

THE JOURNEY

A Roadmap for Self-healing After Narcissistic Abuse

Meredith Miller

Dedication

This book is dedicated to all those who have been abused,
manipulated, violated and mistreated.

I hope this roadmap will help you find your way out and
forward.

You are strong and brave.
You are not alone.

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Prologue

I believe we all have the right and responsibility to feel empowered, worthy and free.

My story of self-healing after narcissistic abuse began the day I realized that I'd been programmed to accept the Legacy of Abuse passed down my lineage for who knows how many generations. Where did it start? It's hard to know.

The Legacy of Abuse gets passed on trans-generationally without question as something normal and acceptable. When it's modeled by parents, it teaches children that's what love is. Kids then grow up to accept more abuse from others as adults or worse yet they become abusers themselves. Eventually the problem becomes pandemic.

Abuse is deeply woven through society from the macro to the micro level. I believe *the* problem in our world is that many families, corporations, workplaces, governments, media, entertainment, and even spiritual and religious organizations are functioning according abusive values and promoting the normalization of this behavior.

The human species is destroying the planet and robbing the wellbeing from future generations. Senseless wars are perpetuated and promoted causing more trauma and devastation. Millions of people go hungry every day. There are nearly six times as many vacant foreclosed homes as there are homeless people in the streets in America.

None of this makes any sense when you're looking at it from a perspective of empathy. Empathy is precisely what is lacking in the fabric of society.

I know that we can do better and I think you might agree.

I believe that we can create a better world. I believe this is our birthright and responsibility to ourselves, to the planet and to future generations.

I believe the change starts when the individual stands up and declares, "It ends with me."

This is no small thing.

Something incredible happens when you take a stand. As each individual stands up and speaks up in your interpersonal relationships, families and communities, you give permission to others to do the same.

As we collectively stop enabling and condoning the abuse of one another and this planet, things change. As we opt out of the reality paradigm of abuse, we ostracize the abusers instead of celebrating and promoting them.

I believe you can help heal the world by taking responsibility for yourself, standing up for yourself, and opting out of the abuse dynamic. As you work on self-healing after abuse, you can stand confidently and in integrity with your true self, owning your reality, and turning away from any new invitations to suffer abuse.

As you free yourself from abuse, you can live the life of purpose that you dream of. You can create a new sense of meaning in your life and make your soul's contribution, creating ripple effects in the world around you.

Imagine the world we would live in when instead of suffering in the powerlessness and struggling in the worthlessness of abuse, we are each living as empowered beings driven by purpose and making a difference.

You matter. You can help create a new way of life for yourself and generations to come.

Big hug to you!

Meredith

Introduction

Abuse can take many forms. These include mental, emotional, financial, sexual, physical, and spiritual. Many kinds of abuse are invisible yet leave long-lasting scars on the victims and survivors.

These invisible forms of abuse are rarely talked about yet incredibly common.

There is currently a silent pandemic leaving millions of people feeling alone and confused, struggling to escape the self-doubt, fear and so many unanswered questions. Invisible abuse is rarely talked about because of how hard it is to pin-point, even by mental health professionals.

Fortunately, there is a growing wealth of information available, particularly around the term *narcissistic abuse*. After discovering the keywords and digging for answers, the next step is figuring out what to do about it now.

It's important to understand that leaving the abusive person and educating yourself about the abuse is not the same as healing. This discovery is the actual start of the journey of self-healing after narcissistic abuse.

Awareness is the first step to change. The next step is to take action.

What Is Narcissistic Abuse?

Narcissistic abuse has classic, identifiable patterns of behavioral dynamics that are nearly identical regardless of country, culture, language, age, race, gender or socio-economic status. After sharing stories, many people say, “It’s like they all read the same book!”

There are two phases of the narcissistic abuse cycle: idealization and devaluation. This is also known as the sweet-mean cycle. These phases are not necessarily linear in order as they are most often used in a back and forth game of intermittent reinforcement. They build you up and break you down over and over again. This is the trademark of narcissistic abusers.

