

ELIZABETH MORGAN

# CO-PARENTING WITH A NARCISSIST



**Guiding You Through the Maze of  
Raising Kids with a Manipulative Ex:  
Strategies for Emotional Resilience, Legal Insights,  
and Safeguarding Your Children's Well-being**

# CO-PARENTING WITH A NARCISSIST

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Practical guide for separated parents: Coping  
with manipulation, protecting your children, and  
regaining your serenity

Elizabeth Morgan

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# Your Additional Content Is Waiting for You!

Here's what you'll find inside the bonus:

- The **AUDIOBOOK** of the book.
- The **CHECKLIST** to find out if you are a narcissist or dealing with one.
- The **ACTION PLAN** to help you navigate the complicated process of divorcing a narcissistic partner.
- **QUIZ 1** Find out if **YOU** have narcissistic traits.
- **QUIZ 2** Find out if **YOUR PARTNER** has narcissistic traits.
- A **FULL-COLOR PDF** version of the book.
- A **PREVIEW** of our publications on Narcissism.
- A **Q&A** with the author.



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# Dedication

I'm Dr. Elizabeth Morgan, and during my career as a psychologist and social worker, I've had the opportunity to meet many brave families who have struggled with the hardships of difficult relationships and narcissistic partners.

I've heard their stories, grieved and rejoiced with them, and witnessed their amazing rebirths.

This book is dedicated to each of them and to all people who are trying to recover from the despair of divorce from a narcissist.

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# Warnings

**I**t is important to establish a focus within these pages. For the purpose of simplicity, I will primarily focus on female victims of narcissistic ex-husbands or ex-boyfriends, while I do not exclude male victims.

This method ensures that the content offered is genuinely interactive with my audience. This is not to dismiss the problems that men face when trying to co-parent with narcissistic ex-partners; rather, it provides a streamlined and simple read.

Therefore, a shared desire for learning, development, and healing influences co-parenting relationships with a narcissistic ex-partner, regardless of gender. Whether you are married, engaged, co-parenting, young, old, mixed, gay, with or without children, I will explain how to deal with a narcissistic ex-partner.

But let me be clear: everyone in this situation, regardless of gender, deserves compassion, encouragement, and all the resources they need to overcome the challenges.

We continue to learn as we go, taking into account the different circumstances and psychological mechanisms that help us understand these complex dynamics.

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## Who Is This Book For?

Every family goes through the challenges of separation and divorce in their own unique way.

However, when one partner has unhealthy tendencies, these challenges become even more difficult and distressing. Dr. Elizabeth Morgan offers a guide in this book to help individuals navigate such complex situations.

The author provides advice and practical psychological strategies that can empower separated parents to co-parent effectively with a narcissistic partner while always prioritizing the well-being of their children.

This book primarily targets individuals who are going through a divorce with a narcissist. It is also relevant for co-parents who are still living with a narcissistic partner and have no intention of separating. Within the pages of this book, you will find all the tools to enhance communication and minimize conflicts.

Furthermore, therapists and counselors can utilize this book as a resource or recommend it to clients facing similar circumstances.

Legal professionals, including lawyers and family law mediators, can also benefit from understanding the dynamics involved when one partner displays narcissistic traits. This knowledge will enable them to provide guidance and support to their clients.

After reading this book, individuals who have friends or family members involved in co-parenting with a narcissist will gain a better understanding of the difficulties they face. This newfound understanding can enable them to provide empathetic support and assistance.

Lastly, support groups or organizations assisting parents will find this book an excellent resource for reading materials and thought-provoking discussions.

In summary, this book can be a resource for anyone seeking to comprehend and navigate the complexities of co-parenting, particularly when one of the parties involved displays narcissistic characteristics.

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# Introduction

**T**hroughout my career as a social worker and psychologist, I have worked with a wide range of individuals and families to help them cope with the effects of divorce from a narcissist.

I have analyzed their problems and shared with them some extremely difficult moments, as well as moments of achievement, incredible joy, and freedom.

This experience taught me that anyone can overcome the challenges of divorcing a narcissistic ex-partner. The obstacles are substantial and real, but they are surmountable.

I think this book will shed light on a tragic truth faced by many divorcing couples: the presence of a narcissistic spouse. This book is not only a collection of advice and methods but also an invitation to embark on a journey of awareness, healing, and transformation.

In the pages that follow, we will examine the characteristics of narcissistic spouses, discuss the emotional suffering that separation can bring, and offer useful tips for coping with co-parenting with an eye to your children's mental well-being.

The purpose of this book is to encourage readers to embrace the perspective of rebirth and hope as they embark on this journey. I believe that every family has the right to find hope in the midst of despair, to persevere in the face of adversity, and most importantly, to provide a bright future for their children.

I've dedicated my life to understanding the complexities of the human mind, decoding difficult family relationships, and providing people

with tools for healing and personal development. I can guarantee that, despite the challenges and difficulties, there are opportunities for growth, knowledge, and healing. Although each story is unique, we all share a desire for a better future for ourselves and our children.

I hope you will find inspiration, comfort, and insight in these pages. Together, we can learn how to turn the darkness of divorce into a path of healing, fostering strong friendships and a bright future for all involved.

With love,

*Dr. Elizabeth Morgan*



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# PART 1. AN INTRODUCTION TO NARCISSISM

## Chapter 1. What Is Narcissism?

**B**efore delving into the world of narcissists, it's crucial to grasp the nature of the individuals you're dealing with. Narcissism refers to a self-absorption that causes people to overlook the needs of those around them.

While we all display narcissistic tendencies at times, true narcissists consistently disregard others and remain oblivious to how their actions impact them. According to the American Psychological Association (APA) Dictionary of Psychology,

*“Narcissism is a personality style characterized by a focus on oneself and one’s own needs, often at the expense of others.”*

Research suggests that narcissism exists on a spectrum ranging from low to extreme levels. Narcissists exhibit traits such as a sense of self-importance, an inflated ego, and an intense need for constant praise and validation. However, there are also positive aspects associated with narcissism, such as self-reliance, confidence in oneself, and the ability to find joy in one’s own company.

### **An Important Note**

Keep in mind that narcissism is a characteristic, but it can also indicate a larger personality disorder. It's important to note that not all narcissists have Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD). To simplify things, let's say that individuals at the maximum end of the spectrum might be



classified as having NPD, while those at the lower end may display narcissistic tendencies. To describe a personality disorder that primarily revolves around narcissism but allows for both grandiose aspects in its manifestations, experts have coined the term “Pathological Narcissism.”

You may have observed that narcissistic individuals often possess strong personalities. They don't always exhibit negative behavior, especially in relationships. On the contrary, they often interact successfully with others who contribute to their self-esteem. These interactions, even if brief, play a role in shaping and maintaining their self-image.

Because many narcissists and NPD patients do not actively seek therapy, studying narcissism is a continuous process. However, we can identify common traits.

## **Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD)**

Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) goes beyond the surface. It's a disorder characterized by individuals having illusions of unlimited authority or worth, isolating themselves, constantly seeking praise, exhibiting grandiosity, and expecting special treatment from others. The disorder encompasses key emotional, psychological, social, and behavioral aspects.

- Self-esteem
- Damaged emotions
- Impulsive behavior
- There's a need for attention and turbulent relationships.

However, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) classifies NPD as one of the personality disorders under Cluster B, which also includes borderline personality disorder and antisocial and histrionic personality disorders.

## What Are the Key Characteristics of Narcissism?

Now let's delve into the characteristics of narcissism and how it manifests in various aspects of human behavior and interactions with others. If you're reading this book, chances are you'll recognize some of these behaviors in your ex-partner or someone you know closely, and this will probably make you uncomfortable.

Read with caution.

1. Narcissists often hold the belief that their emotions are superior to others, requiring special attention and disregarding rules that apply to everyone else. They expect others to always conform to their desires.
2. Lack of empathy is another feature of narcissism. This indicates an inability for narcissists to understand the wants, needs, or feelings of others. Consequently, they struggle to grasp how their actions may cause discomfort or distress to those around them.
3. Manipulative and controlling behavior is also a hallmark of narcissism. Initially, narcissists may attempt to please and charm others, but they always prioritize their demands. They intentionally maintain a level of distance in relationships as a means of exerting control, sometimes even taking advantage of others for personal gain.
4. Another behavioral pattern involves reacting with bitterness or contempt and attempting to belittle others in order to feel superior. They might attempt to provoke you, finding your vulnerabilities and then exploiting them.
5. One common trait among these individuals is an insatiable craving for praise or admiration. These individuals often embellish their accomplishments to gain validation from others. They also seek recognition to boost their self-esteem.

6. They are constantly fixated on acquiring wealth, power, intelligence, attractiveness, or the perfect partner.
7. Their unhappiness and irritability stem from not achieving their desired goals.
8. Even narcissists experience feelings of discomfort, remorse, shame, and rejection.

### ***Focus On***

This chapter provides an in-depth introduction to narcissism, beginning with its basic concept and progressing to the more nuanced intricacies of its manifestation in Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD). The chapter aims to provide readers with a comprehensive understanding of narcissism, from its subtle manifestations in everyday life to its more severe manifestations that require clinical attention.

Gradually, we have made progress in understanding the narcissist: their thoughts, methods, and strategies for handling them. As we delve into the chapters, we will continue to expand our knowledge. However, it's important to note that we are only scratching the surface at this point.

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## Chapter 2. Recognizing the Different Types of NPD and Their Behaviors

Let's take a closer look at narcissists. Although the DSM-5 specifies a single condition for Narcissistic Personality Disorder, substantial evidence suggests there are different subtypes. Some of these will probably look familiar to you as well.

### **a) The Extravagant or Flamboyant Subtype (also known as the Grandiose Subtype)**

This subtype is characterized by obvious grandiosity, frequent attention-seeking, a sense of superiority, vanity, and a lack of visible fear.

Despite their disregard for the needs of others, they can be seductive and cunning in both life and situational relationships. They often attain success because they work harder than others to win everything and everyone over.

### **b) The Secretive or Vulnerable Subtype (also known as the Hypersensitive Subtype)**

Contrastingly, the "Fragile" or thin-skinned type is secretive, reserved, openly agitated, hypersensitive to criticism, and constantly envious and judgmental of others.

These individuals often exhibit calmness and apparent reticence, masking their grandiosity with heightened sensitivity to offense in social situations.

### **c) The Communitarian Subtype**

Those with Communitarian Narcissism often perceive themselves as selfless and deeply caring about justice.

They present themselves as helpful and caring, but are motivated by a sense of superiority and a desire for social dominance. Consequently, their behavior often contradicts their professed intentions.

### **d) The Antagonistic Subtype**

In contrast to the Communitarian Narcissist, the Antagonistic Narcissist views social interactions as conflictual. They think in terms of zero-sum games, believing there is always a “Winner” and a “Loser.” This worldview leads them to be hostile and antagonistic toward others. They are quick to criticize and slow to forgive.

### **e) The Malignant Subtype**

Malignant Narcissism is the most damaging manifestation of this disorder. Individuals with this subtype may exhibit anger, anxiety, or sadistic traits, taking pleasure in the unhappiness of others. They often display alarming behavior with no respect for the rights or safety of others.

All these categories share an extreme sense of self-centeredness. People with Narcissistic Personality Disorder may show symptoms ranging from grandiosity to exhaustion, or a combination, depending on their circumstances.

## **The High-Performing Narcissist**

There is also a version of Narcissistic Personality Disorder classified as “High-performing,” “Autonomous,” or “Exhibitionistic,” in addition to the Grandiose and Fragile varieties, worth discussing. These individuals are grandiose, prolific, attention-seeking, and sexually contentious, while simultaneously exhibiting adaptive behavior and thriving on their selfish tendencies.

Due to their high level of success, people in this category may not appear to have a behavioral problem, so a diagnosis of Narcissistic Personality Disorder may be overlooked in clinical screening; in other words, they can fool even some therapists.

## **The Narcissist’s Emotional Abuse Behavior**

Few people recognize a narcissist until they’ve fallen into their trap and the emotional traumas have begun to emerge.

Knowing what lies beneath the narcissist’s mask can help you identify and avoid them as early as possible, or at least understand how they have behaved towards you so far, and avoid them in the future.

Below, I’ve listed the most common damaging behaviors of a narcissist; we’ll explore them in more detail later.

### **a) Abusive language**

By belittling, criticizing, and trashing everything you say, do, and wear, the narcissist continues to denigrate you and make you look terrible. They then go on to belittle your friends, your family, your work, and your whole life.

#### ***For example:***

*“I thought that dress looked good on me,” says Jane.*

*“Really?” says Mark. “It’s disheartening, much like your purported ‘friends’ and your pointless occupation.”*

### **b) “Love Bombing”**

Everyone enjoys receiving lavish affection. But the narcissist takes it to an extreme, making “the love of my life” seem unattainable through their mastery of the seduction method known as “Love Bombing.” The narcissist’s intense attention overwhelms the victim.

When the victim becomes aware of the narcissistic behavior, the dose of affection increases.

***For example:***

*“I can’t stop thinking about you since we met last week,” says Tom. “You are everything I have ever wanted.”*

*“Wow, Tom!” says Lucy. “You are very passionate! I’ve never had so much attention before.”*

### **c) Different types of manipulations**

The narcissist uses passive-aggressive behavior, self-victimization, whining, guilt, and psychological threats to get what they want. One of their favorite ways of keeping you under control is to exploit your guilt; you will never be at peace with them.

