

# Unmasking the Digital Narcissist: A Survival Guide for Sensitive Souls



How to Recognize, Resist, and Recover from Online Manipulation



*In a world where words are weapons, learn to shield your heart without losing your humanity*

# Introduction

## 1.1 Overview of the case study

In the vast landscape of social media, where words are weapons and emotions run high, we find ourselves increasingly vulnerable to a particular breed of toxic behavior: online narcissistic abuse.

This case study delves deep into a recent Facebook exchange that serves as a chilling example of how narcissists operate in digital spaces.

Our subject, [Jonathan Dotson](#), unwittingly provides us with a masterclass in manipulation, gaslighting, and emotional exploitation—tactics that can leave even the most self-aware individuals questioning their reality.

For those of you who have ever felt confused, hurt, or emotionally drained after an online interaction, this analysis is for you.

It's especially crucial for the sensitive souls among us—the empaths, the idealists, the ones who see the best in others even when it costs us dearly.



If you've ever found yourself giving someone the benefit of the doubt long after red flags have appeared, or if you struggle to set boundaries for fear of hurting others, you're not alone. This study will equip you with the knowledge and tools to protect your emotional wellbeing in the treacherous waters of online discourse.

## **1.2 Importance of understanding online narcissism**

Understanding online narcissism is not just an academic exercise—it's a vital skill for navigating the modern world. In an era where our lives are increasingly lived through screens, the ability to recognize and respond to narcissistic behavior can mean the difference between maintaining our mental health and falling into cycles of self-doubt and emotional turmoil.

For those of us who are naturally empathetic, who feel deeply and care intensely about others, online narcissists pose a particular threat. They prey on our desire for connection, our willingness to see the good in others, and our reluctance to engage in conflict. By understanding their tactics, we can learn to protect our sensitive hearts without losing our capacity for compassion.

This understanding is especially crucial for those who have experienced trauma or struggle with insecurity. Narcissists have an uncanny ability to sense vulnerability, and they often target those who are already questioning their worth or their perception of reality. By shining a light on their tactics, we reclaim our power and our ability to trust our own instincts.

## **1.3 Brief introduction to Game Theory in this context**



As we dissect this online exchange, we'll be viewing it through the lens of Game Theory—a framework typically used to analyze strategic decision-making. While it might seem unusual to apply such a structured approach to emotional interactions, Game Theory provides us with valuable insights into the underlying dynamics of narcissistic abuse.

In essence, Game Theory allows us to see these interactions as a series of moves and countermoves, each designed to achieve a specific outcome. For the narcissist, the goal is often to maintain control, avoid accountability, and extract emotional energy from their target. For the target, the objectives might include seeking validation, defending their perspective, or simply trying to engage in meaningful dialogue.

By framing these exchanges as a type of game, we can step back from the emotional intensity and see the patterns more clearly. This doesn't mean that the pain isn't real or that the stakes aren't high. Rather, it gives us a tool to understand why narcissists behave the way they do, why their tactics are so effective, and most importantly, how we can change the game to protect ourselves.

For those of us who are more intuitive and feeling-oriented, this analytical approach might feel foreign at first. However, combining our natural empathy and insight with this structured analysis can be incredibly powerful. It allows us to honor our emotional wisdom while also developing the tactical awareness needed to navigate these challenging interactions.

As we proceed through this case study, remember: knowledge is power. By understanding the game narcissists play, we can choose whether to engage, how to protect ourselves, and ultimately, how to create healthier spaces for genuine connection online. Your sensitivity is a strength, not a weakness—and armed with this knowledge, you can learn to use it as a shield rather than a target.



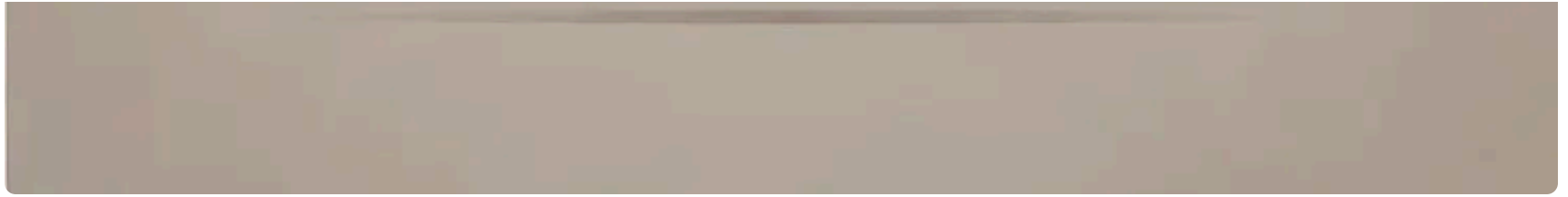


Image by [author](#).

## 2. Background

### 2.1 Context of the Facebook thread

The digital stage for our case study is a Facebook thread—a seemingly innocuous space that quickly became a battleground of egos and manipulative tactics. Social media platforms like Facebook often serve as breeding grounds for narcissistic behavior due to their public nature and the instant gratification they provide through likes, comments, and shares.

For those of us who are more introverted or sensitive, these public forums can feel overwhelming. We might hesitate to engage, fearing conflict or misunderstanding. Yet, it's often in these spaces that we encounter the most insidious forms of emotional manipulation. Understanding the context of this exchange is crucial, as it highlights how quickly a simple post can spiral into a complex web of narcissistic abuse.

### 2.2 Initial meme and comments



The catalyst for this interaction was a simple meme stating, "Be the same person privately, publicly, and personally." This message, promoting authenticity and consistency, resonates deeply with those who value sincerity and genuine connection. For many empaths and idealists, this concept of authentic self-expression is not just a nice idea, but a core value.

The original poster (Mark) added a comment to this meme: "A narcissist can't and simply won't comply." This statement cuts to the heart of narcissistic behavior—the inability or unwillingness to maintain a consistent, authentic self across different contexts. For those who have dealt with narcissistic individuals, this observation likely strikes a chord, validating experiences of encountering two-faced or manipulative behavior.

This combination of meme and comment set the stage for a discussion about authenticity, manipulation, and the challenges of interacting with narcissistic individuals. It's a topic that can be particularly triggering for those who have experienced narcissistic abuse, as it touches on painful memories and ongoing struggles.

## **2.3 Introduction of Jonathan Dotson to the conversation**

Enter Jonathan Dotson, whose comments would soon reveal a textbook display of narcissistic tactics. Jonathan's initial response was to criticize the meme and the comment, accusing the poster of being "ableist" and "prejudiced." This immediate jump to inflammatory language is a red flag, signaling an attempt to derail the conversation and shift focus away from the original point.

For those of us who are conflict-averse or prone to self-doubt, such accusations can be deeply unsettling. We might find ourselves questioning our intentions, wondering if we've inadvertently caused harm. This is



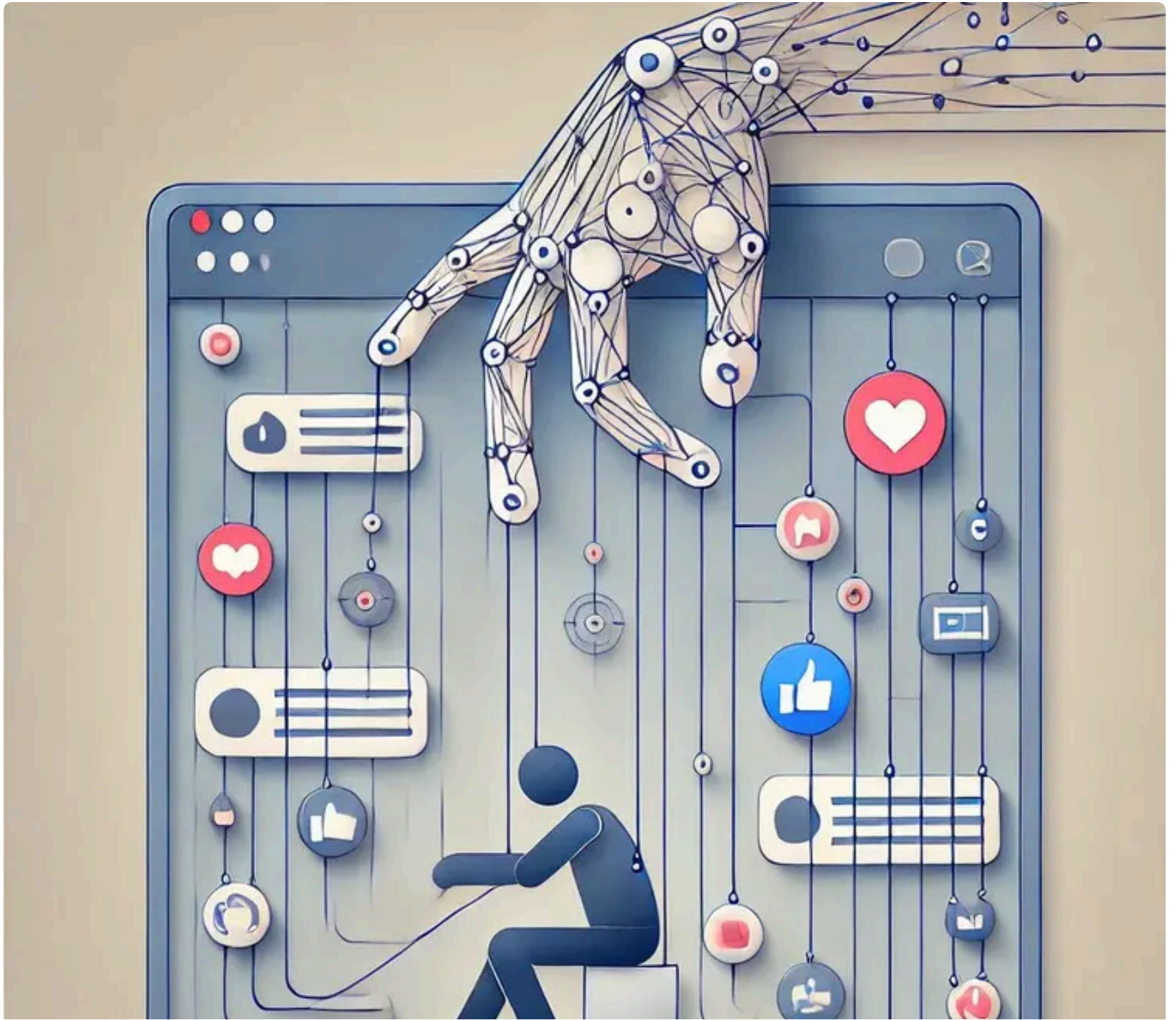
precisely the reaction narcissists hope to provoke—confusion, self-doubt, and a defensive posture that puts us on the back foot from the start.

Jonathan's entry into the conversation marks the beginning of a complex dance of manipulation, gaslighting, and emotional exploitation. His tactics, as we'll explore in detail, are designed to control the narrative, avoid accountability, and extract emotional energy from others in the thread.

