

When Someone Mentions A Relative Of Theirs Is An Outsider Or Outcast

Today's podcast is about when someone mentions a relative of theirs as an outsider or outcast.

When you meet someone new & get to know that person, at some point your families will come up in conversation. A red flag you need to be aware of may suddenly show up when you begin to discuss your families. The particular red flag I'm referring to is when someone refers to another person in their family as if they are a big problem in the family, & they have no problem labeling the person based on that assumption. They may call them an outsider, an outcast, the black sheep or even the problem child.

The reason this is a red flag is because it shows the person discussing their relative this way is a part of an "us against them" mentality. Clearly, that "problem child" is a huge problem within his or her own family. This is a sign of a person being scapegoated. And, scapegoating is a sign of an abusive family.

I saw this in action when I first got involved with my husband. His family very much has an "us versus them" mentality. Those of us who joined the family were clearly outsiders. The only ones welcomed into the inner sanctum were ones who came from a very wealthy family or who did the bidding of the in-law family. Think the Borg from Star Trek The Next Generation. "You will be assimilated. Resistance is futile." Those of us who weren't willing to assimilate into the family & focus all of our attention on the in-laws, aka the Collective, were clearly outsiders & treated as such. The family in these situations acts as if they are the good people, burdened by this person's terrible behavior, trouble causing & lack of worthiness to be a part of their precious family. The outsider, in short, is to blame for any & all problems within the family, & a source of great embarrassment, which is the definition of a scapegoat in a narcissistic family.

Treating people this way is very common not just among in-laws, but within biological families as well. It's happened to me as well as many of my readers who I've spoken with. By scapegoating one person, this allows a group of people to avoid any responsibility for problems within their group. Clearly they did nothing wrong! It was that awful scapegoat who is to blame for all the ills in the family.

By shifting all blame to the scapegoat, this also allows the group to maintain the image they wish to portray - the big happy family, the perfect family, better than others, etc.

Possibly the biggest advantage for those who scapegoat someone is by doing this, they are able to maintain their denial. Denial they have done anything wrong, denial their family isn't perfect, denial that the toxic person in the family isn't really the toxic one.

These are such incredibly unhealthy behaviors! Functional people don't blame innocent people. They accept responsibility for their behavior & expect others to do the same. Functional people also respect that everyone is an individual & don't get angry when someone believes, thinks or acts differently than them.

There is one final thing you need to be aware of on this topic. Not every person who mentions someone in their family as an outsider is dysfunctional. You can tell the difference between a functional & dysfunctional person discussing the outsider in their family. A functional person doesn't speak of their family's outsider in a bad light. They think of the person in question as very different than the rest of the family, but they don't paint that person in a negative light. They may even admire the differences in that person. In any case, they have no problem with this "outsider's" differences.

If someone you just met discusses an outsider in their family, pay attention to how they discuss this person. It can show you whether or not this is an emotionally healthy, functional person.

Thank you for listening to my podcast!