the most rewarding. Stay calm and grounded with them and don't allow their anger to scare you into silence. Breathe...and speak your truth using a **Grounded Powerful Strength (GPS)**.

**GOOD LUCK!**

Warmly,

**Lisa Merlo-Booth**

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