

How To Divorce Your Narcissist Spouse

What They Don't Want You to Know



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Overview

If you're are facing a divorce or custody case and you suspect your spouse is a narcissist, especially if people look at you like you're crazy when you say that, you're in the right place. We have represented people in challenging divorce and custody cases, and specifically in cases where we have had to take over for an attorney who did not know how to handle the case. You can imagine how difficult that is. But as difficult as it can be for attorneys, we know it was 10 times harder for our clients who have to go through it. And in many of those cases, we believe the spouses we were dealing with were showing all the classic signs of a narcissist, and you have to deal with those people in a much different way.

The reason we decided to write this eBook is so that no one has to go through the kind of experiences that many of clients we've worked with have had to go through when we took over their cases. The one thing that they all had in common was they all had picked attorneys who either did not take the spouse's mental state seriously, or were completely unable to deal with it.

If you're here, then you're here to learn the truth, so we're going to teach you some of the main strategies you can employ when dealing with a narcissist.

So let's get right into it. First and foremost, we need to tell you that we are not doctors or psychiatrists or psychologists; we are only talking about personal experience with spouses who exhibit some of the identified traits of a narcissist. Just to give you a roadmap we will talk about 4 things: lack of empathy, frequent lies and exaggerations, false image projection, and rule breaking and boundary violation.



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Four Traits To Look For If You Think You Might Be Married To A Narcissist

Lack of Empathy.

Let's start with lack of empathy. This simply means that your spouse cannot put themselves in your shoes or understand what you need as part of your divorce. Now, this may sound obvious, but what this means is that mediating the divorce without an attorney by your side that understands their mental state and is fully prepared is completely out of the question. You have to exercise extra diligence in mediating a divorce with a narcissist because a successful mediation is based on something called needs-based negotiation. That is where you are negotiating based on the real needs of the parties. Narcissistic spouses simply cannot understand that so there will always be a very difficult positional bargaining that goes on.

We have had many individuals come to our attorneys after going to mediation with a narcissist (who by the way are very good at convincing them that they should do a mediation) because manipulation is another hallmark trait of a narcissist, and the deal they got is horribly unfair. Unfortunately, there's absolutely nothing we can do because the agreement had already been reached and courts will enforce that almost 100% of the time. This is not to say that you won't be in settlement negotiations with your attorney and your spouse and your spouses's attorney, but that must be handled far differently when you're dealing with a narcissist. In fact, you and your attorney must be keenly aware of all the points that we discuss in this eBook, meaning lack of empathy, frequent lies and exaggeration, false image projection and rule breaking, and boundary violation when it comes to participating in a negotiation. This also means that if the Court requires you to use a third party for mediation (and this often happens) your attorney should make the mediator aware of the dynamic in the relationship, and you should thoroughly evaluate the pros and cons of any settlement offer with your attorney before you agree to the settlement of any issues.





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Frequent Lies and Exaggerations

Frequent lies and exaggerations are another area that have a major impact on divorce cases. Where we see them the most are contained in court pleadings, during testimony at trial or in evidentiary hearings, and again in settlement negotiations. So, it is important that you assist your attorney and that your attorney immediately corrects any false statements that are made in your divorce pleadings.

As attorneys, we personally never let a false statement pass, unless it is extremely trivial, without addressing it in our own responses to the court. When it comes to testimony at trial or in evidentiary hearings, it is important that you have gathered and provided objective evidence to your attorney. This can include text messages, emails, audio and video recordings, and any other documents or witness testimony that will contradict what your spouse is going to testify to and say in court. As part of your preparation for hearings, and hearings are often required when you're dealing with a narcissist, your attorney should work with you to anticipate the kind of lies and exaggerations your narcissist spouse could tell in court, and then line up the objective evidence that will show your spouse to be a liar. Many, many times, we have used emails and text messages and other documents to impeach the credibility of a narcissistic spouse. After you do that once or twice in court, the judge begins to question your spouses's credibility in everything they say.

False Image Projection

The third issue is dealing with false image projection. This is usually described to us by clients is that their spouse pretends to be this great person and everyone thinks they are great, when in reality they are really terrible. Where this worries us the most is during court appearances that the court orders, and if the parties go through a custody evaluation and are dealing with a custody evaluator. In those situations, it is important to make the evaluator aware of your position as it relates to your spouses's mental state, but again that should be done with objective evidence and is typically best communicated first through your lawyer.



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It is not best practice to run to the psychologist with this narcissism claim, because a lot of people say that when it's not true, so you have to present the evidence carefully to anyone looking at your case and it's best to do it first through your attorney. Luckily, very often in a custody evaluation where the evaluator is administering psychological tests, the evaluator will find some of these things through testing. But just like dealing with lies and exaggerations, objective evidence is one of the most powerful ways to combat this false image projection.



Rule Breaking and Boundary Violation

The last issue is rule breaking and boundary violation. This can play out in a number of different ways. If your spouse is physically aggressive, we will often deal with a narcissist by seeking a restraining order or protective order in your case, which allows us to insulate you not only from the physical presence of your spouse but from the other types of manipulative communication that we often see in these cases. The other rule breaking and boundary violation that we see is that narcissists often will not follow court orders, and may set unrealistic and groundless deadlines.



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There are essentially two ways to deal with this. If the violation is significant, we immediately file a motion relating to the violation, sometimes that is called an order to show cause. We are relentless in doing that until the spouse's attorney or the judge in the case brings the spouse under control. But the other thing that you need to be very careful of, is that a narcissist will often break rules just to manipulate you into spending a lot of time and a lot of attorney's fees in dealing with every little rule violation. In those instances, your strategy may be to simply do nothing, and to ask the court to order you into a settlement facilitation or to have a final trial in your case where you have more control. Even though those are significant steps, at the end of the day it can be quicker, and a better use of your resources to do that instead of dealing with every rule violation.





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The Cost of Hiring the Right Lawyer to Help You Divorce a Narcissist

The last thing we want to talk about is the cost of hiring the right lawyer to handle your case. Listen, if you have a nothing divorce, meaning you don't have much property and you pretty much agree on everything, then find whatever fits in your budget. You may want to do an uncontested divorce, represent yourself, or go online and use a service like LegalZoom. Though these options present a lot of opportunity for irreversible errors in all other instances in which you are dealing with a narcissist on the other side, especially if you have things like retirement accounts, a home, debt, and unresolved custody issues; you need to find the right attorney regardless of the cost.

We're not trying to be flippant when we say this, and we know this can be financially challenging, but hiring somebody because they have a low retainer, or because they have a lower hourly rate, is not going to solve your financial problems or allow you to deal with your spouse effectively. An ineffective and inexperienced attorney will end up costing you thousands of dollars more than hiring the right attorney in the first place and lower the chance of getting your desired result. So whoever you talk to, have them talk to you about how to deal with your spouse, and judge that against what you just learned here today.





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Austin Texas Divorce Attorneys

Every divorce is unique and requires a thoughtful approach, especially when you are dealing with a narcissist. At Deyerle Silva Smith, PLLC, we understand just how challenging it can be to divorce a narcissist. We are here to help you navigate the process of divorcing a narcissist and regaining control of your life again.



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