

## Hyper Vigilance

Hyper vigilance is a term used to describe when a person feels an extreme awareness of one's surroundings. It's so much more than simply noticing obvious things, such as if a new person entered the room or if someone else left the room. It's being aware that & much more. It can be an awareness of things most people don't even notice, such as if someone had a fleeting expression of anger or someone's tone of voice changing ever so slightly. It also can include an extremely exaggerated startle response, increased heart rate & fast, shallow breathing, feelings of anxiety & even panic.

Hyper vigilance is a natural part of C-PTSD & is extremely common among those who have survived narcissistic abuse.

When you are in the midst of narcissistic abuse, you learn quickly that in order to avoid the narcissist's rage, you have to be perfect. In order to be perfect, you must be aware of whatever the narcissist thinks, feels, wants or needs at any given time. To be aware of such things, you have to notice even the slightest change in the narcissist. Even such very subtle things as a slightly raised eyebrow or a transient half smile can clue you in to whatever the narcissist may want from you or is thinking. Hyper vigilance becomes a very useful survival skill with narcissists, because it can protect you from the narcissist's rage & abuse. Unfortunately though, once the relationship with a narcissist has ended, the hyper vigilance often remains even though there is no longer a need for it.

There are some ways you can cope with hyper vigilance in this situation.

Cognitive behavioral therapy can be very helpful. Talking about your feelings & experiences is helpful, because when you bring problems out into the open, they often lose their control & power over you. You also begin to see the flaws in the thinking that causes your problems in ways you never did before which means you can correct these things. Even if you opt not to partake in therapy, just talking about your feelings & experiences can help, if you talk with only safe, non judgmental & understanding people. Best of all, if you can find someone who has experienced situations similar to yours because that person can understand you as others cannot.

When you feel anxious, stop & take a deep breath. Release it slowly. This simple action enables you to take a moment to stop & regain your focus, plus the act of breathing helps to calm your body.

Remind yourself that you are safe. There is no danger & no need to be hyper vigilant in this situation. Look around at your surroundings & take in what you see. If you're with someone, ask them for help if you need it.

Acknowledge what you feel. Question it. Does it make sense in this situation? Why or why not? Logic helps to calm emotions, especially emotions that are

disproportionate to the situation at hand. Use that to your favor by questioning what you feel.

Medication may be helpful, so talk to your doctor or therapist if you are interested in trying it. Anti-anxiety & anti-depressant medications can be quite helpful. There are many to choose from, so it may take some time to find what works best for you. Also, don't forget to ask your doctor about possible side effects before you agree to take a medication. There are also herbal alternatives, such as Valerian Root, lemon balm & kava kava that may help to calm your anxiety, & St. John's Wort & Sam-E for depression.

Hyper vigilance is a nuisance, I know, but it can be managed! Be as patient, understanding & gentle with yourself as possible, & you will see positive results in time.