

Empowered Empaths: What Happens After No Contact with a Narcissist?

Posted 10/21/2016

Intro Music and Voiceover

KRISTIN: *Welcome to Mental Health News Radio, your source for information about mental health providers and the work they do in the world, the organizations that support their work, volunteers, and mental health consumers. This show is brought to you by ZenCharts.com, the intelligent EHR for addiction treatment providers; and also EverythingEHR, devoted to helping organizations find the best electronic health records software in behavioral health. Thank you for joining us.*

KRISTIN: Thanks, everyone, for joining us on Mental Health News Radio. I'm here with counselors Melanie Vann and Melissa Richards. This is Kristin Walker. Tonight on our Empowered Empaths series we're talking about a couple of different things. One is about something that has been around a while, but it seems to be picking up steam again. It is addiction, which is being called a brain disorder rather than a character or behavioral disorder. This is not new information, but we're going to try to tie that into narcissism, because narcissism is defined as a character/behavioral disorder. Then we are also going to talk about more brain stuff that has to do with an NPR piece that came out saying, "Volunteers described women showing emotions as neurotic, unstable and untrustworthy, whereas men were just having a bad day." Let's start with the brain addiction piece. Melanie, I know you had some interesting points on that. If you want to start that would be fabulous.

MELANIE: Well, hello ladies and hello audience. Like you said, Kristin, the argument has been around for many years: whether addiction is a brain disorder, whether it is behavioral, what are the implications for treatment, etc. I'm sure the audience gets sick of me playing the fence, but I'm really not playing the fence. I just like to look at things from all sides, and I want to have all the information so that I can make an informed decision on my end. I don't feel like I can really have an opinion if I don't know all the facts because I can have an opinion based on one book or article I've read. But there might be other pieces of the puzzle that I don't know that would change my opinion. When I form an opinion or make a statement, I want it to be an informed statement. Knowing what I know about addiction, with it being behavioral versus physical, I honestly think it's a combination of both. We all know that addiction can be hereditary. We all know that drugs change your brain physically as well as your body. We all know that our choices can actually change our brains. That's what neuroplasticity, biofeedback and all of those types of treatments are. They literally change the pathways in your brain. So, I think it is just this interesting interplay of the physical piece of addiction - you are literally adding another substance to your body - and then the other piece where you are making choices that are reinforcing you getting the drug. In my opinion, I think it's both. I think the perfect treatment is to address the physical piece. You have to remove the addiction - whatever it is the person is addicted to. Sometimes you have to medicate. We know there are methadone clinics everywhere. Sometimes you have to fill in that piece, so the behavioral piece can catch up. I think for effective treatment with addictions you have to have both sides. You have to psychotherapy, and you have to have a medical piece with it too - I think it's a combination. What are your thoughts about it?

KRISTIN: I definitely have addictive pieces to my personality, but nothing has trumped food for me as my main addiction. Walk me into a grocery store and say, "Let's look at the wine, and let's look at the Twinkies." Kristin is going to go for the Twinkies. I'm not trying to make light of food addictions because obviously it's been an addiction of mine for a long time as I always go for the food piece. But food itself can be a drug, especially eating unhealthy food. When we try to correlate this to something like a

character disorder, that is talking about brain chemistry as well. But, character disordered folks - for example those who get into Machiavellianism...I just talked about this with our most popular guest of all time, Christine Louis de Canonville. She talks about malignant narcissists as being addicted to people – to the empathic qualities of other people. They get high on other people’s energy because they don’t know how to generate their own. What fascinates me is the difference between being addicted to a drug (like a substance, pain meds, heroin, marijuana, food, whatever) versus being addicted to life force, which is really what a narcissist is addicted to. What do you think, Melissa?

MELISSA: Well, I was thinking about addiction in a different direction. The idea of addiction - you can be addicted to shopping or you can be addicted to gambling. I think it needs to be acknowledged that there’s a physiologic component of addiction, but addiction can’t purely be that because you can be addicted to things that don’t initially change your body properties.

KRISTIN: That’s true.

MELISSA: They do because of your association with those things, absolutely. But people get addicted to many things because it releases something in their pleasure center, right?

KRISTIN: Right – like to Facebook.

MELISSA: I’m addicted to Facebook. It’s a problem, really. I think the whole subject needs a little bit of clarity because what kind of addictions are we talking about?

KRISTIN: Exactly, the whole core of where an addiction starts in the brain. You add another layer when it’s a substance that is going to change brain chemistry by putting something in your body that’s going to tweak your chemistry, as opposed to Facebook changing your brain chemistry because of the dopamine hit every time you check Facebook. So, there’s a lot. I’m no expert to be talking about it.

