

# How to Deal with a Narcissist Spouse

By [InfidelityFirstAidKit.com](http://InfidelityFirstAidKit.com)

You no longer can stomach the tyrannical episodes. However, you also realize that your narcissistic spouse will not change.

So now what?

Find a way to coexist more peacefully or develop an exit plan, that's what.

First, let's first figure out which type of narcissist you live with.

## 2 Narcissist Types: Which Type Is Your Spouse?

One type loves themselves and the other fears revealing their hidden insecurities. One walks while the other talks. One attempts to mask their feelings of inferiority by acting tough while the other sets out to crush anyone who he/she perceives to get in their way.

### Vulnerable Narcissist

Sensitive, defensive, jealous, masks insecurities. Low self-esteem and jump between feeling superior and inferior.

**Approach to Deal with Vulnerable Narcissist:** Do not accuse or attack. They're sensitive to criticism. Acknowledge their strengths to make them feel appreciated. Focus on the specific points that your narcissistic spouse does that bother you instead of any of their character qualities. Do not crush the vulnerable narcissist's spirit, they will only retreat and feel victimized.

### Grandiose Narcissist

Aggressive, confident, domineering. Believe their needs supersede everyone else's, undercuts others to get what they want.

**Approach to Deal with Grandiose Narcissist:** Value their positive aspects but do not rely on them for self-worth. If you desire to coexist with a grandiose narcissist avoid confrontations and do not criticize their behavior.

Once you identify your husband or wife's type then learn and practice some ways to communicate more effectively in order to express your needs and then gauge how willing they are to change their way of listening and taking action.

### What's Your Objective?

Proceed with caution. Do not seek equal treatment or loathing respect from narcissists. You will likely end up failing, feeling even more upset and lose loads of energy and time. Learning effective coping strategies to interact with a narcissist is a more obtainable goal.

### Not Comfortable...*Don't Expect It to Be*

Do not expect a secret magical technique to handle a narcissist. This will only frustrate you more. Instead aim to prevent things to get out of control. Limit chaos. If you accept the role of support and recognition provider then keep reading, instead if you seek to sort of snap them out of their fanaticism, then no need to keep reading.

Walking on egg shells will be a regular occurrence. That won't change. And when you discover a weakness in his/her armor you may feel like you must manipulate to get what you want at times.

Unfortunately dealing with narcissists is a constant up-and-down roller coaster ride while living with their mercurial moods.

## 14 Ways to Deal with a Narcissistic, Manipulative Spouse

### 1. Provide Positive Recognition

What the narcissist needs may change at any moment. Determine if they accept your recognition based on their reaction.

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## 2. Do NOT Challenge Their Needs

You will only frustrate them and upset them more if they would receive no benefit from what you suggest. This is a losing outcome for you if your suggestion only benefits you.

## 3. Disapproval in Non-confrontational Way

Attack and you will ignite their anger which in turn propels them to act defensive. Your narcissistic spouse at times may tend to express empathy for hurting you. This could indicate a hope that they will sometimes openly listen to your needs. Try to share how their insensitivity makes you feel. Choose specific actions and again do not focus on their character. Do not raise your voice or show agitation.

Example: Consider saying something similar to, *"When you choose to work extra during the holidays instead of finding a way to get the extra work done before or after I feel left out and unimportant to you."*

## 4. Find Their Point of View

Ask questions, listen, and paraphrase. Acknowledge and show respect for how they feel since in their eyes they believe they put the most thought into their actions. A narcissist should respond favorable when you acknowledge their deepest thoughts and priorities. If he/she doesn't feel you understand their way of thinking they have no need to proceed in the conversation because you're just getting in the way.

Example: Narcissistic spouse says, *"I don't feel appreciated for all the hard work I do."* You respond, *"Wow! That's certainly NOT how I want you to feel. Your hard work keeps this family together. I know how that feels because I feel that way sometimes."*

Your appreciation earns you points with your narcissistic spouse and paves the way for getting your point across in the future. You will still need to proceed with caution making sure you approach that future conversation appropriately.

