

The Maze of Narcissism: Untangling Romantic Relationships

For many years, in our experience as psychotherapy consultants, we have seen numerous patients with recurring issues on how to cope with everyday life, from relationship difficulties to the loss of loved ones or shattered self-esteem. While traditional education equips us with many skills, it does not teach us how to face the challenges we encounter as we grow, and life teaches us through hard knocks. We all need to learn how to live, and from that clinical experience, along with our own life experiences, **Lum Psychology** was born as a space to help others be happier, more aware, stronger, resilient, human, and wise.

As a team, we have over 20 years of experience in psychotherapy, conducting workshops and conferences, and collaborating with various public and private institutions such as IMSS (Mexican Institute of Social Security), UAM (Autonomous Metropolitan University), CENEVAL (National Center for the Evaluation of Higher Education), ANUIES (National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions), SEIEM Basic Education (Integrated Educational Services of the State of Mexico), OPDM Tlalnepantla (Public Water Services Company), Juan N. Navarro Children's Psychiatric Hospital, Fundación Origen, Fundación Inclúyeme, Fundación Sonríe Estás Vivo, Manpower, Owens Corning, and Avon.

We have been invited to various radio, television, and internet media outlets such as Once TV on the program "Diálogos en Confianza," Grupo Radio Fórmula with Janet Arceo on the show "La Mujer Actual" and also with Irene Moreno on "Las Noches con Irene," Radio Centro 1030 with Maricarmen Quintana on the show "Historias de Todos," and on TV Azteca with Tábata Jalil on the show "Venga la Alegría." We have also been featured in publications such as Revista H and Mundo Femenino.

About the Authors

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Foreword

This book delves into the complexity and confusion often experienced by individuals involved in relationships where one partner displays narcissistic traits.

Narcissism can create an emotionally complicated and labyrinthine environment in a romantic relationship, making it difficult for the individual to navigate and understand the underlying dynamics. Those in relationships with someone exhibiting narcissistic behavior often feel trapped in a cycle of manipulation, lack of empathy, and constant validation-seeking from the narcissist.

This text guides you through the process of unraveling and understanding narcissistic behavior patterns while providing tools to overcome the challenges posed by narcissism in the relationship.

In summary, this book will help readers find clarity and understanding amidst the emotional complexity that characterizes relationships affected by narcissism.

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Chapter 1

What is a Narcissistic Person?

Narcissism and Its Characteristics

You've probably heard this term hundreds of times, or maybe you've even used it yourself. While some may think it's just a trend, that's not the case. Over the past few decades, we've simply paid much more attention to observing, studying, and understanding violence.

But what is a narcissistic person, really? It is someone who exhibits a pattern of grandiosity, an excessive need for admiration, and a lack of empathy toward others. In fact, the term comes from Narcissus, a character from Greek mythology who fell in love with his own reflection in the water. And narcissistic people behave just like someone who is in love with themselves.

People with narcissistic traits tend to have an **INFLATED SELF-ESTEEM, THAT IS, AN IMAGE OF THEMSELVES THAT IS MUCH "BETTER" OR "MORE PERFECT" THAN THEY ACTUALLY ARE.** They almost never admit to having faults, because it's always someone or something else's fault, and they "are just fine." They also constantly seek attention and admiration from others; they love to be praised, to be told how well they do things, or to receive any kind of external recognition.

On the other hand, they generally have **DIFFICULTY ACKNOWLEDGING OR CARING ABOUT THE FEELINGS AND NEEDS OF OTHERS**. They ignore or downplay your needs (or those of other people), disqualifying them or criticizing "weakness" or "lack of willpower, discipline, motivation, etc."

Think about that coworker, acquaintance, friend, or family member who always wants to be the center of attention in any situation; interrupts conversations to talk about themselves and expects constant praise; boasts about being the best at everything they do, even when there is clear evidence to the contrary; and, furthermore, ignores the emotions of others, or is inconsiderate or even cruel to others.

Manipulation is another key characteristic of a narcissistic person. **THEY MANIPULATE OTHERS TO GET WHAT THEY WANT**, without considering how it affects people. They may even feel threatened when others succeed or do well and try to overshadow them or belittle them; they criticize and speak poorly of them, saying things like "they're dumb," "they got lucky," "that's something anyone could do," etc.

If, on top of all these traits, they get angry or overreact to criticism (even constructive feedback) or when they're not getting the attention they want, you are probably dealing with a narcissistic person. Sometimes they become enraged, hostile, or even aggressive when they are not complimented, recognized the way they believe they deserve, or when they don't get what they wanted, leaving you unsure of what happened or why they got so upset.

Some famous figures who may have been narcissists based on their behavior include Napoleon Bonaparte, Adolf Hitler, or many cult leaders who have committed abuse.

If we could summarize the main characteristics you can observe in narcissistic people, they would be the following:

- They seek admiration.
- They have an ***inflated sense of ego***.
- They get what they want through ***manipulation*** and deception.
- They need negative emotional reactions from others to feel empowered.
- They enjoy their victims' reactions (submission, crying, rage, helplessness, joy, praise, admiration, etc.).

Have you already thought of a narcissistic person in your life?

Types of Personalities in the Narcissistic Spectrum

Narcissistic personality has been studied since the early 20th century, with various analyses and theories from expert psychologists who observed many of the traits we've discussed. One of the

first to define the narcissistic personality was Ernest Jones in 1913, calling it the "God Complex." Later, figures like Robert Waelder (1925) and Sigmund Freud (1931), the creator of psychoanalysis, described narcissists as individuals with a great interest in themselves and self-preservation. Years later, Otto Fenichel (1945) and Wilhelm Reich (1949) described narcissists as ambitious, with aggressive and arrogant impulses. Later on, Heinz Kohut (1971) referred to narcissists as individuals with excessive self-admiration, intense ambition, grandiosity fantasies, chronic feelings of boredom, emptiness, and uncertainty about their identity, exploiting others, feeling envious, and defending themselves through devaluation, omnipotence, and control over others ("I am perfect and I control others").

The main traits agreed upon today include:

- **Distorted self-image (omnipotence, power, egocentric perception of reality, fantasies of success, brilliance, or limitless love):** You've probably heard your narcissist acquaintance telling you they are the best at their job, everyone admires them at the office, or they have extraordinary projects with politicians, influencers, or artists. Some narcissistic patients even tell us they have incredible and unbelievable plans to save the world... literally!
- **Lack of empathy:** Inability to recognize or experience what others feel. They struggle to grasp the personal characteristics of the people they interact with. All narcissists lack the ability to reflect others' emotions, let alone feel compassion for someone. Sometimes, they even enjoy others' pain; they can see you cry or feel emotional or physical pain, and it won't matter to them. In fact, they are often the ones causing that pain, without feeling any remorse, guilt, or empathy whatsoever.
- **Hypersensitivity to others' evaluations:** They react to criticism with feelings of rage, shame, or humiliation. They are concerned with comparing themselves to others and develop strong feelings of envy. This characteristic is quite common. A narcissist, when feeling even slightly criticized, will react aggressively, often with outbursts of anger, throwing things, or hurting the person by belittling or attacking them verbally or physically. You've probably experienced this with YOUR NARCISSIST or any other person with these traits: you mention something, they take it as criticism, and they attack you.

For example, Raúl is a patient whose partner, Julia, is a narcissistic woman. Raúl is a calm, flexible, and laid-back man who dislikes conflict. One time, he told Julia that he had noticed she seemed more stressed lately, which might explain her hair loss. Julia, due to her narcissistic personality, is very anxious, stressed, and intolerant, and she had indeed been losing more hair recently. Julia took this comment as criticism and responded angrily, with insults: "You think you're superior! Do you think you're perfect? Have you looked in the mirror? You're the bald one, and if I'm stressed, it's your fault! You jerk!"

- **Exhibitionism:** They take pleasure in being admired, feeling that they are exclusive and unique. For example, the narcissist may be at a party, start yelling, dancing, and getting drunk just to be the center of attention.
- **Machiavellianism:** The narcissist views others as extensions of themselves. They manipulate and use others for their own benefit, feeling entitled to others. They display pride, arrogance, and demand their rights at the expense of others. This type of person has a more psychopathic profile, similar to certain politicians, businesspeople, rulers, or individuals in positions of power.

Types of Narcissistic Personality:

- **Unprincipled Narcissist:** These individuals have the narcissist's self-confidence paired with repetitive criminal behavior, characteristic of antisocial tendencies. This could be described as the "very bad" narcissist, the one who might become a criminal—committing fraud, for example—or even becoming physically aggressive, attacking, or even killing. These are the most psychopathic narcissists (complete lack of empathy) and are therefore the most dangerous. They are strong and cold, despising those they consider weak, lacking empathy, and being highly devaluing. They are leaders but lack morals and values. They move through life as if they are special and face no consequences for their actions. They fear no threats or repercussions, including going to jail. This is why they can kill or become criminals. Examples could be drug traffickers, murderers, serial killers, abusers, etc.
- **Compensatory Narcissist:** They have an air of superiority and seek recognition and high status. They are characterized by their fantasies of grandeur. They cannot tolerate criticism or disapproval from others. Deep down, they are insecure and weak. They lack social skills and cannot form emotionally intimate bonds; they are entirely superficial.
- **Loving Narcissist:** This is a combination of narcissistic and histrionic personality traits (excessively emotional and dramatic to seek attention). They are seductive and erotic individuals whose game is to find people to satisfy their needs, only to devalue and abandon them afterward. This is the typical narcissist who may seem "cool" or "nice" but will later discard you, abandon you, and disappear. They may go days or weeks without speaking to you, only to reappear as if nothing happened.
- **Elitist Narcissist:** This is the classic arrogant narcissist with a self-image of superiority. They are powerful and strong, and this is the most common type. These individuals are disliked because they boast more than they actually possess and belittle and devalue others. They seek to associate with people of high status.