*When you see someone doing the build you up
then break you down game, that’s a major sign
you’re dealing with a manipulative character and
the sooner you turn away the better.*

During the idealization moments, the narcissistic manipulator uses love-bombing, an intense but shallow showering of attention via words and/or actions to seduce (though not always sexually) the target. Idealization is used in order to make the target feel special. It’s the flattering words, gifts, exciting whirlwind dates, frequent and intense contact, early promises of a future together, and in some cases intense and early sex. There are certain characters who skip most of the flattery and just go directly for an intense and edgy sexual connection in order to create a strong emotional bond. There are others who are not sexual at all and use the intellect as their primary weapon of choice. In non-romantic interpersonal relationships, the idealization looks mostly like superficial praising and gushing or gift-giving. Idealization is also used when manipulators sense that the target is slipping away before they’re done with him or her.

In relationships where the manipulator is grooming someone for the long-con, the initial love-bombing phase will go on for much longer. In situations where the manipulator is just looking for a temporary source of supply, the love-bombing will end much

quicker because they won’t need to invest as much in the seduction knowing that they will discard the target sooner rather than later. Jackson MacKenzie explains this dynamic in *Psychopath Free*¹ and his theory is one hundred percent accurate in the stories people tell me.

The idealization, while it looks quite pleasant, is actually very dangerous because it can appear to be genuine when in fact it is only being used as a form of manipulation to reel in a prey.

This is exactly how people get sucked in.

The idealization eventually gives false hope to the person who stays with the abuser. This false hope sounds like, “I just want to go back to the good times before... happened.” “I know s/he has a sweet side too.” “I know s/he can change and be the person I saw glimpses of during the relationship.” Abusive people know they have to use idealization intermittently with the devaluation in order for the trick to work. Most of us wouldn’t hang around people who are just assholes all the time.

The devaluation is when the narcissistic manipulator makes the target feel unworthy. This can be with words or actions. It’s the backhanded put-downs, the little subtle digs here and there, the direct and explicit making fun of, the blatant criticism and cruelty. It’s also the Silent Treatment after the target sets a boundary, calls out the abuser or doesn’t give them what they wanted. It’s the suddenly too busy for you attitude. It’s using triangulation with another person i.e. someone the manipulator is attracted to, or someone who is amazing at doing what you do, someone who is like you in some way, or someone that means more to them or they spend more time with than you in order to incite jealousy, insecurity and the belief that you will never measure up. Triangulation can also be done with work, hobbies and even the use of substances.

The devaluation is a lot more obviously hurtful than the idealization, but even so it can be easy to miss the subtle, covert and unspoken forms of it until the target is in deep due to the slow progression over time.

A narcissistic character is looking for narcissistic supply. They

are addicted to this form of energetic and emotional currency and they will do whatever it takes to get it. They desire and provoke both positive and negative supply from targets by systematically using intermittent idealization and devaluation. When manipulators are using idealization, they're looking for positive supply in the form of attention, adoration, devotion, sex, money, etc. When they are using devaluation, they're looking for negative supply in the form of anger, outrage, jealousy, emotional outbursts, fear, pain, etc.

In the case of an alcoholic, the addiction comes in a bottle and the abuse usually looks a lot more obvious like yelling and rage.

*In the case of a narcissistic character,
both the abuse and the addiction are invisible.*

This makes it even more confusing for the target to put his/her finger on exactly what is wrong. It's therefore very difficult to point out and explain to others.

This leaves the target feeling even more alone and confused in the struggle.

This kind of abuse is silently happening on interpersonal, familial and societal levels. I believe it is the leading cause of loneliness, anxiety and depression in the world nowadays. If only depression carried a birth certificate, we might understand where it came from.

Narcissistic abuse has been going on for a long time, from the macro to the micro level in society, and it appears to be growing at exponential rates. Nowadays it's being normalized by the media and entertainment industries and promoted by many corporations and institutions.

The media often downplays narcissism as selfies and social media attention-seeking, when this is a very superficial and minimized portrayal of the amount of devastation that a narcissistic character can cause in the lives of others.

The entertainment industry tends to condone and celebrate narcissistic characters on screen, often making them likable and instilling the false hope that they will one day wake up and change, when that is most often just a fairy tale. Behind the scenes, the

predatory and abusive behavior of many producers, directors, actors and media personalities is finally being exposed.