***For example:***

*“Why didn’t you come to the party last night?” Anna asks.*

*“Because of you!” says John. “If you cared at all, you would have known how I felt last night. Everything revolves around you. I can’t stand your ingratitude!”*

### **d) Disapproval**

This is when the narcissist removes their disguise and reveals themselves to be heartless. They no longer want you, and this is the most agonizing part of the emotional torment.

No amount of pleading or crying will change the fact that the narcissist will cut off all communication with their victims and leave them abruptly and without explanation.

***For example:***

*“I thought we had something special,” says Ella. “Why are you acting like this? What are you doing?”*

*“You?” says Ryan. “Special? I don’t need your help. Goodbye.”*

## e) “Gaslighting”

The psychological manipulation method known as “gaslighting” involves deceiving the victim to make them question their own memories and perceptions.

The narcissist has the ability to completely rewrite history or simply convince you that you are acting nonsensically. Their persuasion will raise your cortisol levels and make you question your sanity.

### ***For example:***

*“I remember you promised to help me move,” says Sarah.*

*“You’re imagining things again,” says Chris. “I never said anything like that. Why do you always make things up?”*

**Note:** British playwright Patrick Hamilton's 1938 play "Gas Light" is the source of the term "gaslighting." The 1944 movie "Anguish" (Gaslight), starring Ingrid Bergman and Charles Boyer, greatly popularized the play. The plot of the movie revolves around a man who tries to drive his wife insane by making her doubt her perception of reality. He accomplishes this through a series of manipulations, such as altering the intensity of the gaslights in their house, all the while insisting that she is imagining everything.

### ***Focus On***

There are different types of narcissism, each with varying degrees of intensity.

Although some narcissistic tendencies can be helpful, the extremes of this continuum represent deeply disturbing behavior that can be damaging to interpersonal relationships.

Understanding these nuances is the first step in navigating the difficult path with a narcissistic ex-partner. Recognizing the various narcissistic



subtypes and the emotional manipulation strategies they often employ will enable you to maintain your mental and emotional health.



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## Chapter 3. The Impact of Narcissism on Health

Among personality disorders, Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) stands out for its significant impact on the well-being of individuals and society as a whole. In this chapter, we will delve into the dynamics that NPD creates for both those who have the disorder and their close relationships.

NPD goes beyond self-love and encompasses a range of psychological issues that manifest in diverse and often harmful ways. From problematic behaviors to challenges in establishing therapeutic connections, we will explore how NPD intersects with mental and physical health.

Through this exploration, our aim is to shed light on the complexities of NPD and provide an understanding of its pervasive influence on overall well-being. Being addicted to difficulties can cause severe psychological and physical complications for those with NPD. Feelings of helplessness, guilt, explosive self-esteem issues, and reckless behavior are all features of NPD that contribute to various mental health problems. NPD often co-occurs with:

- Repeated suicide attempts
- Violence-related suicide attempts
- Suicide attempts occur during periods of financial hardship
- Interpersonal conflicts
- Physical and mental health issues

Furthermore, cluster B personality disorders like NPD have a higher likelihood of leading to fatal cardiovascular disease outcomes.

Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) can present challenges in managing relationships, often resulting in breakdowns due to unpredictable thoughts and behaviors. Those classified as belonging to cluster B are more likely:

- Have a criminal past.
- Have been sentenced to jail time
- Have a history of domestic violence
- Have caused distress or anguish to others
- Have demonstrated general disability in social role function

Additionally, the inability to establish a trusting connection with a therapist poses a significant obstacle to successful therapy, which is an essential factor associated with narcissism.

## **Prevalence of NPD**

The prevalence rate of NPD (the proportion of existing cases of a specific condition in a community) is still unknown, implying diagnostic uncertainty. Commonly used prevalence estimates range from 0% to 5.3%. In clinical samples, prevalence ranges from 1% to 17%. A recent sample of the adult population identified young age, male sex, and single status as risk factors.

## **Comorbidity of NPD**

Comorbidity in the context of Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) refers to the simultaneous presence of multiple medical and psychological conditions. It is not uncommon for individuals with NPD to experience conditions such as bipolar disorder, substance dependence disorders,

personality disorders, and other related issues that may require medical attention.

The severity of the illness is frequently correlated with the degree of comorbidity. People with NPD often exhibit comorbidity with borderline, antisocial, schizotypal, histrionic, and passive-aggressive personality disorders. This co-occurrence tends to have a negative impact on their overall well-being.

The specific subtype of NPD can also influence the likelihood and nature of comorbidities. In particular, two common subtypes exhibit different patterns in relation to these additional conditions:

## **The Extravagant or Flamboyant Subtype**

Grandiose Narcissists tend to project a sense of entitlement, superiority, and aggression. They often appear self-assured and confident; however, this outward display can be deceptive. Despite their invulnerable facade, they are just as susceptible as anyone else to personal challenges and setbacks. Failures in their personal lives can be particularly distressing for them and may even trigger severe crises.

Psychotic personality disorders often link excessive self-centeredness, showcasing the intricate range of behaviors associated with this particular subtype. In addition, individuals belonging to this subtype often struggle with substance abuse, which may serve as a way to cope with delusions or maintain their sense of grandeur.

## **The Secretive or Vulnerable Subtype**

On the other hand, the Secretive or Vulnerable Subtype is characterized by a low sense of self-worth and heightened sensitivity to criticism. These individuals are more prone to experiencing anxiety and depression due to the conflicts they frequently encounter.

This increased sensitivity can sometimes lead them to engage in self-destructive behaviors like self-harm or even contemplating suicide.

It's worth noting that despite their appearances of security, they may be dealing with significant inner turmoil.

### ***Focus On***

Traversing the labyrinth of NPD and its impact on health reveals a compelling portrayal of how this disorder affects people from multiple angles. It becomes clear that extreme narcissism extends beyond personal struggles to become a societal concern. The alarming co-occurrence of self-destructive behaviors, coupled with the difficulties encountered in therapeutic interventions, emphasizes the interconnectedness between personality traits and health outcomes. Recognizing these far-reaching implications is critical for healthcare professionals and society as a whole.

In order to make progress, it's crucial to approach NPD with empathy and a deep understanding. This will help create an atmosphere that promotes healing and personal development.

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## Chapter 4. What Is Narcissistic Supply?

When trying to understand the dynamics of encounters with people with Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD), the term “Narcissistic Supply” is crucial.

Narcissistic supply refers to the attention, flattery, and other forms of affirmation that a person with NPD actively demands and seeks from those around them. These behaviors support and maintain their often fragile sense of value and self-worth. Here’s a quick rundown:

### **a) Source of supply**

The “Sources of Narcissistic Supply,” or narcissistic victims, are any individuals who provide this validation to the narcissist. They can be family members, partners, friends, or even complete strangers. It is not always a bad or inappropriate relationship; while a relationship is fresh or, as mentioned earlier, while the narcissist is in the “Love Bombing” stage, the narcissist is often charming, fascinating, and seemingly caring, and the “Prey” is quite happy to be with them (at least at first).

### **b) Primary and secondary care**

Narcissistic supply can be primary (e.g., compliments, admiration, or being the center of attention) or secondary (e.g., having control over someone, having someone rely on you, or even receiving unwanted attention, such as fighting or arousing pity or sympathy in order to be the center of attention).

- Primary care is more direct and relevant to the individual's ego.
- The systems and structures that uphold and reinforce the narcissist's sense of self are more closely associated with secondary care.

### c) Cessation and decline

The connection between the narcissist and their source of supply can be extremely volatile. When the source of supply is abundant and pleasing, the narcissist may appear joyful, affectionate, and even grateful to the victim. However, if the source stops providing, or does not provide the necessary level or type of validation (in other words, is no longer a good victim), the narcissist may become angry, confrontational, or even nasty. They may also quickly switch to a new, more promising source instead of one that no longer provides the required input.

### d) Addiction

Just as an addict becomes dependent on a substance, the narcissist becomes dependent on external approval to manage their sense of worth and self-worth. They may feel emptiness, loss, or even depression when they do not have it. Because of their addiction, narcissists cannot *"live without it"* and are constantly seeking new sources of supply. From this, it is clear how delicate and complex the relationship between "Victim" and "Perpetrator" is, in the sense that the victim also has power over the narcissist.

**Note:** Understanding the dynamics of narcissistic feeding is crucial for anyone in a relationship with a narcissist. It can help explain the repetitive patterns of idealization and devaluation that characterize many of these relationships, which are often puzzling to outsiders who have never been in a similar situation.

## **As A Source of Life**

As humans, we all crave acceptance and attention from others. For someone with Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD), this need for admiration and recognition is more crucial. It's like their emotional life support—the fuel that keeps them going.

Just as we need food, water, and oxygen to survive, narcissists rely on constant validation and praise from others to maintain their emotional well-being.

Without this input, several negative consequences can arise:

### **a) Erosion of self-esteem**

The fragile inner balance of a narcissist makes them highly susceptible to external influences. Without the attention they crave, their self-esteem can rapidly deteriorate. Feelings of emptiness, worthlessness, or even despair may overwhelm them, akin to a lack of oxygen.

### **b) Increased vulnerability**

In the absence of affection and attention, narcissists become more sensitive to criticism or challenges to their self-image. They may perceive insults where there are none, or react strongly to any perceived threat.

### **c) Heightened desperation**

Just like a hungry person becomes increasingly desperate for food and might resort to extreme measures to obtain it, a resource-deprived narcissist will go to great lengths in search of the validation they so desperately desire.

Understanding how crucial attention is for those with NPD helps shed light on why they seek it and react strongly when deprived. It's a part of their psychological makeup that, when not fulfilled, has significant consequences.



This can manifest as coercive actions, a longing for new connections or acceptance, or attention-seeking behaviors intended to catch the interest and concern of others. While the metaphor of “Caring for Life” can help capture the depth and intensity of a narcissist’s craving for admiration, it can sometimes result in misguided empathy. Although NPD is an illness, it does not excuse manipulative, aggressive, or abusive conduct towards others, particularly when it involves children. Individuals in relationships with narcissists should prioritize their well-being and seek treatment if necessary; there’s no need to pity the narcissist.

### ***Focus On***

To effectively co-parent with a narcissist, it’s crucial to grasp the concept of what is known as “Narcissistic Supply” or “Life Source” for individuals suffering from Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD). This revolves around one or more people who serve as sources of admiration, attention, and validation for the narcissist.

The narcissist actively seeks them out and sometimes manipulates them to maintain proximity and reap benefits. The narcissist often views those close to them as either sources or victims of this pursuit.

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## Chapter 5. The Victim's Point of View

In this chapter, let's put ourselves in the victim's shoes for a moment. A relationship with a narcissist can be highly problematic, especially for the person who becomes the narcissist's primary source of supply. If we think of ourselves as the "Victim" or "Source of Supply," we can see that this experience goes through a number of stages:

### **a) Idealization phase**

During this phase, the victim may receive displays of affection, recognition, and even gifts from the narcissist. The victim may experience great feelings of worth, devotion, and specialness as a result of this "Love Bombardment." In essence, the narcissist is seducing a trusted reference figure to bind them more to themselves.

### **b) Creating dependencies**

The narcissist may gradually manipulate events to make the victim feel dependent on them (covertly or overtly). This dependency may be psychological, material, or even physical. The narcissist ensures a steady supply by convincing the victim that they are crucial to the narcissist's own existence and happiness.

### **c) Devaluation**

When the narcissist believes they have gained the victim's attachment and devotion, they may begin to devalue the victim.

This may involve subtle humiliation, “gaslighting” (tricking the victim into disbelieving reality), or more overt emotional or physical abuse.

This devaluation has several benefits, including keeping the victim in doubt or in constant crisis, increasing dependency, and allowing the narcissist to gain more control.

#### **d) Continuous ups and downs**

It can be really unpleasant for the victim to go through the cycles of idealization and devaluation in a relationship.

When the victim tries to change their behavior by meeting the narcissist’s expectations or striving to be “perfect,” they always long for that phase of idealization, like a “honeymoon” period.

#### **e) Claiming perfection**

Constantly trying to meet the narcissist’s changing and often unrealistic standards can chip away at the victim’s self-esteem. The victim may start believing that they alone are responsible for any issues in the relationship because of the narcissist’s comments.

#### **f) Isolation**

As if that wasn’t enough, the narcissist may attempt to isolate the victim from friends, family, or any other support system available. The narcissist does this to maintain control over the victim and to guarantee a constant flow of attention. As a result, the victim becomes more dependent on the narcissist for support and validation.

#### **g) “Walking on eggshells”**

Because the narcissist’s behavior is unpredictable, the victim may feel that they must constantly avoid upsetting or irritating them. The victim always feels like they are making mistakes; whatever they do, they cannot win.

## **h) Health consequences and exhaustion**

Being someone's primary source of narcissistic supply can be emotionally, psychologically, and even physically draining. Many victims report physical health problems exacerbated by the constant stress, as well as mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder).

It is therefore vital that all parties involved in these interactions understand this dynamic, especially when children are present. Seeking outside help, such as therapy or counseling, can provide clarity, validation, and the ability to control the relationship or consider safer options.

### ***Focus On***

The dynamics of attachment oscillate between idealization, dependence, devaluation, and emotional upheaval, constantly leaving the "Source" in a whirlwind of emotions. When children are involved in this scenario, the stakes are significantly higher. Because narcissistic relationships are unexpected, it is important to recognize these patterns and seek outside support or counseling. This is not only crucial for understanding but also for maintaining your own emotional equilibrium and ensuring your children's well-being.