It's important to note that there can be combinations of traits in each person. A narcissist may have compensatory traits but also elitist ones, etc. In fact, this is common in narcissists. Although there is a classification, narcissistic individuals often have traits from several categories, which is why we refer to the narcissistic spectrum.

The Narcissistic Spectrum

We all have some narcissistic traits, like posting photos on social media or occasionally showing a lack of empathy unintentionally. However, this doesn't make us dysfunctional or incapable of having emotionally intimate relationships or being empathetic toward others.

In addition to the classifications above, there is another type of classification (Deng et al., 2021) that helps us understand **THE NARCISSISTIC SPECTRUM IN TERMS OF ITS INTENSITY** and how harmful a person can be to others:

1. **Grandiose Narcissist:** This person is constantly seeking attention, is arrogant, socially charming, and exploitative in interpersonal relationships. A person diagnosed with this disorder will not be able to interact healthily with others in society, as they tend to show aggression. Treatment for them is very difficult because they lack genuine communication with others. This narcissist, feeling perfect, will not go to therapy, as they see it as "something for crazy or sick people."

2. **Fragile and Vulnerable Narcissist:** This person is inhibited, easily distressed, and hypersensitive to others' evaluations. They fear rejection and criticism. As they feel vulnerable and threatened, they show envy toward others. Although they believe they are grandiose, they may seek therapy due to the emotional consequences of rejection, such as anxiety and depression. They can start relationships, but these will be dysfunctional.

3. **High-Functioning Narcissist:** This person has an exaggerated sense of grandeur and can be highly competent in various skills. They are high performers and often hold leadership positions, using their narcissistic traits to achieve success. Although they can interact socially, they struggle to form deep or lasting relationships. They enjoy standing out and belittling others. They are relatively adaptive.



Can interact with others

Believes they are perfect relationships	Feels grandiose	Dysfunctional
Socially charming	Shows envy	Likes to stand out and belittle others
Interpersonally exploitative	Distress over criticism and rejection	Successful and high-achieving
Psychopathic		Leader, group boss
Grandiose	Fragile and Vulnerable	High-Functioning

Narcissist Relationship Evaluation Questionnaire

Please answer "Yes" or "No" to the following questions based on your experience in the relationship:

1. Does your partner tend to talk mostly about themselves and their achievements without showing much interest in your thoughts or feelings?
2. Does your partner tend to need constant admiration and seek validation of their worth?
3. Does your partner have difficulty empathizing with you or understanding your emotions?
4. Does your partner tend to exploit others for their own benefit, without showing remorse?
5. Does your partner tend to be manipulative or controlling in the relationship?
6. Does your partner tend to get angry easily when they don't get what they want or when they feel threatened?
7. Does your partner tend to devalue or belittle you, even subtly?
8. Does your partner tend to have unrealistic expectations about what others should do for him/her?
9. Does your partner tend to be arrogant or believe they are superior to others?
10. Do you constantly feel insecure or unappreciated in the relationship?
11. Does your partner often use emotional manipulation to get what they want?

12. Does your partner usually blame you or others for their own mistakes or problems?
13. Does your partner tend to be envious or jealous of your achievements or relationships with others?
14. Does your partner tend to downplay your successes or achievements and exaggerate their own?
15. Do you feel like you're constantly walking on eggshells or avoiding conflict to prevent your partner's anger or contempt?

Results:

Count how many "Yes" answers you provided to the questions above.

If you answered "Yes" to 3 or 4 questions: It is advisable to review your boundaries and assess your partner's ability to negotiate and empathize. Seek professional support if necessary.

If you answered "Yes" to 5 to 10 questions: Consider seeking support from a therapist or another professional to explore your concerns in more detail.

If you answered "Yes" to more than 10 questions: It is very likely that your relationship is with someone who exhibits strong narcissistic traits, and it's important to seek the help of a therapist or other professional to assess your relationship.

Remember, this questionnaire is only a tool for reflection and does not replace professional mental health evaluation.

Chapter 2

How Does Having a Narcissistic Partner Affect You?

What it's like to be in a relationship with a narcissist

Being in an emotional relationship with a narcissist is one of the most complex experiences one can have. Whether you've been with this person for weeks, months, or even years, the feeling is always the same: **IT FEELS INCREDIBLY CONFUSING AND MAKES YOU FEEL LIKE GOING CRAZY.**

Have you ever felt like it's hard to connect with your partner, but everyone tells you how lucky you are to be with them? Do you feel anxious every time your partner calls, reaches out, or texts, fearing they might be angry or once again blaming you for not doing something right? Do you fear their anger and demands?

This kind of anxiety and fear are clear signs of a toxic relationship. However, at the beginning of the relationship, you didn't feel that way. In fact, many patients, mostly women (although a

significant number of men also report this), mention that the narcissist always starts by flattering them, pleasing them, supporting them in many situations, or even solving all kinds of problems for them. In other words, they are incredibly charming.

However, soon (after a few weeks, a month, or sometimes more), the narcissist begins to criticize how you dress and starts saying that you don't do anything right or how they would like you to. Little by little, they start minimizing everything you do. They also begin to limit your contact with family and friends, but not directly. Instead, they create conflict every time you show signs of independence: they tell you not to leave them alone because they feel bad, accuse you of being inconsiderate, or pick a fight over something you “didn't do right” just as you were about to go out. This type of isolation can make you feel lonely and trapped.

THERE WILL ALSO BE TIMES OR DAYS WHEN THEY TREAT YOU EXTREMELY WELL, AND THE NEXT MINUTE THEY TREAT YOU VERY POORLY. THIS PATTERN CREATES DEEP EMOTIONAL CONFUSION. This constant alternation makes you doubt yourself, your sanity, and, naturally, your self-esteem.

NARCISSISTS ARE EXPERTS IN EMOTIONAL MANIPULATION, and they frequently make **YOU FEEL GUILTY FOR THEIR OWN TOXIC BEHAVIORS.** They blame you for the problems in the relationship, bringing up any situation they consider beyond their control and making you responsible for it. This leads you to doubt your own perception and judgment and makes you feel guilty all the time.

To complicate matters further, it can be very unsettling to see that this person is highly recognized in their professional field, or even admired by many for being generous or a “good person.” Even though you doubt whether such recognition and admiration are justified, it makes you question if they are truly as manipulative as you feel, leaving you feeling devalued and worthless.

A key trait of narcissism is the constant need to be the center of attention and receive admiration. This can make you feel inferior, as narcissists often belittle and criticize their partners to feel superior. They make you feel like you're not on their level “because they are superior.” This **ERODES YOUR SELF-ESTEEM AND MAKES YOU FEEL LESS THAN.**

If you're in a relationship with a narcissist, you've probably already realized that the narcissist is extremely demanding of your time. **THEY WANT YOU TO ALWAYS BE AVAILABLE WHENEVER THEY WANT,** literally. Moreover, they are skilled at getting you to meet their needs through emotional blackmail and persistent pressure. And the worst part is, no matter what you do, **IT'S NEVER ENOUGH FOR THEM.** This constant effort and tension create enormous emotional and physical exhaustion. Constantly being on guard, trying to meet their demands, and dealing with their mood swings is incredibly draining.

Eventually, when you're trapped in this dynamic, it becomes so overwhelming that many times, **YOU LOSE SIGHT OF YOUR OWN FEELINGS,** because you're focused on meeting the narcissist's demands. The narcissist's control and manipulation can leave you in a survival mode, unaware that you are sad and desperate. The lack of emotional support and the cruel treatment can lead to deep

feelings of sadness and hopelessness. It feels like there's no way out of the situation, and you feel totally "trapped."

Gradually, **YOU STOP BEING YOURSELF**, because the narcissistic relationship absorbs your energy, time, and emotions. However, it's common that as you start to realize the manipulation and abuse you've experienced, you begin to feel anger and resentment toward your narcissistic partner, especially when you notice you've lost a part of yourself in the relationship.

Major Psychological and Emotional Effects

Being in a relationship with a narcissistic partner can have deep and long-lasting psychological and emotional effects. Here are some of the most significant ones:

Low self-esteem: All of our patients, without exception, who have been in a relationship with a narcissistic partner, end up with deeply affected self-esteem. Often to the point of not recognizing themselves. They lose their self-confidence, and their self-perception changes drastically: from seeing themselves as strong and brave, they begin to view themselves as submissive, passive, controlled, and lacking the strength to make decisions or feel empowered. This loss impacts their professional life, career, and personal relationships.

