

## Executive Dysfunction After Narcissistic Abuse

Today's podcast is about executive dysfunction after narcissistic abuse.

Have you ever heard of executive dysfunction? As the name describes, this is when executive functions don't work properly. Executive functions are cognitive & mental abilities that enable us to accomplish things. They help us by directing & controlling our behavior, planning, prioritizing as well as giving motivation.

Executive functioning is higher level cognitive functioning. Some examples are:

- Emotional regulation, such as working through anxiety.
- Impulse control.
- Attention, such as directing attention where it is necessary to accomplish things.
- Planning such as creating & following a schedule.
- Self assessment, such as making sure you're taking a reasonable amount of time on the task at hand.
- Using working memory, such as following directions or reading.

Anyone can experience executive dysfunction periodically, in particular when overly stressed or tired. That is entirely normal. It becomes abnormal when executive dysfunction interferes with daily life. Difficulty with decision making, concentrating, organization & low motivation are some examples.

Executive dysfunction is often caused by brain damage. Traumatic brain injuries, dementia & Alzheimer's disease are known causes, but mental illness can cause it as well. Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, depression & Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder are known to cause it as well.

PTSD is another mental illness that can cause executive dysfunction, & that is the reason I felt it necessary to discuss executive dysfunction.

Many of us who struggle with PTSD or C-PTSD also struggle with executive dysfunction, yet are unaware that was what our problem is. It doesn't help that those in our lives call us lazy, tell us we need to get out more often or offer other equally useless & unsolicited advice. Useless or unsolicited, it still can take a toll on the self esteem especially since it's already been so damaged thanks to the narcissists in our lives.

Those of you who have been down this road, I want to let you know today that you aren't lazy! There is something wrong with you & it's not your fault that you have this problem! Your brain has been broken due to the trauma or traumas you have experienced. Brain damage in any capacity is no joke! It's a horrible thing!

Brain damage is also not something you can fix easily, like a broken bone. Brain damage may heal completely or it may not heal at all, no matter what you do or don't

do. The brain is a very unique organ & very unpredictable in how it responds to injury, trauma & even healing. I'm not telling you this to make you lose hope. I'm telling you this so you can be realistic in what to expect.

With the symptoms of executive dysfunction, you can learn ways to work with your symptoms.

Set up a routine & stick to it. Not so much you become rigid about it because there will be times you need to change it. Even so, having a set schedule takes some pressure off because you know what you need to do each day. It becomes a habit, so it's easy to remember over time, too.

Use a calendar app on your phone to help you remember appointments & tasks that are out of the ordinary. One with alarms is especially helpful.

Utilize sticky notes & to do lists to help you to stay organized.

When motivation strikes, use it! There tend to be more days without it than with, so when it happens, use it to the best of your ability.

Executive dysfunction isn't easy to live with I know, but you can learn ways to cope!

Thank you for listening to my podcast!