

Passive Aggressive Behavior

Many narcissists use passive aggressive behavior to get what they want. It is a very effective weapon, after all.

Passive aggressive behavior is when someone says they are fine yet clearly something is bothering them. Their behavior & words fail to align. This leaves their victims confused, & wanting to do whatever they can to make this behavior stop.

Some examples of passive aggressive behavior are:

The silent treatment, which is refusing to speak to or acknowledge someone. When confronted, the person giving the silent treatment often says everything is fine or they don't know what the other person is talking about.

Deliberately being irritating, pushing a victim's buttons.

Running late, in particular when the victim is naturally punctual.

When asked to do something, passive aggressive people will procrastinate do the task poorly or "forget" to do it at all.

Sabotaging things important to their victim, such as spilling something on the victim's shirt as they leave for a job interview.

Mean comments or teasing followed by "I was just joking!"

Deliberately making themselves sick or if they're already sick, making it worse to punish victims for something.

Feigning weakness or incompetence to gain sympathy or to force others to do things for them.

Basically, passive aggressive behavior lets a person be angry without admitting it so they don't look "bad" for being angry. It also is a means of controlling a victim, because unless you are well aware of this sort of dysfunctional behavior, the confusion will be uncomfortable enough to make you want to do anything you can to get the relationship to return to its status quo.

There are ways to cope with this sort of behavior.

Start by examining the behavior before assuming it's passive aggressive. Your best friend may not have returned your call because she is busy or she simply forgot, not because she's passive aggressive. If she frequently doesn't return your calls or shows other passive aggressive behaviors though, that demonstrates a pattern of passive aggressive behavior.

Remember you can't change this person. Passive aggressive people act this way because it gets them what they want, which means they don't want to change. Nothing you can say or do will make them change, in particular if the passive aggressive person in question is a narcissist. You need to adapt your behavior to deal with them.

Don't get sucked into the behavior. Remind yourself that their motivations are not about you, they are about this person not being willing to act like a mature adult to resolve a problem. If you do what they want you to do or show that you are upset about their actions, they realize this behavior gets them exactly what they want, so they will continue doing it over & over. Whenever possible, don't do what they want you to do. And, don't let them know it bothers you.

Look at the situation realistically & preferably with a little humor if possible. My mother used to give me the silent treatment on a regular basis starting in my teen years. Naturally at first, it was terribly upsetting. In time, I realized how ridiculous & childish it was, so it upset me less. I also began to look at it as a break from her drama & abuse, so I thoroughly enjoyed the silent treatments. They also struck me rather funny because she was trying to punish me, yet I was enjoying my "punishment."

Give consequences for their behavior when possible. As an example, if the person in question shows up late as a passive aggressive behavior, stop waiting on them. If you're going somewhere together, leave without them if they are late. If you're doing something scheduled such as seeing a movie & the person shows up late, go watch the movie without them.

Passive aggressive behavior is extremely annoying, but it doesn't have to control any aspect of your life.