MELANIE: I’m glad Melissa pointed those things out because there are so many different types of addiction. When I think about what dependency means versus what addiction means, physical dependency is if you have to have a hip replacement, for example, and you are given pain medication. While you are on pain medication after this hip replacement it’s being monitored by your doctors. They know (and I’m not a doctor so if any rehab specialists are listening and this is incorrect please forgive me, but I’m just trying to give an example) if you’re getting these meds, knowing that your hip is eventually going to heal, that for a short period of time your body will be physically dependent on this medication for pain relief. When it’s over and you are weaned down off of the drug, you are no longer physically dependent. That’s very different from addiction. There are some people who are going to get that hip replacement and they will get addicted to the medicine. So, what is the difference there? Why is it that some of us can be physically dependent on something for a certain amount of time and then it goes away? Why is it that some of us can go drink socially and have no problems with alcoholism? That’s an argument we’ve been talking about for years and years and years. I think there has to be a behavioral course somewhere. Obviously, you are looking at genetics. I think for us to talk about this truthfully, like Melissa said, we would need a real definition of what addiction is. That’s where an addiction specialist could help us with that.

MELISSA: You were talking about the difference between dependency and addiction, and what is addiction and a definition for it. I think there has to be an acknowledgment of the element of obsession and compulsion. When you have a dependency on something, you aren’t obsessed with it and you aren’t driven to it beyond reason. It serves a purpose; it has a function; and it’s supporting something. But when something crosses over into addiction, it’s not supporting something – it becomes the

destructive force. It becomes the element that is troublesome. There's a line that it crosses, and I wouldn't necessarily say it is even about degrees. I think when people are cultivating an addictive type of nature, they aren't necessarily starting with a dependency where it is supporting their body or it's positive coping. It is the way that they interact with that thing that is unhealthy from the beginning. There is already an obsession or compulsion, even though it might grow in strength, it's the interplay there.

KRISTIN: Yeah, I just pulled up an [article by Dr. Craig Malkin](#) who is very popular right now in the realm of narcissism. He talks about the fact that there are people out there that are hard line believers that any form of narcissism is toxic and unhealthy. If that were true, then five-year olds would be considered toxic and unhealthy. Every kid goes through a narcissistic state; it's just when people get stuck there that it becomes a problem. In his book, [Rethinking Narcissism](#), he does touch on the link between narcissism and drug addiction. What's interesting is that he wrote: "The question is, is there any connection between narcissism and substance abuse and the answer is yes. There's plenty of research that shows that people who have, say, narcissistic personality disorder, extreme narcissism of any kind - there are different kinds ... - that they are more likely to turn to substances. Again, it makes perfect sense. If you *do not* trust that you can depend on people for love, for caring, connection, you're going to have to soothe yourself some other way. You can soothe yourself with narcissism, you can soothe yourself with a drug addiction. You can soothe yourself through gambling. These things don't require people. Remember, the problem is if you don't trust people and you're not going to turn to them, you're going to turn to things that you can control."

MELANIE: I would tend to agree with that. Melissa and I have both talked about, and Melissa I apologize if you haven't talked about eating disorders on the show.

MELISSA: Yeah, we did.

MELANIE: I know when I was in the midst of my eating disorder or not eating, when I hear you read that, Kristin, I did not trust people. Therefore, I had this relationship with my food and my body in a way that was very safe to me. So, whenever I stepped outside these really strict boundaries I had for myself, it made me feel extremely vulnerable. I can really understand that if a narcissist is truly in that place. Kristin and I had this conversation earlier. As much as we talk on our shows about narcissism, I don't want anyone that listens to these shows and may hear me say things like "vile" or calling narcissists not favorable adjectives to ever think I don't have compassion for these people. These are people. They are lost souls. Do they do things to intentionally hurt people? Yes. Do they make decisions to hurt people? Yes, every single day. But I do believe that there is something underneath it. I don't think they are completely evil. They may have given over to evil as protection for themselves. I don't know, I think it's different for every person. But I wanted to make that clear. I don't want anyone to think that I don't have compassion for these people, because I do. It just doesn't mean that I want to be around them, and I certainly wouldn't want anyone that I love to be around them. I think it's a very interesting statement that he makes - that is what they turn to for trust - because that's the one thing that's always there for them. That is how I felt about my eating disorder too. That was the one steady. That was my safety; that was my security. It was very isolating and coming out of that, learning how to trust people again, was very difficult. If you don't have a support system, if you don't have the strength to look at yourself in a mirror, then I could see where it would be very easy for a narcissist to become an addict. Of course, addiction is narcissistic in nature because you do whatever you have to...

KRISTIN: To get supply.

MELANIE: ...to get the substance that you are addicted to. I guess it just all reinforces each other.