I understand that you identify with these pages and that reading them makes you feel terrible, but you need to know who you're dealing with in order to organize and defend yourself. Read on with courage. By the end of this book, you will realize that you are not dealing with an alien but with a person suffering from a narcissistic illness, and you will have gained the techniques and strength to deal with it.

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## Chapter 6. The Influence of Narcissism on Parenting Dynamics

The lack of research on narcissistic parenting, narcissistic interpersonal dynamics, and the effects of this disorder on children is quite surprising. The complexity of this issue often makes it difficult for children who grow up and seek therapy to acknowledge their upbringing in a narcissistic environment.

Having a narcissistic parent typically means that this parent prioritizes their own needs and interests over those of the entire family and their children's progress. They often invest so much time and energy in themselves that they have very little left for their children, resulting in the children feeling neglected. Alternatively, they may exhibit demanding and controlling behavior, causing anxiety and tension for their children.

Since parents serve as role models for their children, their actions can significantly impact their growth from childhood to adulthood. Children often aspire to mirror everything their parents do and seek inspiration from them. In fact, since children learn more from observing actions and behaviors than from words alone, parental narcissism can greatly influence their personality development.

### **The Origins of Self-Esteem**

Research shows a strong correlation between a child's self-esteem and their parents' approval or disapproval. When narcissistic parents project their sense of self onto their children, it inadvertently influences and shapes their attitudes. Constant overestimation or portrayal of superiority may cause children to develop certain tendencies.

Furthermore, parents with narcissistic traits often prioritize their own needs, emotions, and well-being over those of their children. They view any form of vulnerability or responsibility as a threat to their self-worth or self-perception. Consequently, this can result in neglect or even outright abandonment.

Put simply, to safeguard their egos, narcissistic parents avoid establishing genuine emotional bonds with their own children.

## **The Impact of NPD on Children**

Let's explore the significant impacts that a parent with narcissistic tendencies can have on their children.

### **a) A desire for attention**

One clear sign of a narcissistic parent is their incessant need to be the center of attention. They often exhibit controlling and domineering behavior, treating their children like pawns in a game of competition and one-upmanship. It is obvious that a child cannot compete with an adult in terms of ability.

To assert their superiority, they frequently encourage sibling rivalry, labeling some as “Good” and others as “Bad” based on how much they align with the parent’s expectations. Consequently, the children who are constantly striving to be perceived as “Good” will go to great lengths to become the favored child in search of love and approval.

As a result, instead of developing genuine connections with others, these children may grow up relying solely on seeking attention and acceptance from others in their future relationships.

#### ***For example:***

*Mother: “During my childhood, I always stole the spotlight. I made sacrifices for your academic achievements.”*

*Liam: “Mum, today is my day. Now we have to go to the school play. Can we focus on that? It feels like everything revolves around your past.”*

## b) Sibling triangulation

A situation known as sibling triangulation occurs when children become entangled in a web of unhealthy sibling rivalry. Within this dynamic, each individual assumes a role: the victim, the villain, or the savior.

This manipulation by the parents creates an environment of competition and conflict between siblings, leading to feelings of resentment, misunderstanding, and hostility. Triangulation can take various forms depending on the parents' desires or intentions. Consequently, it can negatively impact the relationship between siblings, both in the present and in their future interactions, causing lasting emotional harm.

### ***For example:***

*Dad: "Why can't you be as responsible as Alex?"*

*Sophia: "Dad, why do you always pit us against each other? It feels like you're constantly comparing us! You know we're both doing our best."*

## c) Favoritism

Narcissistic parents often see their children as extensions of themselves and try to mold them into the people they want them to be. Favoritism and sibling rivalry are significant influences on how a narcissistic parent interacts with their children. As a result, this type of parent is more likely to ignore or have little contact with some siblings while lavishing attention, love, and benefits on the sibling who best symbolizes their beliefs or aspirations.

### ***For example:***

*Mother: "Look at your sister's grades. Why can't you do the same, Mia?"*

*Mia: "I'm trying, Mum! Why do you always treat me like this? It's not fair; and she had a tutor to help her with her homework."*

## d) Unfair treatment

A narcissistic parent will also criticize one sibling while praising the other, fostering jealousy and powerlessness in the latter. As a result, one sibling

may experience ego problems and a lack of compassion, while the other may experience extreme sensitivity and understanding. Sibling rivalry creates an undesirable power dynamic when the children leave home, which can adversely affect their future relationships into adulthood.

***For example:***

*Mother: “Jake, your business is doing fantastically well! Ella, maybe you should talk to him about your work.”*

*Ella: “But, Mum, we’re in different fields. This is not a competition. I’m already making a name for myself in my field. And Jake’s running Dad’s company, so everyone is good.”*

### **e) Establishing expectations**

Narcissistic parents often make excessive demands on their children, which has a deep and lasting impact on them. Children will feel insecure and inadequate for the rest of their lives, striving to achieve an unrealistic ideal to meet the demands of their narcissistic parent or parents.

***For example:***

*Parent: “I expected you to be at the top of your class, Oliver, just like me. And Grace, with all the private lessons I’ve paid for, your work should be in art galleries by now!”*

*Oliver: “Dad, we try our best, but we never seem to be able to please you. Why don’t you join us instead of always criticizing us?”*

### **f) Setting siblings against each other**

To encourage competition or strife between siblings, narcissistic parents may use “Divide and Conquer” strategies. They may favor one child over another, creating a situation in which siblings feel compelled to compete for the parent’s love, attention, or acceptance. The parent ensures that the children are constantly striving for their approval by maintaining an extremely high standard of “perfection,” which may be practically impossible to achieve. As a result, the children may feel inadequate or resentful toward each other.



***For example:***

*Parent: "Leo, you should learn from your sister's example." She always comes first in everything." Leo: "Mom, please don't start again. You are aware of our differences. You always manage to spoil everything, turn us against each other, and make us fight."*

***Focus On***

Narcissistic parenting has long-term and often damaging effects on children's development. This chapter focuses on how narcissistic parents may emotionally abuse, deceive, and neglect their children to maintain their love and fulfill their self-centered ambitions. Sibling conflicts pit them against each other through partiality and triangulation. As a result of trying to copy their parents, children may experience imbalances in their sense of self-worth, ranging from inflated egos to persistent feelings of inadequacy.

Understanding these interactions is critical. By prioritizing the child's well-being, we can reduce negative effects and establish more positive relationships.

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## Chapter 7. What Does It Mean to Co-Parent with a Narcissist?

**C**o-parenting with a narcissistic ex-partner can be incredibly challenging, adding a layer of difficulty to an already complex situation. Dealing with a narcissist in this context can feel like a battle for many co-parents.

Narcissists have a deep-seated desire to manipulate and control those around them, despite their charismatic facade. Here are some key challenges that usually arise when co-parenting with a narcissist:

### **a) Lack of awareness of children's needs**

One of the difficult aspects of co-parenting with a narcissist is their inability to understand or empathize with their children's needs.

Narcissistic parents often prioritize their desires, ambitions, and emotions over the well-being of their children and partner. This can lead them to disregard or dismiss their children's needs, failing to grasp their emotions or actions toward them. As a result, they may be unwilling to cooperate or make decisions that are in the best interests of the children.

### **b) Violation of parenting agreements**

A major issue when co-parenting with a narcissist is their tendency to disregard their responsibilities and act selfishly. Narcissistic parents often believe they are above the rules and regulations governing co-parenting arrangements, feeling entitled to do as they please without consequences. Navigating these challenges requires patience, resilience, and

finding strategies for communication and boundary setting within the co-parenting dynamic. Therefore, it can be quite challenging to establish and sustain parenting agreements.

### **c) Disregard for children's routines**

Establishing routines and consistency for children can be difficult if a narcissistic ex-partner refuses to follow agreements or court orders. They may also make decisions without consulting others or refuse to make concessions, which can cause friction and stress.

### **d) Manipulative approaches to managing co-parenting**

In order to control a co-parenting relationship, narcissists may use dishonest techniques. They may use deception, guilt, or emotional blackmail to achieve their goals. This behavior can be extremely harmful to children, creating an unhealthy and toxic environment. It can also make it difficult to establish a good co-parenting relationship and prioritize the children's needs.

### **e) “Gaslighting”**

Co-parenting with narcissists is challenging because of their natural tendency to use “gaslighting” and blame-shifting. Narcissists often have difficulty taking responsibility for their actions and may blame others. They may distort the truth and misrepresent reality in order to make themselves look better while making others appear worse. As co-parents, this can be quite painful, as it is impossible to have a meaningful conversation with a narcissistic ex-partner who refuses to accept their mistakes.

### **f) Refusal to engage in dialogue**

Finally, narcissists are unable to accept judgment or agreement. When chastised, they may become aggressive or defensive and refuse to make

concessions. This can make it difficult to have meaningful discussions and reach agreements that are beneficial to the children.

Working with a narcissistic ex-partner and dealing with their behavior can be difficult for co-parents. It can also be uncomfortable because you may feel like you have to tread carefully around them and are always on the wrong side.

### ***Focus On***

Co-parenting with a narcissist is fraught with complications, as we know well. The narcissist's innate desire to put themselves first, control the environment, add fuel to the fire, and avoid communication can interfere with the primary purpose of co-parenting: the child's well-being.

It is important to recognize these behaviors over time and understand that they are the result of ingrained personality traits in the narcissist. Despite the road's difficulty, knowing the narcissistic terrain can lead to smarter tactics and, ultimately, a healthier environment for children.



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## PART 2. LET'S START WITH PRACTICE

### Chapter 8. Coping with the Stress and Anxiety of Co-Parenting with a Narcissist

**W**e all feel sad when a relationship ends, no matter how we part. We mourn the unfulfilled dreams and the future we will never have with that person. Even though we know rationally that our dreams are now far away and unattainable, regret sets in, and we feel constantly depressed and in pain.

Because there is no middle ground, we alternate between feeling desperate and hoping that your ex will respond favorably if you talk to them more often and more deeply. However, when dealing with an angry ex-narcissist, you have to be realistic and expect the following:

#### **a) They will respond quickly to your complaints**

Despite their best efforts to create a robust exterior, a narcissistic co-parent's massive ego is as fragile as an eggshell. Criticism that implies they are doing something wrong or need help deeply hurts them. If you criticize them, they might lash out and insult you.

#### **b) They make you the “Bad guy” in front of the children and others**

In addition to being reluctant to accept criticism, narcissists often blame others for their failures. They will constantly try to convince you that it is “fun” to do something that is harmful to your children. If you refuse their

demands, a narcissistic co-parent will convince the children that you're the "Bad guy" for keeping them from having fun.

### **c) Maintaining control over you and your children**

A narcissistic co-parent will use a variety of selfish and manipulative approaches. Narcissists may try to convince you that changing the visitation schedule is better for you or the children. Your selfish ex will try to make you believe that this is exactly what the children would choose if they could.

### **d) They prioritize their own needs**

When co-parenting with a narcissist, remember that they are shamelessly self-centered. They are completely oblivious to what is best for others. Consequently, their ego may lead them to overlook their co-parenting responsibilities.

A relationship with an NPD sufferer is in itself extremely toxic. Whatever form of stress you may have experienced in the past, nothing compares to the impact of living with a narcissist.

These narcissists, masters of disguise, are not only arrogant, but they are also unemotional and do not care about the consequences of their behavior, seeing themselves as godlike, superior beings among ordinary people. This is not and never will be a respectful relationship. The narcissist will not be the one who suffers from emotional scarring and exhaustion. I understand that expressing this might be challenging, but it's important to acknowledge and be aware of these signs.

## **Overcoming Stress and Anxiety**

With its constant ups and downs, co-parenting with a narcissist can be intoxicating, challenging, and often dangerous, but breaking the cycle can be even harder. When you meet a narcissistic ex, you are likely to feel tension and anxiety for not leaving earlier, as well as embarrassment for accepting the meeting in the first place. Don't blame yourself; this sensation

is a common reaction to the narcissist's manipulative skills. In fact, it is a sign that you are beginning to understand who you are dealing with and recognize their manipulations. It signifies that you're starting to grasp the nature of the person you're dealing with and becoming more attuned to their tactics.

You may still find it difficult to end the relationship. Although leaving a narcissistically abusive relationship can leave you with all of these emotions, it's important to remember that the breakup was not your fault. It's also a good idea to tell yourself that it's unhealthy to stay in a relationship. You can rehabilitate yourself and move on to a richer, healthier life by remembering these facts and focusing on how your narcissistic ex-spouse abused you. You are the survivor, not the victim, of narcissistic abuse.

Read on to learn more about some of the best suggestions and helpful guidance from professionals to help you along the way, as well as how to tell if your wounds from narcissistic abuse have healed. Here are some helpful hints:

### **a) Start with no contact**

Ending an abusive relationship usually means setting firm boundaries and stopping contact. Remember that the "No-contact" rule works both ways. Setting and maintaining these boundaries may be difficult at first. Narcissistic co-parenting may encourage you to repeat promises of change. If you cannot cut off all communication because of the children, it is important to set clear boundaries about what is appropriate for you.

### **b) Try not to feel sorry for your child because you are separated**

Allowing your narcissistic ex-partner to blame you for this or the end of your relationship is unacceptable. Raising a child with a selfish and self-centered adult can have no positive outcomes.



### **c) Promise to remain calm, pleasant, and dispassionate**

Always try to keep your cool. If your ex becomes emotionally intense and threatens to drag you down with them, someone needs to think about the impact on the children. Meditation, deep breathing, self-awareness, and support groups can greatly improve physical and mental well-being. Do not doubt these suggestions; try them and see if they work.