Anxiety and stress: As mentioned earlier, narcissists have unpredictable reactions. They may be in a great mood, calm, or relaxed, and suddenly hear, see, or notice something you said or did (or didn't do) that infuriates them, and out of nowhere, they react violently, aggressively, or passive-aggressively. These situations cause constant anxiety and stress (for you and anyone else who interacts with the narcissist). In trying to avoid conflict and criticism, you live in constant anxiety: if they call you, if they text you, if you did something wrong or incorrectly, etc.

Depression: The feeling of being trapped in an emotionally abusive relationship, as happens when you're with a narcissist, can lead to depression. The lack of emotional support and constant negativity can make you feel hopeless and sad. Many times, if not most, when you are experiencing narcissistic abuse, you don't dare to seek support or talk about it with anyone because you feel ashamed for allowing yourself to be in such a relationship. You prefer to stay silent and "suffer in silence."

Confusion and doubt: Narcissists are experts in manipulating and gaslighting, a form of manipulation that makes the victim doubt their own judgment. This leads victims to question their perception of reality and can cause deep confusion and a sense of lost identity.

Isolation: Narcissists tend to isolate you from friends and family to maintain control. This isolation can leave you without a support network, increasing your emotional dependence on the narcissist. It's likely that your narcissist has slowly been isolating you from your people, selling you the idea that "they just want to be with you, and that the two of you should be alone together."

Feelings of guilt and shame: Narcissists often blame their partners for the problems in the relationship, which can make the victim feel guilty and ashamed. This guilt can be paralyzing and make it difficult to make clear decisions, even preventing you from seeing and choosing your self-care, setting boundaries, or leaving the relationship that is causing you so much harm.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD): In cases of severe abuse, the partner of a narcissist may develop PTSD. Symptoms include flashbacks, nightmares, severe anxiety, and intrusive thoughts about the relationship. A high percentage of our patients who have been in a relationship with a narcissist have developed this disorder, sometimes to the point that it prevents them from working or functioning in their life, depending on the severity of the abuse experienced.

Loss of self-confidence: The constant criticism and manipulation progressively wear down self-confidence. When the narcissist constantly tells you that you're not good enough, that you should dress better, that you could have a better job, or when they criticize your home, friends, family, etc., over time, you begin to believe it, you devalue yourself, and start doubting your abilities.

Development of dependent or codependent behaviors: The dynamic of the relationship fosters emotional dependency, to the point where you feel incapable of living without the narcissist's approval or presence. This dependency goes beyond the emotional; gradually, you start doubting your abilities to do things on your own, like traveling or living alone, while focusing all your energy on the narcissist and the relationship.

Self-EsteemTest

(Lucy Reidl Self-Esteem Scale)

Instructions:

Read each statement carefully and indicate your opinion using the following symbols:

- Agree **(A)**

- Don't know **(N)**

- Disagree **(D)**

1) I am a person with many qualities.	A	N	D
2) Generally, if I have something to say, I say it.	A	N	D
3) I often feel ashamed of myself.	A	N	D
4) I almost always feel confident about what I think.	A	N	D
5) I don't really like myself.	A	N	D
6) I rarely feel guilty about things I've done	A	N	D
7) I believe people have a good opinion of me.	A	N	D
8) I am quite happy.	A	N	D
9) I feel proud of what I do.	A	N	D
10) Few people pay attention to me.	A	N	D
11) There are many things I would change about myself if I could.	A	N	D
12) I have a hard time speaking in front of people.	A	N	D
13) I am almost never sad.	A	N	D
14) It's very hard to be myself.	A	N	D
15) It's easy for people to like me.	A	N	D

16) If we could go back and live life again, I would be different.	A	N	D
17) In general, people listen to me when I give them advice.	A	N	D
18) There always has to be someone to tell me what to do.	A	N	D
19) I often wish I were someone else.	A	N	D
20) I feel pretty confident about myself.	A	N	D

Self-Esteem Evaluation Range:

(Maximum score: 60 points / Minimum score: 20 points)

Very Good: 55-60

Good: 46-54

Fair: 37-45

Insufficient: 28-36

Poor: 20-27

Dynamics of Power and Control

The dynamics of power and control in a narcissist involve a series of manipulative tactics designed to maintain power and dominance over their partner or those around them. These tactics can range from subtle to overtly abusive and often follow a more or less predictable pattern. Some of the most common include:

1. **Love Bombing:** As we mentioned earlier, at the beginning of the relationship, the narcissist is extremely charming and generous, showering their partner with attention, praise, and gifts. This behavior creates a strong emotional bond and dependence in the partner, making it difficult to recognize negative behaviors later and harder to decide to end the relationship. When you try to end the relationship, you may remind yourself, "But they care for me, they give me gifts and tell me I'm the best thing that ever happened to them." They may send you flowers every day, offer constant compliments, and plan elaborate, thoughtful, and very personalized dates. This makes you feel very special, and you quickly fall in love.

2. **Devaluation:** Once the relationship is established, the narcissist begins to criticize and belittle you, undermining your self-esteem and making you feel insecure and dependent on their validation. For example, after a few months, your narcissistic partner may begin to make derogatory comments about your appearance, your job, your close relationships, etc., saying things like, "I don't know why you try so hard, you'll never be as good as... (someone from your work)."

3. **Gaslighting:** The narcissist distorts reality and denies facts to make you doubt your own perception and memory. This tactic confuses and disorients you, making it harder to trust your own judgment. For instance, if you confront your partner about a suspicious text message on their phone, the narcissist might tell you that you're imagining things, that you're too jealous, or the classic, "You're crazy," despite you having the evidence.

4. **Isolation:** The narcissist always tries to isolate you from your support network, like friends and family, to increase your dependence and control over you. Isolation heightens your reliance on

the narcissist and reduces the chances of seeking help or receiving outside advice. A very common example is when your partner constantly complains about your friends, commenting that they aren't good for you and that you should spend more time with them, or saying that your friends aren't worth it and are beneath them. Eventually, you might believe them or, simply to avoid conflict, stop seeing your friends.

5. Domination and Control: The narcissist attempts to control all aspects of their partner's life, from everyday decisions to more significant matters. Maintaining absolute control ensures that they retain their power, while you gradually feel powerless and without autonomy. For example, the narcissist might insist on controlling your finances under the guise of being the one responsible for expenses, deciding what can be bought and how much can be spent without consulting you.

6. Projection: Projection is one of the most primitive defense mechanisms, where the individual attributes their own virtues, flaws, and shortcomings to others. In this way, the narcissist accuses you of behaviors that they themselves exhibit. Projecting their own flaws and negative behaviors onto you diverts attention and blame from themselves and confuses you. A common example we see in therapy is when they accuse you of being unfaithful every time you go out with friends, even though it is they who flirt with others and have been unfaithful.

7. Guilt and Shame: The narcissist uses guilt and shame to manipulate you and keep you under control. These feelings keep you submissive and obedient, afraid to act on your own or contradict your partner. For example, they might blame you for your problems at work, telling you that your stress is because you aren't being understanding enough at home, when in reality, the only thing stressing you is them!

8. Silent Treatment: If you don't do what the narcissist wants, don't agree with them, "don't submit" (as one patient put it), or confront them, they may "punish" you by emotionally withdrawing and giving you the silent treatment, leaving you in a state of uncertainty and anxiety. This behavior keeps you in a state of tension and reinforces their emotional control. After an argument, the narcissist might ignore you for days, not respond to your calls or messages, block and unblock you, or even ignore you if you see each other in person. All of this can go on for days or weeks until they decide to speak to you again.

9. Discard: The narcissist may abruptly end the relationship once you are no longer useful to them (as cold as that may sound). Discarding reinforces their sense of control and can emotionally devastate you, leaving you feeling confused and rejected. For example, your partner might suddenly abandon you without any explanation and start a new relationship with someone else almost immediately.

What is Narcissistic Abuse

In all toxic relationships, there is some form of abuse that harms us. But when we are in a close relationship with a narcissist, a specific pattern of abuse emerges. This pattern hurts, **DESTROYS OUR SELF-ESTEEM, AND MAKES US DOUBT OURSELVES, MAKING US FEEL LIKE WE CAN NEVER ESCAPE IT.** This abuse damages our emotional, mental, and physical health. Often, we only start becoming aware of all the harm once we have physically neglected and completely abandoned ourselves.

Suddenly, you notice that you've lost weight, you have dark circles under your eyes when you look in the mirror, you have trouble sleeping, and you suffer from gastritis, colitis, or other physical discomforts that you hadn't paid attention to. Sometimes, even close people comment on how worn down you look, and that's when you start to realize, thinking, "If I don't do something or leave this relationship, it's going to destroy me." Unfortunately, in many cases, if we don't act, this becomes a reality.

It is essential to understand the patterns and cycle of narcissistic abuse, as it also becomes addictive for our brain. (We'll explain this a little later.)

Narcissistic abuse is defined as a **SERIES OF CLASSIC, IDENTIFIABLE PATTERNS OF BEHAVIORS THAT ARE NEARLY IDENTICAL AND OCCUR REGARDLESS OF COUNTRY, CULTURE, LANGUAGE, AGE, RACE, SEX, OR SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS.** In other words, it is not linked to ways of thinking, idiosyncrasies, social class, religion, etc. In fact, we have had many patients who come from relationships with religious leaders or highly recognized people who, while admired publicly (as we have mentioned before), torture those close to them with this type of abuse.