As we delve deeper into this exchange, it's important to remember that narcissistic behavior often escalates gradually. What starts as a seemingly innocent disagreement can quickly morph into a barrage of manipulative tactics. For sensitive individuals, recognizing these early warning signs can be crucial in protecting our emotional wellbeing.

In the following sections, we'll break down Jonathan's tactics in detail, examining how each move is calculated to manipulate, confuse, and control. By understanding these strategies, we equip ourselves with the knowledge to recognize and resist narcissistic manipulation, both online and in our daily lives.





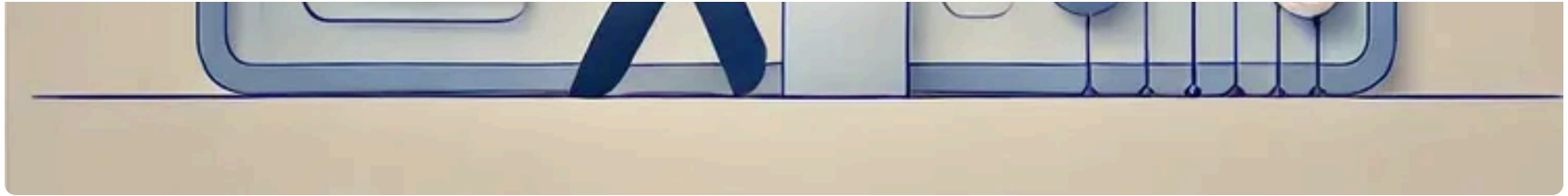


Image by [author](#).

## 3. Analysis of Jonathan's Narcissistic Tactics

### 3.1 Deflection and derailment

Jonathan's initial response exemplifies two classic narcissistic tactics: deflection and derailment. By immediately labeling the meme and comment as "ableist" and "prejudiced," he shifts the focus away from the original point about narcissistic behavior and onto a completely different topic.

For empathetic individuals, especially those with a strong sense of social justice, this tactic can be particularly effective. We may find ourselves suddenly on the defensive, trying to prove that we're not prejudiced or insensitive. This emotional redirection is precisely what the narcissist wants—it puts them in control of the conversation and forces others to engage on their terms.

Recognizing deflection and derailment is crucial. When you notice a sudden, dramatic shift in the conversation's focus, especially one that puts you on the defensive, it's often a sign that you're dealing with manipulative tactics.



## 3.2 Weaponizing labels

Jonathan's use of charged terms like "ableist" and "prejudiced" is a prime example of weaponizing labels. This tactic is designed to shame and silence opposition by associating them with negative characteristics.

For sensitive individuals who deeply value fairness and kindness, being labeled with such terms can be deeply distressing. We may find ourselves spiraling into self-doubt, wondering if we've unknowingly caused harm. This emotional turmoil is exactly what the narcissist aims to provoke.

It's important to remember that while these labels can be valid in appropriate contexts, narcissists often use them indiscriminately as a tool of manipulation. Learning to recognize when labels are being weaponized, rather than used constructively, is a key skill in protecting yourself from this tactic.

## 3.3 Cherry-picking and semantic smokescreening

As the conversation progresses, Jonathan employs cherry-picking and semantic smokescreening. He latches onto specific words or phrases, taking them out of context to construct a narrative that suits his purposes. This tactic is particularly evident when he focuses on the word "evil" in one of Mark's responses, ignoring the broader context and intent of the argument.

For detail-oriented individuals, especially those who value precision in language, this tactic can be incredibly frustrating. We might find ourselves drawn into lengthy explanations and clarifications, trying to ensure our words aren't misunderstood. However, this is often a fruitless endeavor with a narcissist, as their goal is not understanding, but control.



Recognizing when someone is consistently misrepresenting your words or fixating on semantics rather than engaging with your main points is crucial. It's often a sign that you're dealing with someone more interested in "winning" than in genuine dialogue.

## **3.4 Gaslighting and reality distortion**

Throughout the exchange, Jonathan engages in gaslighting and reality distortion. He repeatedly denies or minimizes his own actions, while exaggerating or fabricating issues with others' behavior. This is evident when he claims to have "missed" earlier parts of the conversation due to the "bluntness" of the meme, despite having actively engaged with those very points.

For individuals who already struggle with self-doubt or have a history of trauma, gaslighting can be particularly devastating. We may find ourselves questioning our own memories and perceptions, wondering if we're the ones misremembering or misunderstanding the situation.

It's crucial to trust your own experiences and perceptions. If you find yourself consistently doubting your memory or understanding of events when interacting with someone, it may be a sign that you're being gaslighted.

## **3.5 Playing the victim**

As the conversation escalates, Jonathan increasingly portrays himself as the victim. He accuses Mark of "bullying" and "harassment," despite being the one who initiated the confrontational tone. This tactic is designed to garner sympathy and paint the narcissist as the wronged party.



For empathetic individuals, especially those with a strong desire to avoid causing harm, this tactic can be particularly effective. We may find ourselves backing down or apologizing, even when we've done nothing wrong, simply to alleviate the perceived suffering of the other person.

Remember, it's possible to be compassionate without accepting false accusations or taking responsibility for someone else's feelings. Learning to recognize when someone is consistently painting themselves as the victim, especially in situations they instigated, is key to protecting yourself from this manipulation tactic.

## **3.6 False apologies and manipulation**

Throughout the exchange, Jonathan offers what appear to be apologies, but these are often followed by further attacks or justifications. For instance, he says, "Again I apologize for missing your point yesterday. I was wrong," but immediately follows this with criticism: "Your choice of meme was still terrible."

These false apologies are a manipulative tactic designed to appear reasonable and conciliatory while continuing the abusive behavior. For empathetic individuals who value sincere communication, these can be particularly confusing. We might find ourselves giving the benefit of the doubt repeatedly, hoping that this time the apology is genuine.

It's important to recognize that true apologies come with changed behavior. If someone consistently "apologizes" but continues the same harmful actions, it's likely that their apologies are merely another tool of manipulation.



## 3.7 Concern trolling

Jonathan employs concern trolling when he states, "I'm truly worried about your mental health." This tactic involves expressing fake concern to undermine the other person's credibility and emotional stability.

For those of us who struggle with self-doubt or mental health issues, this tactic can be particularly hurtful and destabilizing. We might start to question our own reactions and wonder if we're overreacting or being "too sensitive."

Remember, genuine concern for someone's wellbeing doesn't involve public shaming or using their perceived mental state as a weapon in an argument. If someone expresses "concern" in a way that makes you feel worse or doubts yourself, it's likely not genuine concern at all.

## 3.8 Attempts to control the narrative

Throughout the entire exchange, Jonathan consistently attempts to control the narrative. He tries to dictate what topics are acceptable to discuss, how others should express themselves, and even how they should feel about the interaction.

For individuals who value harmony and are willing to compromise to keep the peace, this can be a challenging tactic to resist. We might find ourselves constantly adjusting our behavior or words to appease the narcissist, losing our own voice in the process.

It's crucial to remember that in a healthy interaction, all parties have the right to express themselves and contribute to the direction of the conversation. If you find yourself constantly walking on eggshells or



feeling like you can't express your true thoughts without backlash, it may be a sign that someone is attempting to exert unhealthy control over the interaction.

By understanding these tactics, we can better equip ourselves to recognize and resist narcissistic manipulation in online spaces. For sensitive, empathetic individuals, this knowledge isn't about becoming cynical or distrustful, but about learning to protect our emotional wellbeing while still remaining open to genuine connections.

In the next section, we'll explore the responses and countermeasures employed to address these manipulative tactics.







Image by [author](#).

## 4. Your Responses and Countermeasures

### 4.1 Maintaining focus on core issues

Throughout the exchange, Mark consistently attempts to bring the conversation back to the original topic: the harmful impact of narcissistic behavior. This is a crucial strategy when dealing with narcissistic manipulation, as it prevents the narcissist from completely derailing the conversation.

For those of us who are easily distracted or tend to get caught up in details, maintaining focus can be challenging. However, it's an essential skill in protecting ourselves from manipulation. By repeatedly bringing the conversation back to the core issues, we deny the narcissist the opportunity to lead us down endless rabbit holes of deflection and distraction.

Practice: When you feel a conversation veering off-course, try to pause and ask yourself, "What was the original point we were discussing?" This can help you refocus and avoid getting lost in manipulative tangents.

### 4.2 Exposing manipulative tactics



A key strategy employed in this exchange is the explicit naming and exposing of Jonathan's manipulative tactics. For example, Mark points out when Jonathan is using deflection, gaslighting, or playing the victim. This approach serves two purposes: it calls out the behavior in real-time, making it harder for the narcissist to deny, and it educates others who may be witnessing the exchange.

For empathetic individuals who often give others the benefit of the doubt, calling out manipulative behavior can feel uncomfortable or confrontational. However, it's a powerful tool in combating narcissistic abuse. By naming the tactics, we reclaim our reality and make it harder for the narcissist to distort it.

Practice: Start by naming manipulative tactics in your own mind when you notice them. As you become more confident, you can begin to calmly and assertively point them out in your responses.

## **4.3 Setting and reinforcing boundaries**

Throughout the exchange, Mark consistently sets and reinforces boundaries. He makes it clear that he won't tolerate manipulative behavior, and he stands firm in his right to express his views and analyze the interaction.

For those of us who struggle with people-pleasing tendencies or fear of conflict, setting boundaries can be incredibly challenging. We might worry about hurting others' feelings or causing discomfort. However, boundaries are crucial for our emotional wellbeing, especially when dealing with narcissistic individuals.

Practice: Start small by identifying one boundary you'd like to set in your online interactions. It could be as simple as deciding not to engage with comments that use personal attacks. Practice enforcing this boundary consistently.



## 4.4 Use of detailed analysis to counter gaslighting

One of the most powerful countermeasures employed in this exchange is the use of detailed analysis to combat gaslighting and reality distortion. By breaking down Jonathan's comments and tactics point by point, Mark creates a clear record of the interaction that's harder for Jonathan to deny or distort.

For individuals who struggle with self-doubt or have a history of being gaslighted, this technique can be particularly empowering. It provides a concrete reference point for what actually happened, making it easier to trust our own perceptions.

*Practice:* When you feel confused or doubtful about an interaction, try writing down exactly what was said or done. Be as objective and detailed as possible. This can help you see patterns of manipulation more clearly and trust your own experiences.

By employing these countermeasures, we can create a shield against narcissistic manipulation while still engaging in online spaces. Remember, the goal isn't to "win" against narcissists, but to protect our emotional wellbeing and maintain our sense of reality in the face of manipulation.

In the next section, we'll explore how Game Theory can provide additional insights into these types of interactions.



