6 Ways to Protect Your Peace with a Narcissist

Imagine finally achieving success, only to face jealousy from others. This is what happened to David in the Bible. After David defeated the Philistines, the people celebrated. King Saul, however, became jealous: "What's this?" he said. "They credit David with ten thousands and me with only thousands. Next they'll be making him their king!" (1 Samuel 18:8, NLT). King Saul displayed narcissistic traits, including jealousy and a desire for recognition. But David did not give in to his narcissistic abuse. Are you dealing with someone who exhibits narcissistic traits, such as jealousy, manipulation, or a need for admiration? Here are six ways to protect your peace.

1. **Recognize narcissistic behavior.** A person with narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) may exhibit traits such as a lack of empathy, manipulation, exploiting others, grandiosity, and a strong need for admiration. However, not everyone who displays narcissistic traits has NPD. Avoid labeling someone; only a qualified mental health professional can make a diagnosis.
2. **Don't let them manipulate you**. You may not be able to reason with someone who uses manipulation to get their way. Avoid taking the bait by getting drawn into arguments. Instead, respond calmly, set clear boundaries, and disengage when necessary. Here are a few examples of how to respond to narcissistic manipulation:
    - *"I understand you're upset, but my decision stands."*
    - *"I'm not going to discuss this while you're upset."*
    - *"No, that doesn't work for me."*
3. **Set healthy boundaries.** A boundary is not about punishing another person; it is about protecting yourself. Start by communicating what you will and will not tolerate. Clearly explain what action you will take if the person continues to treat you disrespectfully. For example, you might say, "If the disrespect continues, I will need to create some distance."
4. **Stop seeking their approval.** You will never gain the approval of someone who exhibits narcissistic behavior. Instead, explore why you seek their approval. Did you have to work hard to earn the approval of a parent? If so, you may have developed a pattern of seeking approval from others. Let go of the need for their validation, as they may take advantage of you. Instead, build relationships with safe people.
5. **Don't wait for them to change.** You cannot change someone unwilling to change. Instead, focus on what you can control: your own choices, boundaries, and responses. Rather than trying to change them, make decisions about the relationship based on their current behavior, not the behavior you hope they will exhibit.
6. **Prioritize your emotional well-being.** Saul's abusive treatment of David did not stop. David had to flee to protect himself (1 Samuel 19:9–12; 1 Samuel 20:30–33). If a narcissist continues to engage in verbal or emotional abuse, take steps to protect your emotional well-being. Find a counselor in the New Life Counseling Network to help you establish boundaries and determine your next step.

Need Help With a Narcissist? Call 800-NEW-LIFE (639-5433) to Find a Counselor.