

UNDERSTANDING NARCISSISM

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10 Tips for Working with a Narcissist (by Christine Hammond of “Understanding Today’s Narcissist” podcast)¹

1. Stay calm. Stay cool. Don’t let them manipulate you and get you heated. They want to know they’ve gotten to you.
2. Ignore all aggressiveness including in their body language. Don’t draw any attention to this or they know they have been able to intimidate you effectively.
3. Pause before responding to anything they say so that you stay calm and neutral. Don’t let them force you to respond. Buy some time by repeating back what they are asking or saying (reflective/active listening). They use the need for immediate action to bully others to their side. Pauses decrease their effectiveness.
4. Speak softly and carry a big stick (boundaries). Embarrassment is a tool you will need to use at times when they begin the cycle of controlling and manipulating you. Talk very quietly and slowly.
5. Watch out for their rollercoaster/push-pull tactics. Don’t get on their rollercoaster. Refuse to agree with a compliment or criticism.
6. Check your body language for tell-tale signs of nervousness or vulnerability. Don’t let them see that or that gives them a green light to attack.
7. Come alongside them as a partner or teammate to connect or bond with them instead of confronting them. They hate to be embarrassed.
8. Set boundaries. Consistently set and reinforce your boundaries until you succeed at communicating that you will no longer play their games or will no longer play by their rules. They will resist until you outlast them on boundaries.
9. Speak clearly. Because the conversation will always be about them, speak clearly about what YOU want or need. Stay on point with one thing. Compliment – Confront – Compliment.
10. Have an exit plan. Avoid getting stuck in a situation or a conversation with a narcissist.

The key, then, to interacting with your narcissistic spouse is to break the vicious circle—to gently thwart their frantic efforts to control, distance, defend or blame in the relationship by sending the message that you’re more than willing to connect with them, but not on these terms. Instead, invite them into a version of intimacy where they can be loved and admired, warts and all—if they only allow the experience to happen.²

Working Well with a Narcissist (by Christine Hammond of “Understanding Today’s Narcissist” podcast)³ – You can learn to deal with a narcissist despite their difficult characteristics, which can be exhausting. Understanding their need for and disdain for the lack of these things will help you learn how to function well with a narcissist. Understanding how to handle a narcissist will give you greater peace and a more functional working relationship. Narcissists need these four things:

1. Attention – understand the right amount of attention that they need without fueling the narcissism.
2. Admiration – provide subtle amounts of admiration.
3. Appreciation – provide small amounts of appreciation to heal their deep-rooted insecurity.
4. Affirmation – provide unconditional support or affirmation of them in a public setting. This feels like pure loyalty to them.

The Dysfunctional Bond Between Narcissists and Co-Dependents (by Christine Hammond of “Understanding Today’s Narcissist” podcast)⁴

Narcissists and people pleasers are strangely drawn toward each other. While opposites do attract, the bond between these personalities is strong as each unknowingly meets the dysfunctional needs of the other. Here is how:

- **Distorted perception.** Narcissists think of themselves first and very little of others while people pleasers think of others first and very little of themselves. Both, however, believe that their way of perceiving is correct. It is not. The neglect of others (narcissism) is selfish and causes unnecessary distance, confrontation and lack of intimacy. The neglect of self (people pleasing) creates unwanted exhaustion, increased anxiety and contributes to a lack of intimacy. Without a balance of self and others, a person cannot be fully intimate.

- **Driven to rescue.** Narcissists and people pleasers love to rescue others; however, they do it for very different reasons. Narcissists gain a sense of superiority from saving others because they were able to solve something the other person could not do on their own. In exchange for the help, narcissists demand unending loyalty. People pleasers gain a natural high from the same act as they love to feel needed. This strokes their ego and impression of self as a selfless person. In exchange, people pleasers expect friendship.
- **Craving admiration.** This is the key to both personalities: the need to be admired by others. Narcissists believe they should be adored because of their expertise, superiority, beauty, intelligence, or accomplishments. It does not matter if they have achieved anything special, narcissists believe they are above others and deserve constant admiration. The term “people pleasers” defines the essential need for satisfying others and seeking their approval. Without admiration, people pleasers and narcissists become starved, usually resulting in an emotional explosion.
- **Misguided affection.** Affection is not intimacy. Sex is not intimacy. Affection is not sex. However, narcissists and people pleasers are unable to make these distinctions. They see all three as the same thing. Affection is showing tenderness, kindness, and gentleness toward another person. Sex is a physical act which is designed to bring pleasure to both parties. Intimacy is a deep connection between two people where they are equally transparent with one another. Narcissists and people pleasers crave affection but are frequently willing to settle for sex. Often the sex is one way: narcissists seek to satisfy themselves and aren't concerned with pleasing others. People pleasers want to satisfy the other person and sacrifice themselves. Neither is comfortable being transparent with another person.
- **Need for control.** Both parties have control issues. Narcissists control through demands, manipulation, and abuse. They are often very aggressive about insisting on their own way and expecting others to fall in line because they said so. Controlling others feeds their self-righteous ego. Because people pleasers cannot be seen as aggressive or assertive, they often use others to control through guilt trips, excessive kindness or passive-aggressive behavior. They are masters at concealing the need to control through niceness. They must control others to feed the desire to be liked by everyone.
- **A pattern of unforgiveness.** Narcissists won't ask for forgiveness; instead, they expect others to make excuses for their poor behavior. They also don't grant forgiveness to others, even for the same offense, and instead, tend to be very vindictive. People pleasers grant forgiveness without being asked and ask for forgiveness even when it is not their fault. However, they are unwilling to forgive themselves for similar offenses. This unequal scale for both the narcissist and people pleaser stem from a belief that they are different than everyone else. The narcissist believes they are better, and the people pleaser believes they are not worthy.

