



EMPLOYEE

ASSISTANCE NEWSLETTER

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PROVIDED BY SAINT ALPHONSUS EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

THE HIDDEN CYCLE OF NARCISSISTIC ABUSE

Narcissistic abuse is a form of emotional manipulation that can occur in any type of relationship and is used to gain control, admiration, or dominance over another person.



While it can occur in any relationship, it is often seen in romantic relationships where it leaves the victim hurt, confused, questioning themselves, doubting their perceptions, and feeling emotionally drained. Because of how damaging narcissistic abuse can be, it's important to know how to identify when it's taking place. Narcissistic abuse usually happens in stages and follows a predictable cycle. Survivors of narcissistic abuse commonly describe four distinct stages: idealization, devaluation, discarding, and hoovering. The stages can repeat many times, which makes the cycle difficult to recognize and even harder to escape. Below is an overview of each stage and examples of manipulative phrases a narcissist might use in each one.

Stage One: Idealization

In the idealization stage, the narcissist showers the victim with intense affection, attention, and admiration. This is often referred to as "love bombing." The narcissist's goal is to build a deep emotional bond quickly, ensuring that the victim

becomes invested in the relationship. The narcissist may appear to be everything the victim has ever wanted – attentive, affectionate, charming, generous, and intensely interested in their life. However, this stage is not genuine affection, it's a form of emotional manipulation designed to create dependency and attachment so that later abusive behaviors are more easily tolerated.

During the idealization stage, the narcissist may say things like:

"You're the most amazing person I've ever met. I can't believe I finally found you."

"No one has ever made me feel this way before."

"We're soulmates. I've never clicked with someone like this."

"I can see us spending the rest of our lives together."

Stage Two: Devaluation

Once the narcissist feels confident that the victim is sufficiently attached, the tone of the relationship changes. In the devaluation stage, the narcissist begins to undermine, criticize, belittle, and emotionally destabilize the victim. The victim often feels confused and wondering what they did wrong or why the warmth suddenly disappeared. The narcissist may use tactics like gaslighting, silent treatments, blame-shifting, or subtle put-downs during this stage. The purpose is to damage the victim's self-esteem so they become easier to control and increasingly desperate to get back to how things were in the beginning of the relationship.

During the devaluation stage, the narcissist may say things like:

"You're too sensitive. You take everything the wrong way."

"Why can't you be more like you used to be?"

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Saint Alphonus
A Member of Trinity Health

EAP MISSION Saint Alphonus Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a voluntary, confidential counseling service that assists employees and their families with issues that affect their quality of life at home and work.

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"Everything is always about you, isn't it?"

"You're lucky I put up with you."

"There are plenty of people who would treat me better than you do."

"If you loved me, you wouldn't give up on us."

"I don't know what I'll do to myself if you don't come back."

"You misunderstood everything. I never meant to hurt you."

Stage Three: Discarding

In the discarding stage, the narcissist withdraws emotionally or physically, sometimes ending the relationship abruptly or behaving in ways that force the victim to end it themselves. This may include overt cruelty, indifference, infidelity, or a sudden withdrawal of affection. The victim is often left devastated, confused, and full of self-doubt.

During the discarding stage, the narcissist may say things like:

"I'm done. You're not worth my time anymore."

"You drove me to this. I tried, but you ruined everything."

"I just don't feel anything for you anymore."

Stage Four: Hoovering

This stage is named "hoovering" because in this stage the narcissist will attempt to "suck" the victim back in like a Hoover vacuum by using emotional manipulation tactics. Narcissists resort to hoovering when they're no longer receiving enough attention from others. During these periods of depleted "narcissistic supply," they'll reach out to prior victims in an attempt to get the attention they need. The narcissist may make promises to the victim that they have changed for the better and may act very loving and caring, apologize, and promise that things will be different this time. If the hoovering is successful, the abuse cycle starts all over again.

In the hoovering stage, the narcissist may say things like:

"I've changed. You'll see. Things will be different this time."

Narcissistic abuse is a deeply damaging cycle that can leave victims feeling hurt, confused, isolated, and unsure of themselves. By understanding the stages of narcissistic abuse, individuals can better recognize when unhealthy patterns are occurring in their relationships. Awareness of the abuse is the first step toward breaking the cycle, setting boundaries, and seeking support. Whether this type of abuse occurs in romantic partnerships, work relationships, friendships, or in family relationships, knowing the signs of narcissistic abuse can help individuals protect their emotional wellbeing and help guide them to healthier and more stable relationships in the future.