### **d) Demonstrate social and emotional intelligence**

Whenever possible, give your children examples of successful single-family homes. A young person will eventually develop and recognize what has happened in your family, who is right, and who has acted inappropriately. Soon, your child will be able to observe in the abstract, manage their emotions appropriately, and develop effective coping skills.

## **Improving Your Emotional Resilience**

Those who have been in an intimate relationship with a narcissist and have been able to end it through their own power will feel a great sense of relief and liberation. Moving away from a toxic environment and leaving behind all your misery and suffering is an emotional and life-changing moment.

The person who caused you so much pain in your marriage also contributed to the creation of the most important thing you've ever known: your children. I am well aware that some people find this distinction extremely difficult, if not impossible. But it is, and it's good to start accepting it.

## **Seeking Outside Help and Support**

Navigating the rollercoaster of divorce can be challenging to navigate the rollercoaster that comes with divorce. Feelings of grief, loss, anxiety, and anger are common. Some individuals try to stay busy to avoid experiencing these emotions. However, it's important to invest in yourself during this time. Taking care of your well-being is not only beneficial for you but

also for your children. It's like cultivating a field and then harvesting the fruit; every act of self-care contributes to your physical and emotional health. Here are some self-care practices that can help you improve your well-being:

### **a) Surround yourself**

Surround yourself with supportive and empathetic people who can uplift your spirits and boost your confidence. If you're not comfortable discussing all the challenges you face as co-parents, you don't have to, but knowing that those around you are rooting for you is reassuring.

### **b) Consider psychotherapy**

Consider seeking psychotherapy as a space to address co-parenting issues, process your emotions, and develop strategies for dealing with a narcissistic co-parent. Remember, investing in yourself through self-care is a step toward healing and improving both physically and emotionally.

### ***Focus On***

Co-parenting with a narcissist presents unique challenges that require perseverance, courage, and a deep understanding of narcissistic behavior. In this scenario, debilitating emotional turmoil can occur. Unfortunately, stress, anxiety, and grief are regular companions when living with a narcissist.

One's self-esteem will take some hard hits, but one must be brave, work on oneself to improve emotional health, and seek outside help and support. Parents also need to remember their responsibility as educators and caretakers of the child's well-being, not just as co-parents.

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## Chapter 9. Managing Your Children's Stress and Anxiety

**F**irst and foremost, children have the right to know and communicate with both parents. This determines a child's identity and sense of self. If all communication were to cease and your partner were to take legal action, some communication would almost certainly be essential to keep the relationship going. Only the most extreme cases will completely forbid contact.

The second problem with cutting off all contact is that the result can be detrimental, with children developing an unwarranted favorable opinion of the narcissistic parent. Remember that you cannot change the narcissist's behavior or personality. In fact, they will always continue to manipulate them.

### **Finding Balance**

So how can you strike a balance between co-parenting and keeping your children safe? The most common approach is to help children develop resilience. Resilience is the ability to bounce back quickly from setbacks and obstacles and continue to function in spite of them. Children's resilience develops at an early age. Parents can help their children build resilience in a number of ways:

#### **a) Providing a safe base**

Initially, we establish a secure and secluded "base" for kids to retreat to while they explore and learn about the world. Part of this safe base is to

encourage your child to go out into society, or in this example, to hang out with their narcissistic parent, and then to have a calm, safe, and secure environment to return to. This is not an easy task. It necessitates that you set your emotions aside for a moment to listen to your child.

## **b) Building a strong sense of self**

A child's resilience depends on their self-esteem, sense of self, and sense of identity. The aim is to give your child some freedom and the opportunity to take responsibility. It is also important to encourage the acquisition of new talents to build confidence and self-awareness.

The child learns that they can control external events rather than thinking the opposite, which is often the effect of narcissistic abuse. Developing children's judgment and ability to reject demeaning messages from outside, even if they come from their narcissistic parent, makes them more resilient.

## **c) Demonstrate successful interaction**

Lastly, children require exposure to positive interactions beyond their parents. This could be a teacher, an aunt or uncle, or a spiritual leader.

By creating strong and supportive social networks and practicing healthy, respectful relationships, children learn to set limits and know what to expect in their relationships with others, especially their parents.

# **Seeking Outside Help and Support for Your Children**

Conflict within the family, particularly when your former partner exhibits narcissistic behavior toward them, can jeopardize child welfare.

During this time, engaging the services of child therapists can be highly beneficial for both you and your children.

### ***Focus On***

The problems in this scenario can be overcome by increasing your own emotional resilience, ensuring your child's resilience, and enlisting the help of others. Developing your child's sense of self, exposing them to constructive patterns of interaction, and teaching self-care are all important strategies you can implement immediately. Remember that you are an inspiration to your child, not just a victim of narcissistic abuse.



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## Chapter 10. How Do You Begin Co-Parenting with a Narcissist?

One of the most difficult aspects of narcissistic abuse is dealing with reality as it is, not how you want it to be or how the narcissist presents it. The reality presented to you by the narcissist was false from the start and will never be what it appears to be. Narcissists have always practiced deception; they are experts at it and impossible to beat. They lie to others in order to appear authentic, having lied to themselves.

### **Accepting Reality**

At this point, you probably have all the knowledge you need to recognize that the person you're dealing with is toxic and that you should avoid them. The most important thing you can do is recognize the current dynamics of your relationship with your partner. Start to see things for what they really are; it has all been a lie. You now have two options:

#### **a) You can accept them as they are and choose to live with them**

If necessary, bury your thoughts in the sand and wait for them to abuse you again. You are willing to give up your strength, serenity, and originality in order to keep the narcissist as your spouse. With this toxic codependency, you risk succumbing to powerlessness and living moment-by-moment. Or you could wait for the narcissist to finish dumping you. Either way, you are wasting your time and yourself.

## **b) Alternatively, you may discover that the narcissist has been abusing you all along**

You know that this is not how you want to live your life. This is not the person you are looking for. The situation has deteriorated to the point where the partnership is no longer viable. It is time to make a change.

## **Promoting Civilized Parenting**

The main goal is to promote civilized parenting while protecting your mental well-being and your children's best interests. Research indicates that heredity influences NPD by transmitting traits like arrogance and a sense of superiority from parent to child. Growing up with a narcissistic, insensitive, harsh, overprotective, or manipulative parent may, in turn, have led your former partner to develop narcissistic traits.

Trying to persuade your narcissistic ex to co-parent is a waste of time. Because of their arrogance, hostility, and confrontational behavior, they are unlikely to agree with you. They may even accuse you of trying to remove the children if you suggest a court-ordered plan to make parenting more enjoyable and equitable. If you find yourself in this scenario, consider doing some of the following:

### **a) Communicate with the narcissistic co-parent only when absolutely necessary**

It can be difficult, stressful, and sometimes futile to talk to a narcissistic ex-spouse or partner. Narcissists often want to be involved as much as possible. Limiting emotional contact and your ex's chances of winning will make the job easier. If the matter does not require discussion or negotiation, communicate in a more FYI (For Your Information) manner.

People often use this approach to convey that they are simply passing on information. This can greatly minimize the contentiousness of the exchange and the drama of the transaction, both of which narcissists enjoy.

## **b) Write down any contact information**

This will be useful if you decide on a formal custody or parenting plan. A third party outside your partnership will formally regulate this if your ex starts to request more time or tries to influence certain parameters.

## **c) Implementing parallel parenting**

Parenting with an NPD parent may require a “parallel parenting” strategy. In most cases, this involves setting up a formal schedule to ensure that the children spend as much time as possible with each parent. It is better to simplify schedule management than to move children from one home to another or from one event to another in a haphazard way.

### ***For example:***

*Your ex may be responsible for driving the children to school and picking them up. In this way, you will avoid meetings and possible disagreements and arguments in front of your children.*

## **d) Stick to schedules and plans**

When dealing with narcissists, a black-and-white approach is most effective. Once you’ve decided on a parenting method, stick to it as closely as possible. Some parents will try to adapt the conditions to manage their children according to their wishes.

### ***For example:***

*They may call you at the last minute to change plans and take the kids to an unscheduled sports practice. Refuse their attempts to disrupt things; people with NPD benefit from these situations. An appropriate response is: “Let’s stick to the parenting plan, please.”*

## **e) Handle the issue of alienation with sensitivity**

When dealing with a narcissistic individual, it’s crucial to approach the situation of parental alienation carefully. This manipulative tactic is well



known: a toxic parent deliberately tries to distance their children from you by belittling and demeaning you. Their aim is for the children to associate you with being a parent they should avoid, dislike, and reject.

Your ex may employ this strategy to present themselves as a victim and gain your children's admiration. Recognize and comprehend your child's feelings when they experience hurt or confusion. Avoid resorting to insulting the parent as a way of seeking revenge.

As your children grow older, they will be able to make their own judgments about who is right.

## **f) Create a nurturing environment at home that ensures your children's safety**

Separating from and co-parenting with a narcissistic individual can have emotional and psychological repercussions for the entire family. However, if you create a peaceful home environment, it can become a sanctuary for both you and your children.

Implement schedules for family activities such as learning, playing, sleeping, and waking up together.

When raised in such a caring home, children tend to exhibit improved behavior and emotional well-being. Strive to provide love and meet their needs without becoming excessively overprotective or disregarding the other parent.

Growing up in a nurturing environment can shield your children from feeling anxious or overwhelmed when dealing with a narcissistic individual who may attempt to manipulate them, behave aggressively, or cross their personal boundaries.

## **Setting Firm Boundaries**

Narcissists enjoy provoking others and seeing their reactions, whether positive or negative. Setting boundaries can limit your ex's power to upset you.

***For example:***

*Ask them to contact you only by text or email; this will give you time to think about their requests before responding. This also helps with documentation, which is crucial if you decide to take legal action.*

These restrictions may also apply to your former partner's interactions with your child. You may also want to make rules about their phone calls to your child if your agreements or court order allow it.

## **Strategies for the Children**

It will be harder for your ex to upset the status quo if you make sure that the parenting plan or court order spells out exactly what you have agreed with the children. Narcissists enjoy being in charge and will jump into any situation if given the chance. They also enjoy stirring the pot, so be prepared for them to cancel plans at the last minute or turn up at your home unexpectedly. They will accuse you of being unfair and guilty if you do not agree. It is critical to consider all possibilities and arm your perimeter.

Although it is difficult to predict how a narcissist will behave, formalizing the parenting agreement can provide some reassurance that their behavior will be appropriate, as well as a workable mechanism for enforcing the agreement if it is breached.

***Focus On***

Deep introspection, acceptance of the narcissist's nature, and an unwavering commitment to protecting the child are all necessary components of co-parenting. This chapter emphasizes the importance of accepting the reality of a narcissistic relationship and making meaningful choices for oneself and the child. Parallel parenting, honoring commitments, dealing diplomatically with parental alienation, and creating a safe haven for the child are all important approaches.

The emphasis on setting clear boundaries and having a well-thought-out plan highlights the need for organization in these sensitive situations. In

this maze of narcissistic co-parenting, the compass must always point towards the child's emotional and mental well-being.



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## Chapter 11. Communicating Effectively

Co-parenting with a narcissist requires consistency, communication, and shared responsibility, as toxic co-parents can be emotionally abusive and may reject advice or criticism. Healthy communication and mutual respect are important for successful co-parenting.

Most parents will find this easy, but narcissists, who always prioritize their needs, will find it challenging.

Co-parenting does not mean getting along with your ex-partner, going on family holidays, or getting their permission before taking the children out; it means being able to make your children feel comfortable, making your new life as a separated couple work, and sticking to agreements.

Here's what happens when your former partner is a narcissist:

***For example:***

*Will did not allow his child to spend a weekend or a few hours with the other parent without causing a ruckus.*

You must learn to communicate because any lack of preparation will be obvious and will always be your fault.

### **Strategies for Effective Communication**

Once you've identified the narcissist, it's difficult to separate yourself from them because they draw power from connection and closeness. If you can't

cut off communication completely, try to reduce the intimacy, tone down the language, and keep them at arm's length.

Here are some strategies for communicating effectively with a difficult ex-partner to reduce conflict:

### **a) Written communication is preferable**

One method of reducing conflict is to communicate entirely in writing. Having a written record of the conversation reduces the possibility of the "I didn't say that/yes, you did" part. You can obtain such proof by using emails and text messages.

### **b) Maintain a professional attitude when communicating**

Be mature, keep your emotions in check, and avoid exacerbating the results of a virtual or face-to-face encounter. Don't get upset if your ex curses or swears when they are angry. If there is an argument during the meeting, avoid continuing the topic. It takes two to argue; if you remain calm and united, your co-parent can do the same.

### **c) Feeling unable to express anything**

Narcissists need an answer to turn against you in order to feel satisfied and in control. Instead, recognizing which situations require a response and which do not, can give you invaluable peace of mind. Refrain from reacting to different situations and observe the effects.

List the incidents that you can handle by remaining silent and waiting. This method necessitates some trial and error in order to determine which events will resolve themselves without your response.

Allow yourself to ignore all incoming texts, phone calls, challenges, and requests. Recognize that boundaries make sense, regardless of what your narcissist has taught you. By mastering the skill of not responding, you can avoid most of the psychological instability that interacting with a narcissist causes.