7 Things Narcissists Say to Excuse Their Behavior and Keep You Under Control (by Common Ego⁵ - <https://youtu.be/-9Ghqx6SFUg>)

1. Limit your conversation with them.
2. Understand narcissism: their black and white view of the world--you're all good or all bad; lack emotional empathy (They don't care so they will win against someone who cares about others' feelings); they don't self-reflect well
3. Distance yourself from their “flying monkeys” (anyone on their side/on their team)
4. Don't give them what they want. Don't even engage. Don't let them suck you into an argument. (That's what they want you to do.)
5. Take the power away from what they are saying in that moment. Be happy with you are i.e. don't let them trigger you with your flaws or insecurities. Deflate the conversation by not being affected by what they say. Don't let them poke at you and get a response. Don't give them a response that gives them power. Don't let them trigger you. Own your stuff and it then has no power.
6. Stay calm and label the ugliness that is coming out of their mouth but stay calm! Don't let them manipulate you. Say, "that's a weird comment. What does that mean?" Watch if they feel a narcissistic injury.
7. Keep an eye on your emotional state: anytime you feel some emotional trigger, then they are sucking into a reaction; they are trying to trigger a wound within you and get an emotional response. Walk away. Don't respond; get away when you see a narcissistic injury coming on them.

OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES TO LEARN ABOUT AND DEAL WITH NARCISSISTS

- ARTICLE - [Challenging the Narcissist](#) (by Wendy Behary, psychotherapynetworker.org)
- BOOK - *Disarming the Narcissist: Surviving and Thriving with the Self-Absorbed* by Wendy T. Behary -- [Book](#) or [Audiobook](#)
- PODCAST - [Understanding Today's Narcissist](#) podcast by Christine Hammond (*skip over the intro that focuses on divorce*)
 - [E01: What Is Narcissism?](#)
 - [My Spouse is a Narcissist, Now What?](#)
 - [Can Narcissism Be Fixed?](#)
 - [The Dysfunctional Bond Between Narcissists and Co-Dependents](#)
 - [What is gaslighting?](#)
 - [How to Talk about Narcissism without Saying Narcissism](#)
 - [Working with a Narcissist](#)
 - [10 Tips for Working with a Narcissist](#)
- PODCAST - [Narcissist Abuse Support](#) podcast – (helpful to get support from others also dealing with a narcissist)
- WEBSITE - [WhatIsCodependency.com](#)
- ARTICLE - [Can Narcissists Change?](#)
- ARTICLE - [Can Narcissistic People Change?](#)
- ARTICLE - [Blissfully Happy with a Narcissist: Fantasy or Reality?](#)
- ARTICLE - [How to Recognize Gaslighting and Get Help](#) - Gaslighting is a form of manipulation or emotional abuse that's seen in abusive relationships. It's the act of manipulating a person by forcing them to question their thoughts, perceptions, memories, and the events occurring around them. People who gaslight become expert at pushing your buttons and making you doubt yourself.⁶
 - Signs of gaslighting:
 - no longer feeling like the person you used to be
 - being more anxious and less confident than you used to be
 - often wondering if you're being too sensitive
 - feeling like everything you do is wrong
 - always thinking it's your fault when things go wrong
 - apologizing often
 - having a sense that something's wrong but being unable to identify what it is
 - often questioning whether your response to your partner is appropriate (e.g., wondering if you were too unreasonable or not loving enough)
 - making excuses for your partner's behavior
 - avoiding giving information to friends or family members to avoid confrontation about your partner
 - feeling isolated from friends and family
 - finding it increasingly hard to make decisions
 - feeling hopeless and taking little or no pleasure in activities you used to enjoy

¹ <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/10-tips-for-working-with-a-narcissist/id1209719013?i=1000395435199>

² <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/romance-redux/201309/can-narcissists-change>

³ <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/working-with-a-narcissist/id1209719013?i=1000395460364>

⁴ <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/dysfunctional-bond-between-narcissists-co-dependents/id1209719013?i=1000425403869>

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-9Ghqx6SFUg>

⁶ <https://www.healthline.com/health/gaslighting>