THIS ABUSE CAN MANIFEST IN DIFFERENT FORMS: PSYCHOLOGICAL, EMOTIONAL, ECONOMIC, SEXUAL, PHYSICAL, AND SPIRITUAL. However, little is said about the invisible forms of abuse, despite them being quite common. In part, this is because in today's society, we have normalized emotional and psychological violence. As many of our patients say, "But they don't hit me or physically hurt me, so it's not that bad." It's also an uncomfortable topic that we don't like to talk about or acknowledge. Moreover, the narcissist tends to minimize it, making us doubt that it's really violence, using phrases like, "You're just too sensitive," "See, what's happening to X, that's real violence," "You're always making a drama out of everything," or "Look, we're at peace, and you're always trying to stir up trouble."

To understand narcissistic abuse, it is essential to understand the cycle of narcissistic abuse. It's a repetitive cycle that makes us feel confused. On one hand, it makes us feel "loved," but at the same time, it destroys our self-esteem without us noticing clearly.

The Narcissistic Abuse Cycle: Idealization and Devaluation

The cycle of abuse has two alternating stages that often overlap. This leads us to experience an emotional rollercoaster in the relationship, sometimes even in the same day. One day, the narcissist may wake up in a good mood, compliment you, tell you they love you, that you are

wonderful, or give you lavish and costly gifts that may even seem exaggerated to you. But by midday, they explode in a fit of rage, insulting you, belittling you, telling you that you're useless, incapable of doing anything right, that no one loves or tolerates you, etc., and blaming you for anything that didn't go as they expected.

Idealization Stage

The first phase of this cycle is **IDEALIZATION**. This is when everything is "sweet," and when the narcissist uses the "love bombing" technique, which we mentioned in the previous section and you've likely heard about before. This is a **TACTIC AIMED AT SEDUCING AND HOOKING YOU INTO THE RELATIONSHIP THROUGH A FLOOD OF SUPERFICIAL ATTENTION**.

During this stage, the narcissist makes us feel special and wonderful. There are constant and exaggerated compliments, dreamy dates, constant attention, shared dreams, promises of a perfect future together, etc. For example, they might bring you an enormous bouquet of flowers like you've never received before, or give you a very expensive gift on the first date; they tell you that you're the best person, that you're brilliant and different from anyone they've ever met before; they surprise you at work or on the weekend by taking you to your favorite restaurant or for an exceptional dinner; they listen to you and make it seem like they genuinely care. Everything is fun and overflowing with emotions. Even sex can be very intense and start too quickly in the relationship. And it's precisely this intensity that floods your brain with dopamine, making you long for it when it ends. Because it ends. And very soon.

In fact, the duration of this stage depends on whether the abuser considers you useful for the long or short term. The more useful you are, the more they will "invest" to hook you and keep you around. Although sometimes we justify these behaviors or don't see things clearly, if we analyze it, it's evident that they always get something in return: company to avoid boredom, someone to complain to, someone to solve problems or do their work for them, money, material things, or simply someone to blame for everything. They never give anything without expecting something in return. Moreover, what they "invest" in this stage, they will expect repayment for forever, like a debt you can never pay off, no matter how much you give or do for them. They will constantly use phrases like "I did this for you," "I gave...", "I, on your birthday (ten years ago), gave you... and now you can't even throw me a nice surprise party or buy me a good gift instead of this horrible shirt."

In reality, the attention and displays of affection disappear quickly as soon as you feel attached to the relationship. And although it often seems genuine (sometimes it feels exaggerated or too good to be true), it is nothing more than a manipulation tactic.

In general, they invest the bare minimum (time, energy, gifts, compliments, etc.) to get what they want, and even less if they plan to discard you soon because they no longer find you useful. This **DISCARD**, as we mentioned in the previous section, is like throwing away the relationship. They literally block you and erase you from their existence until you become useful to them again, and then they reappear as if nothing ever happened.

THE BIGGEST DANGER OF THE IDEALIZATION STAGE IS BELIEVING THAT WHAT THE NARCISSIST GAVE US WAS REAL, because then we are left longing for that brief period or rare moments of intense joy, thinking that one day everything will go back to how it was. We start to have thoughts like, "I wish we could go back to when things were good before...", "I know deep down they're a good person," "I trust they can change." However, that good treatment never returns, and if it does, it's only for fleeting moments because the narcissist senses that we're about to escape the mistreatment and the relationship.

Devaluation Stage

The **DEVALUATION** phase is the most present and constant stage in a relationship with a narcissist. This is where their attitude changes, making us feel useless, inept, incapable, and worthless. This usually begins with heavy jokes, veiled insults, or sarcastic comments and escalates to explicit mockery, destructive criticism, or ruthless cruelty. Gradually, the narcissist starts making comments about your work, your relationships, or you as a person that make you feel bad and subtly devalue you, eventually increasing to direct aggressions and insults that deeply damage your self-esteem.

For example, they might start with phrases like: "Well, for a woman, you didn't do that badly," "Well, it's not like your job is that hard or important; what I do is much more complicated," "Don't feel bad, you just have to accept that you're not good at this." Then, the aggression escalates with comments like: "That's why your friends don't like you, you're quite difficult," "You're just not trying hard enough," or "Why can't you do it right, are you stupid?", "And you think people care about you? I'd rather no one care about me at all." Later, it can escalate to direct attacks: "You can't do anything right, you're stupid," "Even your parents don't love you, you're unbearable," "You're truly an idiot, just stop talking, you can't even think logically." Finally, this dynamic may escalate to yelling, cursing, and even physical aggression.

Something important to be aware of in this stage is that **THE NARCISSIST WILL CONSTANTLY MAKE YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE NOT DOING ENOUGH AND THAT YOU'RE NOT BEING "EMPATHETIC" TO THEIR NEEDS**. They'll insist on this, and even though at first, you might realize they're being unfair, over time, you often end up accepting it and seeing it as normal. During this period, there are constant complaints from them because, according to them, you're not paying enough attention to them when they want or not doing what they ask or "need." They'll tell you that you're a "terrible" and "ungrateful" person after all they've done for you. Besides blaming you, they use this opportunity to manipulate you, saying that "if you were good enough" or "if you really loved them," you would behave and try harder (in other words, do what they want), and everything would be fine again. This idea reminds you of the idealization stage (which will not return) and keeps you in the relationship without the narcissist having to make any effort to keep you while continuing to abuse you.

For example, take the case of a patient we'll call Claudia, who began a romantic relationship with the pastor of her church, whom we'll call Carlos. Carlos, who was married, constantly complained that his marriage was over because his wife was cruel and didn't understand him, even though "he gave her everything." Eventually, Claudia gave in to his persistence, and as soon as the relationship started, Carlos completely changed with her. He began to accuse her of not understanding him or giving enough, which is why they couldn't move forward in their relationship and that she wasn't worthy enough for him to leave his wife. He demanded she always be available for him, even over her job, and no matter how much Claudia gave in to everything, even changing jobs, he continued to blame her for their inability to be together, saying it was her fault for not trying hard enough. It was a long journey for Claudia to become aware of and accept the manipulation and abuse she was experiencing and finally manage to distance herself from him.

At the beginning of the devaluation stage, it's common for us to try setting boundaries and telling the narcissist that they're being unfair, treating us poorly, etc., but they will immediately try to discredit that boundary, bombarding us with arguments (often irrational) so persistently that we end up doubting ourselves. It's not that they convince us, but rather that we become exhausted and prefer to stop arguing. In general, they don't get tired of talking, arguing, and shouting until the other person gives in to their demands, whether reasonable or not. An important piece of advice here is to remember that **THERE'S NO POINT IN ARGUING WITH A NARCISSIST** because they will "never" understand our point of view. Their only goal is to get what they want, not to listen or understand us. Over time, due to their persistence, repetition, and other strategies, we end up doubting ourselves, believing we're not good enough or that the problems in the relationship are our fault.

On the other hand, when, for some reason, you manage to stand firm on a boundary, they will likely apply the silent treatment, triangulation, or launch a smear campaign against you. For example, if you refuse to change your work schedule to please them, decide not to cancel a visit to a family member or friend, or continue attending the gym or classes you enjoy when they believe you "should" be paying attention to them, giving them money, or even taking out a loan to buy something they want, they'll stop talking to you completely and ignore you, applying the **SILENT TREATMENT**.

In **TRIANGULATION**, the narcissist will focus their attention on another person, speaking highly of them or praising them. They'll then use this situation to make you feel inferior and imply that "you're the problem," suggesting that this other person gives them what they want, while you don't (although this is rarely true). It's common that if they apply the silent treatment, they'll post pictures on social media appearing very happy with this other person, praising them, and letting your mind fill in the rest. In other words, you'll start to think that this person is better than you, that your partner prefers them, and that with them, "they're truly happy." Just remember, all of

this is a lie. It's highly likely that the other person is not that close or is being manipulated in the same way you are.

On the other hand, if they launch a **SMEAR CAMPAIGN**, they will begin to speak ill of you to others close to you without your knowledge. You may not realize it until, when noticing a change in others' attitudes, you start to investigate what's going on. If you manage to get someone to tell you, you'll find out that the narcissist has been telling a story where they play the victim, portraying themselves as a wonderful person whom you treat poorly, despite everything they've done for you.