KRISTIN: Yeah, I was thinking about that today. Why is it that I've been able to forgive myself as well as many other people (a lot of men in my life that have had a lot of narcissistic traits at different points in their lives); but with other people, it's not that I don't forgive them, but I just cut them out like I am just done? No contact – I am done. What is the difference between why I am able to be okay with this one, but not with this one? I think it has to do with what your own triggers are. For me, if I get around someone whose issues or core wounds are like mine – they are in pain just as I am in pain about those issues – but when I'm with them I'm in a very unhealthy place. Here's a better example. One of the things I've talked about with Dan Griffin, obviously he's in recovery so he doesn't drink and he doesn't like to curse (and of course you know I love to curse), but that is an activating thing for him. It takes him to an energy space that he doesn't want to live in because he will be more prone to behavior from the past that he's really worked hard at not living in anymore. When I think about people that I've had to cut out of my life, it's because when I'm around them I'm in danger of going to places that I don't want to live anymore, that I've worked hard to be out of, and they really trigger me to be in those places. Now does it mean that I don't go work on that stuff to figure out why I'm being triggered? No – it absolutely doesn't, but typically the one that is really triggering me is not doing any work on their stuff. That's the reason why they're not in my life anymore. When we talk about having forgiveness for the people in our lives that have high narcissistic traits, you can love that person. There are a couple of people that I miss terribly. I love them. But it's going to be twenty years of work on their part before I'd ever have them within ten feet of me – if ever. But it doesn't mean I don't love them. It doesn't mean I hate them. Does that make sense? I think about that in terms of families. I had a very close friend reach out to me today. I love him very much, and he's having to make a difficult choice about who in his family he can be around. I've been in that place. I remember my family, when I was about 22, really trying to suck me back into being in their lives. I tell you it was a God thing, because I got a phone call after ten years of no contact, asking me to bring my baby son to a family gathering. I became violently ill that night. I've never been that ill. I was so ill that I could not physically take care of my son. I had to call a friend to come take care of my two-year-old because I was so ill. I lay in bed thinking, "Woah, that was God saying, 'You aren't going within three feet of those people, honey!'" It doesn't mean I didn't love my family, but it means that I would have been walking right back into some toxicity that I did not need to be around.

MELISSA: Yeah.

MELANIE: Yep. I think it's hard for people to understand or to learn how to navigate when you have a narcissist in the family that is so incredibly toxic, but at the same time there is some love there because they are family. It's difficult. Then you have all these expectations of the other family members. I feel like the best thing to do when you realize you have a narcissistic family system is that you educate yourself about what that means so that you can learn how to have appropriate boundaries, relationships, and what your expectations need to be, etc. Those are difficult situations to navigate for sure.

MELISSA: Yeah, you can't force the whole system to change, but you can lay certain expectations for the behaviors that are acceptable and not acceptable towards you, what you will and won't expose yourself to within the family. They learn. Family systems adapt with consistency. They always want to snap back like a rubber band to the way that they were given the opportunity. But if you can hold those lines with consistency, even if the heart underneath it doesn't change, eventually they will change the manifestation of it to something perhaps more palatable, or they will restrict the way that they demonstrate that towards you.

KRISTIN: Yeah, that's an interesting thing, Melissa, because you've talked about that. I think it's so powerful. I've noticed this even in working relationships that I have today. The more empowered that I've become (though I noticed it beforehand) people in my family or people I work with will behave differently, or better – like on their best behavior around me – for short periods of time, like short bursts of best behavior. If I'm around them for a longer period of time, that gets exhausting, especially for a narcissist because they are lazy. They are the laziest people you've met in your life. So, to keep up that façade of wonderful generosity and love is exhausting work on their part. You are going to see frayed corners at some point. You will see that in families as well. That's why we tell people if they have a narcissistic family member or you run into them, limit your time with that person. If you have to go to a family party, have an exit plan.

MELISSA: Yeah, and let your exit plan be, "I want to leave!" That's adequate.

KRISTIN: Exactly! No excuses – just, "I'm out! Bye!"

MELISSA: Sometimes we feel like we have to offer explanation. With narcissistic families, I think less is more. With narcissists in general - "I need to leave." You don't have to tell them, "Because I'm full of anxiety, because I can't stomach you any longer, or because I have another party to go to." It doesn't matter. The point is, "I need to leave. I'll see you later."

KRISTIN: It's true! This is one thing I love about my ex-husband. When we've had it with each other, we are just done. We walk away. We don't argue anymore. We don't get into fights. We just walk away from each other. Michael's answers to everything are very succinct. I'll tell him, "Something happened today. I'm kind of upset about it but I'm not that upset about it. Life goes on. People have their issues." Michael's solid answer to everything is, "Yeah. That person is a moron. Just let him go." (If only life could be so simple.) Really, he'll say, "Kris, they don't support you. I don't want to hear their name anymore. Move on." Sometimes I think in a very backwards way that is kind of Yoda wisdom. It's Michael wisdom.

MELANIE: I think we all have to honor our own spirits and how we make decisions about things. Something that would work for one person may just not work for you. Where it is really easy for some people to say something, it may be more difficult for you to arise to that point. I often think it's a disservice that we all do as friends, family members or as clinicians when we don't think about what would be the best way for this person to come to this conclusion. Sometimes that is really hard for anyone to sit back and wait for it to all come into play. Then there are those times where you just have to do it. You have to fake it until you make it; you just have to do what you know you need to do until it becomes a reality. There are definitely situations where that is called for as well. We need to have a longer show on that.

MELISSA: Can you give an example of what you mean?

