

About Irritable Gratitude Syndrome

I read a fascinating article about Traumatic Brain Injuries that mentioned the term Irritable Gratitude Syndrome. This phenomenon happens to many who have survived a TBI. People often tell these survivors how lucky they are to still be alive, it could have ended so much worse or be happy you don't have it as bad as someone else does. Many caregivers or survivors at this point want to scream, & rightfully so!! Such comments can stir up some pretty angry thoughts & feelings that are quite justified.

Yes, it's great the person is still here, but it's not so great that he or she has lost their personality, has constant headaches, struggles to comprehend even the simplest things & forgets so much. Many unaffected by TBIs have zero idea just how awful these things are to live with either in yourself or someone you love.

Ok, true, the situation could've ended worse than it did, but even so, that doesn't mean it ended well! It can be very hard to be grateful to be alive when you're struggling with the awful day to day symptoms of a TBI or watching someone you love struggle with said symptoms.

And yes, others have it worse. That doesn't negate the fact that all TBIs are unique, they all host at least some pretty challenging symptoms & they all are very disruptive to a person's life. As someone with a brain injury, I can tell you that knowing someone else has it worse than me doesn't make mine any less obnoxious to live with. As I was reading the article & considering such things I realized something... I really don't think Irritable Gratitude Syndrome is only for those with brain injuries. I also think it can be common to those of us who have survived narcissistic abuse.

Think about it... how many times have you been told that you should be glad your situation wasn't worse, at least he didn't hit you or everyone has problems with their parents? That's kind of similar to the comments TBI survivors often hear, & they also stir up similar emotions & thoughts to what I described above.

How can you be glad your situation wasn't worse when you struggle with C-PTSD from the narcissistic abuse? Living with the symptoms of C-PTSD is miserable & incredibly difficult.

Maybe that abusive ex didn't hit you but he didn't need to hit to hurt you. Narcissists destroy their victims on the inside, not the outside, but doing their best to ruin their sense of self.

While it's true, everyone has problems with their parents at some point, that doesn't mean all parents are the abusive monsters narcissists are. There is a big difference between normal disagreements & narcissistic parents determined to destroy their own children. Saying they are the same only trivializes narcissistic abuse & invalidates victims.

I think there are some things to do that can help you when experiencing such thoughts & feelings.

Pray. Tell God what you think & feel. Let it all out! He can handle your anger & sadness.

Write it out in a journal.

Talk to someone who is non judgmental, safe & understanding of your situation. If you don't feel like talking or writing, then get alone & cry, scream, beat up some pillows or whatever helps you feel better.

I know this one is very hard but try to be patient with yourself. You've been through a lot! It's ok to feel badly about that!

Rest when you need to. Emotional things take a big physical toll. Give your body extra rest.

I know that when Irritable Gratitude shows up, it's not pleasant. Quite the opposite in fact. But you can & will get through it!