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How I Got Trapped in Narcissistic Abuse

The story I needed to believe



Elena Byron

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We met when I was a teenager. We came from the same small town, went to the same school. A teenage crush.

He was five years older and seemed so cool, handsome, could do all sorts of tricks with his skateboard, and effortlessly smart in class. For a while, I admired him quietly from a distance. So when he finally noticed me, it felt like Johnny Depp had stepped out of my bedroom poster and asked me out.

In my mind, he was completely idealised. We dated on and off for two years. Even at 19, I sensed he wasn't relationship material. That he'd break my

heart. So I kept a safe distance, trying not to get too involved.

Looking back, the 19-year-old me was smarter than the woman in her forties, or at least, she was in a different place. Less vulnerable.

We reconnected 25 years later. No contact in all that time, and then a coincidence brought us back together. Different lives. Two adults. Or so I thought. It felt natural, unplanned, like fate. And I wanted to believe in destiny. All that brainwashing about soulmates, things written in the stars. I thought maybe, finally, something was aligning.

He wasn't a stranger, after all. I already "knew" him. So it felt safer than meeting someone completely new.

I couldn't have been more wrong.

I didn't know him at all. Not the man he'd become.

I ended it back then, and I ended it again, but for very different reasons. The second time round, the relationship had turned into *an emotionally abusive hell*.

I've asked myself over and over: why was I vulnerable to the narcissistic trap? How could this happen to me?

Looking back, three things stand out.

1. The weight of idealisation.

The person I remembered (the one I thought I knew) only existed in my mind. I held on to that image instead of seeing who was really in front of me.

2. I wanted to be loved again.

I'd just come out of a long, respectful, and important relationship. I was grieving. I'd felt alone for a long time and hadn't had real intimacy in years. I was craving closeness, connection, and affection. So when he performed empathy and care, I mistook it for the real thing.

3. The distance.

It was a long-distance relationship. We saw each other one week a month. Not seeing him daily made it harder to spot patterns. The space between visits blurred my judgment. "Is that a red flag, or did I just misunderstand him?" I kept justifying. The distance fed the fantasy. *I filled in the gaps with the version of him I wanted to believe in.*

I dreamt about the relationship. Until my rose-tinted glasses finally shattered, and I was forced to see the truth.

The version of him I loved never really existed.

And now, after a few months, it is starting to be ok.

If this resonated with you, feel free to follow me for more stories on healing, truth-telling, and recovery after narcissistic abuse.

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Written by Elena Byron

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Psychologist & Trauma Therapist | Survivor Exploring the aftermath of narcissistic abuse, the resilience of the human mind and the path to self-reclamation.


Responses (3)



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What are your thoughts?



Tina she/her 
May 18



In my mind, he was completely idealised. We dated on and off for two years. Even at 19, I sensed he wasn't relationship material – that he'd break my heart. So I kept a safe distance, t...

It's wild how our intuition often whispers the truth early on, even when we're young. That line... "I sensed he wasn't relationship material... so I kept a safe distance"? Yeah, it really hit me. It's like we knew, but hope had a louder voice.

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20



1 reply

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Michael Phillips he/him

Mar 27



This really hits. So raw, honest, and painfully relatable. That line "the version of him I loved never really existed"... oof. Been there. It's amazing how memory, longing, and hope can build a person up in our minds, only for reality to tear it all down. I'm glad you made it out—and even more glad that it's starting to feel okay. That's no small thing.



10



1 reply

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Aftab Ahmed he/him

Mar 26



The second time round, the relationship had turned into an emotionally abusive hell.

Always tough but we've to take a decision!!!



5



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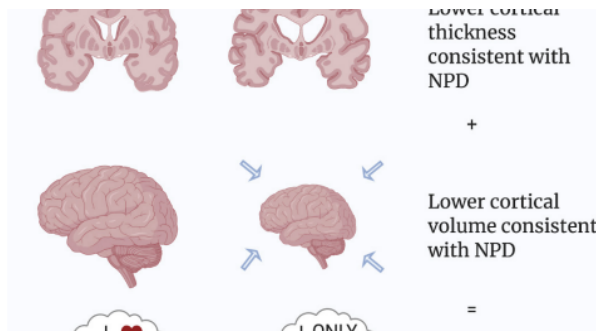


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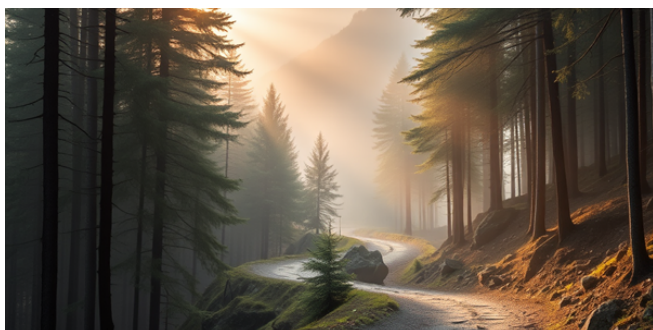


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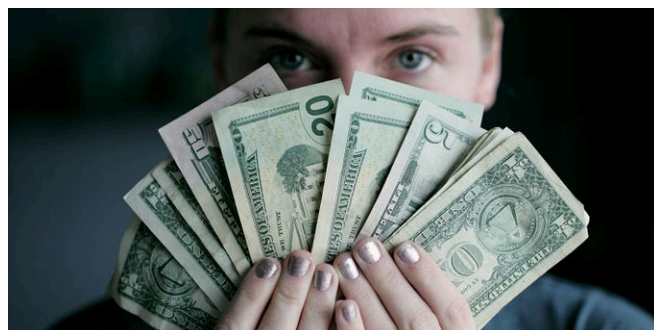
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