MELANIE: Sure, if it's really uncomfortable for you to – well, I had a friend who had a very dysfunctional relationship with her mom. It was very unhealthy, and it really stressed her out. Literally, every single time she talked to her mom she was upset. (In my opinion it was because this woman had narcissistic traits.) So, it was very difficult for the daughter to put a boundary up and say, "I'm going to get off the phone now." That was my advice to her, as a friend. When she starts triggering you, when you start to feel this, you can simply say, "I'm going to get off the phone now." Even though that doesn't feel like what you should be doing, do it anyway; and after practicing that for so many times, it kind of empowers you and it becomes what you need to do. Does that make sense, Melissa? You have to practice, even though it feels so wrong to you in the moment, you know it is better for your self-esteem.

It is like you have to wait for your feelings to catch up with it, but you have to arrange a space for those feelings to happen. If you are constantly caught in that unhealthy loop, then it's hard. You have to take some sort of step towards making a boundary. Sometimes those first couple of steps feel so backwards and wrong, but if you just do it then everything will catch up in the end. Eventually, you realize, "I really can get off the phone, and I don't feel bad about it. She shouldn't be making me feel that way. Every time I get on the phone, she makes me feel guilty." So, get off the phone before she has a chance to. Make a boundary even though it is going to feel really wrong sometimes.

KRISTIN: It's a muscle that you have to exercise. I love it. I do it even with my own crappy behavior. If I'm in a really bad mood, I haven't slept, I'm on the road – I've had some pretty short-tempered moments where I can just tell. I'm walking through an airport and think, "Oh my gosh, I am in such a bad mood. Nobody talk to me because my patience level (and I'm very patient) is low." I will tell people, "You know what, we need to hang up right now because I'm not in a good place to have a conversation." It is totally okay to do that. It's okay to say that to someone else, even someone who isn't toxic but someone you love. "We need to stop talking right now. Let's pick this up later." It is so okay to do that.

MELANIE: Yes, it definitely is. Another example, Melissa, because I was just talking about this, would be an eating disorder. I think at any point of change in our life, there are moments where it doesn't feel right. I think that keeps so many people in a place of not changing. I know when I first started coming out of anorexia, I literally would sit down to eat, and I would have to tell myself, "I am going to eat this because I know this is what I need to feel good today. This is what my body needs." Even though it was going against every bone in my body to put that food into my mouth, it was a self-love thing. It was a very spiritual thing for me. I would think, "This is what I need. I am honoring my body by eating this." Even though my anxiety level was through the window, it was like I had to do it to get to that point. Eventually, after doing that so many times, this connect comes where you really are eating to fuel your body. Then, for me, it went to so many more steps. Now I am back to the point where I can say, "I am going to eat that because I want it, and it's perfectly fine." I'm back to a healthy place where I know some things make me feel rotten and some things don't. You get to a different place where everything just becomes more in sync. Making those first few steps is sometimes so hard with anything to do with change.

KRISTIN: Yes, like Melissa with her sweet potatoes.

MELISSA: Yeah, I had to really strive to break that. I mean, that and Facebook are the bane of my existence. I can't break it.

KRISTIN: I know. I'm pulling off of it, I'm telling you. I'm really going to pull away from Facebook. When I'm in California, I'm going to take a break.

MELANIE: I was really proud of myself the other day because I realized when I was on Facebook I basically don't see any people's feeds anymore. I might see yours, Kristin, and yours, Melissa. But there are very few people whose stuff even comes up because I am always reading articles about autism, narcissism, Christianity, or the service dog provider. I think, "Hey, I think I may have just gotten somewhere on my Facebook." I barely even see what people are doing anymore and honestly it such a positive experience. When I get on Facebook now it is just a feel-good thing. I do it just to find happy stuff. I follow a bunch of happy pages. Sometimes when I need an uplifting word and I can't pick up my Bible, I just go on Facebook and think, "I'm finding the best Christian story I can find today and watch

something that feels good." I still do a little too much of that, but I think we all can relate to the Facebook thing. It can definitely be a false stimulation sometimes.

MELISSA: Going back to what you said about taking those first steps, the way it is framed in my mind is to live "as if" you've felt something, going on faith that you will feel something. As you said, that the feelings will catch up. If you live a principle-based life, I am telling you that you can't go wrong. If your principle is, "I will take care of myself at all times," and that is your concept – guess what? You are going to feed yourself whether you feel like it or not because you know it is good for you. Sometimes it is going to feel good, and other times it isn't going to feel good. At some point you have to come to this commitment: "I will align myself with God's ways and be good to myself because that is what He does. He is good; that is His nature to me. I'm going to bring myself to submission under His authority, and I too will be good to me only. I will not bring evil upon myself. I will not incur it. I will not be destructive because that is not His way for me. That is not what He has for me. I may want to be destructive. I may want to self-harm. But that is to align myself with something dark, and I'm not going to do it." Then the feelings catch up, because guess what? Your life becomes fruitful. Your life becomes productive. Your life becomes prospering and thriving in whatever area you apply that to. Let's talk about an addiction that isn't an eating disorder. If you make a commitment to yourself to say, "I know that everything in my body is going to scream for that, but I have a stronger commitment to being good to myself – I am not going to do it." That has to be your baseline that you come to. Every time you have to choose to live "as if" you felt like being good to yourself. Not that you do, but as if you did. Guess what? Your feelings do catch up.

KRISTIN: You are so right, and you are rewiring your brain chemistry as you do that.

