

# CYCLE OF NARCISSISTIC ABUSE

IDEALIZE DEVALUE DISCARD

## IDEALIZE

**NARCISSIST'S AGENDA** **NARCISSIST:** Grooms victim (and their family/friends) to cultivate sense of trust and commitment; engages victim's empathy to accelerate bonding, loyalty, and attachment; feigns "love" while planting seeds of self-doubt in victim to foster emotional dependency and secure power and control in relationship; "invests" in victim to instill sense of gratitude, obligation, "owing."









**IMPACT ON SURVIVOR** **SURVIVOR:** Feels special/chosen; feels intense love, trust, and sexual desire; experiences increased levels of dopamine and serotonin; feels happy, hopeful, attached to narcissist; feels a sense of "owing" narcissist for their "generosity"; minimizes/rationalizes inappropriate behaviors; gives "benefit of the doubt" to narcissist; wraps inappropriate behaviors in context and compassion; begins to defend and make excuses for narcissist to family and friends; begins to isolate, ignore personal boundaries, and modify behavior to align with narcissist's needs, preferences, and desires.

## DISCARD

**NARCISSIST'S AGENDA** **NARCISSIST:** Acts defensively against pain from "narcissistic wound"; projects their own shame and insecurities onto victim and escalates abusive behaviors; feels repelled by victim's emotional response to abuse; "love-bombs"/grooms new victim(s); feels re-energized from "high" of fresh new "narcissistic supply"; feels empowered, entitled, and in control; uses victim's emotional response to abuse/betrayal to "prove" to others that they are "crazy"/"unwell" and to justify the abuse, betrayal, and discard; solicits sympathy from others for "having to endure such a crazy partner"; regains power and control over victim and the relationship narrative.

**IMPACT ON SURVIVOR** **SURVIVOR:** Punished for responding to abusive behaviors; tries to calm and reason with narcissist; apologizes for emotional response to abuse, assumes blame/responsibility, tries to "fix" relationship; tries to prove their "sanity" to narcissist and others; becomes emotionally distressed/"unhinged"; begins to anticipate abuse and modify behavior to avoid conflict and the escalation of abuse; placates narcissist in attempt to return to "honeymoon"/idealization stage of cycle; leaves narcissist or is discarded by narcissist; submits to narcissist's "hoovering" back into relationship for a myriad of complex and legitimate reasons until leaving permanently feels necessary, safe, and possible.

## HONEYMOON







**ABUSER:** Begins to groom and "love-bomb" victim  Puts victim on pedestal  Rushes intimacy  Compares victim favorably to ex partner(s) Flattery, excessive attention, intense sexual seduction  Acts of perceived kindness, empathy, and generosity  Grand gestures, gift-giving, elaborate dates, romantic vacations  "Mirroring" to convey sameness and a strong bond  "Future-faking," early desire for commitment, premature talk of marriage  Over-protection and isolation in the name of "love"  Over-sharing details of traumatic childhood and "crazy" ex partners  Testing/crossing victim's boundaries  Trying to draw victim back in (aka "hoovering") after inappropriate behaviors through gaslighting, justifying, possible apologies, possible promises to change and/or seek therapy.

## DEVALUE






**NARCISSIST'S AGENDA** **NARCISSIST:** Experiences "narcissistic wound" when victim responds to inappropriate/abusive behaviors; feels threatened, defensive, betrayed, victimized; tries to re-gain power and control over victim; triangulates/uses comparisons to other people (and/or flirtation, infidelity) to provoke insecurity within the victim and make them feel replaceable; attempts to destabilize victim by causing them to doubt their reality and question their sanity; becomes bored and resentful; looks for new source of validation and stimulation; seeks new relationship/"reflection of perfection"; begins to "love-bomb" and groom new victim(s); uses victim's increasing emotional distress to attract sympathy from others and to justify their abusive behaviors and betrayals.

**IMPACT ON SURVIVOR** **SURVIVOR:** Devalued/punished for inconveniencing the narcissist by trying to set boundaries, call out unacceptable behavior, or for not being complacent/obedient; experiences decreased levels of dopamine and serotonin; experiences depression, anxiety, fear, self-doubt, confusion, memory problems, sleep disturbance; experiences "cognitive dissonance," confusion, disconnection from intuition and sense of reality; begins to placate, "walk on eggshells," and "go along to get along" to avoid conflict escalation; blames self for problems in relationship; works harder to please narcissist and tries to re-gain their attention and love when new victim(s) are triangulated in; becomes hypervigilant to narcissist's oscillating moods; tries to predict narcissist's needs to access affection/connection and avoid conflict; experiences feelings of fear, obligation, and guilt (aka FOG); begins to deny intuition and cling to the hope for change.

## TENSION BUILDING

**ABUSER:** Begins to make subtle suggestions for change and "improvement" of victim under the guise of "concern"  Delivers criticism, degradations, insults, and name-calling (sometimes under the guise of humor)  Begins to more overtly isolate victim and restrict/control victim's resources and activities  Emotional withdrawal, silent treatment (aka "stonewalling")  Nit-picking, gaslighting, intimidation, threats, violation of victim's boundaries  Communication breaks down  Triangulation/"love-triangle" begins.

## ABUSE ESCALATION

**ABUSER:** Displays cruelty, contempt, coercive force, rage (loud or silent)  Commits escalated act(s) of verbal, emotional, financial, sexual, and/or physical violence  Commits significant betrayal(s)  Makes excuses, gaslights, and minimizes abuse/betrayal  Invalidates victim's emotional response and blames victim for causing the abuse/betrayal  Discards victim temporarily or permanently.

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