



How to Use These Cards

Your toolkit for recognizing and responding to manipulation

*"Genuine care makes you feel more yourself.
Control disguised as care makes you feel less yourself.
That's the only test you need."*

— The Narcissism Decoder

● In the Moment

When something confusing happens, ask "Which pattern is this?" Naming breaks the spell.

● For Processing

After difficult interactions, review relevant cards to understand what happened.

● For Prevention

Familiarize yourself with patterns before they appear. Awareness reduces their power.

● For Teaching

Share with friends who are struggling. Sometimes naming what we see helps others see it too.

Decoder Cards 1-4

01

Concern as Control

"Just checking on you"

WHAT THEY SAY

- " Just wanted to make sure you're okay"
- " I was worried about you"
- " Where are you? Who are you with?"

WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING

Surveillance disguised as concern. This positions them as protector while you become the one who needs monitoring.

Your Power Move

"I'm fine—I'll reach out if I need anything." Don't explain or provide details. Caring people trust your ability to manage yourself.

02

The Gaslight Loop

Repeated "Huh?" and confusion

WHAT THEY SAY

- " That doesn't make sense"
- " I don't understand what you're saying"
- " You're not being clear"

WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING

Your way of expressing yourself is being framed as nonsensical. The confusion is manufactured to make you doubt yourself.

Your Power Move

Don't elaborate. "I was clear. Let me know when you're ready to engage with what I said."

03

The Shame Dump

"I feel bad for you"

WHAT THEY SAY

- " You're too sensitive"
- " That's a you problem"
- " I worry about how you come across"

WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING

Their shame is being deposited in you. You become the container for feelings they refuse to own.

Your Power Move

Internal: "I return this shame to its source."

External: "I don't experience myself that way, but thanks for sharing."

Withholding as Punishment

Silence and coldness after conflict

WHAT THEY DO

- " One-word answers
- " The silent treatment
- " I'm fine" (clearly not fine)

WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING

Normal warmth is withdrawn as punishment. You're supposed to feel the cold and abandon your position to restore connection.

Your Power Move

Don't chase. "I notice you're withdrawn. I'm here when you're ready to talk directly."

Decoder Cards 5-8

05

The Moving Target

Nothing is ever enough

WHAT THEY SAY

- " Well, you did that, but you didn't..."
- " That's not what I meant"
- " Now this is the real issue..."

WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING

You're chasing a target that moves every time you approach. Your perpetual inadequacy is the point.

Your Power Move

"I notice every time I address one thing, another appears. What would 'enough' actually look like?"

06

Righteous Cruelty

"I'm just being honest"

WHAT THEY SAY

- " Someone needs to tell you the truth"
- " I'm only saying this because I care"
- " You can't handle the truth"

WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING

Cruelty dressed as virtue. The "truth" serves their need to diminish you, not your need to grow.

Your Power Move

Real feedback is given with care, at appropriate times, for your benefit. If it feels like an attack, it is.

07

The Comparison Trap

References to others you should be more like

WHAT THEY SAY

- " My ex never had this problem"
- " Most people would be grateful"
- " I could find someone who..."

WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING

You're being reminded that you're replaceable, measured against phantoms who are somehow better.

Your Power Move

"I'm not in competition for this relationship. If you'd prefer to be with someone else, that's a choice you can make."

Pity as Permission

Using their wounds to excuse behavior

WHAT THEY SAY

- " You don't understand what I've been through"
- " I'm just damaged"
- " Everyone leaves me"

WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING

Past pain becomes a reason not to address current harm. Attention redirects from what they're doing to what was done to them.

Your Power Move

Pain explains; it doesn't excuse. "I'm sorry you went through that. And I still need this behavior to change."

Decoder Cards 9-12

09

The Guilt Ledger

Reminders of past kindness

WHAT THEY SAY

- " After everything I've done for you..."
- " You owe me"
- " How could you do this after all I've sacrificed?"

WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING

Previous kindnesses are being converted into debt. Generosity wasn't free—it was investment.

Your Power Move

"I'm grateful for what you've done. That doesn't mean I accept how you're treating me now."

10

Weaponized Vulnerability

Emotional flooding to avoid accountability

WHAT THEY DO

- " Breaking down crying when confronted
- " You're making me feel terrible"
- " I might hurt myself if you leave"

WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING

Their emotional reaction becomes more important than the issue. Your concern gets buried under managing their feelings.

Your Power Move

"I can see you're upset. This conversation is still important. Let me know when you're ready to continue."

11

Reality Revision

Changing what was said or agreed

WHAT THEY SAY

- " I never said that"
- " You're misremembering"
- " You're making things up"

WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING

History is being rewritten. If they control the narrative, they control reality.

Your Power Move

Trust your perception. "I know what I experienced." You don't need their agreement for your experience to be valid.

The Future Promise

Dangling tomorrow to control today

WHAT THEY SAY

- " Things will be different after [event]"
- " I'm working on myself"
- " Just wait—you'll see the real me"

WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING

Hope is weaponized. By keeping you invested in a future that never arrives, they maintain control now.

Your Power Move

"I'm making decisions based on who you are now, not who you promise to be." Potential doesn't pay bills. Consistency does.

The 3-3-3 Rule

When you recognize a pattern, use this before responding:

3

Seconds

Pause. Count silently. Interrupt the automatic reaction.

3

Breaths

Inhale for 4, exhale for 6. Engage your calm nervous system.

3

Words (or fewer)

"I'll think about that."

"Interesting perspective."

"Not for me."

"The less you say, the less they have to twist."

The Emergency Protocol

When activated and confused, follow these steps:

1 Name It

Which card matches what just happened?

2 Breathe

Three deep breaths, exhaling slowly

3 Remember

"This is a pattern. It's not about me."

4 Choose

What's the power move?

5 Document

Write it down later for your reality anchor

Want the Full Playbook?

These 12 cards are excerpted from *You Are Not Crazy: The Narcissism Decoder*—Volume 1 of The Sovereignty Series

- ✓ 60 manipulation patterns fully decoded
- ✓ The Energetic Signature — body-based detection
- ✓ Trauma bond science — why you got hooked
- ✓ Narcissist archetypes and 12 identity masks
- ✓ Family systems and parental wounds
- ✓ Practical response scripts — what to actually say
- ✓ Nervous system recovery tools
- ✓ Exposure questions that reveal narcissists

The Sovereignty Series

- Volume 1:** You Are Not Crazy — The Narcissism Decoder
- Volume 2:** The Bridge — Healing Through Secure Attachment
- Volume 3:** Sovereignty — Internal Authority and Self-Trust
- Volume 4:** Embodied Leadership — Living from Full Presence

From confusion to presence in four volumes.

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"Every pattern you can name is a pattern that loses power over you."

About the Author

Jennifer Brooke Lawless holds a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Boston University and a Master of Science in Mental Health Counseling from Nova Southeastern University. Her clinical work ranged from locked psychiatric units to family therapy and couples counseling.

She wrote this book for the person she used to be: confused, self-doubting, and desperately needing someone to explain what was happening.

She lives in Costa Rica, where she offers healing sessions through Light Brands and Light Field Institute.

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*If this guide helped you, please share it with someone who needs it.
Every person who names the pattern is one less person trapped by it.*