In the recent years we have also seen numerous abusive scandals coming to light in academic, religious and spiritual institutions. The common pattern of dealing with it tends to be immediately covering up this behavior and protecting the abusers instead of calling them out, often shaming and blaming the victims in the process. This is absolutely unacceptable.

We are living in a world run by the narcissistic and sociopathic values of many corporations, governments, schools, religious and spiritual organizations as well as local communities and families.

Narcissistic abuse is promoted as normal and we are taught not to resist or question it. Those who do speak up and call things out are often humiliated, shamed, and discredited through smear campaigns and character assassinations. The first ones in a family to wake up and call out the abuse are usually met with a similar fate. It's not convenient for the manipulators to have the curtain opened, exposing their game, so they often resort to victim-shaming.

Narcissistic abuse appears to be the thing that's wrong with the world, and just about everything else fits under that umbrella. One can only wonder where we go from here as a society.

The Legacy of Abuse continues to spread until individuals wake up, stand up and speak out the declaration, *it ends with me*. This declaration must then be followed by action, predominantly the act of healing the self. Each individual has a powerful affect on society. It's important not to lose sight of that truth vis-a-vis the overwhelming global problems that we are currently facing.

Your investment in your own self-healing is not selfish but rather self-responsible and it is no small thing.

Every societal change starts within the hearts and minds of individuals.

What Will You Get Out of This Book?

This book is not about understanding the narcissist, psychopath, sociopath or other narcissistic manipulator. I recommend the books, blogs and videos of HG Tudor², Sam Vaknin³, Dr. George Simon⁴ and Dr. Martha Stout⁵ for this purpose.

This book is not about how to do No Contact. I highly recommend Kim Saaed's book, *How To Do No Contact Like A Boss*⁶ to learn the most important strategy to detach and protect yourself from these kinds of abusers so you can create the space you need in order to heal. If you're co-parenting with an abuser, she teaches you how to modify No Contact to work for you while still keeping yourself as safe as possible.

The purpose of this book is to give those who have been abused a roadmap out of the suffering and struggle after narcissistic abuse.

This is a comprehensive, holistic outline of the recovery process so you can measure where you are and where you want to go in the journey of self-healing. If you want to change anything in life, you're going to need to measure it somehow. This structure will help you get to the next level and keep moving forward out of the gravity of the past so you can create a life of peace, joy, meaning and purpose.

I have chosen to use the familiar "you" form in this book as I do in my YouTube videos so that you, as the reader, feel like I'm speaking directly to you. If you're like most of us, you probably felt invisible and ended up craving someone to genuinely see you, hear you and acknowledge that what you went through was real.

This book can apply to any kind of relationship you had with a narcissistic abuser and is not limited to intimate partnerships.

Why Are You Here?

Someone, or perhaps many someones, abused your trust to the point where your entire reality was flipped upside-down and inside-out, leaving you with deep doubts and confusion that threaten your very perception of what's real and what's not.

*After months or years of abuse,
your sense of trust is deeply damaged.*

You lost trust in yourself, others and likely even the universe/god. The repetitive experience of fear, terror, deceit, betrayal and loneliness has shaped your life in some major way after narcissistic abuse.

*It's normal that your trust has been wounded
and the good news is that it can be recovered.*

If the abusive patterns began in childhood, your whole nervous system was programmed to respond in certain ways to people and stimuli in the environment and this will continue unchecked into adulthood until you gain self-awareness around this issue and start transforming your life through the practice of self-care. It was not your fault, however you can change it so you can end the suffering and create the life that you actually want.

When a parent shows one face to the world and an entirely different face to the children — one of cruelty, shaming, criticism, and control alternating with superficial praise and approval or perhaps intermittent acts of kindness, this is deeply confusing to the children who will likely grow up to attract similar types of abusive people because their nervous system recognizes abusive behavior as familiar and normal... or they will turn out to be abusers themselves.

Self-awareness of the familial patterns of abuse often comes as a result of a wake-up call caused by one or many abusive adult relationships with intimate partners, friends, co-workers, bosses, neighbors, family members, etc.