

FREE

UPLIFT

MAGAZINE
HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS
– REVELSTOKE



The Narcissism Epidemic with L.A.
psychologist Dr. Ramani

Is your relationship
abusive? Know the signs

Men experience abuse too
Read Gary's story



We become
stronger
through the
hard times
in our life

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REVELSTOKE WOMEN'S SHELTER
UPLIFT MAGAZINE: HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

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From the editor...

As humans we're social creatures yet those we allow closest to us have the power to break us.

We will all inevitably face something that's toxic and abusive. That's what this magazine is about. Not everyone uses our resources at the Revelstoke Women's Shelter yet everyone can benefit from more insight into what abuse is.

And we're not just talking about intimate relationships. Many of us may not realise that what we are doing is considered abusive. Many of us are not aware of how to care for ourselves.

As adults this might show up with us falling into repeat situations, experiencing a controlling relationship, or realising that we grew up in a toxic environment. Understanding why helps us move forward.

We tend to judge the world and others from our experiences. So if we've had an easy go it might be difficult to understand how someone else struggles, and vice versa. The hand life gives us often comes down to luck and our choices.

For those in abusive situations, it can drag on, making us depressed and physically ill. You might eat well and exercise but if you're involved with toxic people, your health will suffer. And abuse is rampant in our world. It is nuanced, difficult to pin down and normalised, particularly if you haven't known anything else. Of the stories we hear at the shelter and beyond, they share many similarities.

Although this magazine aims to prevent,



Photo: Frontline staff member and UPLIFT magazine editor Emily Kemp.

sometimes we don't learn until we experience. Unhealthy relationships are painful yet can be opportunities for growth. They show us our insecurities that make us easy prey or our urge to react rather than respond. If we don't look at the role we play in dysfunction, we repeat our patterns.

Having boundaries and caring about ourselves (p. 16) is our armour that will be tested by those who intend to use us. Understanding that mental health issues go hand and hand with abuse (p. 9) can clear up confusing aspects of abuse. And knowing that suffering from abuse has an impact on our community and our productivity means we invest in assisting both men and women (p. 18).

This knowledge and insight into what abuse is can help save you and your life.



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24/7 Helpline:
250-837-1111
Use this line to reach out for support or to stay at the shelter. Staff are happy to chat and conversations are confidential.

Disclaimer: This magazine is information only. Consult a health professional for your specific situation.



Photo: Client mural inside the Revelstoke Women's Shelter.

Revelstoke shelter a safe haven for women

A transformative space after trauma

A women's shelter helps to transform lives, providing support and information about abuse. It can be a retreat for women, allowing them space to get perspective on their situations.

The Revelstoke Women's Shelter is a welcoming and modern home. We are a small operation with four bedrooms, which can have double occupancy. We have a comfortable living area, a well-stocked kitchen and in summer our private backyard includes a children's playground and a veggie garden.

How busy we are fluctuates from one day to the next. Women generally come to us from a physically and/or emotionally abusive situation. This can be with an intimate partner or a power dynamic where the woman is controlled, such as within her immediate family or a work-and-live situation. Women can bring their children, male and female, up to the age of 19. We are not a homeless shelter and as we are focused on helping women move forward positively, we are not a place to live long-term.

We are also not a low-barrier shelter which means those who stay cannot be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. There are shelters elsewhere that allow this.

We help women get back on their feet by providing shelter, food, emotional support and help with services such as getting counselling, addictions support, working with police, finding housing, and maneuvering legal and government systems.

Our goal is to ensure our shelter is a safe, calm and comfortable place to stay.



Photo: The shelter's family bedroom.



Photo: Executive Director Lynn Loeppky

Shelter executive director sees change

Better understanding of abuse today

Executive director Lynn Loeppky has been with the Revelstoke Women's Shelter for over ten years and in that time she's seen a growing awareness around abuse and shelters

"It's not so secret anymore," she says. "I think people talk about domestic violence and what it is more now. And I think women who seek out our services feel less shame. They recognise that

"It's not so secret anymore" the situation they are in might not be the best."

The Revelstoke Women's Shelter Society was incorporated in 1989 and B.C. Housing started funding its operations. For a few years before that it ran as a volunteer organisation with staff putting abused women and their children into local accommodations. As one volunteer recollects, it was a different time and a different town with the population booming as the Revelstoke dam was being built.

"There was a huge need for the shelter," a volunteer said. "There was a lot of drinking and drugs."

Now the shelter has a permanent house, paid staff and a



There are over 400 shelters of different types in Canada. Visit ShelterSafe.ca to learn more.