### **d) Formulate a resolution for the discussion**

People are used to seeing a problem but not suggesting solutions. If your ex is a difficult person, simply stating the facts will put them on the defensive, and the conversation will degenerate into “*It’s your fault... no, it’s your fault.*”

#### ***For example:***

*Instead of saying, “An 8 p.m. return time is too late, It has to be 7 p.m.,” say something like: “I understand how valuable time with our child is to you, and I know that keeping him up later gives you more time to spend with him, but moving the bedtime on the last day of school prevents him from getting the rest he needs. Instead of picking him up at 7 p.m., why not pick him up an hour earlier?”*

### **e) Stay on topic**

It is better not to let previous arguments distract you from the issue at hand, as this is far too easy to do. Avoid turning a discussion about exchange times into one about child maintenance. You can’t move forward by thinking backwards.

### **f) Be honest**

Remember that no matter how difficult an ex-partner may be, your child comes first, not the ex-associate. Do not defame or belittle them, and remember that your children, regardless of age, are watching you and learning from your actions.

### **g) Seek a second opinion**

Despite the emotional nature of narcissistic abuse, victims should always seek a second opinion before responding to their abuser. Narcissists may force you to respond immediately in order to keep you off balance and increase the likelihood that you will give the impulsive response they want.

They will use various tactics (such as threats) to induce a rush on your behalf. Learning to pause and consult with a mentor or trusted friend first almost always improves results. This will allow you to vent and clarify your thoughts, but more importantly, it will help you avoid making rash judgments that can lead to further conflict and problems.

### **h) Make compromises**

To gain acceptance, you may need to make a small change to your proposed solution. Be open to their suggestions. It is also important to be open to each other's ideas and perspectives. If you show that you value their opinions, they will be more likely to cooperate and accept your proposals. Accepting their point of view can lead to a more structured and successful final solution.

### **i) Put yourself in their shoes**

Understanding and compromise are important aspects of parenting. Even if you disagree with other parents' perspectives, it can be beneficial to try to understand them. Remember that compassion and understanding make it much easier to work with others.

### **j) Stop trying to change them**

Absolute narcissism is a chronic condition that can destroy relationships. In order to maintain a connection with their children, many people feel driven to make a difference and try to change their former partner. Unfortunately, the narcissist is often incurable, and efforts to "fix" them are worthless. Instead, giving up the idea of changing them is liberating, allowing victims to regain some control and better direct their efforts.

Narcissism is a long-term problem. Frequent exposure to it can lead to significant consequences, so victims in narcissistic relationships must utilize all the resources at their disposal. Making a few small changes and learning how to deal with manipulative situations without falling for an abuser's masquerade can help reduce the impact of abuse.

## Setting Appropriate Communication Boundaries

Setting boundaries is essential for self-care, healthy child development, and a positive co-parenting relationship. It involves being open and honest with your ex about your desires, preferences, and limitations, while respecting theirs. Establishing boundaries with narcissists can be challenging for the following reasons:

- Their difficulty in expressing their needs
- A past history of rejection or overstepping boundaries
- Fear of abandonment or rejection
- Cultural and familial concerns

Communicative assertiveness may be seen as a sign of strength in some families, but as hostility and discouragement in others. These elements can lead to bitterness, guilt, and insecurity.

Setting boundaries requires patience, commitment, and self-awareness, which can be difficult but are necessary for a good partnership. Here are some tips on how to set positive communication boundaries:

1. Set firm boundaries for your narcissistic partner, and be prepared to negotiate and make concessions.
2. Remember, setting communication boundaries is not a debate, and saying no is appropriate.
3. Be direct and cold. Explain your boundaries and the consequences of failing to respect them in a calm and clear manner. Use “I statements” to express how their actions make you feel, such as “*I feel disrespected when...*”
4. Set and maintain boundaries. If others fail to respect your boundaries, enforce the consequences you’ve established.



5. Take care of yourself, and if necessary, give yourself time.
6. Accept your boundaries and surround yourself with supportive people.
7. Instead of blaming people for not respecting your boundaries, take responsibility for enforcing them.
8. Trust your instincts and listen to what you and your children want and need.
9. Seek additional help from a therapist or counselor.

Another push? Be gentle with yourself and allow yourself some grace. Boundary work is often challenging and emotionally draining. Some issues may be easier than others. Start small, with a trusted friend or relative.

Remember that you need to set and communicate clear boundaries in order to maintain a strong co-parenting relationship and take care of yourself. It is important to realize that both setting limits and saying no are viable options.

### ***Focus On***

The difficulties of co-parenting with a narcissist center on the communication relationship. Of course, this is not an easy task, but individuals can navigate this perilous terrain by using clear strategies such as written communication, a professional approach, non-reactivity, and the establishment of strong boundaries. It is important to remember that the best interests of the child must always come first.

Rather than forming an emotional bond with the narcissist, co-parenting requires consistency, respect, and effective communication. Setting limits, seeking outside perspectives, and prioritizing your own and your child's well-being are all positive starts. Keep it up.

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## Chapter 12. Dealing with a Narcissistic Ex

Parenting is challenging. Divorce or separation can be an extremely demanding process for certain people, and these individuals may express their resentment towards you indirectly through the way they parent your child. Parenting alone becomes more challenging when one parent intentionally works against you.

These initiatives may frustrate you and undermine your bond with your child, making parenting even more difficult. The other parent may try to pressure you with words and actions in order to get what they want from you or seek revenge for some perceived harm.

### **Recognizing the Signs of Conflict and Manipulation**

Regardless of the cause, we must address the issue of manipulative parenting. The longer you allow the other parent to try to dominate you, the harder it will be to stop the behavior, and the more damage it will do to your relationship with your child.

Recognizing manipulative behavior is the best approach to dealing with a manipulative co-parent. It is important to understand how to recognize red flags, as some co-parents are more sophisticated than others. Look out for the following behaviors:

- The other parent avoids speaking directly with you and instead communicates with you through the children.

- Your children accuse the other parent of criticizing you or allowing others to criticize you in front of them.
- The other parent tells your children false information about you, your family, or your new partner.
- They are disregarding your boundaries or attempting to interfere with your parenting time.

Address them immediately if you notice any of these signs or if someone is using your children against you. If you are uncomfortable having this conversation, seek the help of a third party or a child custody lawyer. If these attempts are part of a larger pattern of behavior, you may need to act more quickly to prevent them from happening again.

## **Don't Reward Manipulative Behavior and Avoid Conflict**

Despite the temptation to “fight fire with fire,” resist the urge to be manipulative. This does not mean that you have to condone inappropriate behavior. Avoid trying to influence the other parent, but also refrain from allowing them to exert pressure on you to obtain something they do not deserve.

### ***For example:***

*If the other parent often arrives before their parenting time, you do not have to allow your child to leave early. Tell them that your child will be ready to leave at the time and place specified in the custody agreement. However, you should not start arriving early to pick up your child or try to disrupt the other parent's visit in any other way.*

It is better to avoid such behavior because when parents try to influence each other's children, they usually lose. Additionally, a judge hearing the case will expose your unprofessional behavior, potentially leading to accusations of misconduct.

## Taking the Situation to Court

If you are unable to deal with the other parent's manipulative behavior, you should go to court with the help of a child custody lawyer. In response to the other parent's attempts to drive a wedge between you and your children or to turn them against you, a court may decide to change the current custody arrangements. Parental manipulation is one factor a judge may take into account when making custody arrangements. Allowing this behavior to continue jeopardizes your relationship with the child and gives the other parent more room to maneuver. If you cannot come to an agreement with the other parent, it is best to bring the problem to the attention of the court.

### *Focus On*

Co-parenting with a former manipulator adds to the complications of parenting. This chapter emphasizes the need to recognize and deal with manipulation quickly. Although emotions can inspire manipulative revenge, it is important to rise above them and respond with maturity and clarity.

Guiding principles can include open communication, strict adherence to custody agreements, and access to the legal system when necessary. Ultimately, the focus must always be on the child's welfare, fostering trust, and creating an atmosphere in which the child is safe from parental difficulties.

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## Chapter 13. Some Helpful Advice

**I**t is not easy, but it is possible to maintain a long-distance relationship with a narcissistic co-parent without risking a battle every time you connect.

Understanding how a narcissist thinks will help you respond appropriately, without triggering criticism or uncomfortable emotions, while protecting your emotional well-being and that of your children. Here are some tactics I typically recommend that you start using immediately:

### **a) Establishing structured channels of communication**

Instead of sporadic text messages, phone calls at all hours of the day and night, or face-to-face confrontations at every opportunity, a parent can request that all communication about their child take place entirely via email. In this manner, we thoroughly document all encounters, prevent hasty reactions on both sides, and allow time for thoughtful and calm reactions.

#### ***For example:***

*You might suggest setting aside a time each Sunday evening to discuss any updates or concerns about your child's weekly routine.*

### **b) Setting firm boundaries**

I've already mentioned how important boundaries are. You need to set clear boundaries and penalties for crossing them.

***For example:***

*If your ex-partner begins to criticize or insult you, you can state unequivocally, "If you start talking negatively about me, I will have to end the call." "Look, I don't want to hear this talk; I have to go now," or "If you like, you can email me with updates or concerns about our son." I won't respond to the other emails."*

Feeling right and entitled is a fundamental characteristic of NPD. The narcissistic co-parent may bombard the other parent with constant demands, complaints, and other forms of communication because they believe they are right or that their needs must always come first. Therefore, this right may manifest itself as excessive communication. In this case, it is necessary to set clear guidelines about how and when contact between you should take place.

***For example:***

*"You know I'm busy with a thousand things at work and often don't even hear the phone, so please call me after dinner so we have plenty of time to talk quietly."*

**c) Defending yourself against abuse**

If your co-parent makes unpleasant accusations or claims, your first instinct may be to retaliate by arguing loudly, but this is highly discouraged behavior. Give them no weapons to use against you.

This includes not showing any emotion, as the narcissist may be trying to manipulate or feed their ego. If they see nothing in you, they will have no vulnerabilities to exploit.

***For example:***

*If a narcissistic parent accuses you of being ungrateful, you could respond neutrally by saying, "I understand how you feel" or simply, "That's OK" or "OK, I get it," rather than trying to retort or question.*

By staying out of the drama, you can prevent things from getting out of control. Narcissists benefit from other people's emotional reactions; in fact, they often provoke them. Protect yourself from further manipulation and emotional injury by refusing to give them the reaction they want. Do the same: don't react; don't get angry.

This approach, often known as the "Grey Rock Method," involves surprising the narcissist by remaining completely neutral and unresponsive, i.e., becoming a grey rock. This strategy is often successful because the narcissist is waiting for a specific reaction from you in order to attack you. By refusing to give them a weapon with which to insult you, you avoid rewarding their actions and can defuse the situation.

#### **d) Take your time**

In today's world, we are constantly on the go, rushing from one task to another, and we feel compelled to complete everything immediately. If you receive an angry message or phone call, stop. You are free to inform them that "I'll get back to you tomorrow." Put the phone down and do something relaxing. Wait until the next morning to reply.

If a quick response is not needed, if the problem is not urgent, or if a message or communication is harmful or ineffective, it is appropriate to wait before responding.

#### ***For example:***

*Your ex-spouse sends you a long email criticizing your parenting choices without offering any suggestions for improvement. You may choose not to respond quickly or at all to their criticism, focusing instead on the child's current needs rather than engaging in a debate.*

#### **e) Keep it short**

Keep your communication short. Otherwise, you'll talk for hours, get exhausted, lose sight of the goal of the conversation, and end each call with a sense of dissatisfaction, having achieved nothing.

Because one of you chose to argue rather than find a solution, the phone call (or email) went that way. By avoiding arguments, you can give the other person the information they need. The less you say, the less likely you are to be wrong or angry. The more concise the communication, the better.

### **f) Don't get carried away**

As much as possible, avoid distracting the other parent.

#### ***For example:***

*You need to call to tell them you'll be five minutes late, but the conversation has turned to another subject, and you start to argue. Stop this immediately. If the conversation turns to a potentially contentious subject, say goodbye and hang up quickly.*

Hang up if the subject gets too personal for you and your spouse. You'll be glad you did, because now you're in charge, not the other parent.

### **g) What should you do if they become upset?**

When things do not go our way, any of us can become disappointed or angry. For a narcissist, it's even worse: their whole universe revolves around them, so it's extremely difficult to deal with when something suggests otherwise.

I know you'll be tempted to shout at the other parent, "*It's not about you; it's about our child's wants and needs,*" but it won't work. You don't have to respond immediately; try an alternative strategy.

#### ***For example:***

*Just reply, "Maybe you're right," and that's it. How will they react? "No, you are wrong; I am not right!" they would say. You'll notice that they will stand there, staring at you with a mixture of bewilderment and confusion. They will come to a complete stop.*

What's the point of arguing? Maybe they are right. You haven't said that they are right, only that they might be.



## **h) Use mediation tools**

Some co-parenting apps and websites allow parents to talk about their children in a safe atmosphere. This can help create a welcoming environment and keep the conversation focused on the child.

### ***For example:***

*To avoid endless arguments, suggest to your ex that they use a co-parenting app. Not only will the platform keep track of your child's schedule, but it will also serve as a place to talk, avoiding face-to-face confrontation and keeping the dialogue on track.*

### ***Focus On***

Effectively navigating the complex world of co-parenting with a narcissist is a delicate balancing act between precise boundaries, intelligent communication, and personal well-being. When disagreements arise, it is important to keep the child's best interests in mind. Keeping conversations short, setting clear guidelines, and choosing whether or not to respond will make the arduous task of co-parenting with a narcissist more manageable and less emotionally draining.