MELISSA: Yep. There is something about the whole process. It is rewiring brain chemistry. It is rewiring your thinking patterns. It is a spiritual hard-wiring because you are aligning with God and His Spirit. It's a whole process. I feel pretty passionately about that. It does take mastery. You called it a muscle. You get confidence as you see that you are able to do something, and you survive it. You say, "That is not going to destroy me the next time. It's not unlivable. It's not overwhelming. It doesn't have to be bigger than me. I can do that." The only way you know that you can do that is by doing that.

KRISTIN: That is so true. As I'm sitting here I am unfollowing a whole bunch of stuff that has been coming up in my feed that is very triggering because I too go to Facebook to read really great articles. I love the stuff that you post, Melanie. I love hearing about Warren Retrievers and get such great articles from it. I love hearing what's going on with Melissa. But there is all this other ancillary junk that I don't need to read, so I am going to tailor Facebook in order to fit my needs. I want to read this thing from Craig Malkin: [Proof Once and For All That Narcissists Are Deeply Insecure](#). This is interesting and there is a lot of controversy around his book about this.

MELISSA: I reject that!

KRISTIN: I know, I know. But listen to this. And I reject some of that too, but here's something that I personally experienced with a narcissist. "There's a long standing belief, reinforced by books like *The Narcissism Epidemic*, that narcissists actually feel great about themselves, despite everyone's suspicion—dating back to age old wisdom about schoolyard bullies...Much of the "evidence" that narcissists have high self-esteem comes from a measure called the Narcissistic Personality Inventory, which includes items like 'I am assertive' and 'I'm a born leader' ...The only problem is study after study shows that once you pull out the self-esteem heavy items on the NPI, nothing healthy is left. Which stands to reason. Would anyone gifted with truly high self-esteem need to insult others to feel superior,

attack anyone who criticizes them, treat people like playthings, pick “trophy wives” and “trophy husbands” over loving partners, demand constant accolades or—in intimate relationships—perfect unwavering attention, and finally, devalue love and relationships? Because these are all features that NPI narcissists seem to proudly flaunt right alongside their “high self-esteem.” I don’t know where I sit on that spectrum, but I can tell you this. I’ve dealt with covert narcissists; I’ve dealt with overt narcissists. One of them absolutely had a trophy wife, Amazonian goddess, and she was never good enough for him – nothing was good enough for this guy. I really don’t know at the core if he has low self-esteem or if he has high self-esteem.

MELISSA: You know, there’s an analogy that keeps coming to my mind. We reason about these people from our frame of reference, and we say, “Surely they must be like us.” But if you think about a lion out in the wild and how he hunts his prey, he wants the best prey and he has an insatiable appetite. Just because he goes after one, then he wants more, and more, and more, we could say, “Oh, but that lion, he’s just so hungry! He’s so hungry. I feel bad for him. We share commonalities. Everybody gets hungry.” But no! I’m going to go back to the predator thing. There is - not that I wish them ill, although I do wish that God would break them for their benefit and for the benefit of all – that is my wish for them. But I cannot have a pity kind of compassion for a predator. The predator is going around, and it is not like the rest of the animals that are drinking water and eating grass. No! This is what happens when there is hunger – he destroys! Nobody feels bad for the destroyer. You can hear my passion I’m sure – but pride is not the flip coin of insecurity. Pride is an inflation of self and it’s an over focus on self, and yet sometimes they might have insecurities like the rest of us because that is a common experience. But if you are talking about generalities, I don’t think it comes from a deep insecurity. They are a self-focused, self-full person who sometimes maybe looks at themselves and wishes that this area was even more. But I don’t think that is the core of it. There is something predatory. There is something dark about the core of it. Insecurity is not that darkness.

KRISTIN: That’s very true. That’s why it’s such an interesting topic and I was just talking about this today with my friend who reached out. He’s in a lot of pain, and he asked me, “How are you doing?” I said, “I’m okay. I’m still reeling over a relationship that I feel like I should be over already, because I can tell you the dude was over it twelve minutes after I went no-contact.” We sort of lamented over it. Isn’t it interesting how they just come in, wreak all kinds of havoc, then they’re gone (they leave or you discard them) and they are off galivanting to destruct elsewhere – be a predator elsewhere – and you, the people who have had to be waylaid in their wake, are the ones that are in therapy months later still trying to figure out what the hell happened, get over trauma, get over triggers, and have to keep processing. It’s why this is so damn destructive, and I wish people would take it more seriously and have more compassion for the actual victims here, because the actual victims here are not the narcissists!

MELISSA: No! Absolutely.

KRISTIN: And yet we seem to have a society that feels sorry for these people. I’m thinking, “What?!”

MELISSA: In the fact that they are people made in God’s image, I can say I am sad for them that they are bringing destruction on themselves and that they are aligning themselves with darkness. But does anybody, because this is the age-old story, if you go back to Scripture and you talk about it, Satan just wanted to *be* God. It’s not like he was saying, “Oh, I’m less than God. Oh, I feel bad about myself.” No! He wanted to *be* – and he goes around destroying at whatever cost. He doesn’t take – there is no mercy for his victims. There is nothing - children, adults, elderly – there is nobody who is exempt, and it is one destruction after the next. This is what evil does, and that is his nature. When you align yourself with

evil, this is the fruit of it. It's death and it's destruction. I will not have compassion on evil! I will not! Although I do have a sorrow for the person who aligns themselves in this way.