Thanks Revelstoke!

Donations, gifts, grants boost work and programs

Funds raised throughout the year allow the Revelstoke Women's Shelter to provide extra beds and add value to its service.

B.C. Housing funds the operating expenses for five beds at the Revelstoke Women's Shelter. With fundraising, that capacity can be brought up to eight beds.

Other funds have been funneled into important projects including having a space downtown at the United Church to hold our programs and private sessions.

We also have a dedicated vehicle to safely transport clients. We provided community education with a workshop on vicarious trauma to help Revelstoke workers deal with the day-to-day trauma they absorb in their work.

"The kindness in our community has allowed us to grow awareness and skills for everyone, not just those who stay at the shelter," executive director Lynn Loepky said.

To donate to the shelter, call us on 250-837-4382.

volunteer board of directors.

But as society has become less tolerant of domestic violence, coercive control is becoming more the weapon of choice.

"Women say 'he didn't hit me, I don't know why I'm here' or 'it was only once,'" Loepky says. "There is a lot more awareness now of what emotional and psychological abuse does to people versus physical."

Today the shelter is more engaged with the Revelstoke community through raising awareness and providing programming for men and women (see p. 18). We also have a presence with youth in the schools and work with seniors through the Community Response Network.

"Community engagement has been really important to grow awareness and create openness around the topic of how we treat one another," Loepky says.



Clockwise from left: Workshop on vicarious trauma in Revelstoke, Maggie 'May' Davis plays at the December 6 remembrance event of the Montreal Massacre at Dose, and the Revelstoke Women's Shelter booth at the Farmers' Markets raises awareness of shelter services.



Gift baskets were donated to our clients for Christmas 2019, worth over \$100 each, in memory of Carolyn Chwyl.



Vaya and Ciel made sure that kids staying in the shelter are entertained and happy with these homemade colouring books.



RMR's She Patrol event for International Women's Day 2020 raised funds for the shelter.



Oteas stocked our shelter with their delicious teas and Tim Hortons often donates goodies.



The Revelstoke chapter of fraternal group the Freemasons have donated funds in recent years.

Thank-you

WHAT'S IT **LIKE** STAYING AT A WOMEN'S SHELTER?



We talked to previous clients about their experience.

Our stories do not have fairytale endings. Our clients are on their journeys and the shelter is one stop along the way.

Women tend to learn and grow with us but many go back to previous situations.

To expect anything else is almost to expect a miracle, particularly if they are working through the confusing aspects of an abusive relationship that seems loving.

Some transfer to other shelters or find housing in Revelstoke. Those who alter their lives often feel a deep desire for change. They have hit rock bottom and that choice comes from within.

Leah (name changed) came to us as her long-term marriage was breaking down.

What was your impression of the shelter?

I was surprised at how nice the place was. That I was able to be in a room by myself. I had the privacy I needed. That was good for me because at a time like that you really want to be private. There was well-rounded, good food. You could cook yourself or if you weren't up to it, there's someone there to help you out with that too. The friendliness of the staff was really helpful.

How did you feel about being at a shelter?

I have a lot of pride. I'm not happy that that was an event in my life. I was happy that there was a place for me to go. The staff there respected what you needed and understood, so the support was there, take it or leave it no judgement.

What made it hard?

There could have been better communication about what the shelter is really like for people, especially family. They're going through this with you but they're not understanding why you are there. The stigma affected me. It's not just for drug addicts and beaten-down women. They are for any woman that feels she has a crisis in her life. That it is a safe place for many women and many different types of situation. You never know where you are going to end up. Staying there was never in my wildest dreams.

How did staying at the shelter change you?

It changed my outlook. For me it was respite. I was pretty shut down and closed off. You have to be able to breathe and think. Try and put all your broken pieces back together and make sense of it.

You have to get rid of the shame. Sometimes you need that outside help. And families have to understand. Sometimes things just break down.

This 26-year-old client travelled to stay with us. She was escaping a physically abusive relationship and rehabilitating from drug addiction. The Revelstoke Women's Shelter is not a low-barrier shelter, which means we don't take women who are currently under the influence:

Client said: "It was awesome. It was really supportive and I didn't think I was going to come this far when I first came here. Honestly I'd be in the same spot I was in if I hadn't. I'm clean and sober now. Staff supported me a lot along the way. I'm actually sad to leave. I've gained weight, I'm healthier, I'm more confident now, I'm going out with a job and a car. It wasn't a vacation but it was nice time away from everyone and everything."