## 5. Determine the Circumstances

Each situation changes the words and tone you choose. Seek the details or circumstances that lead to more emphasized anger. Did something happen at work today? Or do you know of a bigger incident that happened recently that could affect their mood? If you must ask for details, do so without pestering or annoying them. Try the **statement-question technique** where you ask for information without actually asking a question.

Example: *"Wow. You seem really intense. Something probably happened at work."*

This acts as an invitation to talk, but does not put them on the spot and demand an answer. The temptation not to talk or even the temptation to correct you will be too hard to resist (most of the time). They'll probably talk.

## 6. Do Not Follow the Drama

Walk away if you must, while giving them a timeout. Do not wait for them to respond the way you'd like. Show that you will not allow them to upset you. Keep calm. Explain your need to remove yourself from the situation in order to avoid things worsening for both of you. Suggest that you both could pick things up later. Narcissists need an audience to display their power. No audience. No reason to blow up.

## 7. Seek Professional Help for Both ...*if necessary*

If you desire to improve your communication in order to enjoy the relationship better, state so, and request seeking outside suggestions. One visit certainly will not suffice, offer a trial of at least 4 visits (or whatever short range of visits the therapist you choose suggests). By offering your spouse to "give it a shot at least", you will increase your odds of succeeding since it requests a smaller commitment.

## 8. Speak in "We" Terms

Speak in terms of "I" and you sound selfish and manipulative to them (ironic, right?). Talk about "You" and you come across accusatory. Instead talk about "We" and "Us". Discuss specific actions. Do not generalize.

Example: "When we call each other names then we both push each other away and then start feeling more lonely and unappreciated."

## 9. Find the Benefit for the Narcissist

Frame your request in a way that benefits him/her too. Narcissists care little about others' needs.

Example: "I took the flowers you gave me to work and placed them on my desk. Now everyone in the office says how a great and caring husband I have." Stroke your spouse's ego. Don't be surprised if you get more special treatment later.

Keep track of his/her reaction to what you ask for. *Does positive reinforcement work? How about stroking his intelligence?*

## 10. Gauge His (or Her) Willingness to Change

How often does he/she take action to resolve the differences in your relationship? Does he/she acknowledge the damage they cause? Choose the moment he/she seems calm and not distracted. Openly express your concerns about the relationship's direction. Again do not accuse or attack. Stroke his/her ego to avoid their retreat or defensiveness.

Example: *"You make me feel safe by providing financial support and solving many of our household problems head on. I have a concern though. (State your concern and the repercussions for not resolving them "together")."*

If your spouse time and time again changes the subject or attacks you then they probably will not ever improve their communication with you. Consider seeking professional solo counseling for more suggestions as the next step before deciding to leave the relationship.

### 11. Build up Yourself First

Seek tips on how to build up your own self-esteem to avoid being victimized. A narcissist will keep stepping on the weak. Learn to stand up for yourself without provoking confrontation.

### 12. List Acceptable and Unacceptable Behaviors

Often times narcissists will spring into anger or demanding behavior. This will catch you off guard and you begin to justify his/her actions. Write down a list of behaviors you will not accept. Find a way to address them with the above tips and then choose the consequence for them breaking the rule.

### 13. List of Consequences for Unacceptable Behavior

List out the consequences for your spouse breaking the rules: removal of special treatment, recognition and approval on your part. Aim to specify the rules as detailed as possible and get them to agree.

### 14. If No Change...*Consider Ending Relationship*

In the end your biggest power chip is to leave the relationship. And when I say leave I mean you choose a peaceful life over chaos. This is no ploy to elicit a reaction from them. This is for the people who are "sick and tired of being sick and tired". Maybe that's you.

If you constantly justify their actions regardless of their level of abuse then seek professional therapy. Do so in private if you must, without telling your spouse. You deserve a better life. You fear being alone and you fear constant confrontation forever. Find your strength.

Some things take time, but you must start now.

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*"What are the risks of being married to a narcissist spouse?"*