

Reinventing The Past As An Unhealthy Coping Skill

Today's podcast is about reinventing the past as an unhealthy coping skill.

Anyone who has experienced a relationship with a narcissist knows that they love to reinvent the past. In their version of events, they weren't abusive. They were just trying to help.

Narcissists aren't the only ones who are able to reinvent the past, however. Sometimes their victims do as well. I have a very good example of this phenomenon.

I know of someone who was what I refer to as a holiday Nazi. She demanded her adult children, their spouses & grandchildren spend holidays with her, & they had to celebrate on the exact day. There was no acceptable reason not to do this, it seemed.

One Christmas season, her adult children decided they wanted to spend the day with their respective families rather than their parents. Apparently, Mom didn't approve. She stopped taking her medication a few days before Christmas & ended up in the hospital either Christmas day or within a couple of days after, I can't remember which. She told her adult children that she did it because she was too busy baking Christmas cookies that she didn't have time to take her medicine.

Some time after this fiasco, her son who had heard what she said & even repeated it said that never happened. It was during the time when she was having trouble regulating her medication dosage.

Rather than admit how manipulative his mother was, & how she would risk her own health just for some attention, he convinced himself that was not the case. He convinced himself that this happened because the doctors hadn't regulated her medication need at that time.

If you have done something similar, you're not alone. There is no need to be ashamed of yourself for doing it. There is, however a need to change that behavior.

Reinventing the past only gives the narcissist power, because their actions are being excused rather than holding them accountable for their actions. Narcissists realize they can do anything, & you'll pretend they didn't. In fact, you may even end up blaming yourself for what they did. You won't punish them for their actions, so this makes them believe they can do anything without fear of consequences. There is no reason to limit their abusive actions.

It also makes the victim feel like they have to tolerate the abuse. They convince themselves that what happened was ok by pretending it didn't happen as it actually did. This means victims will tolerate a LOT of abuse. You can change your behavior into something much healthier!

Writing is an incredibly useful tool. I don't mean writing a book or blogging about your experiences like me. I mean writing in a journal or writing letters you don't send. Seeing your experiences in writing helps to make them more real somehow. It's very validating! Writing also gives you an outlet for getting your emotions out with no fear of anyone judging you, which can be incredibly helpful. It can show you, too, just how much you've grown & healed, which is very encouraging. And regarding changing this habit of reinventing the past, writing also gives you a written record of events, so you can't reinvent anything. If you wrote something down, you can revisit that knowing that is what happened rather than this different scenario you started to form in your mind.

Dealing with the traumatic event also will help you to stop reinventing the past. Reinventing things happens as a way to avoid pain. If you face that pain & deal with it, you automatically won't try to reinvent the scenario. I know that seems terrifying, but truly it will help you a great deal if you face it. It'll hurt for a while but not forever. You'll heal & that situation won't have power to devastate you anymore. At most it may sting a bit when you think of it. Wouldn't you prefer that to being devastated?

And as always, never forget to turn to God & trust Him to help you to do what you need to in order to release that unhealthy habit of reinventing the past.

Thank you for listening to my podcast.