Using structured communication channels such as email and co-parenting applications can help you achieve clarity and avoid reactionary debates. The "Grey Rock Method" is also a great way to avoid conflict and manage your emotions.

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## PART 3. KEY RESOURCES

### Chapter 14. Rethinking Your Definition of Success

Arriving at this point, consider rethinking the concept of success when co-parenting with a narcissist. This means changing your expectations and goals.

In a healthy co-parenting relationship, there is agreement between the parents, or at least enough respect and understanding to compromise on issues that affect the child's welfare. If co-parenting is to be productive, both parents need to put their emotions aside and talk openly and honestly.

Living together, even for the child's sake, is an essential part of a healthy co-parenting relationship. The co-parenting arrangement will only be successful if one or both parties are up to the task.

It can be difficult to deal with narcissistic people in a relationship, and it can also be difficult to co-parent with them when the relationship ends. You and your ex may have decided to co-parent your child while you're apart, but the challenge is to give your child the protection, stability, and deep relationship with each of you that they need.

If you share parenting responsibilities with a narcissist, you may find that they take even the gentlest and most well-intentioned criticism personally. This is because your narcissistic ex is unlikely to admit or change their destructive behavior. What should be a typical co-parenting conversation can easily turn into an adversarial one.

The resulting situation is difficult and upsetting for the other parent. It should come as no surprise that these traits often undermine peaceful interaction, as good co-parenting is based on open communication and mutual respect.

Narcissism and other personality disorders are present in virtually every high-conflict scenario. Narcissists often reject collaborative co-parenting in favor of the competitive framework of the courts, preferring to have someone else make decisions for them.

## **Balancing Emotional Control and Boundaries**

Co-parenting as equals is preferable to relying on the legal system, but nothing is ideal when co-parenting with a narcissist. The best you can do is to use the resources at your disposal, and just achieving these goals will be a huge accomplishment. Consider the following recommendations if you are going it alone, without the help of a therapist:

### **a) Maintain emotional control**

Those involved in difficult co-parenting partnerships need to maintain emotional control. No matter how capable your ex is, emotional restraint on your part will go a long way toward minimizing conflict and maintaining sanity.

Are you confused about how to manage your emotions, or are you struggling to do so while your unreasonable ex is present? This is normal and just one of the many reasons why co-parenting and counseling work so well together. By focusing on emotional regulation alone, you can concentrate on finding solutions rather than simply reacting.

### **b) Avoid conflict**

If your ex likes to stir the pot, try to stay out of it. A non-confrontational attitude is essential when dealing with recurring problems, but that doesn't mean you have to give in. In this case, it's important to express yourself.

You can do this, keeping in mind the narcissistic mindset (i.e., sensitivity to imagined judgment), by writing down your thoughts in an email instead of talking about them directly. This method also provides your ex with additional time to consider the situation, preventing a sudden, intense reaction from influencing both of you.

### **c) Give compliments**

A sense of entitlement and an excessive sense of self-importance define the narcissistic personality, but their core motivation is a desire for admiration. When co-parenting with a narcissist, the simplest way to keep things from spiraling out of control is to give them the affirmation they want. Whenever possible, acknowledge the co-parent's achievements. They need approval and a spoonful of sugar.

## **Recognizing Small Victories and Achievements**

Being able to do some of these things is a great achievement; what matters is the ultimate goal, which is your and your children's well-being.

Using these guidelines, you can prioritize your children's needs, be consistent, and develop a healthy and consistent parenting style. Remember that your children's well-being is your top priority, and by sharing resources, you can create a safe environment in which they can thrive, where they feel valued and understood by both parents.

By accepting the challenges and benefits of co-parenting, you can build a healthy post-divorce relationship that will benefit your children and provide a solid foundation for their future happiness and well-being.

### ***Focus On***

Because of the challenges posed by a narcissistic ex-partner, co-parenting requires a new concept of success and a shift in expectations. Navigating this complex relationship requires the ability to regulate emotions, avoid conflict, express regular appreciation, and set clear boundaries.

While the journey is certainly arduous, it is important to recognize and celebrate even small successes. After all, the goal—the well-being of the children—remains constant. Adopting these approaches can help couples rebuild their relationships after divorce, always keeping in mind the emotional stability and future well-being of the children.



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## Chapter 15. Consequences for Children Raised by Narcissists

**N**ow, let's try to understand specifically the impact a narcissistic parent can have on their children. But let's start at the beginning.

Children who have a relationship with an unhealthy parent are more likely to develop the following personality traits: Their resentment of their treatment leads to the development of these characteristics.

### **a) The “Bully Child”**

This child imitates the habits of an unhealthy parent, such as bullying, throwing tantrums, manipulating outcomes, using emotions to distract others, and avoiding responsibility. Sometimes they do this to fit in, other times to dominate the parent.

The sense of power and control that the parent's actions provide attracts this child. Some children, dissatisfied with their treatment, may develop an obsession with beating emotionally unstable parents at their own games and overpowering others whenever they get the chance (or find someone weaker).

### **b) The “People-Pleaser Child”**

Some children will try to win over a controlling parent in order to avoid the suffering that control brings. To avoid their parents' authority or anger, these children try to be obedient and appealing, often becoming people-pleasers and lacking boundaries, inviting unwanted people into their adult lives.

These young people often grow up to be adults who see relationships as “projects” and end up in the same kinds of encounters they wish they could have avoided (or corrected).

### **c) The “Rebel Child”**

When a young person feels manipulated and dominated, they may rebel by doing the opposite of what the ill parent wants. This can range from “throwing a tantrum” and deliberately getting into trouble (the worst offender for a narcissistic parent) to “hiding from the world” by withdrawing completely into the house or into themselves.

### **d) The “Survivor Child”**

These young people are strong enough to resist parental coercion. They come to terms with not having a close relationship with their parents and learn to set boundaries.

They gain confidence, meaning, and stability from the healthy parent or another close person and grow into emotionally secure individuals. These young people make wise choices, form healthy relationships, and exercise sound judgment.

## **Children’s Self-Esteem and Growth**

Now is the time to take action, repair the damage your self-absorbed former partner caused, and restore your children’s sense of serenity and confidence so they can thrive in a peaceful environment.

The initial step involves establishing a foundation for your child as an individual, fostering their inner strength and belief in themselves.

### **a) Establishing targets**

Young children should set goals that are appropriate for their ability level. These goals can be as simple as doing things that pique their interest. As children get older, they can choose difficult but doable tasks when they are

involved in goal planning. Achieving this balance ensures that their goals match their abilities, promotes a sense of accomplishment, and develops a perspective on individual growth.

## **b) Praise**

Encouragement and acknowledgment of their accomplishments, such as mastering new skills or achieving milestones, fuel their excitement and eagerness to interact with the world.

Smiling, interacting, and actively engaging in their endeavors are all ways to demonstrate your appreciation for their efforts. Providing them with your attention will not only enhance their self-assurance but also boost their confidence.

## **c) Accept imperfection**

Children learn by watching adults, especially how they deal with mistakes. Being open and honest about your own mistakes not only creates an honest and trusting atmosphere, but also teaches them that making mistakes is a natural part of life.

Because they understand that mistakes can be opportunities for growth and learning, they will become more resilient and less afraid of making errors themselves.

## **d) Avoid caustic remarks**

Sarcasm can be confusing and uncomfortable for children, especially when they are dealing with difficult emotions. Instead of using sarcasm, engage them in a conversation about their feelings when they are triumphant or struggling.

Reassurance and constructive feedback can have a significant impact on their emotional development. If they've achieved something, ask sincerely how they feel. Similarly, if they've had problems, give them a safe place to vent their feelings.



### **e) Emphasize the enjoyment and learning process rather than the outcome**

While objectives are important, too much attention to the end result can sometimes overshadow the enjoyment of the journey itself. Encourage children to enjoy the process of learning and participation.

Participation for the sake of participation teaches children about cooperation, perseverance, and the importance of taking on new challenges. This strategy promotes holistic growth, allowing children to acquire not only specific skills but also a positive attitude towards lifelong learning.

## **Encouraging Children's Development and Interaction**

It is more important than ever for children to play. Playing with your child is an effective way to promote their physical, emotional, and cognitive development. Remember that through play, you are not only providing entertainment but also laying the foundations for a better future and healthy growth.

### **a) Playmates for parents**

Your relationship with your child will grow, and if you participate in their play, you will show more interest in their world. Activities like playing Monopoly, drawing, or building with blocks can accomplish spending quality time together and sharing ideas. This shared experience helps to build memories while facilitating open communication and greater mutual understanding.

### **b) Find some time to spend playing with your child**

Playing with your children goes beyond enjoyment; it's an investment in their growth and development. When you actively participate in their

playtime, you gain insights into their world, better grasp their interests, and understand how they think. Through play, kids acquire life skills, foster creativity, enhance problem-solving abilities, and cultivate self-discipline.

### **c) Foster a culture of playfulness among children**

Besides being enjoyable, play holds importance in a child's development. Encourage your child to partake in a range of activities that encompass imaginative role-playing as well as physical exercises. Running, jumping, and even shouting are all forms of play that not only bring excitement to young children but also promote their physical and mental well-being. Additionally, it provides them with opportunities to form lasting friendships.

### **d) Interacting with others through play**

Children's interactions with their peers are crucial to their development. Spending time with other children gives your child a sense of belonging and helps them identify their own skills and areas for improvement. Playing with other children teaches them important social skills such as cooperation, communication, and empathy. Contact your local community groups, schools, or leisure centers to find appropriate play opportunities for your child.

### **e) Putting fun before winning**

In our achievement-oriented culture, we tend to focus on success and victory. But the thrill of engagement and exploration may be more important for young people.

Prioritise the experience and enjoyment of your child's play over the outcome. Instead of asking, "*Did you win?*" ask, "*Did you have fun?*" This shift in emphasis encourages young people to value the process of learning, experimenting, and having fun over the pressure of winning. It boosts their internal motivation and helps them develop a positive view of success.

Encourage them to play and interact with their peers so they can become part of their vibrant world. Not only will you be creating valuable experiences for them, but you will also be building a solid foundation for their social skills, self-esteem, and overall development.

### ***Focus On***

Co-parenting with a narcissistic ex-partner requires an extra level of tolerance, sensitivity, and understanding. The child's well-being and emotional stability must always come first. Witnessing narcissistic traits could damage the child's emotional development and lead them to adopt roles such as bully, people-pleaser, survivor, or rebel.

Although one parent's narcissistic tendencies may attempt to undermine the child's bond with the other parent, it is important to prevent the child from becoming a pawn in the ongoing dynamic.

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## Chapter 16. Protecting Children

A narcissistic parent will generally limit the amount of time you spend with your children because they are jealous of the relationship you are developing with them and are afraid of losing your attention and taking a back seat.

They also believe that you are doing exactly what they would do with the children, which is to influence them and persuade them to side with you because they cannot think otherwise and believe that everyone is like them.

This parent may try to control you by constantly texting and calling while the children are with you. Despite the potential for upset, you might find yourself tempted to temporarily remove the phone from the child.

***For example:***

*"Jake, I've noticed that your mom never stops calling or texting you when you're with me. "Is everything okay?"*

*"It's too much, Dad," Jake says. "She keeps checking up on me and wants to know everything."*

*"I've been thinking about turning off my phone for a while to get some peace and quiet," his father says. "Does that sound sensible to you?"*

*"No, I'd rather she trust me," says Jake.*

*"Ok, so we'll have to deal with it," the dad says. "If this continues, we may have to go to court to get restrictions."*

We need to address and manage this compulsive calling habit. Courts often allow children to see the other parent whenever they want, but

they also have the power to intervene if the contact becomes excessive and controlling. Alternatively, former parents may wish to engage their children in conversations that have nothing to do with them.

## Children as an Outlet

Don't think of your children as psychologists or ears for your frustrations. If you feel the need to talk about the other parent, it's better to confide in your best friend or a therapist instead of discussing it with your children.

If your child asks you a question that you know is not appropriate, like, "Mommy, why did you and Daddy break up?" Explain to them that the situation is quite complex, and it's something between the two of you.

Assure them that both parents love them as much as before, and that the family will remain together like always. Above all, make sure to reassure your children that they are not responsible for the divorce.

### ***For example:***

*If Lily brings up the reason for her dad and your divorce in a conversation with her friend, please remind her that certain topics are appropriate for adult discussions. "Mum," Lily says, "I just want to understand why you guys split up."*

*Mom responds, "I know you're curious. It's a complicated situation between your father and me. I want you to know that we both care deeply about you, and our separation has nothing to do with anything you've done."*

*"It can be tough sometimes," Lily admits.*

*"I understand, sweetheart," Mom responds affectionately. "Keep in mind that you can always communicate with us. But there are certain matters that your father and I should address privately."*

It's important not to disclose all the details to them and not to speak ill of the other parent in front of the children. Doing so would mirror the tactics employed by your ex-partner: trying to manipulate and gain favor by

exploiting their emotions. By doing this, you would essentially be engaging in the negative behavior that you are criticizing in this situation.

## **Protecting Children from Narcissistic Environments**

Children thrive when their parents are emotionally stable. While it is true that children of emotionally unstable parents often face similar challenges, this does not imply that these children will repeat the same patterns. We all make mistakes as parents, so it is important not to be too hard on yourself if unexpected things happen in your child's life.

While family dynamics, trauma, and loss can influence a child's upbringing, it's not a given that children of balanced parents will always follow the same path, and vice versa.

However, when parents are well-adjusted themselves, their children are more likely to develop healthy emotional skills. Moreover, even if a child grows up with parents facing challenges, they can still achieve greatness and emotional stability with proper supervision and support.

