

Emotional Incest, Covert Incest, Parentification, Parentalization

Many adult children of narcissistic parents treat their children more like partners than children. These parents expect their children to take care of their emotional needs, but some also add in other needs such as cooking or household chores well beyond what they should be doing at their age & even sexual needs. This phenomenon is known as emotional or covert incest, parentalizing or parentification. For simplicity's sake, we'll call it emotional incest in this video.

Narcissists often turn to their children for support rather than their partner. Narcissistic supply can be one reason. People see the narcissist's relationship with her child as very close, not realizing it's actually dysfunctional, & praise this "wonderful relationship" which provides narcissistic supply. Or, maybe the narcissist is simply unhappy with her spouse or her single status, & since the child is convenient, she turns to her child with matters that should be discussed with her spouse or a close friend.

No matter the reason, emotional incest is traumatic. The child subjected to this abusive behavior feels a tremendous amount of responsibility for the parent's emotional state, as well as possibly also the parent's physical or sexual needs. This child grows up with a tremendously overdeveloped sense of responsibility for everyone. This can lead to codependency, depression, anger, anxiety & more.

The child who is abused also feels guilty for growing up, leaving home & wanting to have her own life, as if she's betraying her parent.

Emotional incest also can lead to a child having very unhealthy romantic relationships as an adult. The child is taught from an early age that the parent's needs come first, no matter what. A person married to an adult child of an emotionally incestuous environment is going to be a lower priority to that adult child than that child's parents. Whatever the parent wants will be more important than the spouse, which is detrimental to a marriage.

If you are in this dysfunctional situation, then you need to break free. I believe that what I learned with the emotionally incestuous relationship with both of my parents can help you.

As always, the first step should be prayer. Ask God to show you what to do to help break the cycle. And, ask Him to help you to have the strength & courage to do it.

Also, start changing the subject with your narcissistic parent. Asking them about something else related to themselves works best. Since narcissists enjoy talking about themselves, use it to your advantage.

Sometimes the narcissistic parent keeps changing the subject back. If possible, end the conversation. If you're in their presence, have a friend on call, so to speak. Have

your phone ready so you can dial quickly & discreetly or take your phone with you to the bathroom if need be. Tell that person ahead of time that if you call & it only rings a couple of times on a specific day, that means they need to call you & say they need you to come to them immediately. Or, if you're on the phone with your parent & want to end the conversation, ring your doorbell or knock on your door. You can then say, "The doorbell rang.. I have to go." If you have a dog who barks when they hear the doorbell, this is an added bonus- your parent will hear the dog & know that your doorbell rang. You also can use your cell to call your house phone or vice versa & then you can tell your parent that the call waiting beeped & you need to go. Sneaky? Yes, but not entirely dishonest. Your doorbell rang, your call waiting beeped & you do need to go!

I also learned that saying, "It hurts me when you talk to me about Mom/Dad like that" was a recipe for disaster. Not only did it not stop their behavior, since they knew it hurt me, they did it even more. This is typical of narcissists, so learn from my mistake- DO NOT ADMIT IT HURTS YOU!!!

Always remind yourself that your parent's problem is NOT your responsibility. It is acceptable to tune their words out!

Lastly, limit your contact as much as possible with your narcissistic parent. If you aren't so available, they may feel forced to find someone else to listen to their woes & you need the reprieve.

Emotional incest is a very painful thing to deal with, but you can handle it!