

The Covert Passive Aggressive Narcissist

Debbie Mirza

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Foreword

“3 years ago, my reality was imploding all around me like a scene from the movie *Inception*. Everything I had believed to be true was suddenly collapsing. I was forced to face the truth. Until that moment, I couldn’t quite put my finger on exactly what the problem was. I was mostly in denial about it, but I think I knew something was wrong for a while.

As 1 of my friends mentioned the word narcissist, she pointed out, “He’s like the ones from the past, he’s just the more sophisticated model.”

The heart-breaking dissolution of that relationship sent me on a journey to Peru where I met several more characters like him, mostly in my work life. A year later & totally devastated, I reluctantly went back to the original covert abuser in my life to get on my feet again.

Back where it all began, 1st the complex-PTSD breakdown happened & then I broke through. Observing my mother with new awareness, I was finally able to see where that pattern of relationships came from. In facing my wound & working on healing, I created a new sense of purpose & the work I do now to help people self-heal after narcissistic abuse.

Recently, when 1 of my clients told me she was writing a book on covert narcissists, I was so excited that I offered to write the foreword. I'm grateful that Debbie dedicated herself to write this book on such an important, nuanced topic within the genre of narcissistic abuse.

This book is meeting a great need because unfortunately there is not enough information available for people who have been through the more covert forms of abuse. It's incredibly sophisticated & stealth, so it's often missed by mental health professionals who were not trained to recognize it.

Debbie writes,

"You think you're on the right track after discovering narcissistic personality disorder, but then you read things that are not completely what you experienced."

"Coverts do have a grandiose sense of self, are preoccupied with fantasies of power, require excessive admiration, but they hide all these attributes so people will like & trust them."

She gets it. The author clearly knows this war from the front lines.

After years of talking with people in my personal & professional life about covert narcissists, I've come to believe that in order to really understand the nature of the covert narcissist, you have to have lived it. Whether it's a spouse, significant other, friendship, boss, co-worker, neighbor or family member, the patterns are nearly identical & only someone who has been inside that nightmare can really know what the experiences is like. Even then it's hard to describe.

I believe the covert types are by far the most dangerous because of their ability to fly stealth, undetected by normal radar. They leverage their intelligence through a meticulous choice of words & silence in order to manipulate others. The smarter the narcissist, the more dangerous because the cloak of invisibility is so high-tech.

The overt type of abuser is much more obvious because they lack the intelligence to manipulate that cleverly, so they resort to aggression & violence as their primary weapons.

Plausible deniability is the covert narcissist's greatest weapon in their arsenal of gaslighting tools.

With a covert narcissist everything on the surface looks normal & often lovely for months, years, even decades. They know how to say all the right things, exactly the things that you personally want to hear. They can mirror empathy, concern, & tears better than most Hollywood actors. However, underneath the surface the feeling is off. It's so subtle that you could easily miss it or dismiss it.

After a relationship with a covert narcissist, you feel like you can't trust your perception of reality because no one else can see what you see. Most people adore covert narcissists because of how very careful they are in choosing who they unmask around & how much effort they put into optics & public perception.

When you ask for advice from friends & even professionals, you might only hear people giving the benefit of the doubt to the covert narcissist or worse yet telling you that you're being paranoid, overreacting or some other way of blaming the victim. Unfortunately, asking advice from people who don't understand it can feel invalidating, lead you to more setbacks & possibly even encourage you to stay in a dangerous situation.

It's terrifying when every part of your intuition is telling you something is really wrong but the covert narcissist & everyone else are telling you that things are just fine, & implying that maybe you are the problem.

Survivors of covert narcissists need to know that they're not crazy. This is the primary concern I hear from clients who were with covert types of abusers. Reading this book will give you that validation.

The recovery of self-trust after abuse by a covert narcissist can take some time. Be patient with yourself in this process. You have been through a severe relational trauma & while you can't see your wounds, they are very real.

This book will help you to understand what happened in your relationship with a cover narcissist through an inventory of their typical characteristics & behaviors, in addition to survivors' stories of interactions with them. You'll likely have many aha moments when you connect the dots to similar experiences that happened to you.

I know this book is going to help a lot of people make sense of the insensible.

Big hug to you!

Meredith Miller, Coach & Author. Mexico City, Mexico" – Mirza, 2017, pp. 6–8

Preface

"Are you in a romantic relationship or coming out of one that feels incredibly confusing & is making you feel like you're going crazy?"

Does your mother appear amazing to everyone else, but growing up you felt alone, found it hard to have your own identity, & you felt like things were always your fault?"

Did you feel like you walked on eggshells growing up with your dad & find it hard to connect with him, but people have always told you know lucky you are to have a dad like yours?"