Many people often wonder how they can shield their children from life challenges and negative consequences such as abandonment or the impacts of divorce. The answer lies in taking care of your emotional well-being and maintaining good mental and physical health.

By setting a positive example, you provide your children with the best possible foundation for a successful and emotionally mature adult life.

### ***Focus On***

It is critical to create a loving environment that builds the child's self-confidence, emphasizes the importance of learning, and encourages open communication to offset the negative consequences of poor separation.

Providing children with a foundation of understanding, growth, and play, even in the midst of difficult parenting dynamics, will help them develop the emotional maturity and resilience necessary to thrive and become well-adjusted adults.

Always be honest with your children; even if they are young, they understand more than you think.

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## Chapter 17. The Legal Consequences of Co-Parenting with a Narcissist

**I**t takes courage to take a narcissist to court, whether you're married or not. Although the judge has the final say on your child's custody, they will usually accept the mutually agreed-upon arrangements you and your partner have made. Therefore, it's crucial to reach a consensus on custody, access, and maintenance matters prior to court proceedings to ensure the current and future safety of your children.

I recommend that you consult a family law specialist for the legal elements, as some rules may differ from country to country. If you're new to divorce, I'm going to cover some general concepts here just to keep you informed. The ability to communicate with your ex-partner in a civil, if not calm, manner is the most valuable asset you can give your children. Occasionally, an open discussion between you two can be beneficial, while other times, mediation and legal advice may be necessary.

Even the most difficult parenting issues should be resolvable if you both want to avoid a costly court battle and are prepared to put your respective egos aside to work together for the benefit of your child. But if you cannot come to an early agreement on the following issues, you will have to take your dispute to court:

- **Custody:** Who has custody, and where does the child live?
- **Visitation:** How often and under what conditions can the non-custodial parent see the child?
- **Maintenance:** To what extent does the non-custodial parent contribute financially to the child's upbringing?



The local Family Court judge usually has wide powers to decide on custody and visitation after hearing the views of a county social worker on your parenting styles and living arrangements. The court will always follow the "best interests of the child" legal standard.

In most states, you can submit your own custody and visitation arrangements, which the court will often approve if the judge thinks they are reasonable and you both agree to them. If the judge disagrees with your approach, they may come up with a new or modified solution. But first, let's be more specific.

## **Custody of a Child**

The court will usually grant joint or shared custody to both legal parents. This means that both parents have a legal obligation to raise the child, and they have equal authority over major life decisions affecting the child (such as education and medical treatment).

Children often share physical custody or residence, living with one parent for a few days or weeks at a time. Some countries grant both parents "joint legal custody," yet only one parent receives "primary physical custody." Again, in some countries, the court is more likely to award one parent "primary physical custody" while giving the other parent "reasonable visitation" rights.

Regardless of the legal definition, the practical outcome typically grants the parent not in charge during the school week liberal rights to spend the weekend or other times with the child (known as "visitation"), unless there is a compelling reason why it would be harmful to the child.

## **Visitation**

You and your ex-partner can agree on visitation arrangements on a voluntary basis, just like with custody. However, if the other parent's (or other person's) behavior prevents you from doing so, you must take legal action and ask the judge to grant you visitation.

## **Child Support**

Even if you were not married at the time the child was born, biological parents are required to support their children in every state. If the parents' incomes are unequal, or if one parent is responsible for most of the child's care, the Family Court may order the non-custodial parent to pay a certain amount of money towards the cost of raising the child (known as "child support").

The Family Court often uses established standards to determine the amount of child support. If the parents' payments or the children's needs change, the Family Court can still adjust this amount.

The amount each parent earns and pays for health care, housing, and other critical child-related costs (such as medical bills and private school fees) determines the amount of child support. Each state has its own child support rules, and the monthly amount varies widely. To help you negotiate, we recommend that you first find out what your legal system would decide in your particular circumstances.

## **Manage Custody and Visitation Disputes**

To understand family law, you will need the help of a family solicitor, as it deals with many difficult family issues. The main focus of family lawyers is divorce, parental rights and support, adoption, and other family-related matters.

Divorce can be a long and difficult process. However, the couple must resolve some issues before formalizing the divorce and address them as soon as they decide to separate. Usually, they use temporary court orders and agreements to address these issues.

We must always meet children's needs and resolve disputes over custody and access as soon as possible. In order to preserve the parent-child relationship and provide a stable environment for all concerned, a "Temporary Parenting Plan," the legal instrument that will guide the residential program and decision-making process, is required.

While the parties, with the help of their attorneys, negotiate a final long-term agreement, a short-term order provides structure, sets expectations, and helps parents understand their obligations. Temporary orders, therefore, help clarify each party's roles and reduce the frequency of time conflicts. But let's take a closer look at temporary orders.

## **Temporary Orders**

A temporary order facilitates planning and ensures that the children spend enough time with each parent. Short-term orders or directives serve to define and specify the expectations of each involved party.

Establishing these clear expectations reduces instances of misunderstanding or overlap regarding time management, thereby ensuring smooth operations or interactions between the parties. In essence, these short-term orders lead to better organization and fewer clashes or disagreements over scheduling custody time and children's various school or sports commitments.

## **Out-Of-Court Settlements**

At times, parents choose to settle custody disputes outside of the courtroom through agreements. In such cases, it is crucial for parents to set aside their disagreements and collaborate in developing a custody and visitation agreement that caters to their family requirements.

You must write, sign, and present this agreement to the judge for approval. It is essential for all involved parties to adhere fully to the terms of the agreement. Once approved, this agreement becomes legally binding, and any parent who fails to abide by its terms may face consequences.

If divorcing couples cannot agree on custody and visitation arrangements, they may seek the assistance of an impartial and competent third party to develop a parenting plan. This process may involve discussions or mediation sessions, making it a bit longer and more difficult (as well as more expensive). Parents usually turn to this type of conflict resolution

when there are custody disputes or when they are having difficulty reaching a mutually acceptable compromise.

### ***Focus On***

When navigating through the legal procedures associated with custody arrangements, contact rights, and child support matters, it is critical to always prioritize the child's best interests. Periods frequently employ temporary arrangements as a stabilizing measure to meet all of the child's needs.

While it is true that open discussions and voluntary agreements can occasionally result in resolutions, it is also true that the presence of legal experts becomes necessary when dealing with highly contentious matters. Regardless of the issues at hand, the ultimate objective remains consistent: ensuring a nurturing environment for the child while simultaneously navigating the intricacies of human relationships and legal frameworks.

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## Chapter 18. Helping to Co-Parent with a Narcissist

**T**his chapter explores the best methods I've found in my work to help people leave a narcissist and start a new life. In my experience, there is always a solution to any problem, and there is always a positive aspect to every situation.

It all starts with a strong and supportive support network, then a skilled counselor, and finally the legal system to help you on this difficult journey. But first, in order:

### **Support Groups for Parents**

The first step is to create a network of trusted friends or family members. Your “support network” is a group of people with whom you can share experiences and seek motivation and support when you need it.

Your support network may be able to offer a sympathetic ear and wise advice. Most people's networks often consist of family, friends, and colleagues who provide support during both good and bad times. Having a strong support system is crucial to avoiding loneliness and maintaining your mental health and well-being.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs ranks relationships and social interactions as the next most important human needs after meeting our basic needs for health and physical safety. In fact, Maslow emphasizes the importance of interpersonal relationships and social ties to an individual's overall well-being and development.

**Maslow's hierarchy of needs:** Is a psychological theory developed by Abraham Maslow (1908–1971) that suggests that individuals have a range of needs from basic (e.g., food and shelter) to advanced (e.g., esteem and self-actualization), with relationships and social connections as basic needs.

## The Benefits of a Support System

Remember that having a solid support system is essential to being a happy and successful parent. I'd like to share with you some opinions about the usefulness of these groups, without excluding other resources:

- **Shared Experiences:** By comparing yourself with others, you will learn that you are not alone in this situation and that it is not your fault or unlucky that you married a narcissist (they can be quite charming!). The key is to recognize when this attitude becomes a real disorder and intervene.
- **Diverse Perspectives:** Talking to people will expose you to various points of view, allowing you to look at situations from different angles. You may discover aspects, even favorable ones, that you had not considered.
- **Emotional Venting:** You'll also be able to vent to more people without burning them out by always talking to the same person.

## Creating a Support System for Separated Parents

1. **Connect with parents:** Building connections with fellow parents can be incredibly valuable. It allows you to share knowledge, gain perspectives, and foster a sense of community. Look for parent organizations, online forums, and other helpful resources.

2. **Lean on family and friends:** Your loved ones can be a source of support, both practically and emotionally. Whether you need help with childcare or someone to talk to, don't hesitate to reach out to your family and friends.
3. **Prioritize self-care:** As a parent, it's crucial to prioritize your well-being. This includes getting rest, maintaining friendships, engaging in physical activity, and participating in activities that bring you joy.
4. **Foster co-parenting:** If you're co-parenting with your partner or ex-partner, it's important to work cooperatively for the benefit of your children. Be open to communication, be willing to negotiate differences, and strive for cooperation.
5. **Consider seeking assistance:** If you encounter parenting challenges or face personal difficulties that affect your ability to cope effectively, don't hesitate to reach out for professional help from psychologists or therapists who specialize in supporting parents like yourself.

## Seeking Professional Help

If you find yourself co-parenting with a narcissist, it's important to prioritize your mental well-being. Keep in mind that your strength has grown over time, and your children will no longer endure the abuse of their narcissistic parent.

If you feel overwhelmed during this process, don't hesitate to seek support. Consider counseling as a resource to help you navigate your emotions and adjust to your new circumstances.

Always remember that you are now in control of your life, and having a child together doesn't automatically make you dependent on the other parent. However, it's completely acceptable to seek assistance if you find yourself struggling with the challenges of co-parenting.

In times of crisis or significant life changes, we often turn to those closest to us for support, such as friends and family members. However, it's important to recognize that they might not always fulfill this role or offer impartial support.

You may upset them or reopen personal wounds, or they may bring their traumas or old family dynamics to bear on you. In short, it's okay to talk to those close to you, but healing the mind requires a psychologist, therapist, or other appropriate professional.

Keep in mind that working individually with a therapist can greatly assist you in developing better coping mechanisms for this challenging situation. Additionally, consider joining a support group specifically tailored for separated or divorced parents who have experienced narcissistic abuse.

## **The Law Is On Your Side**

Narcissists are experts at reshuffling the deck at the last minute. The best thing you can do is write everything down in a custody agreement or parenting plan. You have yet to discover how effective that piece of paper will be when your narcissistic co-parent starts to demand more time with the child or tries to exert more control in certain situations.

You need to put every aspect of your custody arrangement in writing so that the narcissist cannot exploit any misunderstandings later. Make sure the court-approved plan spells out every detail, such as who will pay for any medical expenses and when regular and holiday visits will take place, including Christmas and summer holidays.

You can ask the court to appoint a Guardian ad Litem (GAL) for your child, a neutral third party who will look after your child's best interests. After getting to know your child and their circumstances, the GAL will have the authority to propose solutions to the court to meet your child's needs.

These co-parenting plans will cover issues such as where the child should spend time and which parent the child should live with. You can also agree



that the court may appoint a mediator to help you and the other co-parent resolve any disagreements.

### ***Focus On***

To navigate the difficult waters of co-parenting with a narcissist, you need a solid support network. Such support will ensure your mental and emotional health and build resilience in the face of adversity. Connecting with a network of supportive friends, relatives, and co-parents, seeking professional help when overwhelmed, and ensuring that legal protections are in place are all important components of this support system.

With these resources, parents can navigate the challenges posed by a narcissistic co-parent, ensuring that the child's well-being remains a priority and that the parent remains psychologically and emotionally healthy.



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## Chapter 19. Key Tools for Co-Parenting with a Narcissist

**W**hether you decide to leave your spouse or stay in a relationship with a narcissist, the materials in this final chapter can help you manage the situation better.

Managing expectations, setting limits, and maintaining an appropriate emotional distance are all common tactics in the self-help tools I've highlighted below, and they're the same strategies I taught you on earlier pages and what I use successfully with my patients.

Of course, these tools can also help both the victim and the narcissist heal and recover. Despite the fact that narcissists are unlikely to seek self-help (they wouldn't be narcissists if they didn't deny having a problem), there are options for anyone who exhibits symptoms of Narcissistic Personality Disorder and wants to deal with the consequences of their behavior.

The following organizations, books, and professionals may be of great help:

1. **The National Domestic Violence Helpline:** Provides a hotline, text line, and online chat for people in high-risk situations. Their website also has a search function that can be used to find local services, such as support groups.
2. **Help Within Reach:** Is an organization founded by therapist Pamela Raphael, offering several narcissistic abuse support groups. The groups are accessible to anyone, regardless of location, and meet virtually.

3. **I Believe Your Abuse:** Is a website that provides guidance on how to overcome narcissistic abuse. They provide a list of therapy and support group resources by state.
4. **Who's Pulling Your Strings?:** Dr. Harriet Braiker's book can help you develop techniques to control the cycle of manipulation.
5. **Domestic Violence Clinics:** Often offer support groups for IPV survivors. We classify narcissistic abuse as a form of intimate partner violence (IPV).
6. **7 Cups of Tea:** Is an internet service with hundreds of listeners who volunteer their time to provide a listening ear.
7. **Online-Therapy.com:** An online therapy service that offers weekly live therapy sessions (chat, phone, and video) with your own licensed and verified therapist, as well as additional support focusing on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), one of the most popular psychotherapeutic modalities for dealing with mental health issues.
8. **Queen-Beeing.org:** Offers support groups and information on narcissistic abuse.
9. **Renee Swanson's Covert Narcissism Podcast:** This podcast discusses covert narcissistic abuse, its effects on victims, and recovery options.

