



Finding Peace after Narcissistic Abuse

Coming Home to the Body

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*Approximately 80 million people are negatively affected by
narcissistic abuse in the United States alone —
and yet, public awareness is as invisible as the wounds of those abused.*

— Victor Pacheco, Founder of World Narcissistic Abuse Awareness Day



This Workshop Moves in Waves

01

Recognize

The invisible epidemic

02

Feel

Into the body

03

Act

Working with clients

04

Integrate

Coming home

01

Recognize

The Invisible Epidemic

Narcissistic abuse in our practices

1 in 14

people carries narcissistic traits

*Someone causing one of our clients to suffer.
Right now. In our practices today.*

Today we focus:

NOT narcissism — their psychology, tactics or behavior

BUT what narcissistic abuse does to a person

HOW we can recognize it

AND how we can help survivors of narcissistic abuse



What is Narcissistic Abuse?

Narcissistic abuse is the slow and systematic erosion of a person's sense of self—through manipulation, control, and the distortion of reality.

It happens behind closed doors — invisible to the outside world.

Anyone with strong narcissistic traits can cause profound harm.



How Narcissistic Abuse Works

- Power & control
not love, not connection
- Moves fast
no time to see clearly
- Isolation
cutting off friends, family, support
- Gaslighting
distorting reality until they no longer trusts their own perception and judgement
- Triangulation
you are not ok — there is always someone better
- Financial control
- Blackmailing
- Post-separation abuse



Grandiose versus Covert

GRANDIOSE

- Magnetic, charismatic — something feels electric
- Subtle put-downs disguised as jokes
- Entitlement: rules don't apply
- Behind closed doors: rage, contempt, icy silence

COVERT

- Quietly suffering — never raises her voice
- A sigh, a look — shifts the entire room
- Abuse is energetic — felt, impossible to pinpoint
- Much easier to miss

Public persona and private reality — two entirely different worlds. That gap is the architecture of the abuse.



The Trauma Bond

It is not all bad. That is the heart of it.

- Good days, tenderness, humor, moments of feeling seen — unpredictably woven through the chaos
- Intermittent reward — not consistent cruelty
- Research shows that trauma bonds create a dopamine dependency similar to cocaine addiction.
- Long-term narcissistic abuse physically alters the brain

When we sit with these clients, we are not only dealing with attachment patterns, often intergenerational trauma, boundary rupture etc, but also with a body and brain profoundly altered by the relationship.



The Pattern That Doesn't Change

- Narcissism lives on a spectrum
- The behavior does not change — it only gets worse over time
- High emotional intensity · Lack of self-regulation · Entitlement · No accountability or real remorse · Praise & devaluation
- Like a dripping tap — constant, without a break

*Rule of thumb: with a narcissistic person, you cannot get it right. Ever.
That is not a coincidence. That is the point.*



What Our Clients Bring Us

HYPERVIGILANCE

& exhaustion of constantly strategizing to prevent conflict

COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

Hold two contradictory realities at the same time => my fault

SELFBLAME & PROJECTIVE IDENTIFICATION

Their narrative becomes the survivor's own inner voice.

LOST — DISCONNECTED FROM SELF & BODY

Not in touch with preferences, needs, inner compass.

SELF-ALIENATION

Often a basic question like „What do I want?“ has no answer.

NEED FOR LANGUAGE & CONTEXT

"I didn't know there was a name for this."

BONE-DEEP EXHAUSTION

Highly functional outside — empty inside

LOYALTY CONFLICT

Defending, excusing the partner



02

Feel

Coming into the Body

A short experience — essential for our clinical understanding

Gaslighting — A Felt Sense

Film clip — 1950s, deliberately theatrical



I strongly believe that narcissistic abuse can only be truly understood by those who have lived through it. However, this film can give you a felt sense.



03

Act

How to Work with These Clients

SE principles & beyond

First: Who Do We Need to Be?

- The therapeutic relationship is often the first safe space in a long time
- These clients need us to be present and authentic
- A real human being — vulnerable, imperfect, honest
- Genuine compassion, patience, willingness to do repair
- Years of navigating a world where appearance did not match reality made them very sensitive to pretense.
- The experience of being seen, believed and responded to helps the client learn that being close does not equal danger.



The Most Important Shift

Beginning

~100% attention on the narcissistic person

Their chaos · behavior · next move · urgency



Over time

20% on toxic dynamic & how to deal with it

80% on client — rebuilding life, resources, self

Everything the toxic person does is smokescreen.

Its purpose is getting attention, keep the other hypnotized, off center, reactive, easy to manipulate.

Our work is to shift the focus - from manipulation to what is in the client's power.

What do I want my life to look like? · What is the smallest next step I can take into that direction?



Working with Dysregulation in Survivors — SE & Beyond

- Regulation first — our own regulated nervous system is our most powerful tool for co-regulation
- Titration — only the smallest next step
- Orientation — here & now as a counterweight
- Small questions: "How was your morning?" — instead of "How are you?"
- Resources
- Kindness towards oneself — Introducing a different inner voice
- Psychoeducation
- Radical acceptance — behavior will not change
- Boundaries around own behavior
- Canned responses "I hear that's how you see the matter, and I disagree."
- Lots of earth
- We can use SE principles & the SIBAM model when we work towards restoring a more fluid, integrated experience.
- Questions, like: If you could see this through the lens of a camera — what would you see?



What This Work Asks of Us

- Possible intense own reactions — helplessness, urgency, the pull to rescue
 - Counter-projections — their stories can trigger our own experience of betrayal
 - The narcissist's narrative can be compelling
 - Progress will often feel like one step forward, two steps back
 - Supervision & inner work — not optional here
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TAKE A CLEAR STAND

Neutrality in the face of abuse is abandonment. We are in our client's team, believe them. We stand for their dignity and healing — until they can stand there themselves.

BE THE VISION-KEEPER

Hold the image of who they are beyond their story: their resilience, authentic expression, capacity for joy and connection — until they can hold it themselves.



04

Integrate

Coming Home

A Moment to Reflect

Turn to the person next to you · 3 minutes each

*What is one thing from today
you want to carry into your practice —
and what is one thing that touched you personally?*



Healing is possible.

*Not just surviving. Not just functioning.
Real peace — a kind of peace that goes way beyond forgiveness.*

*I have seen it many times.
And it begins — always — with coming home to the body.*



Thank You

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www.traumainanutshell.com



Resources & Next Steps



Scan for:

- Handouts
- Supervision & Sessions
- Professional Training — Waitlist

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