

Aging & Narcissistic Parents

For years, I've wondered why so many narcissists get meaner as they get older, while your average person becomes gentler & kinder. I think I have figured out why this happens.

As we age, we lose some qualities of youth, such as good looks, health & physical strength. While most people accept this as a natural part of the aging process, narcissists don't accept it so well. Extreme insecurity is at the root of many narcissists' behavior, so losing their good looks for example, can be devastating to them. They may not realize they're still attractive, but they simply aren't that attractive 22 year old anymore.

Narcissists also count on things to always be there for them, like they're above losing their looks or sharp minds. When they aren't, this makes the narcissist more insecure. Anything that threatens a narcissist's illusion of their, false self angers them. They may lash out more at the people around them as a result of the anger & frustration they feel.

Also, losing such qualities as their physical strength or mental sharpness can mean losing control over those the narcissist once controlled easily. A narcissist who was big, strong & healthy could physically intimidate another person when young, but once that person is older & not so strong or healthy, that ability to intimidate is gone. As a result, the narcissist must change how she controls her victim. I saw the changes with my mother. As a child, it didn't take much for her to control me. The vicious looks & cruel words always scared me easily. She was also very strong, so she physically intimidated me as well. In my late teens, I wasn't so easily controlled. She began screaming at me, sometimes inches from my face, calling me terrible names & saying horrible things. Once I moved out of my parents' home at 19, my mother still said cruel things, but without screaming. She also did other hateful things. For example, after she threw me into a wall & hurt my back when I was 19, when I saw her, she would constantly hand me something heavy or slap me on the back where it was injured. Once she got older & frailer than she once was, her method of attack changed yet again. She loved to say her cruel things quietly, & usually while we were in a restaurant or other public place. That way, either I had to take it quietly, or look like the crazy one abusing her poor elderly mother if I spoke up to her.

I believe there are 2 options in dealing with this behavior. You either can sever ties with your narcissistic parent, or if you're unwilling or unable to do so, you can find ways to protect yourself & deal with the abuse. There are several ways to do this...

First, pray. You need His help to maintain or gain self esteem, & for creative ideas on ways to cope.

Second, you need to have strong boundaries & good ways to enforce them. If a topic comes up that you don't want to discuss with your narcissistic mother, then change the subject, for example. Change it over & over if necessary.

Third, keep all conversations impersonal. Don't divulge information about your personal life to your narcissistic parent, because that information only becomes ammunition for her to use to hurt you later. Use one word answers. If she asks how you're doing? Say, "Fine." If she tries to pry information out of you, don't give in. Turn the conversation back to her, & she'll forget all about you quickly enough.

Fourth, remember- you do NOT have to be available 24/7. Don't answer the phone every time she calls. Don't spend a lot of time with her when you don't feel up to it. Some distance will help you to protect your mental health.

Lastly, don't neglect yourself. Spend time with God & with empathic, caring people who understand what you are going through & won't judge or criticize you when you're angry. Be good to yourself. Take care of your physical health & get plenty of rest. Treat yourself to things that make you feel nurtured. Taking good care of yourself will help you when you have to deal with your narcissistic parent.