In this stage, if you've managed to stand firm on your boundaries, it's also possible that they'll **DISCARD** you, at least temporarily, only to reappear when their anger has subsided or you become useful to them again. An important piece of advice here is not to trust that a discard is something permanent, especially **IF THEY HAVE GAINED A LOT FROM THE RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU. IT'S MOST LIKELY THEY WILL REAPPEAR AS IF NOTHING HAPPENED.** Many times, when we are grieving the relationship and just beginning to recover, the narcissist reappears. This prevents us from moving on and letting go of the relationship. To trap you back into the cycle of narcissistic abuse, they will refer to the brief period of idealization, making us think "that everything could be fine again."

For example, Carlos, a patient of ours, had a lot of difficulty understanding how discarding worked in his relationship. Carlos would often come to therapy in an emotional crisis every time his partner abruptly ended the relationship, often without any explanation. This would cause him to spend days or weeks in distress, crying and grieving, thinking "this time it's for real, and I've lost them forever." However, his partner always reappeared saying, "I'll give you another chance," and Carlos would give in to whatever his partner asked. This cycle repeated more than eight times until, finally, thanks to the therapeutic process, Carlos managed to distance himself from the relationship after understanding the manipulation that was causing him so much harm.

So far, we've mentioned some of the most common manipulation strategies used by narcissists, but they are not all of them. In the glossary found in Chapter 4 of this ebook, you can review these and other essential concepts to help you understand and start protecting yourself from narcissistic abuse.



IDEALIZATION

DEVALUATION

Charming and charismatic
manipulation

Intense attention

Mirroring the victim's tastes, interests, and values
affection

Grandiose promises
comparisons

Talking about the future together

Extraordinary displays of affection

Abuse and

Constant criticism

Withdrawal of

Unfavorable

Blaming

Aggression

Inconsistent behavior



Now that we've identified the phases of narcissistic abuse, it's important to pay attention to how it ties us to the relationship. Once this cycle of abuse starts—where brief periods of idealization alternate with long, constant moments of devaluation—we find ourselves tied to this emotional roller coaster, trying to make sense of what is happening. We ask ourselves questions like: "Do they really love me?", "But why do they treat me this way?", "Am I really the one at fault?", "Maybe they're right, and if I change and make an effort, everything will get better.", "Maybe if I talk differently, they'll understand." We stay hopeful, waiting for things to improve, longing for the idealization stage where "everything was wonderful."

However, that stage never returns because it wasn't real. **THE NARCISSIST LACKS EMPATHY AND HAS NO GENUINE INTEREST IN OUR FEELINGS AND NEEDS; IT'S JUST A MANIPULATION STRATEGY TO GET SOMETHING IN RETURN LATER.** If at any point they apologize for something or stop mistreating us, that apology is generally not sincere. The narcissist only treats us kindly to continue receiving the benefits our relationship offers. This is something that, when we're deep in the situation, is very hard to accept and understand. We try to make sense of their behavior based on how we would act, which becomes a major obstacle to leaving the relationship. The advice here is to **ACCEPT THAT THE NARCISSIST THINKS AND FEELS DIFFERENTLY FROM US AND HAS NO EMPATHY FOR OTHER PEOPLE'S FEELINGS.** What affects them is very different from what affects people with healthy empathy. In fact, you've probably noticed that the most common emotion in a narcissist is anger, rather than feelings of loneliness or sadness. We often confuse this and try to "be empathetic" with them. However, what

they really care about is winning, getting what they want, and reinforcing their sense of being wonderful and “superior” to others.

It's also crucial to understand that these emotional ups and downs create an addiction in the brain. When we receive a small gesture of kindness or recognition from the narcissist, our brain increases dopamine levels (a neurotransmitter related to happiness and immediate reward), triggering our idealization that “everything will be okay”: we feel good. However, immediately after, there's a deprivation of these stimuli and that substance, accompanied by the intense stress caused by the narcissist's aggression, which increases cortisol levels and other chemicals. This cycle is very similar to what happens in substance addiction. In fact, that's how it feels when we want to leave the relationship: like trying to quit an addiction. Even though we know it's harmful, we feel the urge and need to go back to it. It's common to hear our patients say, “I feel addicted to the relationship. I know I should leave them, but it's extremely difficult.”

A helpful tip here is not to judge yourself for feeling this way (even though many people around you might) and to keep this factor in mind to manage it and leave the relationship. That's why it's essential to cut off or limit contact as much as possible in a planned way. Otherwise, you'll be constantly exposing yourself to the stimulus that creates the addiction. This means avoiding places or times where you might run into them, not frequenting the places you used to go together, staying away from things that remind you of them, etc., at least until you've healed from the separation and grief of the relationship, reducing the risk of falling back into it.

A final aspect of narcissistic abuse is that if we stay in the relationship for too long, this abuse can create a toxic dependency bond. This bond distorts our perception of ourselves and our loyalty to the relationship, filling us with guilt, and ultimately places us in a position where we accept the abuse as normal, making it very hard to escape. In the next section, we will delve deeper into this topic to better understand it and begin to manage it.

Reflection:

Make a list of your emotional, physical, and mental needs in the relationship. Then, reflect on whether your partner respects and addresses them. Notice if you are constantly sacrificing your own needs to please your narcissistic partner.

My physical needs	My emotional needs	My mental needs
<div>How does my partner react or respond to these needs?</div> <div>Does my partner respect the time I try to dedicate to these needs?</div> <div>Does my partner support me in fulfilling them, or do they criticize and invalidate them?</div> <div>Do I set aside these needs myself to avoid making them angry, to prevent arguments, to please them, or to avoid rejection or to be "accepted"?</div> <div>In what situations and in what ways do I set aside my own needs?</div>		

Chapter 3

The Toxic Dependency Bond

If you've been in a relationship with a narcissist long enough, you've likely experienced that sense of owing them "something," like a kind of unhealthy loyalty. You might already see the abuse more clearly — it has shifted from covert aggression (jokes, sarcasm, demeaning comments, gaslighting, etc.) to overt aggression (yelling, insults, or even physical violence) — but even so, you still feel like you owe them respect and loyalty, or that you're somehow in debt to them. This might confuse you more, and you might even reprimand or internally punish yourself for feeling this way. However, this is not your fault. That feeling is the direct result of the abuse you've experienced, and recognizing it is key to managing it and starting to break free from the relationship.

This kind of bond between the victim and the abuser, in this case, you and your narcissistic partner, is known as a toxic dependency bond, and it can form either in childhood or adulthood as long as there is prolonged abuse. In relationships where one parent is a narcissist, it forms in childhood. Other terms for it include betrayal bond, unhealthy loyalty bond, trauma bond, or Stockholm Syndrome, a term you've probably heard of.

This bond is an emotional survival mechanism that develops in the victim as a response to cycles of abuse, with intermittent periods of cruelty, intimidation, threats, or covert abuse. Understanding this bond explains why others can easily identify the abuse (and may even despise the abuser) while you, the victim, remain in love with or even defend your aggressor.

The first point to emphasize is that this bond happens **UNCONSCIOUSLY THROUGH OUR PRIMITIVE BRAIN AND NERVOUS SYSTEM'S SURVIVAL MECHANISMS**. This means it happens without your conscious awareness and is tied to intense emotional responses that guide your behavior. Perhaps, like many people in this situation, the idea of leaving the relationship causes such strong fear or anxiety that it prevents you from walking away, even though you know and rationally understand that it's the best thing for you. You may have even wished that the other person would end the relationship for good so that they don't come back, because you don't feel strong enough to end it and stay away. However, they always come back or reappear just as you're starting to stabilize emotionally without them.

People close to you might have told you to leave the relationship, to "just break up and stop hurting yourself," or in the worst cases, they may even scold you by saying: "If you're still in it, it's because you want to be." While these words might be well-intentioned, they only make you feel worse and more frustrated, leaving you with the feeling that you are incapable of getting out. An important piece of advice is to seek help as soon as possible, and when you do, make sure it's from a professional or at least someone capable of understanding your situation. They can help provide the proper tools to break this toxic bond gradually.

An example of this bond is Rocío, an independent and successful woman in her career, who was in a relationship with a very wealthy man. Although they didn't formally live together, he rented an apartment for her and her daughter in a very exclusive area, and he would stay there for a few days "between business trips." Over time, Rocío discovered that he was married. Although she knew she earned enough to comfortably support herself and her daughter, the idea of ending the relationship and permanently returning to her own home (which she still maintained and where she spent a few days each month for upkeep) terrified her. She eventually stopped telling her friends about her situation because they would question why she needed to stay, given that she had all the means to leave the toxic relationship at any moment. She even blamed and punished herself for not having the strength to leave. It took time in therapy for her to stop blaming herself, understand the fear she was feeling, and find the strength to finally let go of the relationship.

How is this harmful bond formed?