KRISTIN: What do you say about people that, let's say like that man that we met at NCAD, John Bruna. I had a chance to talk to him later and he told me, "Kristin, I was evil. I lived in evil. I behaved in evil ways." But he had a spirit change. He woke up to God. He got into recovery, and that is not the man who was sitting before you. I mean there are people that do have these awakenings. What do you say about those people, Melissa?

MELISSA: I think that every person has the potential to change. Everybody is given that opportunity and afforded that. That's the whole nature of God. It's to be redemptive. But not everybody wants it, and some people reject it. So, he obviously would acknowledge, "I was evil. I was doing evil and participating in it and causing evil." Then he says, "But now I'm different." So, you cannot go along continuing to be evil and do evil and say, "Oh, but see me as good." No! No!

KRISTIN: You're right because we had some great dinners with some good friends when we were out there, and we talked to some other men that have said, "I did some shady stuff. Some really bad stuff." Then they found God, whatever that means to that person, and that is not the person that they are today. You're right, for those people I think, "Good for you! That's wonderful." They are atoning for things they have done in the past and the ways that they have hurt people. But there are literally people out there that know that what they do is horrible, and they don't care – they like it!

MELISSA: Yes, and that's hard for people to believe; but you must accept that there is a kind of person out there who is very much different from who you are, and they operate very differently because they have aligned themselves with different things. Their core values are vastly opposite in nature and intent.

KRISTIN: Yes, that's very, very true. And let me tell you, some of these people that are out there, man they look shiny and attractive. But underneath, they are just horrible, deplorable people. It takes some time to figure that out, and you can't believe it. You literally do not want to believe it. When you figure it out you think, "Woah!" There's your cognitive dissonance. You just can't believe it – but that's reality.

MELISSA: A lot of times, they are the people that are seemingly doing good things in the world until you get a little bit closer. Maybe they are claiming the name of God; maybe they are doing charities and humanitarian work. I just think, "Wow!"

KRISTIN: Yes, exactly. Well, we had a shorter one tonight. Melanie, you've been quiet at the end. What are your thoughts about what we've been talking about?

MELANIE: You know I don't always see things so black and white. And whereas I agree with a lot of the basic statements, I can see truth in the thing that you read from the article, and I can see truth in what you say, and I see truth in what Melissa says. Some of these people, they do bad things and then they say it's good. Then sometimes people believe it, and the bad thing is right in front of their face. You have all flavors of narcissists and sociopaths. There are just so many different types. But I guess the black and white is exactly as Melissa says – when you align yourself with evil, when you choose to let that into your life, when you choose things that are not of light and not good – then every time you surrender yourself to that it is just going to continue to grow and grow and grow inside of you. That's what I think has happened to these people. I don't think they were born into this world. Do I think there's a physical component to narcissism? Yes, I do. But as I said, just like on Facebook, I think James Fallon, just because he exists, just because you are born one way doesn't mean you have to act that way. Obviously, he has

made choices. I think when you are constantly aligning yourself - like Melissa was saying - their alignment comes from a completely different place, but they have made choices to get there. Some people's journey to get there was really long and they fought; and some people just jump on over into the evil boat and they are there from the beginning, they love it, and they play with it. There are those people that fight it and fight it, and they just turn into it because for whatever reason they just can't. I don't know the answer to that. I don't know why that's the case. I think logically as a person you have to do what's right for you in being in contact with these people. I don't have compassion for evil either, but I still maintain that I have compassion for these people. I won't go as far as to say I have sorrow for them, or whatever, I forgot what it was that you said, Melissa, that you called it. But I do because they are lost souls. Even though I believe that a person in their right mind wouldn't continue to make choices that were bad - or I shouldn't say in their right mind. I believe that a person that had the ability to do so wouldn't continue to make those choices, but somewhere along the way they handed themselves over to evil. Once that's done - there's no turning back. Is there any fault; is there any blame? I don't know. Yes, they made choices to get there, but I still don't like that that is where they are. Am I appalled by these people's behavior? Yes! I'm appalled. I have to have contact with a person that is like this and it is appalling, it's triggering, it brings me anxiety every time I'm around the person.

KRISTIN: Which is why?

MELANIE: Right, and I understand that because I understand that it's the darkness and I understand that it's something that I don't want to be around. So that energy is just very specific. But I as a person, I just can't say that I don't - I'm in the reality of what it is, but as a clinician, as a person of faith, to me it's just not so black and white. I just see the truth in everyone's statement. I think until you know this person's entire life story, you can't put yourself in their shoes. Only God knows what their story is, and obviously God will be grieved that they've chosen darkness. I think every person's story is different. I don't know how a person got there, I just know how I'm going to live my life. I'm really glad that a lot of narcissists didn't show up in my office as a clinician; I can say that.