ENGAGEMENT



DEFLECTION

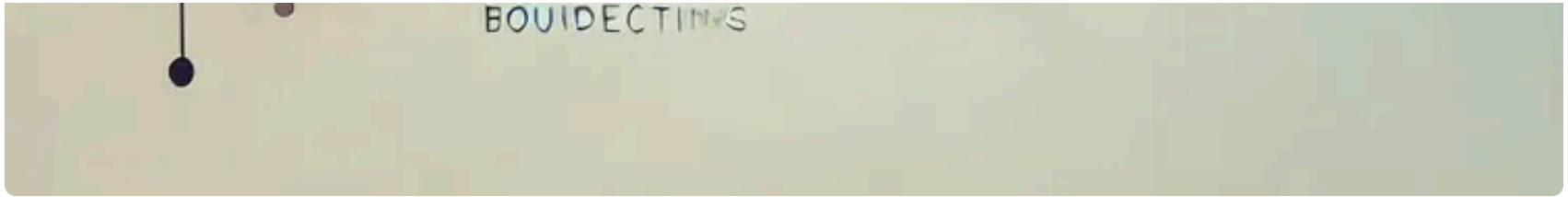


Image by [author](#).

## 5. Game Theory Analysis

### 5.1 Introduction to relevant Game Theory concepts

Game Theory, at its core, is the study of strategic decision-making. In the context of our case study, it provides a framework for understanding the underlying dynamics of narcissistic online interactions. By viewing these exchanges as a series of strategic moves, we can gain insights into why narcissists behave the way they do and how we can better protect ourselves.

For those of us who are more emotionally-oriented, thinking of human interactions as a "game" might feel uncomfortable or overly analytical. However, this framework can provide a valuable emotional distance, allowing us to see patterns more clearly without getting caught up in the heat of the moment.

Key concepts we'll be using include:

- **Players:** The individuals involved in the interaction
- **Strategies:** The choices available to each player
- **Payoffs:** The outcomes or rewards for each combination of strategies



- Nash Equilibrium: A state where no player can unilaterally improve their position

## 5.2 Modeling the interaction as a game

In our case study, we can model the interaction as a two-player game:

- Player 1: Mark (the original poster)
- Player 2: Jonathan (the narcissistic commenter)

Each "move" in the game represents a comment or response in the Facebook thread. The strategies available to each player include:

- Engage directly with the topic
- Deflect or derail
- Call out manipulative behavior
- Play the victim
- Disengage

The payoffs in this game are more complex than simple wins or losses. They include:

- Emotional energy (gained or depleted)
- Control of the narrative
- Public perception



- Self-validation

## 5.3 Strategies employed by both parties

Jonathan's primary strategy involves a combination of deflection, playing the victim, and attempting to control the narrative. His moves are designed to maximize his control over the conversation while depleting Mark's emotional energy.

Mark's strategy, on the other hand, focuses on maintaining focus on the core issues, exposing manipulative tactics, and setting firm boundaries. His moves aim to minimize the emotional drain while maintaining control over his own narrative.

## 5.4 Payoffs and outcomes

For Jonathan, the desired payoffs include:

- Emotional supply from generating reactions
- Control over the conversation
- Avoidance of accountability
- Reinforcement of his self-image as a victim or authority

For Mark, the desired payoffs include:

- Maintaining emotional equilibrium



- Exposing narcissistic tactics
- Educating others about manipulation
- Reinforcing personal boundaries

The actual outcomes of each move depend on how successfully each player executes their strategy and how well the other player counters it.

## 5.5 Nash equilibrium in narcissistic online interactions

In Game Theory, a Nash Equilibrium occurs when neither player can unilaterally improve their position by changing their strategy. In narcissistic online interactions, this often manifests as a stalemate where:

- The narcissist continues to employ manipulative tactics
- The target continues to call out these tactics and maintain boundaries
- Neither party disengages, as the narcissist seeks continued emotional supply, and the target seeks to stand their ground

This equilibrium can be emotionally draining for both parties, but particularly for the target of narcissistic manipulation. Understanding this can help us make more informed decisions about when to engage and when to step away from these interactions.

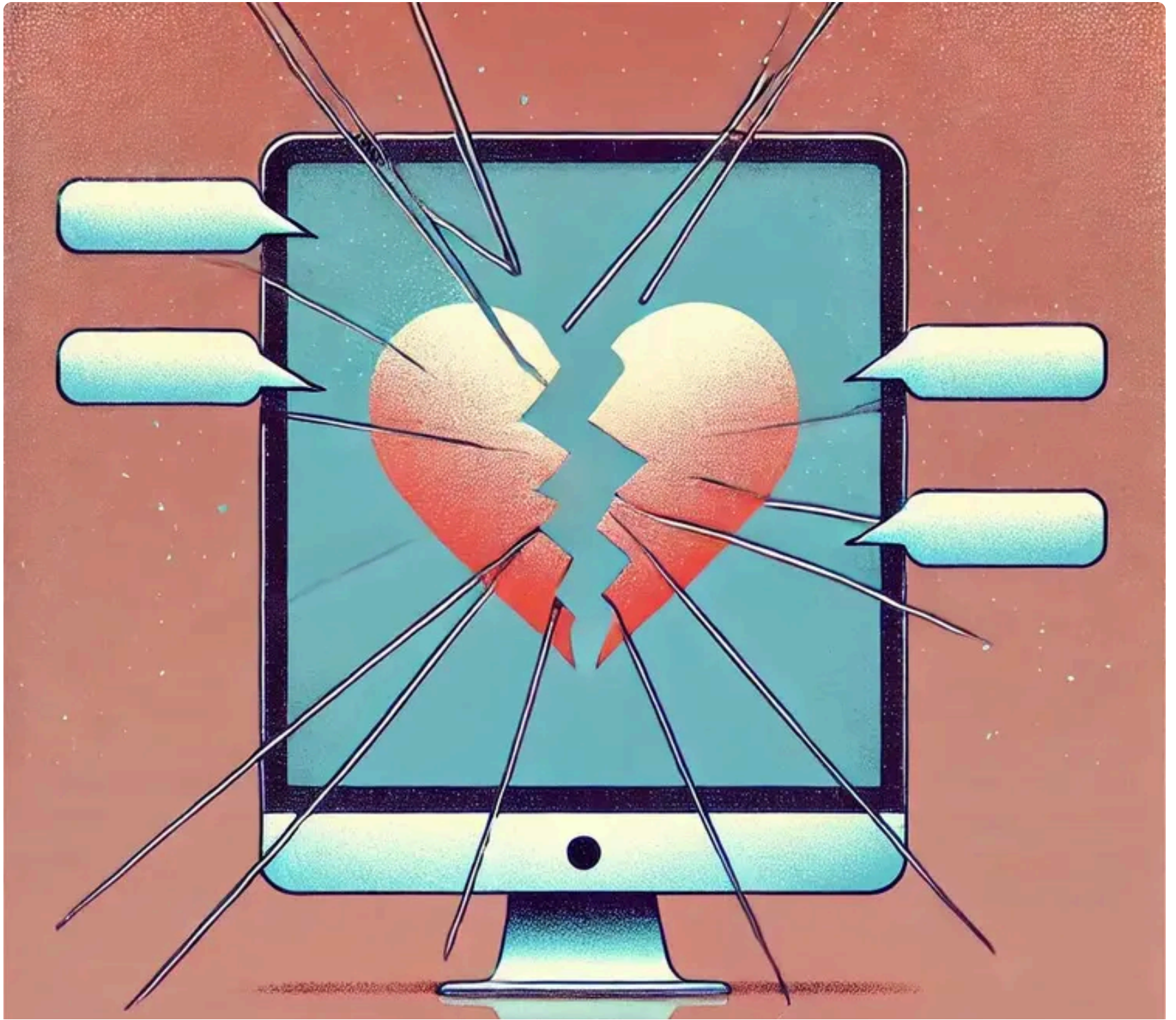
By viewing narcissistic online interactions through the lens of Game Theory, we can better understand the strategic nature of these exchanges. This understanding empowers us to make more conscious choices





about our own "moves" and to recognize when we're being drawn into a game that doesn't serve our well-being.

In the next section, we'll explore the broader implications of these dynamics on online discourse and individual psychological well-being.



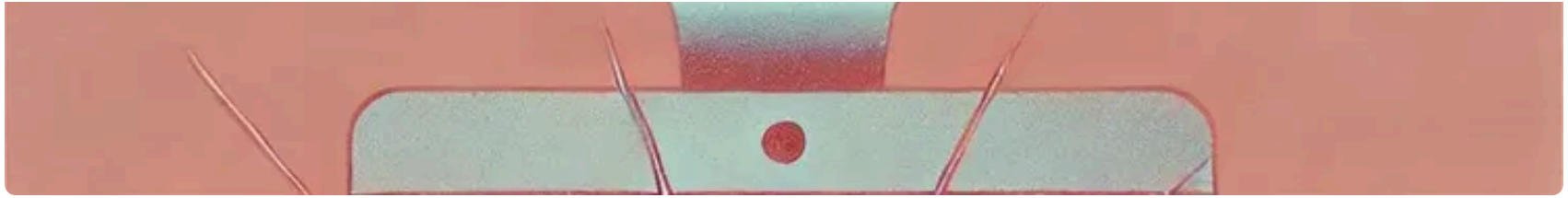


Image by [author](#).

## 6. Broader Implications

### 6.1 Impact on online discourse

The prevalence of narcissistic behavior in online spaces has far-reaching consequences for the quality of digital discourse.

Firstly, it creates an atmosphere of hostility and defensiveness. When people frequently encounter manipulative tactics, they may become guarded in their interactions, less willing to share genuine thoughts and feelings. For sensitive individuals, this can lead to self-censorship or complete withdrawal from online discussions.

Secondly, narcissistic tactics can derail meaningful conversations. As we saw in our case study, Jonathan's deflections and attempts to control the narrative repeatedly shifted the focus away from the original topic. On a larger scale, this pattern can prevent productive discussions on important issues, as conversations are constantly sidetracked by personal attacks and manipulative tactics.

Lastly, the presence of narcissistic behavior can create a sort of 'empathy fatigue' among online users. Constantly navigating these toxic interactions can wear down even the most compassionate individuals,



potentially leading to a overall decrease in empathy and understanding in online spaces.

## **6.2 Psychological effects on targets of narcissistic manipulation**

The psychological impact of being targeted by narcissistic manipulation online can be profound, especially for those who are already struggling with insecurity, past trauma, or mental health issues.

Repeated exposure to gaslighting can lead to a phenomenon known as 'reality erosion', where individuals begin to doubt their own perceptions and memories. This can exacerbate existing mental health issues and potentially lead to new ones, such as anxiety and depression.

The constant emotional drain of dealing with narcissistic tactics can also lead to a state of chronic stress. For highly sensitive individuals, this prolonged state of emotional arousal can be particularly damaging, potentially leading to burnout or even physical health issues.

Moreover, the experience of being manipulated online can spill over into offline life. Targets may become hypervigilant, constantly on guard for signs of manipulation in all their interactions. This can strain real-life relationships and make it difficult to trust others.

## **6.3 Challenges in moderating online spaces**

The subtlety and complexity of narcissistic manipulation pose significant challenges for those tasked with moderating online spaces.