PREP 15 m	COOK 30 m	SERVINGS 6
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INGREDIENTS

- Chicken Tortilla Soup
- 2 Tbsp light olive oil
 - 1 large yellow onion, chopped
 - 4 garlic cloves, minced
 - 1-2 jalapeno peppers, seeded and diced
 - 32 oz chicken broth
 - 28 oz can crushed tomatoes
 - 1 lb chicken breasts, (2 medium), or leftover rotisserie chicken*
 - 15 oz can corn, drained & rinsed
 - 15 oz can black beans, drained and rinsed
 - 1 1/2 tsp chilli powder
 - 1 1/2 tsp ground cumin
 - 1 tsp salt, or to taste

CHICKEN TORTILLA SOUP

- 1/3 cup cilantro, chopped, plus more to garnish
- 1 1/2 Tbsp lime juice, from 1 lime, or to taste

Homemade Tortilla Strips

- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 8 corn tortillas, (6" tortillas)

Toppings

- 1 large avocado, diced
- 1 lime, cut into wedges, to serve

INSTRUCTIONS

Tortilla Strips:

1. Preheat a pan with 1/4 cup oil over medium-high heat. Cut tortillas into thin strips and fry them in batches in the hot oil until crisp. Remove from the pan and allow them to drain on a paper towel. Repeat with remaining tortilla strips, adding more oil as needed then set aside.

Chicken Tortilla Soup:

1. Preheat a pot or dutch oven with olive oil over medium-high heat. Add chopped onion, garlic, and chopped jalapeno and saute until veggies soften.
2. Add chicken broth, crushed tomatoes, chicken breasts, corn, beans, chili powder, cumin, salt. Bring to a boil and let simmer for about 20 minutes or until chicken is just cooked through and easy to shred.
3. Remove chicken from the pot and shred it using 2 forks. Add shredded chicken back to the soup and simmer another 5 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in cilantro and lime juice.
4. Serve the soup garnished with some tortilla strips, diced avocado, fresh cilantro and lime wedges, or use your favorite toppings.

SAYING GOODBYE: NAVIGATING THE HEARTACHE OF LOSING A BELOVED PET

Losing a beloved pet can be very difficult. Though it's different in ways from losing a loved human, it isn't necessarily easier.



Relationships with our assorted critters often provide us with unconditional support and love, a nonjudgmental ear, selflessness, and straight forward connection, one that is not tainted by agendas or expectations. What you see is what you get with a pet. Although our communication with them is not a mutually verbal exchange, they share a lot with us through their physical presence, single-minded attention, and ability to attune to our emotional and corporeal states. Frequently, our animal friends can be our most reliable and steady companions.

Pets can't tell us when it's "time" because I don't believe animals can tell time, they seem to inhabit each moment as it comes. Barring an abrupt medical event or accident, humans are left to

guess when it is "the right" time for our beloved companions to go. I do believe that putting an animal down is the hardest part of being a pet owner. I also firmly believe that this act, while always conflicted, is an action of love, mercy, and sacred obligation. Over the past few decades, the understanding and support surrounding how difficult losing a pet is and having to make the decision to end a pet's life has grown. Nowadays there are pet support groups, articles, books, and counseling targeted to help pet owners navigate their bereavement process. Such organizations as the Association for Pet Loss and Bereavement (APLB), Lap of Love's Virtual Support Group, Animals in Our Hearts, to name just a few, can be sources of information and support for

bereaved pet owners. There are also agencies that can come to our homes, assess our pet's quality of life, and, when it's time, put them to sleep in the comfort of familiar surroundings and faces. This option also allows surviving pets to see, smell, and "know" that their buddy is no longer physically with us. A local agency that provides such support is Gentle Goodbyes, who lovingly and respectfully provide pets and their owners a dignified pet death.

The counselors at the Employee Assistance Program are also a resource for people who have lost their pet. We would all be honored to offer you support and care if you need help during this very difficult time.

EAP COUNSELORS

SAINT ALPHONSUS EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



Jared Belsher – Supervisor
MA, LCPC, NCC

Jared is a licensed clinical professional counselor (LCPC) and national certified counselor (NCC) who has worked in outpatient mental health clinics and in private

practice since 2007. He received a bachelor's Degree in Political Science and a master's Degree in Community Counseling from Northern Arizona University. His approach to counseling is strength-based, which means that rather than dwelling on

things that are wrong, he focuses on the strength individuals have, and how they can use those strengths to overcome their obstacles. He uses a person-centered approach and additional counseling techniques such as cognitive-behavioral

therapy (CBT) to help clients discover healthier ways to cope and think about a problem.

