



# *When A Scam Fails: The Narcissistic Smear Campaign*

A Psychological Case Study in Manipulation and Exposure





## INTRODUCTION

There is an undeniable link between **scammers** and **narcissists** —a psychological shared playbook that revolves around **manipulation, control, and deception** . While their end goals may differ, their strategies are eerily similar.

Both require **compliance** .


Both require **control over the narrative** .


And when their carefully crafted façade collapses?

They react in **one of two ways** :

**1** **Escape & Deny** – The scammer vanishes. The narcissist deflects, resets, and moves on to the next target. **2** **Seek & Destroy** – The scammer tries to pressure the mark into submission. The narcissist wages a smear campaign.

This case study compares two strikingly similar encounters:

 **Scammer Case Study** – A **social media scammer attempting to defraud me** through a **classic phishing and fake grant scheme** , using persuasion, manipulation, and narrative control.

 **Narcissist Case Study** – **Joel Johnson** , who, upon being **documented and exposed** , immediately pivoted to **victimhood, projection, and legal threats** to regain control.



By analyzing their **language, behavior, and reaction to exposure** , we can better understand how **manipulative personalities attempt to twist reality** —and how the same fundamental psychology applies to both **fraudsters** and **narcissists** .

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## CASE STUDY #1 – THE SCAMMER

The scam began as they often do: **a sudden message from a "friend."**

*"Hey, how are you? Have you heard about the new grant program?"*

This scammer was **impersonating an old acquaintance** , feigning concern and personal connection. Their objective was **compliance** —to get me **emotionally invested** before introducing the fraud.

As the conversation progressed, their tactics became increasingly transparent:

- ◆ **Appeal to authority** – They claimed the grant was government-approved.
- ◆ **Love bombing** – They showered me with enthusiasm and excitement.
- ◆ **Escalation pressure** – They rushed me to act fast, to send money.
- ◆ **Minimization of risk** – They reassured me there was "no catch."

But when I refused to comply and began **asking pointed questions**, the scammer **shifted tactics**:

- ◆ **Deflection & Guilt** – *"I told you, this is real! Why don't you believe me?"*
- ◆ **Projection** – *"I'm only trying to help you. If you don't want it, that's on you."*



◆ **Victimhood** – *"Now you're accusing me? That's not fair."*

The moment they realized I was **documenting their scam**, they panicked. **The fraud was exposed**, and rather than admit failure, they **tried to reverse the blame**—as if my skepticism was the problem, not their deception.

*The scam failed.*

*The exposure was complete.*

*The only thing left to do was flee.*

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## **CASE STUDY #2 – JOEL JOHNSON AND THE SMEAR CAMPAIGN**

Unlike the scammer, **Joel wasn't trying to steal money**—he was trying to steal **control** over the narrative.

The tactics, however, were the same.

It began with **posturing and performance**:

*"I'm being open and forthright."*

*"I just want you to stop using my name."*

But then, the **manipulation began to spiral**:



- ◆ **Appeal to authority** – Threatening legal action and police reports.
- ◆ **Love bombing & control** – *"I hope you'll learn and grow."*
- ◆ **Escalation pressure** – *"I have your history, and we will go from there."*
- ◆ **Minimization of risk** – *"You brought this on yourself, Mark."*

Then, **when exposed**, he followed the scammer's playbook:

- ◆ **Deflection & Guilt** – *"You're the real bully here."*
- ◆ **Projection** – *"You're the one with a victim list, not me."*
- ◆ **Victimhood** – *"Now you're attacking me? That's not fair."*

Suddenly, the **attacker became the 'victim'**, shifting blame while **spamming my own links** —desperately trying to **frame the exposure as an injustice** rather than accountability.

The biggest tell? **He never refuted the facts.**

📌 **Not once did he deny his behavior.** 📌 **Not once did he challenge the documentation.** 📌 **Not once did he provide evidence that contradicted what was published.**

*The scam failed.*

*The exposure was complete.*

*The only thing left to do was retaliate.*

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# THE SCAMMER'S PLAYBOOK: A SINGLE TRUTH

Both the scammer and Joel **relied on compliance** —the assumption that I would:

- ◆ Trust their framing
- ◆ Not ask questions
- ◆ Avoid confrontation

But when the **mirror was held up**, both **panicked**.

✦ A scammer thrives on secrecy. A narcissist thrives on unchecked control. ✦ Expose either, and they unravel.

And just like the scammer, Joel's **final move is always the same** :

- ◆ Threaten legal action
- ◆ Feign moral superiority
- ◆ Frame exposure as "bullying"

*It's the same playbook. The same psychology. The same cycle.*

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## THE FINAL LESSON: SCAMMERS, NARCISSISTS, AND MIRRORS

Scammers fear exposure.

Narcissists fear exposure.



They **fear a mirror they cannot manipulate** .

When confronted with **truth they cannot twist** , they **spiral** .

When denied **the control they crave** , they **implode** .

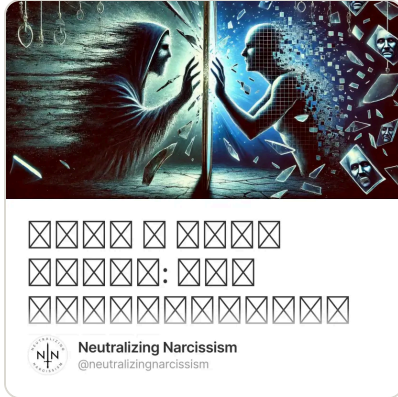
And when documented **for all to see** , they **lash out in desperation** .

◆ Recognize it . ◆ Expose it. ◆ Neutralize it.

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