One of the conditions for this type of bond to form is that **THE NARCISSIST MUST ELIMINATE OUR SENSE OF SELF**. Do you remember those harsh jokes, sarcastic comments, or veiled aggressions where they belittled and criticized you, telling you that you were wrong or that you didn't know how to do things? Over time, those attitudes evolved into more direct aggression: insults, yelling, telling you that you're useless, stupid, that you're worthless without them, that nobody loves you, etc. Little by little, you began to doubt yourself, who you are, and your own worth. This is how emotional abuse robs you of your sense of self. When you look back, you realize that you no longer have the self-confidence you once had, you doubt your abilities, you no longer dare to do things you used to do, and you're afraid that without the relationship in your life, you won't be able to do things right. However, it's not clear how you went from being who you were to becoming this anxious and insecure person.

Here, it's essential to understand that one of the ways our emotional brain learns is through repetition. In this sense, the phrase "a lie repeated a thousand times becomes a truth" is true. The narcissist's constant criticisms, belittlements, and manipulations managed to infiltrate your mind, and you started to feel it as true.

Furthermore, this process happens more quickly if the narcissist managed to **DISTANCE OR ISOLATE YOU FROM YOUR CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS**. As a result, you no longer have friends, siblings, or other family members to help you see things as they truly are. Do you remember how, little by little, you started leaving abruptly when you were at a gathering or with a close person to rush over because "they needed something"? Or how you isolated yourself from others, spending hours on the phone (although it would be more accurate to say listening, because you hardly spoke)? Eventually, you gave in, and it seemed better not to go to those events, knowing that there would be a problem if you weren't there when they wanted you to be or simply because they didn't like your friends. This is how narcissists manage to isolate you from your relationships.

Once your sense of self has been eroded, the next condition for forming this toxic dependency is forgetting who you are and **ADOPTING THE NARCISSIST'S "REALITY"**. This means that, once you've internalized that "you're worthless and don't deserve respect or to have your needs met," through the same process of repetition, you begin to believe that what they say about the relationship is true. Usually, it starts by making you responsible for everything that goes wrong, both in the relationship and in other areas of their life. If they get angry, yell, or throw something, it's because "you did (or didn't do) something, and their reaction is only fair and necessary." If something doesn't work out for them, it's because "you didn't support them enough, or you were an obstacle" (or, failing that, someone else was). They are never responsible for anything. Little by little, they make you responsible for their needs and mistakes, and you end up believing it until you feel guilty for practically everything.

In this sense, an important piece of advice is to try to understand what the "**NARCISSIST'S REALITY**" is, that is, their distorted view of the world: "I'm always right, I'm never responsible for anything, **YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING ME FEEL GOOD ALL THE TIME**, regardless of what I do, whether I attack you, or even if what's happening is a direct consequence of my actions." As irrational as this statement sounds, over time, you start to feel it as true. That's why it's crucial to understand it and constantly question it in your mind and your internal dialogue, even several times a day, even though at the moment, it may seem like the truth.

An example of this is the case of a couple we will call Mauricio and Karla. Mauricio blamed Karla for his obesity, telling her that "she fed him poorly," didn't support him, and that she was responsible for his weight gain. However, Karla prepared healthy food for him every day so that he could take it to work and not eat junk food. Despite this, Mauricio would come home every day with the food untouched, and she would end up eating it or throwing it away. Even when they were at home, he would ask to order takeout so she wouldn't have to cook, even though she insisted on making something healthy. At first, Karla was annoyed, but over time, and with Mauricio's persistence, she began to doubt whether she was doing something wrong and even started looking for solutions to "help him."

Another essential condition that supports this traumatic bond is developing something we call **LEARNED HELPLESSNESS**. This emotional and psychological state leads us to respond with

discouragement, abandonment, passivity, and inaction when faced with negative, unpleasant, or painful situations that any person would try to escape from. When we fall into this state, we feel that what we do has no effect on our environment, and we “learn” to do nothing, even when we are going through very difficult times. We feel like we’ve tried everything, but nothing helps to change the situation or avoid something negative.

You’ve surely experienced this feeling more and more frequently in your relationship. If you’ve been in it long enough, this feeling has become stable. You feel that no matter what you do, nothing will change or improve, and that it’s impossible to leave the relationship. Even ideas for solving the problem or ending the relationship seem useless, and the simplest thing is to endure the situation.

To begin freeing yourself from this feeling, it is essential to recognize that **THE NARCISSIST WON’T CHANGE**, but **YOU CAN CHANGE**, and this will allow you to break free from the abusive relationship and heal. This means that any effort to make them happy, not get angry, treat you well, accept you, or love you (as they seemed to do during the idealization phase) is completely useless. It’s much more helpful to focus your energy on recovering and feeling good about yourself. Invest your efforts in doing those little things that make you feel good: taking a course, a class, returning to yoga or the gym, or encouraging yourself to go out with your friends from time to time. After all, whatever you do, the narcissist will find something to be upset about, criticize you for, or make you feel like you’re not enough and that without them, you can’t do anything.

Finally, one of the main traps that reinforce this bond is **CONFUSING THE NARCISSIST’S ACTS OF ATTENTION, KINDNESS, AND CARE WITH GENUINE SIGNS OF AFFECTION**. This makes the relationship incredibly confusing, generating doubts about whether the narcissist truly loves us, whether what they say is true, whether they care about us, whether the relationship can improve, or whether they can change. However, it is essential to understand that these gestures are not signs of affection but rather tactics to hook us and keep us trapped.

A useful exercise is to make a list of negative situations and remind yourself of them constantly. You can also compare and contrast the few “good” moments with the bad ones. Ask yourself: How long did the good phase really last? How long have you been suffering in the relationship? How long has it been since there have been good moments in the relationship? How many days or hours are truly good in the week? How does the narcissist treat you daily? How do you feel most of the time in the relationship?

Remember: **THE GOOD PHASE IS JUST AN ILLUSION THAT WILL NOT RETURN.**

Codependency Test:

This test is designed to measure your level of codependency. It's a tool for self-diagnosis. Answer the following questions by selecting the number that corresponds to how you feel. Then, calculate the sum of your responses and review the recommendations.

Never or Rarely = 0

Occasionally = 1

Frequently = 2

1. Do you feel compelled to help others solve their problems, even when they haven't asked for help?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
2. Do you often find yourself saying yes when you really wanted to say no, doing things you don't want to do, more than what is a fair share of the work, or doing things for others that they can do for themselves?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
3. Do you feel bored, empty, and worthless if there isn't a crisis in your life, a problem to solve, or someone to help?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
4. Do you believe or feel that you are responsible for other people, their feelings, thoughts, actions, decisions, desires, needs, well-being or discomfort, even what happens to them in the future?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
5. Do you believe that someone is responsible for taking care of you and making you happy?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
6. Do you feel or believe that someone or someone else's problem is controlling your life?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
7. Does guilt determine your priorities?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
8. Do you feel guilty for what you think and feel, and do you deny it?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
9. Do you worry about someone to the point where you lose sleep and cannot relax or enjoy life?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
10. Do you think about someone else and your problems more than three times a day?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
11. Are you so worried about someone that you become depressed and/or physically ill?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
12. Are you so worried about someone that you take sedatives or drink alcohol to manage the resulting anxiety?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
13. Do you believe that you cannot be happy until someone else—a parent, child, friend, lover, or partner—changes their behavior? Are you waiting for someone else to change so that you can be happy?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
14. Do you abruptly abandon your routine and stop living your life because you are very upset with	

someone?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
15. Do you feel confused, helpless, or sometimes think you're going crazy because of how involved you are in someone else's life?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
16. Do you try to control events and people by withholding affection, producing guilt, coercing, threatening, giving unsolicited advice, exercising manipulation, or domination?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
17. Do you allow someone to physically or emotionally abuse you?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
18. Are you emotionally and physically abusing someone?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
19. Do you feel attacked and defensive when others talk about you?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
20. Do you feel you have to get angry and yell to be heard?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
21. Do you seek approval from others for their behavior or decisions?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
22. Do you try to prove that you're good enough for others, but forget to ask yourself if those people are good enough for you?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
23. Do you feel trapped in relationships?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
24. Do you blame others for the circumstances in your life?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
25. Do you often not say what you feel?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
26. Do you ask for what you need indirectly or often don't speak about it?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
27. Do you lie to protect and cover for the people you love?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
28. Are you tolerating behaviors that you said you would never tolerate?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
29. Has someone hurt you so deeply that you lost your spiritual faith?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
30. Has someone hurt you so deeply that you've considered or done things to punish and take revenge on that person?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
31. Do you have sex with someone even when you don't want to?	
0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
32. Is someone else's anger controlling your actions? For example, do you spend a lot of time and energy thinking about and choosing the behavior that will least provoke that person's anger?	

0 = Never or rarely	1 = Occasionally	2 = Frequently	
33. Do you have difficulty relaxing and having fun?			
0 = Never or rarely	1 = Occasionally	2 = Frequently	
34. Do you feel stuck, trapped, and hopeless, but tell yourself that your problem isn't serious enough to need help?			
0 = Never or rarely	1 = Occasionally	2 = Frequently	
35. Because of someone else's problem, have you separated and isolated yourself from the things and people you enjoy?			
0 = Never or rarely	1 = Occasionally	2 = Frequently	
36. Have you thought about suicide or wished for death as an escape from an intolerable relationship?			
0 = Never or rarely	1 = Occasionally	2 = Frequently	
TOTAL			

Codependency Results:

Score **0** to **10**: Your behavior is within the **safe zone**. It would be beneficial for you to learn more about codependency and addiction.

