

Often I have heard there are two types of people in the world... But there are so many categories where this observation may be applied. I know in church I often hear the two groups include the saved and the unsaved. In politics, there are conservatives and liberals. Financially, there are the haves and the have nots. The sane vs. the insane, the movers and shakers vs. the slackers and takers. The optimists vs. the pessimists. It goes on and on, doesn't it?

I guess it really comes down to our personalities and opinions in the end. For example, I am content to make my median wage and live in a home that is nice and simple. I feel like I work hard for what I have, and by those standards, I feel successful. A stockbroker on Wall Street who strives everyday to make the kind of money that keeps them in a fancy car and a high-rise apartment may look upon me as being lazy or unmotivated. It is all based from our perspective.

I bring this up mainly because recently I have become keenly aware of another set of categories that I find to be complex, frustrating, amazing, and draining, all at the same time. The two groups I'm talking about are empaths vs. narcissists. We didn't really know what a narcissist was twenty years ago, but now we hear the word all the time. From my 'perspective' these two groups might also be simplified into the two groups of good vs. evil, or kind vs. unkind.

From my own observations, a narcissist is only about self, above and beyond anything else. Everything they say and do is done with the motivation of "How will it benefit me?" I do believe we are all narcissistic at times, and it is without question that we must care for ourselves, emotionally and physically. But there must come a time when we look outside ourselves and see the affect we have on others. I don't think a narcissist is capable of doing this. They are basically locked in to telling the world that 'this is how I am and I don't intend to change for anyone'. Narcissists are adaptable like a chameleon, changing and mirroring their chosen surroundings because they will personally benefit by being with a certain person or situation to which they have attached themselves. Much like a leech sucking the blood from its prey.

Unfortunately, empaths are often the prey of the narcissists. Empathetic people know how important self-care is, but they are also deeply caring and like to believe that everyone else is as caring as they are. They believe what others tell them, because they don't understand the benefit of telling a lie. If they see someone in pain, they are quick to try to be a balm to the pain. "How can I help?" "I'm so sorry you had to go through that." Unfortunately, a narcissist finds the empath to be their perfect source of affirmation and supply to their need for being the center of the universe.

It is a toxic combination. It is usually the empath that is devastated the most when the relationship fails, because they invested their heart and their soul into the relationship. They were the ones to jump through hoops, make all of the effort to try and work out the differences or obstacles. Empaths usually blame themselves as the cause of the dissention because they see themselves as having been the weak one by wearing their heart on their sleeve. When a narcissist leaves a broken relationship, they simply move on to their next source who will provide what they need to serve their purpose. Often, not giving a second thought to the empty shell of a person left in the wake from having life sucked out of them for so long.

So that's my take on an empath vs. a narcissist. As I said, all things are based on perspective, and I don't mind if someone doesn't agree with me. I'm sure from this writing, you can guess on which side I believe myself to be, to have been. It has taken me a very long time to finally realize that I did my best with who I am. I can only take responsibility for my own actions. Even after all the pain, I have peace, knowing I did my best, knowing I sought divine guidance through it all. Did I make mistakes? Absolutely. I made poor choices, knee-jerk reactions, and said so many things I wish I never had. But I chalk that up to being human.

Finally being on the other side, I know I am okay. I like who I am, and I still care about those who were a part of that period of my life that I survived. But caring doesn't mean making the same mistakes again. I have thicker skin than I had before, and I am more guarded with who gets my heart and my empathy. For now, my Lord gets it all, and if that's how it remains until he calls me home, I'm okay with that.

Blessings,
Lisa Jo