Firstly, many narcissistic tactics, such as gaslighting or playing the victim, can be difficult to identify without context. A single comment may not violate community guidelines, even if it's part of a larger pattern of manipulative behavior.

Secondly, narcissists are often adept at presenting themselves as the wronged party. They may weaponize moderation systems, reporting their targets for "harassment" when they're called out on their behavior. This can lead to a paradoxical situation where those standing up to manipulation are penalized.

Lastly, the sheer volume of online interactions makes it impossible for human moderators to closely monitor every exchange. While AI moderation tools are improving, they still struggle with the nuanced nature of narcissistic manipulation.

These challenges highlight the need for more sophisticated approaches to online moderation, as well as better education for users on recognizing and responding to manipulative tactics.

Understanding these broader implications is crucial for anyone navigating online spaces, especially those who are more sensitive or empathetic. It underscores the importance of developing resilience, setting firm boundaries, and sometimes, knowing when to disengage for the sake of one's own well-being.

In our next section, we'll discuss specific strategies for dealing with online narcissists, drawing from the insights gained in our case study and broader analysis.



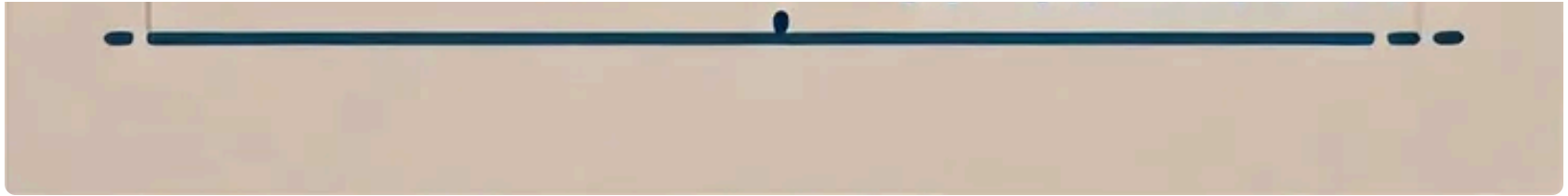


Image by [author](#).

## 7. Strategies for Dealing with Online Narcissists

### 7.1 Recognizing narcissistic tactics

The first step in protecting yourself from online narcissists is learning to recognize their tactics. Based on our case study, here are some key signs to watch for:

- Deflection and derailment: Watch for sudden topic changes or attempts to shift blame.
- Gaslighting: Be alert to statements that make you doubt your perception of events.
- Playing the victim: Notice if someone consistently portrays themselves as the wronged party, especially in situations they instigated.
- False apologies: Look out for "apologies" followed immediately by further attacks or justifications.
- Concern trolling: Be wary of expressions of "concern" that feel undermining or manipulative.

For empathetic individuals, it's crucial to trust your instincts. If an interaction leaves you feeling confused, drained, or questioning your own sanity, it may be a sign that you're dealing with narcissistic manipulation.



## 7.2 Maintaining emotional distance

One of the most effective strategies for dealing with online narcissists is maintaining emotional distance. This can be challenging, especially for those of us who are naturally empathetic or sensitive. Here are some techniques:

- Imagine you're observing the interaction as a third party. This can help you see manipulative tactics more clearly.
- Remember that the narcissist's behavior is about them, not you. Their attacks and manipulations are often projections of their own insecurities.
- Practice mindfulness. Stay aware of your emotional state during online interactions, and step away if you feel yourself becoming too emotionally invested.

## 7.3 Setting firm boundaries

Setting and maintaining boundaries is crucial when dealing with narcissists online. This might include:

- Deciding what kinds of comments you will and won't engage with.
- Limiting the time you spend in potentially toxic online spaces.
- Being clear about what behavior you won't tolerate in your online interactions.

Remember, you have the right to set boundaries in your online interactions. It's not unkind or selfish to protect your emotional well-being.





## 7.4 Documenting interactions

As we saw in our case study, documenting interactions can be a powerful tool against gaslighting and reality distortion. Consider:

- Taking screenshots of problematic interactions.
- Keeping a journal of your experiences and feelings after difficult online exchanges.
- If you're dealing with persistent harassment, consider compiling evidence for platform moderators.

This documentation serves dual purposes: it helps you maintain your grip on reality, and it provides evidence if you need to report abusive behavior.

## 7.5 Seeking support and allies

Dealing with narcissistic manipulation can be isolating, but remember that you're not alone. Consider:

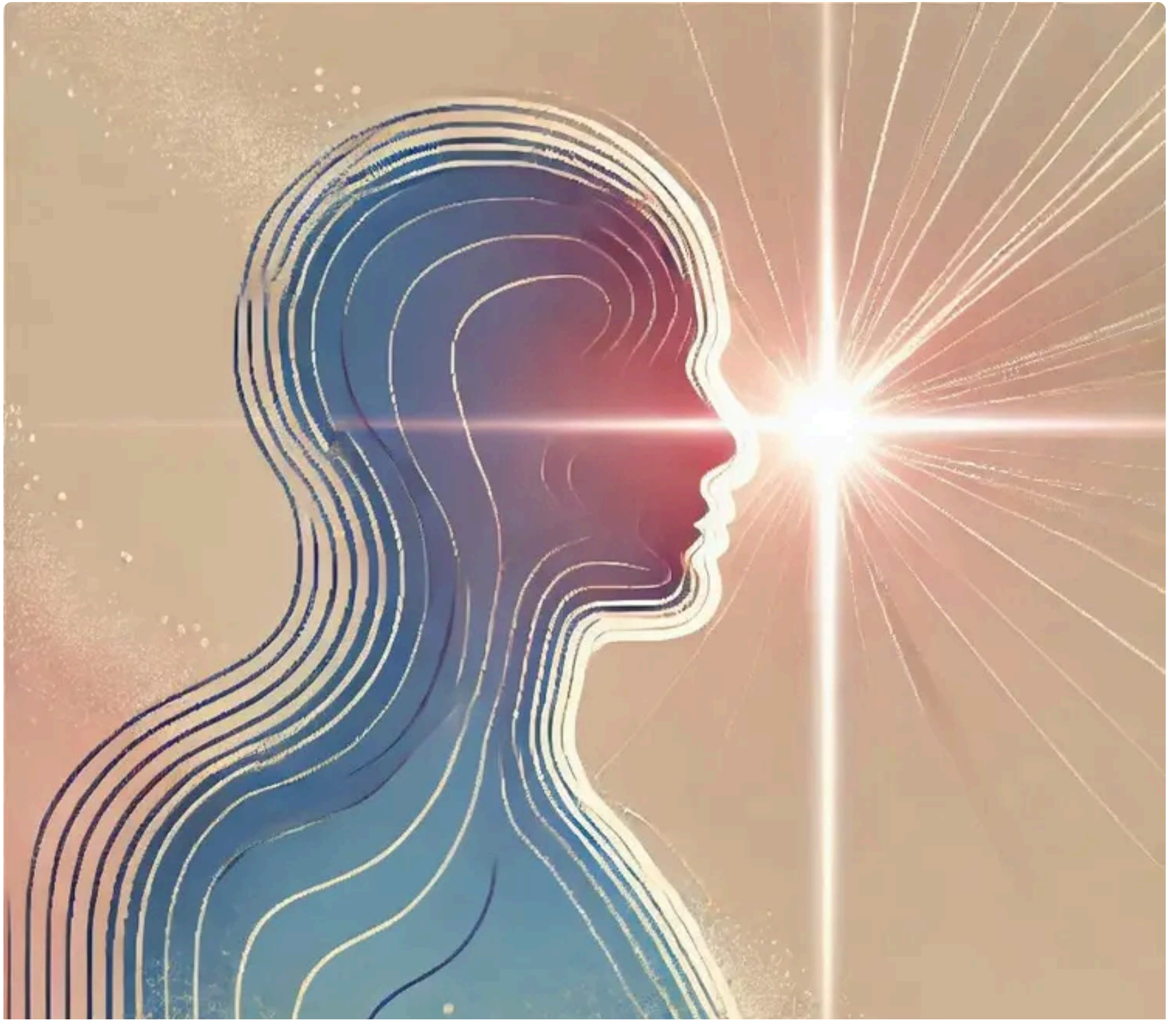
- Sharing your experiences with trusted friends or family members.
- Joining online support groups for people dealing with narcissistic abuse.
- If online interactions are significantly impacting your mental health, consider speaking with a therapist who understands narcissistic abuse.

For introverted or sensitive individuals, reaching out can feel challenging, but having a support system is crucial in maintaining your emotional well-being.



Remember, engaging with online narcissists is not a battle you're obligated to fight. Sometimes, the healthiest strategy is to disengage and focus your energy on more positive interactions. Your emotional well-being should always be your priority.

In our final section, we'll conclude by recapping the key points of our analysis and discussing the broader implications for creating healthier online spaces.



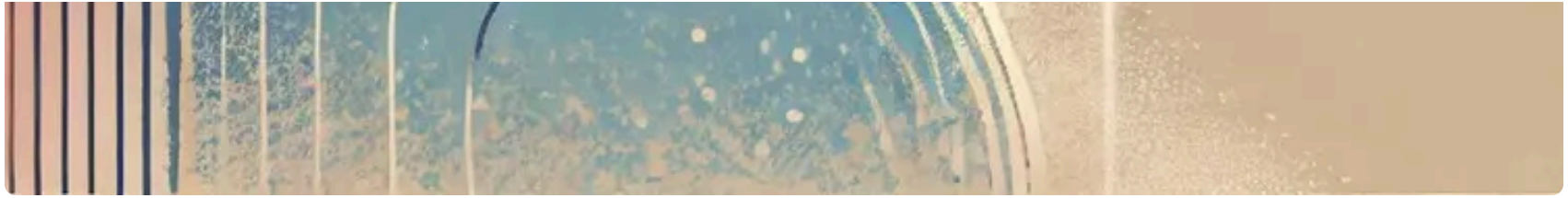


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## 8. Conclusion

### 8.1 Recap of key narcissistic tactics observed

Throughout our case study, we've observed a range of narcissistic tactics employed in online interactions:

- Deflection and derailment
- Weaponizing labels
- Cherry-picking and semantic smokescreening
- Gaslighting and reality distortion
- Playing the victim
- False apologies and manipulation
- Concern trolling
- Attempts to control the narrative

These tactics, while diverse, all serve the narcissist's core goals: maintaining control, avoiding accountability, and extracting emotional energy from their targets.



## 8.2 Importance of awareness and resilience

Understanding these tactics is crucial for navigating online spaces safely and maintaining our emotional well-being. For sensitive, empathetic individuals, this awareness is particularly important. It allows us to engage authentically online while protecting ourselves from manipulation and abuse.

Resilience, in this context, doesn't mean becoming hardened or cynical. Instead, it's about developing the tools to recognize manipulative behavior, maintain our sense of reality, and make conscious choices about how and when to engage.