Score **11** to **25**: Your behavior is in the yellow or **caution zone**. It would be helpful to obtain more information about codependency and addiction, and to start working on these behaviors. Attending support groups or seeking professional advice would also be beneficial.

Score above **25**: This indicates **codependency-related problems**. We highly recommend seeking professional help. It is also important to obtain appropriate information about codependency and addiction; we can provide it by getting in touch.

Guided Meditation:

Take a few minutes to relax and follow the meditation from the audio. First, make sure you are completely comfortable (go to the bathroom or drink water if needed). Before starting, choose a comfortable place and either sit or lie down, whichever feels best for you. Then, try to relax your entire body and take a few deep breaths, filling your lungs with air. Adjust your body as needed, and when you feel comfortable, follow the meditation from the audio.

Chapter 4

Glossary of the Narcissistic Relationship

Here is a catalog of words and their definitions that best characterize narcissistic behavior, manipulation tactics, and the dynamics that occur in these types of relationships.

Blame-shifting: This is the tactic in which the narcissist blames the victim for their own mistakes, toxic behaviors, or failures. Instead of taking responsibility for their actions, the narcissist projects blame onto the victim, making them feel guilty and responsible for situations that are not their fault, much less their responsibility. Example: if the narcissist arrives late to an important appointment, instead of admitting their lack of punctuality, they will blame the victim for "not reminding them" or "distracting them," making the victim feel responsible for their own error.

Bullying: This refers to abusive, intimidating, and humiliating behaviors that the narcissist inflicts to maintain control and dominance over the victim. It is characterized by cruelty, contempt, and constant degradation, both verbal and emotional. Bullying includes insults and derogatory remarks that belittle the victim, as well as ridicule and humiliation, both in private and public. The goal is to emotionally destabilize the victim to maintain emotional control and dominance, with devastating consequences for the victim's mental and emotional health.

Discard: This is the phase in which the narcissist abruptly ends the relationship with their partner, in a cold manner, without considering the other person's feelings. This usually happens when they feel they have extracted everything they could from the relationship or when they find a new source of narcissistic supply (i.e., a new person who provides the admiration and validation they need). The discard is often traumatic for the victim, as it happens without warning and follows a period of idealization.

Devaluation: This is the second phase of a narcissistic relationship, following the idealization stage. Here, the narcissist begins to show their true abusive and manipulative behavior. The victim, who was initially idealized and treated with excessive attention and praise, now experiences constant criticism, withdrawal of affection, unfavorable comparisons, inconsistent behavior, and blame-shifting. It is the process by which the narcissist degrades and diminishes the victim's self-esteem, making them feel inadequate and insecure.

Emotional Blackmail: This is a manipulation tactic aimed at controlling and dominating the victim by exploiting their emotions and vulnerabilities. It involves making the victim feel guilt, fear, obligation, or insecurity in order to do what the narcissist wants. The narcissist makes the victim feel guilty for not fulfilling their desires or demands, reminding them of past mistakes or accusing them of being selfish or insensitive. They may also use direct threats to instill fear, such as abandonment, causing harm to the victim or themselves, or even exposing secrets.

Flying Monkeys: These are people that the narcissist manipulates to act on their behalf, defending their actions and attacking or discrediting the victim. The term comes from the Wicked Witch of the West's henchmen in "The Wizard of Oz," who carried out her will and executed her orders. The "flying monkeys" can be friends, family members, colleagues, or anyone the narcissist persuades to support them in their campaign of manipulation and control. They become the narcissist's spokespersons, delivering messages and threats, and amplifying the narcissist's lies and distortions. Some actions of flying monkeys include spreading rumors, intimidating and threatening the victim, and orchestrating false or manipulated interventions where they try to convince the victim that they are the problem and need to change their behavior.

Gaslighting: This is a form of psychological manipulation in which the narcissistic person seeks to make the victim doubt their own perception, memory, or judgment. This tactic is used to sow confusion in the victim's mind and gain power and control. Gaslighting can include denying facts ("I never said that"), dismissing the victim's feelings ("you're overreacting"), distorting reality, and isolation. An example is when the narcissist consciously denies doing something you saw them do and tells you that you're confused, have a bad memory, or change things.

Hoovering: This refers to the tactics the narcissist uses to "suck" or lure the victim back into the relationship, especially after a separation or breakup. The term comes from the Hoover vacuum brand, symbolizing how the narcissist tries to "suck" the victim back into their sphere of influence and control. Common forms of hoovering include promises of change, excessive attention and affection, "remorse" and apologies, emotional manipulation tactics, reigniting nostalgia and past experiences, contacting through third parties, etc.

Idealization: This is the first phase in a narcissistic relationship and is one of the most deceptive and trapping stages. During this stage, the narcissist presents their best version, creating an idealized image of themselves and the relationship to attract and win over the victim. This occurs when the narcissist is extremely charming and charismatic, appearing to be the perfect partner. They provide intense attention and mirror the victim's values, interests, and likes, striving to align with them. This behavior creates a false sense of compatibility and deep connection. Additionally, the narcissist speaks of an ideal future together, making grand promises about the life they will share, which generates expectations and hope in the victim.

Love Bombing: This is a tactic often used by narcissistic individuals at the beginning of a relationship. It consists of an overwhelming and excessive display of affection, attention, and love toward the other person. The intention is to create a strong emotional bond quickly, making the victim feel special and unique, which facilitates long-term control and manipulation. Examples include constant attention, excessive gifts, continuous compliments and praise, and unrealistic future projections like "when we live together" or "when we travel together."

Silent Treatment: This is a deliberate tactic of ignoring, excluding, or withdrawing all forms of communication with the victim as a form of punishment or control. The narcissistic person simply stops talking, responding to messages, or interacting, creating an atmosphere of silence and emotional isolation. The goal is to generate anxiety, insecurity, and desperation in the victim to regain the narcissist's attention and affection, which reinforces their control. The silent treatment is a form of emotional abuse that destabilizes the victim, increasing their emotional dependence on the narcissist.

Smear Campaigns or Defamation: These are deliberate and systematic actions by the narcissist to damage the victim's reputation, isolate them socially, and weaken their support network. The goal is to maintain control over the victim, protect the narcissist's image, and divert attention from their abusive behavior. These occur when the narcissist spreads lies, rumors, and false accusations about the victim. These may concern their character, behavior, etc. The narcissist also uses their charisma and manipulation skills to convince others that the victim is problematic, unreliable, or emotionally unstable. They exaggerate or distort facts to make the victim seem guilty of inappropriate or harmful behavior. Examples include workplace rumors, false accusations (such as infidelity, abuse, or immoral behavior), manipulation of friendships, or derogatory posts and insinuations on social media to publicly expose the victim.

Scapegoat: This refers to the person the narcissist chooses to blame for their frustrations, problems, and failures that they do not want to admit or face. The scapegoat becomes the recipient of the narcissist's anger, contempt, and mistreatment, unfairly bearing the responsibility for everything negative that happens in the narcissist's life. Examples include blaming the scapegoat for conflicts, project failures, or emotional issues, making them responsible for the narcissist's bad mood, stress, or unhappiness.

Triangulation: This is a manipulation tactic used by narcissists to create conflict, insecurity, and dependence in their victims by introducing a third person into the relationship. One triangulation tactic is **GENERATING JEALOUSY AND COMPETITION:** The narcissist may praise another person (for example, an ex, a friend, or even a coworker) in front of the victim to make them feel insecure, jealous, or inadequate, leading the victim to try harder to gain their approval. Another triangulation strategy is **AVOIDING RESPONSIBILITY:** The narcissist involves a third person in the conversation or conflict to divert responsibility for their own actions, suggesting that the third person has issues with the victim. Another form of triangulation is **CREATING ALLIANCES** with others against the victim, making them feel isolated and attacked from multiple fronts.

Reflection:

Identify the situations you have experienced and/or are currently experiencing in the relationship based on the glossary above. Then, acknowledge and validate the emotions you experience in these situations.

Which situations from this list are present in my relationship?	How do they manifest or what happens in the relationship?	How do I feel when this happens?
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<p><i>Blame-shifting</i></p> <p><i>Bullying</i></p> <p><i>Discard</i></p> <p><i>Devaluation</i></p> <p><i>Emotional Blackmail</i></p> <p><i>Flying Monkeys</i></p> <p><i>Gaslighting</i></p> <p><i>Hoovering</i></p> <p><i>Idealization</i></p> <p><i>Love bombing</i></p> <p>Smear Campaigns or Defamation</p> <p><i>Silent treatment</i></p> <p><i>Scapegoat</i></p> <p><i>Triangulation</i></p>		
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Chapter 5

Reflection on Your Situation

Reaching the end of this book is a significant achievement. You've walked a complicated path, filled with discoveries about how difficult a relationship with a narcissist can be. This journey hasn't been easy, but every step you've taken demonstrates your courage and strength.

Becoming aware of what was happening is just the beginning. What matters now is what you do with this knowledge. Healing is an ongoing process that requires effort, patience, and most of all, self-love. Every small step you take toward your recovery counts, and together, those steps will lead you to a more balanced and fulfilling life.