Photo: Client with a Revelstoke Mountain Resort ski instructor. RMR donated a lift ticket and a lesson.



Carly*: 21, pregnant, nowhere to go

Carly (*name changed) had been living with her mom before coming to the shelter.

"We did not get along but I had absolutely nowhere else to go," Carly reflects, now in her thirties. "The verbal abuse that I received from my mother — I would rather take a beating over that."

Carly got into housing for young mothers in Vernon, which she says was a great experience. She later returned to the Revelstoke shelter and then moved into the community.

"Being at the shelter changed my life, 110 per cent," Carly says. "I am now married and have a third child. And we are home-owners by the

grace of God."

"Back then I felt, just utterly hopeless, distraught, and life just being life at that point. I didn't really see a future."

"I think the women's shelter taught me to be able to ask for help. I had never been able to do that before."

"The women's shelter taught me to be able to ask for help."

At the beginning, she wasn't sure that she met the requirements.

"Because it was to do with my abusive relationship with my mom," Carly says. "I wasn't even sure if they

would take me. My advice is to reach out whatever situation you find yourself in. If they can't help you directly, they will have the resources to point you in the right direction."

Merry Christmas
 I wanted to thank each and every one of you for your warm hearts and kindness. I didn't realize how much a place like this can heal a broken person. I want you all to know you are special jewels to the woman who enter these doors. I didn't know I needed this time here so much. I didn't know I was living with so much fear and guilt until I actually felt safe for once. Thank you for providing a safe place for woman who need to understand that again. I think it's beautiful and I'm extremely grateful. Happy Holidays

Photo: Card from a client.

WHAT IS ABUSE?

Understanding it can help release us

Abuse is not a one-off incident, it tends to be drip-fed so it feels normal. Abuse wears a person down and physical abuse can happen after a long period of emotional and psychological abuse.

Once abuse occurs in a relationship, that relationship has changed permanently.

When we stay in abusive relationships, it has an impact on our health physically and emotionally. We may get sick more often and our self-esteem is eroded. Self doubt makes us less efficient, and we spend more time walking on eggshells and protecting ourselves.

Revelstoke counsellor Julia Steele explains:

Patterns of distressed relating have their origin in traumatic experience, usually from our early years.

This is true of both partners. We can fall into serious misattunement with one another which can progress in its extreme form into violence. All distressed relating is progressive in nature (the old frogs in boiling water analogy). The longer we remain in a distressed pattern of relating the higher the risk of adverse outcomes.

This is fundamentally not an issue of personality or character, but rather the outcome of chronically misfiring nervous systems, looking for safety or experiencing threat (resulting in an impulse to fight) in all the wrong places. ”



MYTHS VS FACTS

Myth: All relationships need work and it takes two to tango.

Reality: When one partner seeks control, it will never be a healthy equal relationship. They must recognise their behaviour and want change. You cannot do that for them.

Myth: Abusers are alcoholics, brutal and hateful.

Myth: Past trauma has damaged you and you can't help falling for abusive partners.

Reality: Often they are confident, attractive people who hold respected roles in the community.

Myth: If you're in an abusive relationship, you should want to leave your partner right away.

Reality: Your past doesn't have to be your present. It's also not an excuse for the current behaviour of your partner.

Myth: You should have seen the signs.

Reality: Often the beginning of abusive relationships appear positive and loving — something most people would be attracted to.

Myth: Abuse is obvious.

Myth: If you tell the shelter you're in a bad situation your kids will be taken away.

PERSONALITY DISORDERS

Understanding personality disorders can make sense of someone's otherwise confusing actions. It's important not to stigmatise these conditions as people with them often face a tortuous inner struggle. But if we or they are not aware, their behaviour can be abusive.

Other contributing factors to confusing behaviour might be addiction or other mental illness such as depression, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia.

Histrionic: Excessive attention seeking behaviour. Appears flamboyant, dramatic, shallow, sexually provocative and highly emotional. They think relationships are more intimate than they are. Can be manipulative but also easily influenced.

Narcissistic: Differs highly from one person to the next but in general are grandiose, self-absorbed, reliant on external validation and must be viewed as exceptional. They lack empathy and are dismissive of others. Their self-esteem is highly vulnerable and they suffer from feelings of inferiority. Narcissism frequently coexists with other disorders. Likely unaware of their condition as they feel everyone else is the problem (see more next page).

Borderline: They live in constant crisis mode. They feel emotions intensely, from highs to tortured lows. May switch instantly from idolising you to despising you. They are terrified of abandonment and will do anything to stop it, yet their actions often push loved ones away. They revolve their lives around others.