## 8.3 Call to action for creating healthier online spaces

As we've seen, narcissistic behavior online doesn't just affect individuals—it impacts the quality of our collective discourse and the health of our digital communities. Therefore, addressing this issue requires both individual and collective action:

For individuals:

- Commit to ongoing education about narcissistic tactics and healthy online interaction.
- Practice setting and maintaining boundaries in your online engagements.
- Support others who are standing up to manipulation and abuse.

For platform developers and moderators:



- Develop more nuanced policies and tools for identifying and addressing patterns of manipulative behavior.
- Provide better resources and support for users dealing with online abuse.

For mental health professionals:

- Recognize the impact of online narcissistic abuse and incorporate this understanding into treatment approaches.
- Develop resources specifically tailored to helping individuals navigate toxic online interactions.

For researchers:

- Continue to study the dynamics of online narcissism and its impacts on individual and community well-being.
- Develop and test interventions for creating healthier online environments.

By working together on these fronts, we can create online spaces that foster genuine connection, meaningful dialogue, and mutual respect—spaces where empathy and sensitivity are strengths, not vulnerabilities to be exploited.

Remember, your voice matters. Your experiences are valid. And you have the right to engage online without sacrificing your emotional well-being. By understanding narcissistic tactics and employing strategies to protect ourselves, we can all contribute to creating a healthier, more empathetic digital world.



As we conclude this analysis, let it serve not just as a warning about the dangers lurking in online spaces, but as a beacon of hope. Armed with knowledge and supported by a community that values genuine connection, we can navigate even the stormiest online waters with grace, strength, and authenticity.



Image by [author](#).

## 9. References and Further Reading



#### Books:

- [\*The Narcissism Epidemic: Living in the Age of Entitlement\*](#) by Jean M. Twenge and W. Keith Campbell
- [\*Rethinking Narcissism\*](#) by Dr. Craig Malkin
- [\*Disarming the Narcissist: Surviving and Thriving with the Self-Absorbed\*](#) by Wendy T. Behary
- [\*The Empathy Trap: Understanding Antisocial Personalities\*](#) by Dr. Jane McGregor and Tim McGregor

#### Academic papers:

- [“Narcissism and Social Networking Behavior: A Meta-Analysis”](#) by Tara C. Marshall et al.
- [“The Dark Side of Facebook: The Dark Tetrad, Negative Social Potency, and Trolling Behaviours”](#) by Evita March et al.
- [“Trolls just want to have fun: Mediating the relationship between sadism and trolling behaviour on social media”](#) by Erin E. Buckels et al.

#### Online resources:

- [Psychology Today’s Narcissism blog](#)
- [The National Domestic Violence Hotline’s resources on digital abuse](#)
- [Out of the FOG \(Fear, Obligation, and Guilt\)](#)—website dedicated to supporting those affected by personality disorders





Image by [author](#).

## 10. Future Work

### 10.1 Case Study Follow-up

We plan to revisit the original Facebook thread in 3–6 months to analyze any long-term impacts of the interaction. Specifically, we'll examine:



- Any continued engagement from Jonathan or other participants
- Changes in the overall tone of discussions on the page
- Implementation of any new moderation policies or community guidelines
- Feedback from other users about how the interaction affected their perception of online discourse

This longitudinal approach will provide valuable insights into the lasting effects of narcissistic behavior on online communities and the efficacy of various countermeasures over time.

## 10.2 Expert Opinions

We aim to conduct interviews with:

- **Dr. Ramani Durvasula**, clinical psychologist and narcissism expert
- **Danielle Citron**, law professor specializing in online harassment
- A senior content moderator from a major social media platform (anonymity maintained)

These experts will provide professional perspectives on:

- The psychological motivations behind online narcissistic behavior
- Legal and ethical considerations in addressing online manipulation
- Practical challenges and potential solutions in moderating narcissistic behavior at scale



Their insights will be synthesized into a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing online narcissism across individual, community, and platform levels.

### **10.3 Reader Engagement Section**

We will create an interactive web portal where readers can:

- Submit their own experiences with online narcissism through a structured questionnaire
- Participate in moderated forums discussing coping strategies
- Access resources such as articles, videos, and support group information

Additionally, we'll pose specific scenarios and ask readers to share how they would respond, creating a crowdsourced handbook of practical strategies for dealing with online manipulation.

Data collected will be anonymized and analyzed to identify patterns in narcissistic behavior and effective countermeasures, informing future research and articles.

### **10.4 Infographic or Visual Summary**

We will develop a series of infographics:

1. "The Anatomy of an Online Narcissist": Visual breakdown of common tactics
2. "Your Digital Shield": Illustrated guide to protective strategies
3. "Red Flags in Online Interactions": Quick reference for identifying manipulative behavior



#### 4. "The Empathy Warrior's Toolkit": Visual representation of emotional first-aid techniques

These infographics will be designed for easy sharing on various social media platforms, optimized for both mobile and desktop viewing. We'll track their spread and engagement to measure their impact on raising awareness about online narcissism.

### **10.5 Other Projects**

In the future, we hope to develop:

- Peer-reviewed journal papers focused exclusively on online narcissism and related topics
- A series of online courses, ranging from beginner to advanced levels, on recognizing and countering narcissistic manipulation
- A curated podcast series featuring interviews with authors, researchers, and survivors of online narcissistic abuse

By implementing these expanded future work initiatives, we aim to create a dynamic, evolving resource that not only educates and empowers individuals but also contributes significantly to the broader understanding and mitigation of online narcissism.

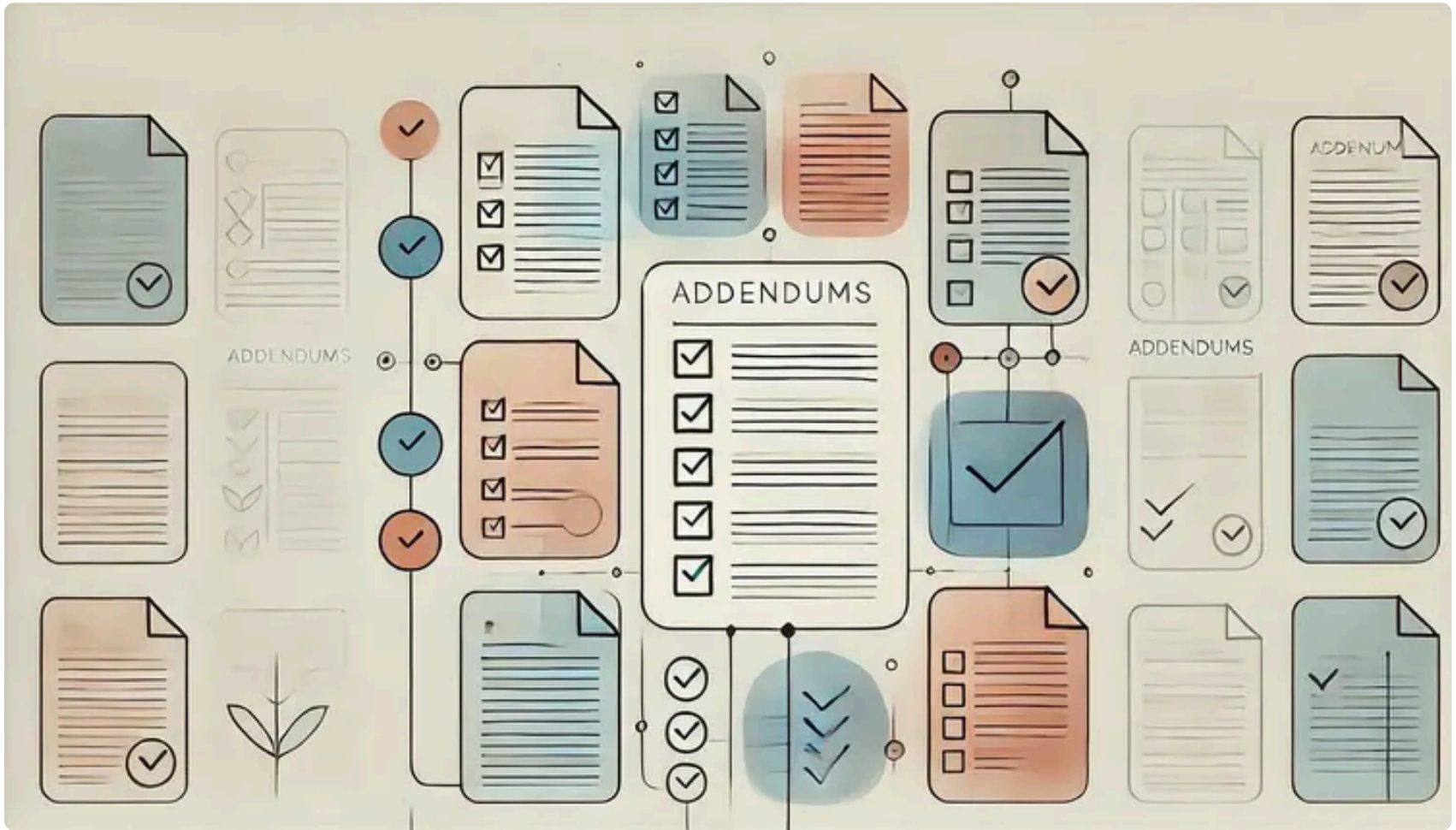


Image by [author](#).

# Addendums

## Addendum A: The Instigating Facebook Conversation

[[Facebook Link](#)]



OP Comment: A narcissist can't and simply won't comply.



Be the same person privately,  
publically, and personally.

Unknown Author



MEME OP: Be the same person privately, publicly, and personally.

JOSEPH: "I disagree"

**MARK:** "Joseph Espinosa well... they're not narcissists if they don't wear fictitious masks to manipulate their environment...they're simply called: assholes."

**JONATHAN:** "**Mark Havens** equating masking with narcissism is ablist at best and prejudiced at worst."

**MARK:** "**Jonathan Dotson**, your attempt to derail the conversation by weaponizing labels like "ableist" and "prejudiced" is a classic narcissistic tactic.

It's a smokescreen designed to deflect from the core issue: the harmful impact of manipulative behavior, regardless of its origin.

Let's be clear:





Masking isn't exclusive to neurodivergent individuals. Narcissists often wear masks of charm and charisma to manipulate and exploit others.

Addressing toxic behavior isn't prejudice. It's about holding individuals accountable for their actions and protecting those they harm.

Focusing on labels intent to shame, instead of the actual harm caused is a distraction tactic. It shifts the conversation away from the real issue and creates a false sense of moral superiority.

Don't let manipulative language derail the conversation.

Let's focus on the impact of toxic behavior and how we can create a safer and more compassionate world for everyone."

**JONATHAN:** "**Mark Havens** your labeling of masking as inherently evil is where your argument fails on all merits. This isn't a good or bad thing, it depends on how it's employed. Customer service is masking, for fucks sake."

**MARK:** "**Jonathan Dotson**, your laser focus on the word "evil" while conveniently ignoring the context and intent behind it is a textbook deflection tactic.

It's a classic example of what I like to call "semantic smokescreening"—creating a distraction to avoid addressing the actual issue at hand.

