



Maladaptive Personality Styles Impacting "High-Conflict" Litigation

It Doesn't Always Take "Two To Tango" ...
It Takes One High Conflict Personality To Prevent Conflict Resolution

RECOGNIZING MALADAPTIVE PERSONALITY STYLES

ANTAGONISM:

- Manipulativeness
- Deceitfulness
- Grandiosity
- Attention Seeking
- Callousness
- Hostility

DSM-5: NARCISSISTIC PD:

- A pervasive pattern of grandiosity (in fantasy or behavior), a need for admiration, and lack of empathy, beginning by early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts.

DSM-5: NARCISSISTIC TRAITS:

- Grandiose sense of self-importance
- Preoccupied with fantasies
- Believes they are "special" & unique
- Requires excessive admiration
- Entitlement (favorable treatment)
- Interpersonally exploitative (narcissistic abuse)
- Lacks empathy
- Envious or believes others are envious of them
- Arrogant, haughty behaviors

HOW NARCISSISTS PRESENT IN COURT:

How They Feel Internally:

- Unsettled by processes when they feel they are not in control or dominant
- Instigator, antagonistic, and purposely triggers others
- Need to "win" at all costs
- Reacting to a narcissistic injury with aggression

How They Act Externally:

- Appear calm, suave, put together, and successful
- Calculating, convincing, projecting their behavior on the other
- Flip-flop between being the victim and the aggressor
- Sudden and unexpected interest in the children (for personal gain, harm, and control)
- Place blame and refusal to take any responsibility

How They Cause Conflict:

- Will not negotiate or mediate, or break the terms within a few days to weeks
- Unlimited requests and frivolous motions
- Do not cooperate with discovery
- Twisting facts and asserting unfounded conclusions
- Harassing behaviors or unsubstantiated harassment accusations
- Will misrepresent or not follow court orders because they feel above the law
- Use parenting plans as a weapon or punishment for co-parent
- Risk for claiming "alienation" when documented accusations of domestic abuse or other intra-familial abuse are raised
- Fueled by conflict, partner dependence, and financial injury

**BELOW THE
SURFACE**



DON'T BE DUPED

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MANAGING MALADAPTIVE PERSONALITY STYLES

WHAT A JUDGE CAN DO:

- Know things are not always what they appear. Recognize narcissistic abuse, coercive control, domestic violence, child abuse, post-separation abuse, and co-parents' normal response to trauma.
- Require training in maladaptive personality styles for those that contribute to decisions (however avoid mental health evaluations).
- Do not lump both parties in the "high conflict" label. It could be one party perpetuating the conflict and preventing conflict resolution.
- Understand the likely financial disparity and emotional distress that accompanied the narcissistic abuse during marriage and the power/control dynamic that ensued.
- Make decisions and render orders timely to limit legal abuse with frivolous, repetitive demands. Orders should be concise and specific with safeguards in place to be enforced.
- Hold people with narcissistic and other antagonistic personality styles accountable early and often for their actions when they display entitled, abusive, untruthful, or illegal behavior and do not follow orders. Always fact check them.
- Do not be worn down by their persistence. Do not appease them.
- Do not pathologize the emotional, numbed, or other reactions of the non-antagonistic co-parent. These are responses that are often observed in persons who have experienced protracted trauma or emotionally abusive relationships.
- **Make children's rights more important than parental rights. An abusive parent's interest does not always align with the child's best interest. Have the children's best interest at heart by listening to and believing them.**
- Have patience- these cases are frustrating; but they are more frustrating for the victims involved. Avoid re-traumatization of the victims for sharing their concerns.