

Ignorance vs Malice

Today's podcast is about ignorance vs malice.

"You can't get mad. He just doesn't know any better." I think all of us who have been victimized by a narcissist have heard this statement at some point. It's said by those who either have absolutely no understanding of Narcissistic Personality Disorder or those flying monkeys who enthusiastically enable narcissists to abuse.

This statement can be very unsettling. You can feel so angry by the abuse but then you stop in your tracks. Maybe the person who said this is right, & the narcissist truly doesn't know any better. You feel badly for being angry with someone for doing something they don't know is wrong.

Long before I learned about Narcissistic Personality Disorder, I was in this situation. I had problems with my now deceased mother in-law from about the moment we met. Obviously I didn't know what to do since I knew nothing of narcissism. I decided to talk to my husband in the hopes he would have ideas on how to help me get along with his mother. When I first told my husband about the problems with his mother, he said that she didn't know any better. He truly believed it, & I thought maybe he was right. His mother gave the impression of being very naïve, after all. I also knew her mother in-law never liked her. Maybe the problem was that she had no other experience beyond the negativity between her & her mother in-law, & being naïve, she didn't know how to act better towards me. Logically, it made sense, & I felt terrible for being so upset with my mother in-law for quite some time & silently tolerated her abuse. Yet, "she doesn't know any better" didn't sit right with me.

Eventually I realized why the ignorance plea felt wrong. I realized she wasn't ignorant, she was malicious. I thought I'd share those realizations with you today so if someone tells you that the narcissist in your life doesn't know any better, you won't suffer needlessly as I did.

If someone is truly ignorant of their actions, they won't hide their behavior. Why would they? If they aren't aware that what they're doing is wrong, there's no need to hide it. Someone who is knowingly doing something wrong is going to hide their actions. My husband never once saw his mother say or do anything inappropriate to me. Not once in the eight years she was in my life before I walked away. We saw her often, too, but she never slipped up. If she truly didn't know that she was treating me badly, why would she have hidden her behavior towards me? She would have treated me the same no matter who was around.

A malicious person doesn't listen. A person who is told that their actions are hurting someone yet repeats the actions over & over is malicious. By continuing to hurt someone, they are proving by their actions that they either don't care that their actions cause someone else pain or that they enjoy deliberately causing pain.

However, if you confront someone who is truly unaware of the pain their actions cause, they will change their behavior, apologize & even try to make it up to the person they hurt if at all possible. They also won't repeat the hurtful behavior again.

An ignorant person doesn't change their actions just because another person enters the room, but a malicious person does. A malicious person will change their behavior if someone whose opinion they value comes along so that person continues to think well of them. Ignorant people won't think that way because they don't think their behavior is something that can be construed as bad or wrong.

When in a situation where you are told the person mistreating you simply doesn't know any better, please consider these scenarios. They should help you to realize quickly if the person in question truly is ignorant of the pain their actions cause or if they are deliberately mistreating you.

Thank you for listening to my podcast!