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TENDING YOUR INNER HOUSEPLANT



Navigating mental health in 2026 has become increasingly more challenging for many Americans. Nearly one billion people worldwide struggle with mental health and in the US alone 1 in 5 experience mental illness. Shockingly, only about 45% of people seek mental health treatment according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). This is a concern for a number of reasons because in



addition to people suffering, employees and employers alike face more work absences, higher turnover, lower productivity and work morale, and ultimately more health care costs.

Some of the top concerns for Americans are the impact of workplace burnout, high conflict or estrangement in families, feelings of loneliness or isolation, climate change, grief and loss, integration of AI, job loss, unemployment, the economy, financial instability, current events, and physical and mental health. Whether we are looking at stressors from a macro, mezzo, or micro level most Americans are feeling a degree of heaviness

and fear. Many of us feel we have little to no control over the future and what it may bring.

So what can we do about it?

Think of yourself as a complicated house plant... food, water, soil, sun, air are the basic needs.

What “feeds” your spirit or your soul?

- Make time to play. Grown-ups often lose this skill and it’s imperative for positive mental health
- Move your body. It doesn’t have to be classified as exercise; simply moving makes a difference
- Connect with others in meaningful ways

What “water” is essential to your minimum level of functioning?

- Eat nutritious food, stay hydrated, talk with a nutritionist if this is an area of concern
- Positive sleep routines and getting enough quality sleep
- Consume less...food, sugar, caffeine, media, news, work, alcohol, drugs, you name it

What grounds you in the “soil” of life”?

- Practice gratitude. Write it down or say it out loud to someone; it literally changes your brain
- Create a centering daily anchor. It should be something that happens at the same time each day that you prioritize, no matter what is going on around you. It can be a walk at lunch, a call with mom or your bestie, time with your favorite critter, or 5 quiet minutes with a cup of coffee in the morning
- Be kind to yourself. This can be setting boundaries, saying “no” to invitations, getting a massage, going to the gym, listening to your favorite show or book or podcast, or spending meaningful time with friends or family

What fuels your growth like the sun and air?

- Get outside, even if you are just sitting in it
- Practice staying in the moment, even if only for a moment
- Seek support through your doctor, spiritual advisor, or therapist

Just like a house plant, you are living, growing, and changing in response to your environment. You don’t need to do everything perfectly—you just need the right conditions to thrive. When life feels overwhelming, return to the basics: nourishment, rest, connection, grounding, and support. Small, consistent acts of care add up. You deserve time, space, and gentleness, and you are worthy of tending to.

EAP COUNSELORS

SAINT ALPHONSUS EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



Jenny Lee Doty, MSW, LCSW

Jenny Lee has been practicing as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker for nearly a decade. She has worked in the mental health field for more than 20 years in a variety of treatment settings including but not limited to schools, day treatment centers, hospitals, and local community agencies. Jenny Lee has provided treatment to children, pre-teens and teens, and adults in individual, group, and family settings.

Jenny Lee is skilled in working with complex family units, emotional and behavioral issues, trauma, depression, mood disorders, anxiety, co-occurring diagnosis, psychotic disorders, self-harm, suicidal ideation, gangs, and those involved with foster care and Child Protective Services. Jenny Lee practices from a strength-based approach to treatment, while using a combination of interventions tailored to meet each individual’s needs.



Melissa Young, MSW, LCSW

Melissa has been a Mental Health Professional for 30+ years having the opportunity to serve in a variety of mental health settings, with diverse client populations, working in various roles. As a Clinical Social Worker she has had the opportunity to work with survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence; as an Outpatient Psychotherapist within a Community Mental Health Center; a Peace Corps Volunteer in Asuncion, Paraguay; Hospice Social Worker; and currently working as a Counselor at the Saint Alphonsus Employee Assistance Program and Safe Connections LLC. She employs an eclectic approach to her work with clients, believing that a trusting and supportive relationship is key to any therapeutic success. In addition to her professional life, she is a mother of three sons and is a proud dog, cat, chicken and horse owner.

Saint Alphonsus Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Regular Appointment Hours:
9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m., Monday-Friday
(special appointment hours by request)

Phone: (208) 367-3300

Locations:
6140 W. Emerald St., Boise, ID 83704
4424 E. Flamingo Ave., Suite 250,
Nampa, ID 83687

Counselors:
Jared Belsher, MA, LCPC, NCC
Jenny Lee Doty, MSW, LCSW
Melissa Young, MSW, LCSW

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