KRISTIN: Yeah, my hat is off to [Wendy Behary](#) who treats them.

MELANIE: I know. I don't know how people do it.

KRISTIN: She talked on the show about how she will be in the middle of a session and she will have to get up and say, "Hold on a minute. I'm feeling very triggered right now." Her clients sit there thinking, "What? What did I say?" because they aren't exactly introspective people. She has to just breathe deeply, shake herself out, and shake herself off in the middle of a session. That's how difficult it is. My thought is like that too. I love some of these narcissists that have come into my life. I miss some of them, some qualities about them. But being in their presence or having any connection to them whatsoever (because there is so much destruction, bad stuff and energy in their lives because that is what they live in), I don't care how godly or how strong you are, you are going to get some of the debris of their junk. For me, I will love you from afar, but I need to disconnect big time because I don't want any of the stuff that you attract into your sphere of influence. I don't want that chaos. I don't want that negative energy. I don't want the negative people that come into your life. I don't want the negative experiences to fall off the truck and hit me because I'm in the car driving next to it. I don't want any of that in my life. So, love ya - and let's not talk!

MELANIE: Yeah. I mean, I'm not going to go so far as to say that I still love and miss some of those people in my life. I absolutely do not.

KRISTIN: I don't with a couple, but a couple of them I do. The first one I talked about on the show, I don't miss him at all. I miss another one.

MELANIE: I won't go that far. For me, and there may be a point that this changes because we are constantly in this chain of growth, moving forward and healing from being in a relationship with someone like that, but in my mind if I can't still have some inkling of compassion (maybe compassion isn't the right word) then they have won.

MELISSA: Oh, I see.

MELANIE: You see what I'm saying? If I can't maintain something in my heart that's of me – they've won. That's really how I feel about it – then I'm no better than they are.

KRISTIN: That's good.

MELISSA: For me, the idea that the desire for them to be broken is for their good.

MELANIE: Absolutely.

MELISSA: That's why I say the word sorrow because I have a deep sorrow for their choices. I do not have a compassion for what they are doing. I think it is just semantics where we are coming from because I would grieve deeply over that. Especially, Kristin, I can align with you in that I have an affection for some of my past narcissists. But boy, I know, and I do not delude myself, that they are rotten to the core. My attachment to them is not a reflection of them.

KRISTIN: That is so true. This is funny – this last one, I swear, when he was asleep (because he would always fall asleep as he would go on these manic episodes for days) I loved him. He looked like an angel, I'm telling you. He didn't snore. He absolutely looked like an angel. I wrote him this really great email and said, "When you're asleep I just want to climb up on top..." It was a really good email. He probably has saved that and who knows what he does when he reads it and he's watching porn or something. But it was a really good email. Then I said, "It's just when you wake up and you start talking, then all of a sudden I want nothing to do with your ass."

MELISSA: Just shush – don't say a word.

KRISTIN: Yeah, because when you're sleeping...

MELANIE: Isn't it funny, though, and ironic on a very superficial level, how so many narcissists are these attractive, beautiful people. They are just so perfect and beautiful on the outside. I think it's weird, especially how narcissistic women are described. They are described as these attractive people, and you think, "Man, Satan knew what he was doing with that one." It's like the perfect deception.

KRISTIN: Oh, absolutely. Satan is beautiful. This guy is – I told him from the very beginning, because I did not think he was attractive. He's an okay looking guy; he's not ugly or anything. But I didn't think he was attractive. I told him, "Don't start showing me lots of pictures of yourself because I can get bedazzled." So, what does he do but send me eight million pictures of himself so that I would get bedazzled. Even still, the only time I thought he was absolutely gorgeous was when he was sleeping and therefore not wreaking havoc upon the planet. I miss that man that was sleeping. But that's the only part I miss.

MELANIE: That is because that was a fantasy.

MELISSA: That's what I was just going to say too, Mel.

MELANIE: Yeah, it wasn't really him. It was just the fantasy; and then he opens his eyes and his mouth and it's all over.

KRISTIN: You just ruined it. Be quiet. Shhhh! Zip!

MELANIE: Exactly. Don't talk!

KRISTIN: Don't talk. Don't open your mouth, have a face shift, and morph into some weird, devil looking – just stay in sleep mode where you look like an angel of God. Just stay there. Well, this was good. I don't know what our plan was for tonight, but we got onto some cool subjects. I really appreciate it.

MELISSA: We just sort of went all over.

KRISTIN: We did, but you know what, people still – these are the shows. It's funny.

MELANIE: Yeah, we need to have a show – someone needs to write this down – because I have found in my reading (and I don't always read positive stuff, because reading stuff about psychopathology is not always positive but it is educational – don't judge, it's educational and this is what we talk about) but I've found, and I'm sure you do too, Melissa and Kristin, when I find articles about personality disorders that talk about treatment and having compassion on these people, I swear they always leave out narcissistic personality. They will talk about all the others like borderline, schizoid, avoidant, histrionic – they will talk about all those – but for some reason narcissistic personality always seems to be in its own little corner. This tells me it's just plain evil and that is why it doesn't belong in the DSM. That's what I think. But do you notice that, both of you?