The final exercise asks you to create an action plan. Think of it as your roadmap to a happier and healthier life. Imagine that each action not only distances you from the painful past but brings you closer to a future full of possibilities. Celebrate every small victory because you deserve it. You deserve a life free from the shadow of narcissism, a life where you can truly be yourself and be happy.

Thank you for walking this path with us. This is not a goodbye; it is the beginning of something new, filled with hope and opportunities. And if you feel that this book has helped you, we invite you to join us in the next one in this series, where we will continue to delve deeper into the healing process and provide you with more tools for your well-being.

Work Plan to Leave the Toxic Relationship

Write down some concrete actions to start working on or changing if you are in a narcissistic relationship. Set realistic goals that you know are achievable for you, even if they seem small at first. Establish the ways and dates to begin taking these actions and commit to yourself to follow through.

I. Area to improve: *(What is the first thing I can do to strengthen myself and improve so I can leave the relationship?)*

1.- _____

2.- _____

3.- _____

4.- _____

II. Current situation: *(How is what I'm doing working for me today? How am I doing today?)*

1.- _____

2.- _____

3.- _____

4.- _____

III.Goals: *(What do I want to achieve? How do I want to see myself in the future?)*

1.- _____

2.- _____

3.- _____

4.- _____

IV.Options: *(What can I do? And how?)*

1.- _____

2.- _____

3.- _____

4.- _____

V. Commitments: *(What, when and how will I do it)*

1.-

2.

3.-

4.-

Date

Name/Signature

6 Test Formats for Manual Scoring

Self-Esteem Test

(Lucy Reidl Self-Esteem Scale)

Instructions:

Read each statement carefully and indicate your opinion using the following symbols:

- Agree **(A)**

- Don't know **(N)**

- Disagree **(D)**

1) I am a person with many qualities.	A	N	D
2) Generally, if I have something to say, I say it.	A	N	D
3) I often feel ashamed of myself.	A	N	D
4) I almost always feel confident about what I think.	A	N	D
5) I don't really like myself.	A	N	D
6) I rarely feel guilty about things I've done	A	N	D
7) I believe people have a good opinion of me.	A	N	D
8) I am quite happy.	A	N	D

9) I feel proud of what I do.	A	N	D
10) Few people pay attention to me.	A	N	D
11) There are many things I would change about myself if I could.	A	N	D
12) I have a hard time speaking in front of people.	A	N	D
13) I am almost never sad.	A	N	D
14) It's very hard to be myself.	A	N	D
15) It's easy for people to like me.	A	N	D
16) If we could go back and live life again, I would be different.	A	N	D
17) In general, people listen to me when I give them advice.	A	N	D
18) There always has to be someone to tell me what to do.	A	N	D
19) I often wish I were someone else.	A	N	D
20) I feel pretty confident about myself.	A	N	D

Self-Esteem Scale Score Calculation

Mark the selected responses with their corresponding number and add them up to get your score.

1) I am a person with many qualities.	3	2	1
2) Generally, if I have something to say, I say it.	3	2	1
3) I often feel ashamed of myself.	1	2	3
4) I almost always feel confident about what I think.	3	2	1
5) I don't really like myself.	1	2	3
6) I rarely feel guilty about things I've done	3	2	1
7) I believe people have a good opinion of me.	3	2	1
8) I am quite happy.	3	2	1
9) I feel proud of what I do.	3	2	1
10) Few people pay attention to me.	1	2	3

11) There are many things I would change about myself if I could.	1	2	3
12) I have a hard time speaking in front of people.	1	2	3
13) I am almost never sad.	3	2	1
14) It's very hard to be myself.	1	2	3
15) It's easy for people to like me.	3	2	1
16) If we could go back and live life again, I would be different.	1	2	3
17) In general, people listen to me when I give them advice.	3	2	1
18) There always has to be someone to tell me what to do.	1	2	3
19) I often wish I were someone else.	1	2	3
20) I feel pretty confident about myself.	3	2	1
TOTAL			

Self-Esteem Evaluation Range:

(Maximum score: 60 points / Minimum score: 20 points)

Very Good: 55-60

Good: 46-54

Fair: 37-45

Insufficient: 28-36

Poor: 20-27

Codependency Test:

This test is designed to measure your level of codependency. It’s a tool for self-diagnosis. Answer the following questions by selecting the number that corresponds to how you feel. Then, calculate the sum of your responses and review the recommendations.

Never or Rarely = 0

Occasionally = 1

Frequently = 2

1. Do you feel compelled to help others solve their problems, even when they haven’t asked for help?	
<div>0 = Never or rarely</div> <div>1 = Occasionally</div> <div>2 = Frequently</div>	
2. Do you often find yourself saying yes when you really wanted to say no, doing things you don’t want to do, more than what is a fair share of the work, or doing things for others that they can do for themselves?	

0 = Never or rarely	1 = Occasionally	2 = Frequently	
3. Do you feel bored, empty, and worthless if there isn't a crisis in your life, a problem to solve, or someone to help?			
0 = Never or rarely	1 = Occasionally	2 = Frequently	
4. Do you believe or feel that you are responsible for other people, their feelings, thoughts, actions, decisions, desires, needs, well-being or discomfort, even what happens to them in the future?			
0 = Never or rarely	1 = Occasionally	2 = Frequently	
5. Do you believe that someone is responsible for taking care of you and making you happy?			
0 = Never or rarely	1 = Occasionally	2 = Frequently	
6. Do you feel or believe that someone or someone else's problem is controlling your life?			
0 = Never or rarely	1 = Occasionally	2 = Frequently	
7. Does guilt determine your priorities?			
0 = Never or rarely	1 = Occasionally	2 = Frequently	
8. Do you feel guilty for what you think and feel, and do you deny it?			
0 = Never or rarely	1 = Occasionally	2 = Frequently	
9. Do you worry about someone to the point where you lose sleep and cannot relax or enjoy life?			
0 = Never or rarely	1 = Occasionally	2 = Frequently	
10. Do you think about someone else and your problems more than three times a day?			
0 = Never or rarely	1 = Occasionally	2 = Frequently	
11. Are you so worried about someone that you become depressed and/or physically ill?			
0 = Never or rarely	1 = Occasionally	2 = Frequently	
12. Are you so worried about someone that you take sedatives or drink alcohol to manage the resulting anxiety?			
0 = Never or rarely	1 = Occasionally	2 = Frequently	
13. Do you believe that you cannot be happy until someone else—a parent, child, friend, lover, or partner—changes their behavior? Are you waiting for someone else to change so that you can be happy?			
0 = Never or rarely	1 = Occasionally	2 = Frequently	
14. Do you abruptly abandon your routine and stop living your life because you are very upset with someone?			
0 = Never or rarely	1 = Occasionally	2 = Frequently	
15. Do you feel confused, helpless, or sometimes think you're going crazy because of how involved you are in someone else's life?			
0 = Never or rarely	1 = Occasionally	2 = Frequently	
16. Do you try to control events and people by withholding affection, producing guilt, coercing, threatening, giving unsolicited advice, exercising manipulation, or domination?			
0 = Never or rarely	1 = Occasionally	2 = Frequently	
17. Do you allow someone to physically or emotionally abuse you?			
0 = Never or rarely	1 = Occasionally	2 = Frequently	
18. Are you emotionally and physically abusing someone?			
0 = Never or rarely	1 = Occasionally	2 = Frequently	
19. Do you feel attacked and defensive when others talk about you?			
0 = Never or rarely	1 = Occasionally	2 = Frequently	

20. Do you feel you have to get angry and yell to be heard? 0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
21. Do you seek approval from others for their behavior or decisions? 0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
22. Do you try to prove that you're good enough for others, but forget to ask yourself if those people are good enough for you? 0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
23. Do you feel trapped in relationships? 0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
24. Do you blame others for the circumstances in your life? 0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
25. Do you often not say what you feel? 0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
26. Do you ask for what you need indirectly or often don't speak about it? 0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
27. Do you lie to protect and cover for the people you love? 0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
28. Are you tolerating behaviors that you said you would never tolerate? 0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
29. Has someone hurt you so deeply that you lost your spiritual faith? 0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
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32. Is someone else's anger controlling your actions? For example, do you spend a lot of time and energy thinking about and choosing the behavior that will least provoke that person's anger? 0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
33. Do you have difficulty relaxing and having fun? 0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
34. Do you feel stuck, trapped, and hopeless, but tell yourself that your problem isn't serious enough to need help? 0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
35. Because of someone else's problem, have you separated and isolated yourself from the things and people you enjoy? 0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
36. Have you thought about suicide or wished for death as an escape from an intolerable relationship? 0 = Never or rarely 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently	
TOTAL	

Codependency Results:

Score **0** to **10**: Your behavior is within the **safe zone**. It would be beneficial for you to learn more about codependency and addiction.

Score **11** to **25**: Your behavior is in the yellow or **caution zone**. It would be helpful to obtain more information about codependency and addiction, and to start working on these behaviors. Attending support groups or seeking professional advice would also be beneficial.

Score above **25**: This indicates **codependency-related problems**. We highly recommend seeking professional help. It is also important to obtain appropriate information about codependency and addiction; we can provide it by getting in touch.