

## Scapegoats

In the narcissistic family, there is bound to be a scapegoat. The one person that is bullied & blamed for all of the family's problems & dysfunction, if they admit to any dysfunction at all that is.

- The scapegoat is accused of having the flaws the narcissistic parent has, not the child. That is called projection, accusing another person of having the flaws you have when that person doesn't have the flaws at all.
- The scapegoat isn't given things freely, but grudgingly, often even including necessities like clothing & food.
- Any achievements of the scapegoated child are ignored or criticized. They also can be sabotaged. The narcissistic parent might say that they can't afford to continue paying for your piano lessons or after you reach a milestone with the lessons, they give away your cat. Anything to ruin your joy & success with playing the piano.
- If the scapegoated child looks like the narcissist's spouse, this can be problematic for the child, especially if the marriage is rocky to begin with. The abusive parent may blame the child for her marriage problems & see the child a traitor if the child wants to have a relationship with that side of the family. This happened to me. I look nothing like my mother's family. I look like my father's mother. My mother hates her in-laws, so this bothers her to the point she won't even admit to seeing that resemblance in spite of everyone else I know seeing it. She also kept me from spending time with that side of my family for my entire childhood.
- People outside of the immediate family often are told stories about the bad things the scapegoat has done. Often, those lies are believed not only by the people hearing them but sometimes even by the child who believes the parent's lies over their own views of reality. These lies protect the image of the narcissistic parents. Obviously the child is the one doing bad & wrong things, not the parents. They look like good, long suffering, patient parents, putting up with their terrible child.

Often it's the parents who scapegoat a child, but if there are several children, often the siblings will follow their parents' example & join in the scapegoating. Narcissistic parents don't want their children to get along, so they will encourage the good child, also known as the golden child, to bully the other with scapegoating.

If there are no siblings, the only child is often the scapegoat, as I was. Some narcissistic parents treat their only child as a scapegoat with periodic times of being the golden child. I never received that treatment, but I can imagine how confusing it must be to a child to go back & forth in those two totally opposite roles.

As an adult, the scapegoated child often suffers from a great deal of toxic shame, depression, anxiety, low self esteem or even self loathing, addiction, eating disorders & in many cases, they can be suicidal. The scapegoated child also grows up gaining a

tiny bit of approval when they fail, so as adults, they often self sabotage in order to gain that approval. Basically instead of living up to their parent's expectations, they aim to live down to them. They also tend to be overly responsible, taking on the responsibility for other people's happiness, well being & more things that they shouldn't be responsible for. They also have difficulty trusting their ability to make decisions thanks to a lifetime of gaslighting.

The good thing is the family scapegoat is usually the first one to realize the dysfunction of the family & to escape it. Scapegoats are usually the strongest member in their immediate family, which is why they were chosen for that role. A strong person is needed to carry so many burdens. After a lifetime of abusive behavior, the scapegoat wants some answers, which often leads to discovering Narcissistic Personality Disorder.

So once you learn about being a scapegoat, what do you do about it?

- I always recommend prayer as the best place to start in any situation. Ask God to help you with whatever you need—strength, comfort, the ability to see the truth that you are NOT to blame for everything wrong in your family.
- You also need to know that there isn't anything you can do to stop being treated this way by your family. No one can change another person's behavior. All you can do is set & enforce good boundaries by refusing to accept the blame. Always state your case as calmly as possible too, or else you'll be accused of being crazy, irrational, etc.
- You also can't change anyone's opinion of you, so you are going to be the scapegoat forever in their minds. What you can do about their opinion though is refuse to take it as your own. Remember, that person's opinion is theirs, & it doesn't need to be yours as well.
- Form your beliefs about yourself based on real evidence, not what your dysfunctional & abusive relatives have to say about you. Ask God to show you who He has made you to be. Listen to things people who genuinely love you have to say about you.

Never ever forget—you were strong to survive being a scapegoat. It's not an easy position to be in, but you survived it. If you could survive all that shaming, abuse, & rejection, you certainly can survive the recovery.