Do you have a boss or coworker that everyone thinks is great, but after years of working with him/her, you find yourself feeling a lot of anxiety, never feeling good enough, & questioning your own sanity?

Has someone told you your loved one might be a narcissist? You've done some research but are confused because the person you are wondering about doesn't come across as a self-absorbed, arrogant over the top person that fits the description of a narcissist?

If any of these scenarios resonate, this could mean you are dealing with a covert narcissist. This is the hardest type of narcissist to diagnose because they are so disguised, so covert.

Covert narcissism is the worst & most insidious form of narcissism because the abuse is so hidden. Most people don't even realize they are being abused when they are in these relationships. The life inside them is slowly depleted over time without them recognizing that this is a result of years of devaluing tactics by the narcissist. Their self-worth is beaten down. There are no visible scars, but the impact these people have on you is profound. You have been emotionally & psychologically abused & you are often the only one to see this side of them while everyone around them thinks they are great. This furthers your confusion & minimizes your pain.

When I say "worst form," I do not want to minimize anyone else's trauma when dealing with an overt narcissist or any other type of psychologically abusive personality. Abuse is abuse – it is horrific & always undeserved. My heart goes out to anyone who has & is experiencing anything that harms & devalues them.

1 reason covert narcissists are so damaging is because of cognitive dissonance. This is when you have 2 competing thoughts in your mind. You love your mom, spouse, boyfriend, or girlfriend & thought they loved you the same. Yet when you look back, their behaviors are making you question your beliefs about them. As you research you begin to wonder, *"Could this person really have been controlling & manipulating me for years, & I didn't see it . . . or were things really my fault & I'm just overdramatizing my experience?"* You have a solid belief that has been built up over years that this is a good person who cares about you, & at the same time, they are being incredibly cruel & controlling. The cognitive dissonance is dizzying & crazy making.

The overt types of narcissists are obvious, in your-face-face kind of people. They will let others know how great they are. When their mask comes off others around them roll their eyes & say, *"Oh, yeah, he's terrible."*

On the other hand, covert narcissists are well liked. They are charming & kind. They appear humble & empathetic. They can be good listeners & appear to really care. You can feel incredibly loved by them. They simultaneously make you feel terrible about yourself. They use cloaked tactics that you don't see for years.

It is common for people to be in romantic relationships with covert narcissists for over 10, 20, 30, 40-plus years not recognizing the abuse they have endured for decades.

This is especially devastating when it is a family member. Sometimes you are the only one who sees it when your siblings still think their dad or mom is amazing & blame you for a plethora of things. You feel like you are going crazy & you start minimizing the abuse yourself. If no one else sees it, you think it must be you that is the problem.

This type of abuse does not look as messy as it really is. It is so invisible. It is hard to put your finger on what is wrong. If you relate to any of this, you are not alone, & you can trust yourself.

I went through years of confusion & cognitive dissonance myself. I have had several covert narcissists in my life. They have been incredibly confusing & crazy-making relationships.

Years ago I searched for answers to help with my own confusion. I read a lot of books on narcissism but could not find any on the covert type. After years of piecing together information from various sources, I decided to write the book I had needed & couldn't find so other survivors would have the information they needed in 1 place.

In preparation for this book, I interviewed over 100 survivors. I did in-depth research on the topic because I wanted to make sure this book would be accurate, comprehensive, & incredibly helpful for you. You deserve that.

As I met more & more people who have been through this type of relationship, my heart was affected tremendously. Witnessing their pain, their wounded hearts, & their strength was humbling & brought out a fierceness in me that made me want to make this the most helpful book I possibly could.

In the following pages, I will explain the traits of a covert narcissist. I share lots of stories from people I've interviewed to illustrate the traits. All the names have been changed & details altered, so their identities are protected.

I facilitate a support group in my area & have seen how important stories are. When I begin the meetings, I often ask what they are hoping to get out of the evening. Most people say, *"Stories! I need to hear stories so I know I'm not crazy."* You will hear plenty of stories in this book to help you recognize things you have experienced & help validate the truth of what you have been through.

I also spend a lot of time talking about healing. If you have read this far, my hunch is you have probably been through or are going through a tremendously difficult & crazy-making experience with a covert narcissist. You deserve to find clarity & ultimately heal the wounds this relationship has caused.

Being with a covert narcissist can take you far away from the person you really are. My hope is this book will help bring you back to your stunning self.

May you find all the answers you are looking for & come to a place of freedom & peace. That may not feel possible right now, but trust me, it is.

With so much love,
Debbie Mirza” – Mirza, 2017, pp. 9–12

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References

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