

3 Emotions that Identify Subtle Abuse and Disrespect

blogs.psychcentral.com/narcissism/2019/02/3-emotions-that-identify-subtle-abuse-and-disrespect

February 25, 2019



It's been years since it happened to me. That vague feeling of being controlled or violated or shamed or otherwise treated incorrectly by another human being. Yet, yet, you can't quite put your finger on it. Was I in the wrong, as they seem to think? Were they in the wrong? Was their behavior as inappropriate and disrespectful as my emotions indicate or am I over-reacting? Where does truth lie? I experienced it quite frequently in the narcissist's environment. Experiencing it again at the hands of a complete stranger was a revelation (and massively triggering.) It reminded me how it all felt, once upon a time...

Today's article is all about recognizing vague yet distinctly bad treatment when it happens from the emotions it triggers. How to hold up that crawling, uncomfortable feeling to the

light and notice it instantly, instead of burying it away in self-doubt. Here's what happened to me last Thursday. It all started so innocently at a nearby grocery store. (Cue flashback harp music.)

We needed milk. Much as I hate to spend almost \$6 per gallon at that particular store, a recent snowstorm made driving further for the good \$3 milk unwise. So I went to the smaller store with its half-empty shelves, who-knows-how-old spices and \$5.99 heads of iceberg lettuce instead. Of course, a simple milk run always turns into more. I've come to expect that I can't walk out for under \$50. What I didn't expect was to be verbally attacked when I took my cart of over-priced food to be checked out.

"I'm going to need to know when you're going to come in from now on," the new clerk laid down the law brusquely. "I order milk for you every week and you don't come in for it, so I end up throwing it out."

Well, that was news to me! Usually when I (very infrequently!) came in for whole milk, they either didn't have any, only a couple of nearly expired jugs *or* the new clerk tried to pressure me into buying expired dairy products! No one had told me whole milk was being "special ordered" for me nor that I was *required* to buy it on a schedule. And after all, isn't part of doing business having product at all times for anyone and everyone who stops in!? But it got even worse.

"Now you've bought all four gallons I ordered," she shamed me, "and the other people who buy it won't have any! From now on, I'm going to have to limit you to two gallons." She made me feel like a milk-thief! Or one of those people who buys *all* the boxes of strawberries despite the sign, "Limit 2 per customer." Heavenly days! What was going on!?!

Apparently, the customer is *not* always right nor even welcome nor appreciated in this place of business. I could feel the anger rising in me, so I directed my eyes to the floor, kept my voice steady, played along. I kept things pleasant while she pushed my most sensitive buttons: shame, blame, control.

Why? For the same reasons you and I did not fight back against the narcissists in our pasts who treated us badly.

1. We weren't sure we were in the right.
2. We weren't sure they were in the wrong.
3. We didn't want to create a scene.

Most importantly, the grocery store fiasco made me relive and remember how my narcissists made me feel. The emotions they triggered were always the same. Shame. Guilt. A feeling of being violated. Controlled. Having my boundaries bashed. Anger. Guilt *for* that

anger. A feeling of unfairness that I couldn't justify or embrace. Most of all, confusion. It was always painful and yet I took it all because I was always in the "wrong," they were always in the "right" and they just loved and cared about me *so much*.

I should've trusted my gut. You should always trust your gut. If it feels like an insult, *it is*. If it feels like your boundaries are being violated, *they are*. If you're blindsided by the shame and your conscience was never piqued by this "horrible" thing you did, *you're probably innocent*. If you feel like someone is trying to control you, *they are*. And if you can feel the anger instantly boiling within you, *it's valid*. Trust your gut.


That's the closest I can put the feeling into words. It's a creepy, crawly, ugly, nasty feeling inside ... always laced with *doubt*. Living with narcissists, you feel it frequently. Free from them, you'll rarely feel it at all. I'd forgotten. Forgotten how rotten they make you feel and how hard it is to pin down *why* and to figure out who is or isn't in the wrong let alone stand up for yourself.

I used to feel it the most when I endured infantilization and scapegoating. Usually, it's triggered by some brouhaha about the silliest, tiniest, most pedestrian things that, as I write this, I find difficult to even remember. Stupid stuff like being blamed for buying bruised apples. Turns out I scrupulously bought perfect apples when I did my narcissist's grocery shopping each week. They then *dropped* the perfect apples into the crisper (bruising them!) and I took the blame, much against my better judgement.

It's stupid stuff like requesting privacy only to be met with the quintessentially narcissistic blame/shame game, "Why!?! What are you hiding!?! If you're not doing anything wrong, why do you need privacy!?" It's the feelings of anger and shame and violation and self-blame that come from that scenario. Their argument *seems* unassailable and our response, "Because privacy is normal" doesn't have a leg to stand on.

You and I are very nice, peace-loving people who can take *valid* criticism, expressed *respectfully*, and benefit from it. When the anger rises, when you feel violated, shamed, blamed and controlled...*trust your gut!* You're not in the wrong. Raise your eyes from the floor, look the other person in the eye and stand up for yourself.

Me? I'm not going back to that grocery store. I'm taking my custom and my money elsewhere where it's actually appreciated and I'm not fleeced to my last cent for buying over-priced milk ... and then shamed for it, adding insult to injury. Along the way, I've relearned a valuable lesson: exactly how disrespect feels so next time, I can instantly do something about it.

Photo by [Zeyus Media](#) 



Copyright © 1995-2020 Psych Central

Site last updated: 25 Aug 2020

Handcrafted with pride in historic Massachusetts.

Psych Central does not provide medical or psychological advice, diagnosis or treatment.

[Learn more.](#)