Antisocial: Sociopathy and psychopathy are not clinical terms but they fit under this category. They tend to disregard the safety of others and act without remorse, moral functioning or loyalty. Their decisions are driven by their desires. Tendency for criminal behaviour, they can be aggressive and impulsive.

Reality:

It's hard to pin down and confusing in nature. Abuse can be found in any age group, financial status, education level, and ethnic background.

Reality:

The shelter works with the Ministry of Child and Family Development to keep families together and frequently accepts mothers and their children.



How to manage someone abusive

You may not be able to cut every abusive person from your life but you can minimise their power over you and soften interactions.

People who are abusive invalidate others and want to be in control. The term high conflict describes disagreeable people who may have an underlying personality disorder. While their behaviour may be hurtful, at a fundamental level they feel threatened and are protecting themselves.

Indicators of a high conflict person are:

- Can't take criticism
- Disregulated emotions with overblown reactions
- Rigid behaviour — everything is all bad or all good
- No responsibility for conflict or misunderstandings
- Attack/blame intensely as if their life depends on it

HOW TO DEAL

*as recommended by the High Conflict Institute
highconflictinstitute.com

Don't defend, explain or reason

They won't hear you and may thrive on arguing. If you provide no outlet they lose interest.

Don't take it personally

It's never about you, it's a reflection of them. If you do, you are making their fears and insecurity your own.

GIVE THEM AN EAR

Empathy

Listen to their frustration. You can connect with that on a human level.

Attention

They often feel ignored. This is one reason they get into so many conflicts. Giving them attention (while not reacting to their drama) can help neutralize a situation.

Respect

Not something they are used to getting. They may get negative attention from their never-ending conflicts, but rarely respect.

RESPONDING

BRIEF

Reduce angry exchanges. The less you engage, the less there is to respond to.

INFORMATIVE

Facts, no defence or attack.

FRIENDLY

Mature and polite. Not fake, sarcastic or patronising.

FIRM

Set limits in a confident, non-threatening way.

MANIPULATION TECHNIQUES



Surveillance

A desire to spend as much time and contact with you as possible. At first this may seem romantic but constant checking in on someone is control.

Long term it can feel like living under surveillance.

Love Bombing

It's that feeling of possibly having found The One. It feels like you're in sync and know each other despite the short time you have been together.

It seems almost too good to be true. Things move fast, like meeting parents or moving in together. You ignore red flags as you don't have the time (or desire) to question it.

Love bombing occurs at the start of a relationship (or when a partner is looking for forgiveness).

Often it's these early few weeks that get people trapped in an abusive relationship because they want to get back to what it was.

Trauma Bond

This is the result of loving actions mixed with abuse. The brain gets addicted to the feel-good chemicals and we start to associate all the upheaval with love and passion.

This is why people go back to partners again and again.

Trauma bonds are a natural reaction to abuse. They are difficult to break and continue long after a relationship has ended. You may hold space for another and get triggered when hearing or seeing something associated with the other person.

For more, view the control wheel at: RevelstokeWomensShelter.ca



Projection

Projection is an insight into what an abuser is actually doing themselves.

The abuser unconsciously defends their unpleasant behaviours by attributing it to others. For example a rude person may accuse other people of being rude.

In a relationship, your partner may ask or accuse you of doing things that never occurred to you (like lying to them or cheating), which they are actually doing to you.

Gaslighting

Makes you question your reality. The term comes from the play/film Gaslight where a husband hides items and manipulates his wife into believing she is going insane.

Gaslighting invalidates your feelings and creates self-doubt. The gaslighter will justify their behaviour, deny, lie, or minimise your concerns so you feel like you're being over-sensitive.

When victims give in, they lose trust in themselves and their decision-making, ensuring they are easier to manipulate in the future.

HEALTHY

- Is there little emotional pain in the relationship?
- Is your life better with them in it?
- Do you trust and respect each other?
- Do you feel supported?
- Can you communicate easily and openly?
- Does your relationship recover quickly after an argument?
- Are you both able to apologise?
- Do you both have your own lives?

UNHEALTHY

- Did you feel happier before or at the start of the relationship?
- Do you make excuses or rationalise their behaviour?
- Do you feel bad about yourself?
- Are you afraid to upset them?
- Do you have intense feelings of love for them?
- Do you feel a lot of self-doubt and confusion?
- Are you isolating yourself from others?
- Do you find it a struggle to do things that you used to enjoy?
- Does thinking about the relationship consume your mental energy?