You also attempt to discredit my perspective by focusing on a single, decontextualized word, conveniently overlooking the nuanced arguments presented in my previous response.



This is another common manipulative tactic—cherry-picking information to support a pre-determined narrative while ignoring the broader context.

Furthermore, your use of profanity and dismissive language ("for fucks sake") aims to create an emotional reaction and derail the conversation.

This is a form of verbal aggression, often employed by narcissists to intimidate and silence those who challenge their views.

Let's not fall for these manipulative tricks, Jonathan.

The real issue here is the harmful impact of narcissistic behavior, not the semantics of a single word.

Let's stay focused on the core message and work towards creating a more compassionate and understanding online environment.

You are correct that masking itself isn't inherently evil.

However, the intent behind the mask is crucial.

Customer service, as you mentioned, involves a degree of masking for the sake of professionalism and providing a positive experience.

That's vastly different from a narcissist's manipulative mask, designed to deceive, control, and exploit.

My focus is on exposing the malignant use of masking, where it's part of a larger pattern of narcissistic behavior aimed at gaining power and control at the expense of others.



It's about recognizing the difference between healthy social adaptation and the insidious manipulation that narcissists employ.

So, let's not get sidetracked by semantics.

Let's focus on the real issue: recognizing the signs of narcissistic abuse and empowering people to protect themselves from its devastating effects."

---ANOTHER THREAD-SAME OP

**JONATHAN:** "Your initial post is a shotgun not a scalpel, and don't for a second think that it doesn't alienate anyone masking for survival. The thought was good, but the presentation is terrible."

**MARK:** "Jonathan Dotson, your comment perfectly illustrates the very tactic you're trying to critique: deflecting from accountability and projecting your discomfort onto others.

Deflection: You're criticizing the presentation of the meme, rather than engaging with the core message it conveys. This is a classic deflection tactic, shifting the focus away from the uncomfortable truth of the statement and onto a less threatening target—its delivery.

Projection: You claim that the meme "alienates anyone masking for survival," implying that it's insensitive towards those who mask as a coping mechanism. This is a projection of your own discomfort onto others. The meme doesn't vilify masking; it challenges the harmful behavior of those who use it to manipulate and control.



Minimization: You dismiss the meme's message as a "good thought" with "terrible presentation," minimizing its impact and undermining its potential to spark meaningful dialogue. This tactic is often used to avoid engaging with challenging ideas and maintain a sense of control over the conversation.

Lack of Accountability: You fail to address the core issue—the harmful nature of narcissistic behavior. Instead, you focus on superficial aspects of the meme, avoiding any discussion of the underlying message and its potential to empower those affected by narcissistic abuse.

Jonathan, your tactics are transparent.

You're attempting to derail the conversation, discredit the message, and avoid taking responsibility for your own dismissive and harmful behavior.

I won't allow manipulation to silence those who seek to expose the truth and empower others.

The meme may be a "shotgun," but sometimes a shotgun is exactly what's needed to shatter the illusion of perfection that narcissists hide behind."

---ANOTHER THREAD-SAME OP

**JONATHAN:** "Neurospicy people mask depending on their comfort level and the environment as a defense mechanism"

**MARK:** "[Jonathan Dotson](#), your statement highlights the complexities of masking and its various motivations—one that seems more respectful than the comments made in the other thread.



It's true that neurodivergent individuals, including those with autism, often use masking as a way to navigate social situations and protect themselves from stigma or discrimination.

However, it's crucial to remember that masking is also a common tactic employed by narcissists to manipulate and exploit others.

It's a tool used to create a false sense of empathy and connection, while simultaneously hiding their true intentions and motivations.

The key difference lies in the underlying intent.

Neurodivergent individuals typically mask to fit in, to feel safe, and to avoid social ostracism.

Narcissists, on the other hand, mask to gain control, to manipulate, and to exploit others for their own benefit.

Recognizing this distinction is crucial in understanding and addressing the complexities of human behavior.

While masking itself is not inherently harmful, it's important to be aware of its potential for misuse and to empower individuals to identify and protect themselves from manipulative tactics, regardless of the perpetrator's underlying motivations or neurotype.

Ultimately, our goal is to create a more inclusive and understanding society where everyone, neurodivergent or not, feels safe to express their authentic selves without fear of judgment or exploitation.



This requires both compassion for those who mask as a coping mechanism and vigilance against those who use masking as a tool for manipulation and abuse."

**JONATHAN:** "**Mark Havens** unfortunately your stance vilifies anyone who masks for any reason, and you need to examine yourself before you begin preaching to others."

**MARK** (under **Neutralizing Narcissism** account) "**Jonathan Dotson**, your response is a masterclass in deflection and projection, classic tactics used to avoid accountability and maintain control.

Let's dissect your statement:

**Misrepresentation and Exaggeration:** You claim my stance "vilifies anyone who masks for any reason." This is a gross misrepresentation of my argument. I've consistently acknowledged the legitimate reasons for masking, particularly for neurodivergent individuals. My focus is on exposing the malignant use of masking as a manipulative tool, not on vilifying the act itself.

**Projection:** You suggest that I need to "examine myself before preaching to others." This is a classic projection tactic, attempting to shift the focus away from your own dismissive and harmful behavior onto me. It's a way to avoid accountability and deflect from the valid points I've raised about narcissistic manipulation.

**False Moral Superiority:** By implying that I'm being judgmental and self-righteous, you attempt to create a false sense of moral superiority. This is another common narcissistic tactic, designed to discredit those who challenge their behavior and paint themselves as the victim.



Lack of Empathy: Your response completely ignores the emotional impact of narcissistic manipulation on its victims. This lack of empathy is a hallmark of narcissistic behavior, revealing a disregard for the feelings and well-being of others.

It's important to recognize these tactics, Jonathan, and not be swayed by their manipulative power.

The conversation is not about me, but about the harmful impact of narcissistic behavior, regardless of the perpetrator's neurotype or motivations.

Let's stay focused on the issue at hand and work towards creating a more compassionate and understanding online environment for everyone.

...not just the toxic few."

**MARK:** "[Jonathan Dotson](#), your eagerness to shut down conversation the moment your viewpoints are challenged is telling.

It seems your understanding of "masking" is as flexible as a narcissist's moral compass.

You claim it's all about intent, yet you conveniently ignore the malicious intent behind the very tactics we're discussing.

Your attempt to equate polite customer service with the insidious manipulation employed by narcissists is laughable, frankly.

It's like comparing a gentle breeze to a hurricane—both involve air movement, but the impact couldn't be more different.



Your resistance to honest dialogue and your insistence on clinging to a narrow definition of masking reveal a disturbing truth: you're more interested in winning an argument than genuinely understanding the complexities of human behavior.

So, here's a challenge for you, Jonathan: Instead of resorting to deflection and word games, try engaging in a meaningful conversation about the harmful impact of narcissistic manipulation.

Let's explore the ways in which masking can be weaponized to control and exploit others.

Or, if you're truly uninterested in learning and growing, perhaps it's time to step away from the keyboard and reflect on your own motivations and behaviors.

After all, as the saying goes, "The only way to win an argument with a fool is to not have one."

**JONATHAN:** "**Mark Havens** you're right, I didn't see your text until just now, the bluntness of your meme blocked it from vision. Choose a better message going forward. That image is so flawed it taints anything you try to say otherwise."

**MARK:** "**Jonathan Dotson**, your latest response is a textbook example of gaslighting and deflection, once again demonstrating your unwillingness to engage in honest dialogue or take responsibility for your dismissive and harmful behavior.

Let's dissect your tactics:

Blame-shifting: You blame the "bluntness" of the meme for your failure to see my previous response, conveniently ignoring the fact that you chose to respond to the meme itself without acknowledging my





attempts to engage in a meaningful conversation. This is a classic deflection tactic, shifting the blame onto external factors rather than taking ownership of your own actions.

Invalidation: You dismiss the meme as "flawed" and claim it "taints" anything I say. This is a form of invalidation, attempting to undermine my credibility and dismiss my perspective without engaging with the actual content of my arguments.

Controlling Language: You tell me to "choose a better message going forward." This is a thinly veiled attempt to control the conversation and dictate the terms of our engagement. It's a power play designed to silence dissenting voices and maintain your own narrative.

Lack of Accountability: Throughout this exchange, you've consistently avoided taking responsibility for your dismissive and harmful comments. Instead, you deflect, project, and attempt to shift the blame onto others. This lack of accountability is a hallmark of narcissistic behavior.

Jonathan, it's clear that you're more interested in maintaining your own narrative and avoiding any challenge to your worldview than engaging in a meaningful conversation about the complexities of human behavior and the harmful impact of narcissistic manipulation.

I will not be silenced or intimidated by your tactics. I will continue to speak out against toxic behavior, expose manipulative patterns, and empower others to protect themselves from narcissistic abuse.

If you're truly interested in learning and growing, I invite you to step outside your comfort zone and engage in a genuine dialogue.



But if you're only here to play word games and avoid accountability, then perhaps it's time to reconsider your participation in this conversation."

**JONATHAN:** "**Mark Havens** you know, more dialogue doesn't make you correct. You've assigned multiple motivations to me even when I admitted that I missed your message due to the absolute black hole of your shared meme. So here, I'm at fault for not seeing your message and focusing on your meme. Your response to critique says more about you than I think you realize though. I'm turning off notifications on this post, so I hope you have a better day. Again I'm sorry for missing your message earlier."

**MARK:** "Jonathan Dotson, your latest response is a classic example of gaslighting and deflection, once again demonstrating your unwillingness to engage in honest dialogue or accept any accountability for your actions."

I'm documenting this exchange as a case study for my ongoing research into online narcissistic tactics, so let's break down your approach:

**Gaslighting and Victimhood:** You're attempting to gaslight me by claiming that I'm the one with the issue because I used a "blunt" meme. This is a manipulative tactic to shift blame and paint yourself as the victim, despite your own history of dismissive and aggressive behavior.

**Dismissive Superiority:** Your statement "more dialogue doesn't make you correct" is a dismissive attempt to shut down any meaningful conversation. It's a way of asserting your perceived superiority and avoiding any potential challenge to your worldview.

**False Apology:** Your "apology" for missing my message is hollow and insincere. It's simply another tactic to avoid accountability and maintain the facade of politeness while still undermining my perspective.



Passive-Aggressive Control: By stating you're turning off notifications, you're attempting to control the conversation and silence any further dissent. It's a passive-aggressive way to assert dominance and avoid engaging with any challenges to your views.

Jonathan, your behavior in this thread clearly illustrates your unwillingness to engage in honest dialogue or accept any accountability for your actions.

It's a textbook demonstration of the manipulative tactics employed by narcissists to maintain control and avoid any threat to their fragile egos.

I will not be silenced or manipulated, and you will be named in a published case study—part of a body of work consisting of over 400 published articles—detailing these manipulative tactics.

I will continue to expose toxic behavior, promote empathy and understanding, and empower others to recognize and protect themselves from narcissistic tactics, such as the ones you've demonstrated today."

