

In 2007, I was thirty-four years old. My career was going well, I was on my way to moving into educational leadership, and I had just purchased my first home, a beautiful condo. After years of focusing on my career, I was ready to seek out a relationship that would result in marriage and children.

When I met Michael, I thought that would happen, however, three years later in 2010, I learned that was far from the truth as I had once again become a survivor of predatory victimization.

My counselor at the time who had met him only once was very direct with me when she stated after he had to miss a second appointment to answer to legal charges in Massachusetts, "I will never meet with the two of you together again. He is a narcissist and narcissists kill people. You need to create an escape plan and I will help you." She then handed me a copy of the foreword and introduction to the book *Malignant Self-Love: Narcissism Revisited* by Sam Vaknin, Ph.D. This became my valuable resource which I used to disarm Michael's power over me. This was the beginning of establishing my escape plan. Additionally, I knew I needed to further empower myself, so I chose to obtain a degree in Paralegal Studies; this aided in my prosecution of him.

By memorizing the following major points, I was able to identify every falsehood he was telling me and every manipulation he was trying to achieve:

- The narcissist is an actor. He does not "love" himself in any true sense of the word, rather he feeds off other people who hurl back at him an image that he projects to them.
 - The narcissist's Ego is weak, disorganized and lacks clear boundaries. Many of the Ego functions are projected. The Superego is sadistic and punishing. The Id is unrestrained.
 - Narcissistic Personality Disorder consists of an all-pervasive pattern of grandiosity and self-importance, need for admiration or adulation, and lack of empathy. Specifically, they demand to be recognized as superior, are obsessed with power and omnipotence, wish to be feared and to be notorious, feel entitled, are interpersonally exploitive using others to achieve their own ends, devoid of empathy, and arrogant.
 - Narcissists are pathological liars.
 - Narcissists are deniers of reality.
 - Narcissists are sadists, using verbal and psychological abuse and violence against those closest to them.
- Ph.D., Vaknin, Sam. *Malignant Self-Love: Narcissism Revisited*. Narcissus Publications, Czech Republic. 2001.

I no longer complied. While this disarmed him, it also made him angry, and I had to obtain a restraining order and have him evicted once his violent tendencies escalated. I digress to provide the backstory.

As I stated earlier, my life in 2007 was going well until a car accident a few days before Christmas that year. Though my car was totaled, I was very lucky as I survived. From that car accident, I met Michael. His daughter was a student in one of the seventh-grade English classes I was teaching that year. As it was early in the school year, I knew nothing of him or my student's parental situation. He had emailed me saying that his daughter was upset about my accident and asked if it would be okay to bring her to visit me to see that I was okay. Culturally, I grew up in a small town where most of my friend's parents were our teachers, so I saw no problem with it and agreed. He brought her to my home for a short visit.

Shortly after the new year, he emailed me again asking me out. As there was no policy against teachers dating a student's parent, I agreed. The date went well, and we began seeing each other regularly. A few weeks later, he asked if he could move in with me. I don't recall what he said the reason was, and I

should have seen something wrong with it, but I suppose I have always been a bit too naive, though I always hated that word. I am too trusting, preferring to always see the good in people rather than the evil tendencies. For whatever reason, I trusted him and agreed. I now understand, from the beginning, he planned everything and used me as his vessel. Little did he know, God made me a vessel in getting justice for his victims.

Until I began dating Michael, I knew nothing of his divorce. And, until I learned that he was a narcissist, especially because school personnel who know the truth had not taken me aside and explained to me what I needed to know, I knew nothing of his criminal past. Had I known all these things, I would not have continued my relationship with him so long. Understand, I am not skirting responsibility or placing blame, but I am recognizing that most people do not help others rather they choose to victim blame.

Though I do know right from wrong, when one does not know the whole story, and they are being made a puppet, especially by a narcissist, and feel they have nowhere to turn for assistance or support, they become entrenched in traumatic situations. And don't forget, I had already been a victim of two Adverse Childhood Experiences and healing from trauma is a lifetime process. Surviving one crime does not mean an individual is immune to future crimes affecting their lives. Now, I can see a predator coming, but at this time, I had still not developed this skill.

Because I was still not able to identify predators at that time in my life, I let Michael in. School personnel judged rather than helped me. Had school culture been different, I might not have lost my job when his arrest made Inside Edition and the local news; they didn't care I was responsible for having him jailed in late January 2012.

After his daughter told me about the legal charges against him because he was hiding it from me, I began paying attention. This allowed me to find pertinent evidence, two patient files, he had refused to turn over to the State of Massachusetts years before. He brought them into my house. One week, he went on a vacation with a friend and left them on his desk. I found them and contacted the Maryland State Attorney's Office; they put me in touch with the State Prosecutor's Office in Massachusetts and I testified in front of a grand jury. Because I was able to confirm his handwriting due to our long-term relationship, I was able to have him put away, ten years after he evaded the law.

I was in a psychologically abusive and manipulative relationship. I had allowed myself to be forced into doing things I was not proud of such as keeping the truth about our relationship a secret from his ex-wife and children because I wasn't wise enough to see a predator coming. Also, I supposed on some level I was still frozen by fear.

Michael manipulated me by only telling his side of the story in his custody battle with his ex-wife. I was blind to his having been abusive of her and his crimes, the reason he was not allowed to see his children, until it was too late, and I was deeply embedded in my own abusive relationship with him. I recall driving home from a party with his family; he was drunk and driving erratically, and I yelled at him to stop. He responded by giving me a black eye. He used me as a conduit to receive visitation with his children, bullying me into moving from my condo into a townhouse.

The course of events turned one night during a weekend visitation. He had refused to drop the kids off at his ex-wife's house on time and she tried to call the kids. They didn't answer so she and her boyfriend came to the house. He would not let me answer the door. When he answered the door, I heard yelling

and immediately ran towards the door. I witnessed him push her down the outside steps. He expected me to lie about it, but I refused, testifying on his ex-wife's behalf in court.

The truly sad part about victim blaming and lack of support, is that my one sister-in-law, an attorney did watch the news, unlike myself and learned about Michael's criminal past around the time I did. Rather than supporting or helping me, she told my brother and my parents and asked them to speak to me. This is ironic because none of them helped or supported me when I had been raped years before. And I love my brother, but he is a silent one, who doesn't deal with conflict. The only exception in this situation is that the day I had the police come to the townhouse to serve Michael with his Order of Protection and Order of Eviction, my father was sitting at the table supporting me.

You'll have to excuse me if some of the events are out of sequence; this story is summarized rather than told in its entirety as there is no need to recount every single detail. Also, to all survivors of trauma, please, when you are ready get into therapy and stay in therapy. Please don't stop because you feel you are done. As I discovered, I wasn't done which is what led to this third trauma.

Stop Victim Blaming, Especially When You Don't Know the True Facts