### *Focus On*

There is no doubt that co-parenting with a narcissist can be challenging, but there are numerous resources available to help parents navigate this difficult terrain. The support network is vast and diverse, ranging from hotlines for high-risk relationships to websites dedicated to recovery from narcissistic abuse.

Books and podcasts provide insight into manipulative practices and help readers recognize and avoid them. In addition, remote therapeutic support is available through online platforms, making therapy more accessible.

While each scenario is unique, many of these methods emphasize the importance of knowing, setting limits, and prioritizing one's own well-being. By using these resources, co-parents can find comfort and techniques to ensure the best for their children.

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# Conclusion

**T**his chapter concludes our journey through the pages of this book. I sincerely hope that, as you have considered the challenges and opportunities of co-parenting with a narcissistic partner, you have found inspiration, comfort, and wisdom in my words, as I promised you at the beginning of our journey.

I understand that your journey has not been easy. You've experienced tremendous emotions, identified subtle dynamics with your ex-partner, and sought practical solutions for the sake of your children and your personal well-being. Your commitment to achieving all these goals is impressive.

Remember that you are stronger than you think. You have shown remarkable strength in the face of adversity. You have continued to seek the light, even when the darkness seemed insurmountable. Having realized the importance of self-care, communication, and empathy, you have made an effort to incorporate these into your life.

Always remember that repairs take time. There may be times when you are successful and times when you are not, but every step you take brings you closer to a better future. I urge you to continue to take care of yourself, cultivate empathy, and keep open lines of communication with your ex-partner and especially your children.

Remember that you are setting a good example for your children. Respect, strength, and unwavering love are qualities you are instilling in them that will have a huge impact on their future. Believe me, your commitment to creating a friendly and nurturing atmosphere for children will make a lasting impression.

If you ever find yourself feeling overwhelmed, I encourage you to return to these pages. Take the time to revisit the advice, reflect on the inspiring passages, and remember that you are never alone in your journey.

Remember that there is always someone for you to reach out to, whether it is a friend, a psychologist, or even a lawyer. Don't hesitate to ask for assistance when needed. There are people who believe in your ability to overcome any challenge; you must also believe in that.

Lastly, I want to express my gratitude for taking the time to read this book. I hope that the concepts presented within will serve as a guiding light as you strive towards creating a future for both yourself and your loved ones.

Should you wish to get in touch with me, please feel free to contact the publisher at [authors@ltpublishing.net](mailto:authors@ltpublishing.net). I would be more than happy to address any inquiries or concerns you may have. I also plan to write a sequel to this manual.

If you are interested, you can request the preview through the email address and join our group of beta readers, who get early access to my books and can provide feedback that is very valuable to me.

May your courage always prevail through times, and may you embrace the light that waits beyond every dark moment.

With love and hope,

*Dr. Elizabeth Morgan*

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# Glossary

**Addiction:** The narcissist's dependence on external validation bears similarities to an addict's dependence on a substance.

**Antagonistic Subtype:** Narcissists who view interactions as conflictual, often seeing situations as having a "Winner" and "Loser."

**APA (American Psychological Association):** A renowned organization that offers definitions and classifications for psychological terms and disorders.

**Beta Readers:** A group of individuals who read and review a manuscript before it's published, providing feedback to the author.

**Blame-shifting:** The act of pushing the responsibility of one's actions, decisions, or mistakes onto another.

**Boundary Setting:** Establishing clear limits or rules that define acceptable behavior in a relationship or situation.

**The "Bully Child":** Is a child who emulates the narcissistic parent's domineering behaviors.

**CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy):** Is a popular psychotherapeutic treatment that helps patients understand the thoughts and feelings influencing their behaviors.

**Child Custody Lawyer:** Is a legal professional who specializes in child custody cases, upholding the rights and best interests of the child and parents.

**Child therapist:** A professional trained to understand and assist children and their families in the midst of emotional or behavioral challenges.

**Clinical Psychology:** Is the branch of psychology that deals with the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders.

**Cluster B of Personality Disorders:** A classification within the DSM-5 that includes NPD, borderline personality disorder, antisocial, and histrionic personality disorders.

**Communicative assertiveness:** Is the quality of confidently and directly expressing one's needs or desires without being aggressive.

**Communitarian Subtype:** Narcissists motivated by a sense of superiority, who perceive themselves as selfless and project a caring image.

**Comorbidity:** The presence of two or more disorders in an individual at the same time.

**Co-parenting:** Is a shared responsibility between parents to raise their children after separation or divorce. Co-parenting involves collaboration, communication, and compromise in making decisions about the children's upbringing.

**Counseling:** A professional relationship in which a trained individual offers guidance and support to help an individual or group navigate personal, social, or psychological challenges.

**Counselor:** A professional who provides guidance and support in managing personal, social, or psychological challenges.

**County Social Worker:** Is a professional who assesses parenting styles and living arrangements, making recommendations to the court regarding custody and visitation.

**Court Intervention:** Legal involvement or action taken by a court of law to address or remedy a particular situation.

**Covert Subtype:** A type of narcissism in which the narcissistic traits are hidden or downplayed rather than being openly displayed.

**Custody Agreement:** Is a legal document that outlines the terms and conditions of a child's care and control following the parents' divorce or separation.

**Custody:** The legal right to care for and make decisions for a child. We can divide this into two categories: joint or shared custody and primary physical custody.

**Devaluation:** This is a stage where the narcissist begins to devalue their source through means such as humiliation or emotional abuse.

**“Divide and Conquer”:** A manipulation technique in which an individual fosters division among others to prevent them from uniting and maintain control or power.

**DSM-5 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition):** The standard classification of mental disorders used by mental health professionals.

**Emotional Abuse:** Is a form of abuse where an individual uses words and actions to control, isolate, or belittle another person, causing emotional harm or trauma.

**Emotional Resilience:** Is the ability to mentally or emotionally cope with a crisis or return to pre-crisis status quickly.

**Empathy:** Is the ability to understand and share the feelings or emotions of another person.

**Extravagant or Flamboyant Subtype:** Also known as the Grandiose Subtype, these individuals display a sense of entitlement, superiority, and aggression.

**Family Solicitor:** A legal professional specializing in family law matters, including divorce, custody, and child support.

**FYI (For Your Information):** A form of communication that simply passes on information without expecting a response or action.

**GAL (Guardian ad Litem):** A court-appointed individual who represents the best interests of a child in legal proceedings, ensuring their rights and needs are considered.

**“Gaslighting”:** Is a form of psychological manipulation in which a person seeks to sow seeds of doubt in a targeted individual or group, making them question their memory, perception, or sanity.

**The “Grey Rock Method”:** Is a tactic to deal with manipulative or narcissistic individuals that involves offering no emotional response, akin to a dull, lifeless rock.

**High-Performance Subtype:** An individual who may display grandiose narcissistic tendencies but is also highly functional, adaptive, and successful.

**“I Statements”:** Communication strategy focusing on expressing personal feelings and needs without placing blame.

**IPV (Intimate Partner Violence):** A form of abuse that occurs between two individuals in a close relationship, often encompassing physical, sexual, or psychological harm.

**Joint Legal Custody:** Both parents have equal authority over significant life decisions affecting the child, such as education and medical treatment.

**Legal Protections:** Safeguards provided by the law to ensure the rights and well-being of individuals, especially in contentious situations like divorce or custody battles.

**“Love Bombing”:** Is a manipulative technique used by narcissists where they overwhelm their victims with affection and attention to gain control or influence over them.

**Malignant Subtype:** A particularly damaging form of narcissism characterized by anger, sadism, and a complete disregard for the well-being of others.

**Manipulative Parenting:** A parenting style in which one parent uses tactics to undermine, control, or negatively influence the child's

perception of the other parent, often in order to achieve their personal agenda.

**Maslow’s “Hierarchy of Needs”:** A theory in psychology introduced by Abraham Maslow (1908–1971) suggests that individuals have a series of needs ranging from basic (e.g., food, shelter) to advanced (e.g., esteem, self-actualization), with relationships and social connections being a fundamental need.

**Mediator:** A neutral and impartial third party who assists the parties in reaching an agreement.

**Narcissism:** Is a personality trait or style marked by an inflated sense of self-importance, a need for constant praise, and a focus on oneself often at the expense of others. It is sometimes considered a personality disorder when it affects one’s ability to have healthy relationships.

**Narcissist:** A narcissist is someone who has an excessive interest or admiration for themselves. People with Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) can be particularly challenging to deal with in personal relationships.

**Narcissistic Abuse:** Is a form of emotional and psychological abuse inflicted by an individual who has narcissistic tendencies or a Narcissistic Personality Disorder.

**Narcissistic Parenting:** Is the act of parenting dominated by self-centered motivations and a lack of genuine concern for the child’s wellbeing, often leading to emotional neglect and manipulation.

**“Narcissistic Supply”:** The attention, admiration, and validation sought by someone with Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD). It’s the emotional sustenance they require to bolster their fragile self-esteem.

**The “No-contact” rule:** A self-imposed boundary where one person stops contacting, connecting, or communicating with another person to heal, recover, and move on from a relationship.

**NPD (Narcissistic Personality Disorder):** A mental condition characterized by a long-term pattern of exaggerated feelings of

self-importance, a deep need for excessive attention and admiration, troubled relationships, and a lack of empathy for others.

**Parental Alienation:** Is a manipulative tactic where one parent tries to distance their children from the other parent, typically by painting the other parent in a negative light.

**Parental Manipulation:** Tactics used by one parent to sway the child's opinions, feelings, or perceptions about the other parent, often stemming from unresolved personal issues or desires to control.

**Parenting Agreements:** Legally binding contracts that set out the terms and conditions of co-parenting, such as custody arrangements, visitation schedules, and decision-making responsibilities.

**Parenting Plan:** A detailed document that parents create to outline how they will raise their children post-divorce. It can cover topics ranging from daily routines to long-term decisions about education and health care.

**Pathological Narcissism:** A term describing severe manifestations of narcissism that can involve both grandiose and vulnerable aspects.

**The “People-Pleaser Child”:** A child who becomes overly compliant to avoid conflict with the narcissistic parent.

**Personal Boundaries:** Defined limits or rules that individuals set up to protect their personal space, emotions, or well-being.

**Prevalence rate:** The proportion of existing cases of a specific condition in a community.

**Primary Physical Custody:** The child lives predominantly with one parent, but the other parent might have visitation rights.

**Primary Supply:** Direct forms of validation such as compliments, admiration, or being the focus of attention.

**Projection:** A narcissistic parent may project unwanted feelings or traits onto their child as a defense mechanism.

**Psychotherapy:** The treatment of mental disorders by psychological rather than medical means.

**PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder):** A form of psychological distress that develops after highly traumatic experiences.

**The “Rebel Child”:** A child who acts out against the controlling behaviors of the narcissistic parent.

**Resilience:** Is the ability of a person or system to recover quickly from difficult conditions.

**“The Savior”:** Role within the triangulation dynamic; “The Savior” is the mediator or “Hero” trying to resolve the situation.

**Secondary Supply:** Indirect forms of validation, such as having control over someone or receiving unwanted attention. This type of supply supports the structures that reinforce the narcissist’s self-worth.

**Secretive or Vulnerable Subtype:** Individuals who exhibit a lower sense of self-worth, heightened sensitivity to criticism, and may struggle with anxiety and depression.

**Self-esteem:** Is an individual’s subjective evaluation of their own worth or value.

**Setting boundaries:** Establishing clear limits in relationships to maintain personal well-being and ensure mutual respect.

**Sibling Rivalry:** Competition and conflict between siblings are often fueled or exacerbated by parental attitudes and behaviors.

**Supply:** Individuals who provide validation to the narcissist. This could include family members, partners, and even strangers.

**The “Survivor Child”:** Is a child who learns to set boundaries and safeguards their own emotional well-being.

**Temporary Court Orders:** Legal directives that address pressing issues such as custody and child support before a divorce is finalized.

**Temporary Parenting Plan:** A short-term arrangement that outlines the rights and responsibilities of each parent regarding the child's care. This can include where the child will live, visitation schedules, and decision-making powers.

**Therapist:** A professional trained to help people manage and understand their emotions, behaviors, and thoughts. Therapists can be particularly helpful in navigating difficult relationships or situations.

**Toxic Codependency:** A dysfunctional relationship pattern where one person supports or enables another person's addiction, poor mental health, immaturity, or irresponsibility.

**Toxic relationship:** A relationship characterized by behaviors on the part of the toxic partner that are emotionally and, not infrequently, physically damaging to their partner.

**Triangulation:** A manipulation tactic where one person pits two others against each other, preventing direct communication and causing conflict between the two. Narcissistic parents commonly use it to control and manipulate sibling relationships.

**“The Victim”:** Role within the triangulation dynamic; “The Victim” is the one being “wronged.”

**“The Villain”:** Role within the triangulation dynamic; “The Villain” is the one doing “the wrong.”

**Visitation:** The legal right granted to a non-custodial parent to spend time with their child or children. Court orders or voluntary arrangements can establish this.

**“Walking on Eggshells”:** Describes the state of a victim who is always cautious and fearful of triggering the narcissist due to their unpredictable behavior.



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