

## Responding vs Reacting To Narcissistic Behavior

Narcissists know how to push every single button you have & many you weren't even aware of having. They do this in order to provoke an emotional reaction from you. Love them or hate them, either is fine with narcissists since both are strong emotions. When you're angry or hurting, your reaction makes them feel powerful, which in turn provides narcissistic supply, making them feel good. That is why they often act much like a machine gun with their cruelty- quickly pumping out verbally abusive comments one right after another. The more they can upset, hurt or anger you, the better & more powerful they feel. When you have pretty much fallen apart, they are deliriously happy.

There aren't any ways to stop this behavior that I know of other than not having the narcissist in your life. However, there are some ways to slow this awful behavior down. One very effective way is to learn to respond, not react, to the narcissist's abuse.

Reactions are done immediately, often without thinking. If a doctor uses that little hammer & taps your knee in a certain spot, your reaction is for your leg to kick. That is the type of reaction narcissists want from you- immediate anger or hurt without taking a moment to think about what you say as soon as they have said or done something hateful.

Responding however is different. It's much slower & more deliberate. You take time to think, possibly even putting your emotions aside before you give any sort of comment. This is not what narcissists want, & that is a very good thing! The more a narcissist can get what they want from you, the more they will demand from you. Providing supply in any form means they will do whatever makes you provide it over & over. It doesn't matter if you're hurt in the process.

The more you react emotionally to a narcissist, the more buttons they will push to get you to react more. It's a vicious cycle. However, the less reaction you give them, the less interest they will have in hurting you. Why waste their time trying to hurt you if it isn't working?

Responding can seem impossible to do at first, but it really does get easier & easier with practice. The best way I know to do this is a technique recommended to caregivers of those with Alzheimer's or other types of dementia. When something upsetting is said or done, stop for a second. Take a deep breath in & out, then speak. That brief moment of the deep breath helps you to clear your mind, & also to remind yourself why you must stay calm & focused. Plus the deep breath relaxes you physically. This technique enables you to stay calm & focused in the face of sheer madness.

I urge you to give this a try the next time you must deal with the narcissist in your life. It really does help. I did this often when speaking with my narcissistic father.

After he developed Alzheimer's, the narcissism got worse than ever & was especially difficult to deal with. I didn't feel right about being too harsh with him. I knew the Alzheimer's was making the narcissism worse as it often does, but, at the same time, I needed to protect myself. Stopping long enough to take in & release that deep breath helped me to maintain my composure & give a decent response rather than an angry reaction. It may help you as well.