

Parentalization And The Shame It Causes

Growing up with at least one narcissistic parent almost always means there was a parentalizing relationship between the narcissistic parent & her child. Since narcissists are so self-absorbed, they often have children to take care of them or to fill some need in their life. This is where parentalizing, comes into play.

Parentalizing, parentification, covert incest & emotional incest all describe the same thing. To keep things simple, we'll use "parentalizing" in this video. Parentalizing is when a parent & child's roles are reversed. A parent who talks to a child about adult matters such as her sex life or failing marriage is indulging in parentalizing, as is the parent who makes the child feel responsible for her emotional well being. Although this may not sound so bad, it is devastating to a child. The child's feelings & issues can be made worse when people tell her how lucky her parent is to have her to count on or other misguided comments such as, "You have to be strong for her!" "I don't know what she'd do without you!"

Children who have survived parentalizing often grow up guilty, angry, depressed, full of shame, possess poor relationship skills, are way too responsible for others or have addictions. Another side effect you rarely see mentioned is the feeling of needing to be invisible, to blend into the background.

Parentalizing parents take up all the space in the relationship with their child. Through fear or guilt, they give their child the message that they are important, & their child isn't. Children often internalize the message, & feel they must stay invisible so as not to bother or upset their narcissistic parent. They comply with anything & everything the parent wants. The idea is to avoid the rage that comes from not pleasing her. This pattern also continues into adult relationships with thoughts such as "If I'm good enough & give him what he wants, he'll stop hitting me."

Parentalizing parents often communicate the message that they aren't able to handle things, they are weak, & need the child to clean up their messes. This message tells the child that just existing is a burden to the parent & the child's needs shouldn't add to that burden. Often the only validation or affection the child gets is when she fixes her parent's problems. If she dares to express any need, chances are good it will be met with anger, even rage, so the child learns to fade into the background until she is needed.

Feeling invisible, I think, is a very common result of parentalization & I believe it is rooted in shame. Children are made to feel ashamed of having needs, wants, feelings & parentalizing parent gave the message that children aren't important. Both of these things, I believe, create this toxic shame.

Toxic shame can cause you to feel so ashamed of yourself, that you don't feel worthy of anything. You assume people won't want to help you or even talk to you. You may

feel so ashamed of yourself that you don't think you should bother people with even your presence. Even expecting help from salespeople, service people, or staff in a hospital may seem impossible because of that deep root of shame.

To get rid of toxic shame, it'll take time & a lot of work. Start out by praying. Ask God to help you to heal & obey any instructions He gives you.

Next, push yourself outside of your comfort zone sometimes. Start with small things. The more you see you can do things successfully, the more confident you will become & the less hold shame will have on you.

Also, question the shaming beliefs when they come up. Why do you feel so ashamed of yourself? Why do you feel to blame for a situation where you had no control? Ask God for the answers if you don't know them. And, ask Him to help you to release those beliefs.

Talk about how you feel. Talking about problems helps to weaken their hold over you. Keeping things hidden inside only gives those problems power.

These things can help a great deal. For them to work, you have to keep doing them over & over, even when it's uncomfortable.