KRISTIN: Absolutely.

MELISSA: I absolutely do too.

MELANIE: So, what's up with that?

MELISSA: I can say this too. You know how I told you that my one mentor had said, "How a client makes you feel is a good indicator of how they feel – it's telling." It's telling, so you should look at that as a cue. I can say that I've had plenty of borderline clients, and sometimes they are off-putting, but sometimes you can fall in love with them too. But the narcissists – they are one hundred percent off-putting. They come in and from start to finish it is usually just a different experience. Toxicity is toxicity, but there seems to be a different element there. Who can know what it is? Who can even articulate it? It is its own category in a way.

KRISTIN: It is, and that is why NVS (narcissistic victim syndrome), I hope one day it is in the DSM because there is overwhelming evidence from all over the globe. It is the same pattern of recovery, the same symptoms, the same everything for every single victim. Every single one. There is no way that there are millions of people that are making this shit up. We all go through the same recovery phases and the same stages. On a global level, we are the ones that get the emails and hear about it, so it is valid. That is why it does deserve its own category because the treatment for it (of course you are treating people for PTSD, for c-PTSD, for trauma – a lot of things that you are treating them for) but there is another classification that requires a specific kind of therapy that is just related to victims of narcissistic abuse.

MELISSA: Yeah, well the world is moving closer that way.

MELANIE: Yeah, I'm right there with you. I think it's hard for us, and I think it's confusing for the very reasons that Melissa said. That's because narcissists work from a different framework from us, and it is this confusing, oxy-moron mirrored weirdness that comes along with trying to heal from – I mean we just don't know what to do with it. When you are with a sociopath, when you are with someone that functions on a completely different level than you, it just does such a whammy on your personhood, your mind, your body, your soul, your spirit – everything. It is all encompassing. I agree with you – it is difficult to figure out.

KRISTIN: And people are triggered again, and again, and again in different areas of their life. I am very close friends with some of the leading experts of this, globally. The ones that are really good are the ones that have been narcissistically abused themselves; and they still will come to me, I will come to them, we email and call each other, and we get re-triggered about something that goes on in our life and we are right back in that trauma. Now, do we get out of it quicker? Absolutely. We know the stages. We know the steps. We have support – all of those things that you don't have the first time you go through this. But it is such a deep soul wound that even these experts that are out there on the fricking front lines. When I get an email from one of my sisters and they are in the thick of it – maybe a narcissist, the original one that brought this to them, is hoovering or doing whatever they are doing – they are right back in the trauma and they have to put that in a basket (or like Melissa says – put it in a box and put it up in the closet) because they have to go treat patients the next day that are going through this too while they are triggered because of their own stuff. Going through that stuff is the very reason they are such great therapists for the victims that are coming in, so it's an interesting dynamic. I have so much compassion for the therapists out there, the both of you, that work with patients that come in when you've been through this yourselves too.

MELANIE: Let me tell you how I started looking at triggering, Kristin, because I think I talked to you recently about some triggers that were making me angry. I think I've said on the show that it aggravates me. I don't like being triggered; no one like being triggered. This is what I tell myself when I've been triggered lately: I'm triggered because I, as a person of love and light, should be triggered by darkness and evil. So, when I'm triggered I remind myself why I am triggered, because I don't want to be around darkness and evil. It's almost like I embrace my trigger as a reminder that I am not of whatever is triggering me. Does that make sense? So instead of letting take over me, I remind myself that I should be triggered by this. This should trigger you because it is dark and is bringing in an energy that you are fighting really hard not to be in. Instead of beating myself up about being triggered or being frustrated, I just acknowledge that I am being triggered. That's how I'm talking myself out of it and making it something positive.

KRISTIN: That's right. That's why from the beginning we all said you disconnect from family, you disconnect from people, you disconnect from whomever you need to disconnect from so that you are triggered, and you live in that positive energy space. Like Melissa has said a million times, "If you are not adding to my life then why are you in my life."

MELISSA: That sounds so harsh when I hear you say it!

KRISTIN: But it's so true!

MELANIE: I love it! I love hearing you say stuff like that, because I'm just thinking, "Uh huh, that's right!"

KRISTIN: It doesn't mean that we don't have compassion, because obviously you are counselors. People are coming into your offices and they are coming in and paying. I have people emailing me all over the world and they are in pain. I'm not saying, "I don't want your negative energy around me." No, forget that. Of course, I am there for them. But when it starts dipping into where I feel like I am being used, manipulated or triangulated – I start seeing those traits coming on – I have no problem anymore just saying, "Nope! Not gonna!" Alright, I think we can end on that note. So, thank you both for coming on again and doing another show.

MELANIE & MELISSA: Thank you.

KRISTIN: And thanks to our listeners for another edition of Mental Health News Radio. *Please join us next time on Blogtalk Radio. Visit MentalHealthNewsRadio.com for a list of upcoming and past shows. If you'd like to be a guest on our show, please visit EverythingEHR.com or email me at hello@everythingEHR.com.*

Now a final word from our therapy dog, Myles.

Myles the therapy dog: Woof!