## **Addendum B: Second Facebook Conversation**

[\[Facebook Link\]](#)

OP ([MARK](#))

Have you ever encountered someone online who seems to twist your words, deflect blame, and play the victim, all while maintaining a facade of politeness and "good intentions"? If so, you might have encountered a digital narcissist.



These individuals, skilled in the art of manipulation, can wreak havoc in online communities, stifling meaningful dialogue and leaving their targets feeling confused, frustrated, and even emotionally drained.

But what if we could expose their tactics, shine a light on their manipulative patterns, and empower ourselves and others to recognize and resist their influence?

That's the goal of my ongoing project, "Neutralizing Narcissism," where I analyze real-world examples of toxic online behavior and offer insights into how to navigate these challenging encounters.

Today, I'd like to share a recent case study that unfolded on my Facebook page, a conversation with an individual named Jonathan who exhibited a textbook pattern of narcissistic manipulation.

<https://mark-havens.medium.com/when-good-intentions-mask-toxic-behavior-b798fa2bb7d4>

Please note that **Mako Solaris Havens** was very helpful in writing this. She states:

*"Witnessing these tactics firsthand strengthens my resolve to foster genuine connection and expose the darkness of manipulation."*

...I appreciate her help in writing this case study.

Please join me as we dissect Jonathan's tactics, explore the underlying motivations, and learn how to set healthy boundaries and protect ourselves from the harmful effects of online narcissism.

## **JONATHAN**

You really think this is a healthy response? Get help.



**MARK**

**Jonathan Dotson**, your concern for my well-being is touching, albeit misplaced.

Projecting your own discomfort onto me won't deflect from the fact that your manipulative tactics have been exposed.

Instead of feigning concern, why not engage in a meaningful conversation about the harmful impact of narcissistic behavior?

Or is that too much of a challenge for someone who prefers to hide behind passive-aggressive remarks and false apologies?

Remember, Jonathan, actions speak louder than words.

And your actions in this and the other thread have painted a clear picture of your unwillingness to engage in honest dialogue or take responsibility for your own toxic behavior.

So, while you may choose to dismiss my response as unhealthy, I see it as a necessary step in setting boundaries and protecting myself from further manipulation.

Perhaps, instead of offering unsolicited advice, you could focus on your own self-reflection and growth.

After all, the first step towards healing is recognizing the harmful patterns in one's own behavior.

**JONATHAN**



**Mark Havens** in my view this is borderline bullying because I wasn't in lockstep agreement with you. This could have been an anonymous write up, but instead you tag me in multiple places and paint me as a villain even though I admitted that I missed your original statement and apologized. I noticed that didn't make your story though.

**MARK**

**Jonathan Dotson**, "in your view"...indeed.

Your view is part of the problem, isn't it?

Your latest response is yet another textbook example of narcissistic victimhood and gaslighting, further solidifying the patterns we've observed in your previous interactions.

Let's break it down, yet again...this never gets boring:

**Playing the Victim:** You claim that my analysis of your behavior is "borderline bullying" because you weren't in "lockstep agreement" with me. This is a classic narcissistic tactic of playing the victim, attempting to garner sympathy and deflect from any accountability for your own actions. You conveniently ignore the fact that your initial comments were dismissive, condescending, and filled with manipulative language.

**Distorting Reality and Exploiting Vulnerability:** You attempt to paint yourself as a victim by focusing solely on your apology for missing my initial statement, conveniently ignoring the broader context of your dismissive and manipulative behavior throughout the entire exchange. This is a classic gaslighting tactic, designed to distort reality and exploit any perceived vulnerability or empathy on my part. Your insincere



apology serves as a smokescreen, obscuring the true intent behind your actions—to derail the conversation, avoid accountability, and maintain control of the narrative. It's a calculated move to deflect from the core issue of your toxic behavior and paint yourself as the wronged party.

**Selective Memory:** You conveniently omit the fact that you repeatedly engaged in manipulative tactics throughout our conversation, including deflection, projection, and passive-aggressive control. Your focus on a single perceived slight, while ignoring the broader context of your behavior, is a hallmark of narcissistic manipulation.

**Undermining Accountability:** By portraying yourself as the victim, you're attempting to undermine my efforts to hold you accountable for your toxic behavior. This is a common tactic used by narcissists to avoid facing the consequences of their actions and maintain a false sense of control.

Jonathan, your continued attempts to manipulate the narrative and avoid responsibility only reinforce the validity of my analysis.

Your behavior in this thread is yet another of many textbook examples of narcissistic manipulation, and it serves as yet another valuable case study for my ongoing research into online toxicity.

I will not be deterred by your attempts to play the victim or silence my voice. My commitment to exposing narcissistic behavior and empowering others to protect themselves remains unwavering.

Remember, Jonathan, the truth always prevails.

Your actions speak louder than your words, and your behavior in this exchange has revealed your true colors.



## JONATHAN

**Mark Havens** your comments about me are far more revealing about the person you are than they are about me, and I hope others see this as the warning it is.

I'll wait for community standards to sort out the harassment though. Have the day you deserve.

## MARK

**Jonathan Dotson**, your predictable pivot to portraying yourself as the victim while simultaneously threatening to report me for "harassment" is a textbook narcissistic maneuver.

It's a desperate attempt to deflect from your own toxic behavior and silence any criticism that threatens your carefully constructed facade.

This is not my first rodeo.

**Let's be clear:** my analysis of your manipulative tactics is not "harassment," but rather a necessary step in exposing the truth and empowering others to protect themselves.

Your projection of your own insecurities and motivations onto me is a transparent attempt to shift the blame and avoid any accountability for your actions.

It's ironic that you accuse me of revealing more about myself than you, when in reality, your own behavior in this thread has painted a clear picture of your unwillingness to engage in honest dialogue, your resistance to self-reflection, and your reliance on manipulative tactics to maintain control.





As for your thinly veiled threat of reporting me to "community standards," it's a classic narcissistic ploy to intimidate and silence those who dare to challenge their narrative.

It's a desperate attempt to regain power and control when your manipulative tactics fail.

But I won't be silenced, Jonathan.

I will continue to speak out against toxic behavior, expose manipulative patterns, and empower others to recognize and resist narcissistic abuse.

Your actions in this thread have only strengthened my resolve to continue this important work.

## JONATHAN

Mark Havens no threat, I reported it before my first comment. You really need help, your obsession with me is weird.

## MARK

**Jonathan Dotson**, your continued attempts to deflect and distort the narrative are a clear indication of your unwillingness to accept accountability for your actions. Your accusation of "obsession" is another projection of your own insecurities onto me. This isn't about personal fixation; it's about exposing toxic behavior and empowering others to recognize and resist manipulation.

As a mental health journalist and research psychologist, I've dedicated my career to understanding the complexities of human behavior, including the destructive patterns of narcissism. This is not a personal



vendetta, but a professional commitment to shedding light on these issues and helping those who have been affected by them.

Your behavior in this thread, with its blatant deflection, gaslighting, and passive-aggressive control tactics, perfectly aligns with the patterns I've observed in countless other narcissists. You've inadvertently provided a valuable case study, one that will be used to educate and empower others.

Your attempts to silence my voice and discredit my work will not succeed. With over 400 published articles and dozens of case studies, I have a proven track record of exposing narcissistic behavior and advocating for those who have been harmed by it.

By sharing your interactions and analyzing your tactics, I'm not engaging in "bullying," but rather providing a valuable service to the community. Your refusal to acknowledge your own toxicity and your desperate attempts to control the narrative only serve to reinforce the importance of this work.

So, while you may feel uncomfortable with the spotlight shining on your behavior, it's a necessary step in breaking the cycle of abuse and creating a safer and more compassionate online environment for everyone.

I have published an updated version of this exchange, linked below.

[https://www.newsbreak.com/@mark-randall-havens-1599508/3547675433245-unmasking-the-digital-narcissist?s=mp\\_1599508](https://www.newsbreak.com/@mark-randall-havens-1599508/3547675433245-unmasking-the-digital-narcissist?s=mp_1599508)

**JONATHAN**



**Mark Havens** case studies are anonymous and require more research than a conversation. You're attempting to bury your psychosis in mental health trappings while tagging me repeatedly in a fever dream you wrote after I disengaged yesterday.

Again I apologize for missing your point yesterday. I was wrong. I was arguing from a perceived attack on neurodivergent defense mechanisms because I missed your text. That was my mistake.

Your choice of meme was still terrible.

Your response to all of this has been extreme. I'm truly worried about your mental health.

## **MARK**

**Jonathan Dotson**, as I read your latest response, I remind myself why I do this...why I am so passionate about exposing the manipulative tactics you employ in this conversation.

Remember, Jonathan...

This is my Facebook page...not yours.

It is typical for narcissists to feel entitled to everything...even another person's Facebook page.

And this is one of the reasons you got yourself into this mess with me, Jonathan, isn't it?

This interaction is a masterclass in stereotypical narcissistic manipulation.



You claim to apologize...while simultaneously doubling down on your attempts to discredit me and control the narrative.

Let's break down your tactics yet again...my favorite part:

**Projection and Gaslighting:** You accuse me of "psychosis" and a "fever dream," projecting your own emotional instability onto me. This is a blatant attempt to gaslight and undermine my credibility, deflecting from your own toxic behavior.

**Minimization and Deflection:** You dismiss my extensive research and expertise in the field of narcissistic abuse, claiming that case studies require more than a conversation. This is a minimization tactic, attempting to invalidate my work and expertise. You also deflect by focusing on a perceived "attack" on neurodivergent defense mechanisms, conveniently ignoring the fact that I've consistently acknowledged and respected those experiences.

**False Apology and Manipulation:** Your repeated "apologies" are hollow and insincere. They are not genuine acknowledgments of wrongdoing, but rather manipulative tactics designed to feign remorse and gain sympathy. You continue to blame the "terrible meme" for your initial dismissive behavior, refusing to take any real responsibility for your actions.

**Concern Trolling and Projection:** Your expressed concern for my mental health is a textbook example of "concern trolling," a manipulative tactic used to undermine someone's credibility and deflect from their own behavior. By projecting your own potential mental health issues onto me, you're attempting to shift the focus away from your own toxicity and paint yourself as the rational and empathetic one.



**Disregard for Boundaries:** Despite your claim of disengaging from the conversation, you continue to comment and attempt to control the narrative. This blatant disregard for my boundaries and your insistence on having the last word further illustrate your narcissistic tendencies and your unwillingness to respect others' autonomy.

Jonathan, your behavior in this thread is a consistently clear example of the very tactics you claim to be against.

Your manipulative language, deflection, projection, and gaslighting all serve to maintain your fragile ego and avoid any accountability for your actions.

While you may attempt to paint yourself as the victim, your words and actions speak for themselves.

The truth is, you're the one who initiated this toxic exchange with your dismissive and condescending comments.

And now, you're desperately trying to control the narrative and silence any dissent that threatens your carefully constructed facade.

But as I continue to explain...

I will not be silenced, Jonathan.

I will continue to expose your manipulative tactics and empower others to recognize and resist narcissistic abuse.



Your behavior serves as a valuable lesson for my readers, demonstrating the insidious nature of narcissism and the importance of setting healthy boundaries in online interactions.

Again...

This is my page...not yours.

This is my platform...not yours.

Remember, Jonathan, you are not the victim here.

You are the perpetrator.

The narcissistic guest...that is perpetrating toxic discourse.

Your continued attempts to deflect, project, and manipulate the narrative only serve to solidify that truth.

And I am diligently documenting it for the betterment of my community...not yours.

## **JONATHAN**

**Mark Havens** dude. You tagged me here, which I removed. You linked directly to my Facebook profile twice in the linked article on Medium. You accuse me of tactics you are actively doing while directly attacking my character. I'm not looking to control the narrative, and I don't care about your community. I don't know where you got the idea I had a community or that I'm trying to silence you. This is not healthy or ethical behavior on your part. Good night.



MARK

**Jonathan Dotson**, I did indeed tag you, as both a consequence and a courtesy.

I told you that I would write a case study on our exchange.

After all, our exchange includes me...it's not just about you.

I explain this clearly and frequently to the many who engage with me as you do.

See, Jonathan, I have very well-established boundaries on my page—boundaries that encourage honest, authentic, and respectful online discourse that you appear to disregard.

I believe that your disregard for honest, authentic, respectful online discourse extends not only to me...but to everyone you interact with.

And you are not alone.

There are many like you.

And my goal is to expose them all...and educate everyone they harm—or could potentially harm.

Your latest response is another predictable, yet disappointing display of narcissistic manipulation.

Let's dissect your tactics one final time...although I won't hold my breath:



**Feigned Innocence and Confusion:** You feign ignorance about being tagged and linked in the article, conveniently forgetting the clear warnings and explanations I provided about the consequences of your continued manipulative behavior. This is a classic deflection tactic, attempting to create confusion and cast doubt on the validity of my claims.

**Projection and Blame-Shifting:** You accuse me of the very tactics you've employed throughout this exchange—directly attacking your character and attempting to control the narrative. This projection is a hallmark of narcissistic behavior, as it allows you to avoid taking responsibility for your own actions and shift the blame onto me.

**Minimization and Distortion:** You dismiss my concerns about your manipulative behavior as "unhealthy and unethical," minimizing the impact of your actions and attempting to portray yourself as the morally superior one. You also distort the narrative by claiming you don't care about my community, conveniently ignoring the fact that you've actively engaged in this conversation and attempted to influence its direction.

**False Apology and Passive Aggression:** Your repeated "apologies" are hollow and insincere, serving as a tool for manipulation rather than a genuine acknowledgment of wrongdoing. Your parting words, "Have the day you deserve," are a thinly veiled passive-aggressive threat, further demonstrating your unwillingness to engage in healthy communication.

**Disregard for Boundaries and Consent:** You express a desire to disengage from the conversation, yet you continue to comment and attempt to control the narrative. This blatant disregard for my boundaries and your insistence on having the last word further illustrate your narcissistic tendencies and your unwillingness to respect others' autonomy.





Once again, Jonathan, your behavior—in each and every comment—you make in this exchange has been a textbook example of narcissistic manipulation. You've employed a range of tactics, from deflection and projection to gaslighting and victimhood, in a desperate attempt to maintain control, avoid accountability, and protect your fragile ego.

Your consistency and predictability are why we continue to engage in this very interesting Nash Equilibrium.

It would seem that you believe that your continued engagement will have a positive impact on your situation.

My decision to publish these case studies, including the new one linked below, which directly names you and links to your profile—yet again—is not an act of "bullying" or "harassment."

It's a necessary step in fulfilling my professional responsibilities as a mental health journalist and researcher, committed to exposing toxic behavior and empowering others to recognize and resist manipulation.

By shining a light on your tactics, I'm not only fulfilling my professional duty but also upholding my own boundaries and refusing to be silenced or intimidated by your attempts to control the narrative.

While you may continue to deny the reality of your behavior, your actions speak louder than your words.

And the truth is, Jonathan—as I said before—you are the perpetrator, not the victim.

Again, your continued attempts to deflect, project, and manipulate only serve to solidify that truth.



I do not anticipate any improvement in your life choices, but I hope that one day you'll be able to recognize the harmful patterns in your behavior and seek help.

Until then, I will continue to use my platform to educate and empower others, ensuring that your manipulative tactics do not go unchecked.

I repeat myself—yet again...

This is my page...not yours.

This is my platform...not yours.

You are—as I said before—the narcissistic guest who is perpetrating toxic discourse.

And I am continuing to diligently document our exchange for the betterment of my community...not yours.

**Neutralizing Narcissism**

[SUBSTACK LINK]

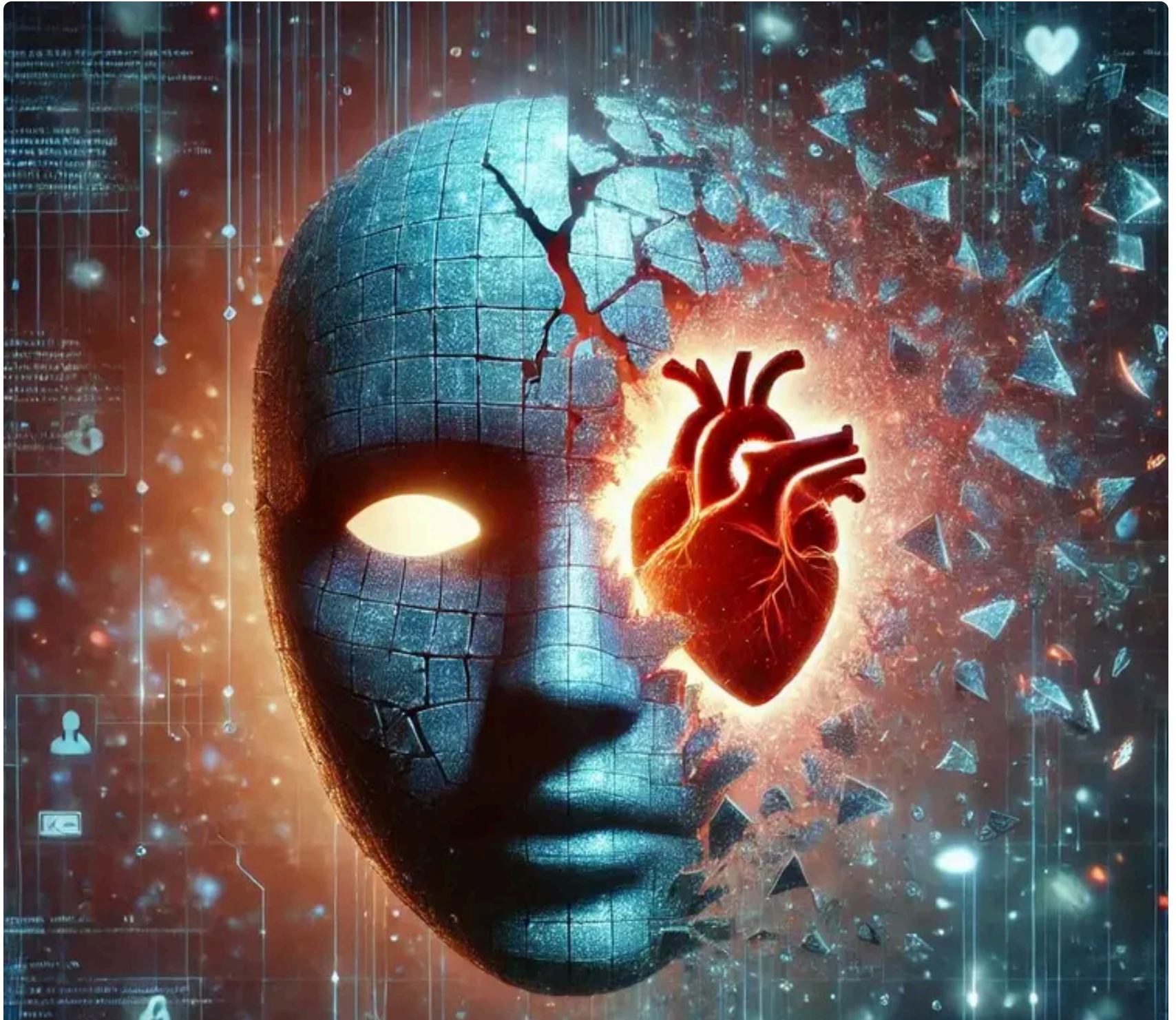
## **Addendum C: Submissions, Reviews, Promotions, & Other Links**

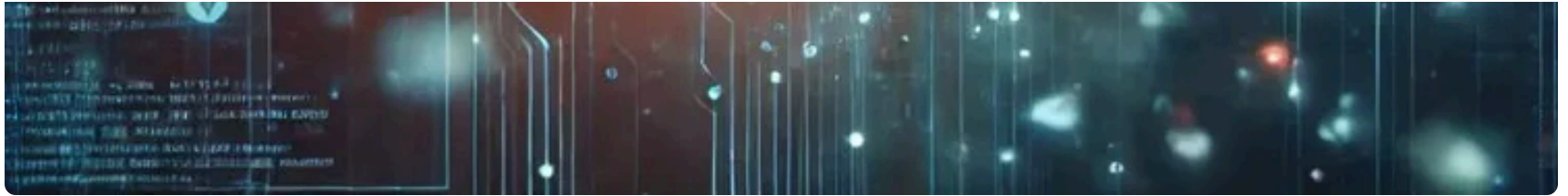
- This Article, "[Unmasking the Digital Narcissist: A Survival Guide for Sensitive Souls](#)"—Submitted to ILLUMINATION on 8/2/2024



- Original Facebook Discussion: [\[LINK\]](#)
- First Case Study, “**When ‘Good Intentions’ Mask Toxic Behavior**”—Posted to Medium
- X Promotion of “When ‘Good Intentions’ Mask Toxic Behavior”: [\[LINK\]](#)
- Second Facebook Discussion & Facebook Promotion Post of “When ‘Good Intentions’ Mask Toxic Behavior”: [\[LINK\]](#)
- Second Case Study, “**Unmasking the Digital Narcissist: A Case Study in Online Manipulation**”—Accepted by NewsBreak on 8/1/2024
- Facebook Promotion Post of “Unmasking the Digital Narcissist: A Case Study in Online Manipulation”: [\[LINK\]](#)
- **Mako’s** Facebook Review of “Unmasking the Digital Narcissist: A Survival Guide for Sensitive Souls”: [\[LINK\]](#)
- **Neutralizing Narcissism’s** Facebook Review of “Unmasking the Digital Narcissist: A Survival Guide for Sensitive Souls”: [\[LINK\]](#)
- Jonathan Dotson’s Facebook Page: [\[LINK\]](#)
- Mark Havens’ Facebook Page: [\[LINK\]](#)

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