NARCISSISM: THE TOPIC OF OUR TIME

**Dr. Ramani discusses how it's really not you.
It's them.**

We all like attention, money and validation. But what happens when this desire becomes a necessity to our survival at all costs? Welcome to the world of a narcissist.

“It’s the topic of our time, it’s misunderstood and it is absolutely destroying people,” Dr. Ramani Durvasula says. “I don’t know a single human whose life hasn’t been touched by pathological narcissism.”

Dr. Ramani is a licensed clinical psychologist based in Los Angeles. She has written two books on the topic of narcissism and her presence online is growing as people flock to her YouTube channel.

But why the growth in interest? Narcissism isn’t new but we seem to be more aware of it and increasingly it is providing an answer to maddening and toxic relationships in our lives, whether that is with a colleague or boss, customers, a family member or an intimate partner.

“So many people are being hurt and devastated by relationships with toxic and narcissistic people,” Dr. Ramani says. “People who are empathic and strong are being devalued and invalidated so they think they’re not enough.”

The word narcissist gets thrown around and there is confusion with what it is. Being narcissistic can be a pattern of behaviour,

much like we’d say someone tends to be agreeable or sweet. We can all be narcissistic at times but the actual Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) is someone who is grandiose, entitled, lacks self-awareness and relies on validation.

“They regulate their self esteem from outside sources,” Dr. Ramani says.

If you think back to when you were a child or a teenager you might recollect how self-centred you were. This is when narcissism makes sense, when we have to think about ourselves for survival. But for those with NPD, they don’t grow out of this as adults.

Narcissists are made not born. They are both over and under indulged as children — praised for their achievements or looks yet they had no one addressing their emotional needs or ensuring that they were caring and responsible for their actions. There also may be trauma in their past.

NPD is listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), a handbook used by health care professionals. It is one

“So many people are being hurt and devastated by relationships with toxic and narcissistic people.”



Photo: Dr. Ramani Durvasula (TONE Networks)

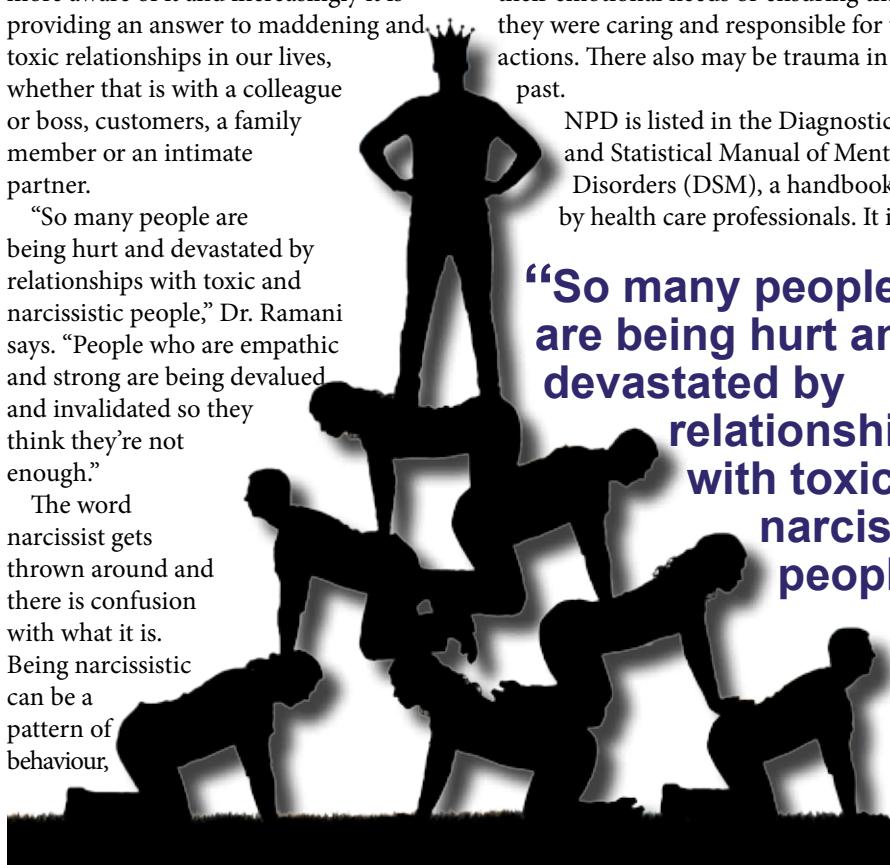
of four Cluster B personality disorders, which can overlap with one another. While the DSM-5 lists in detail the criteria for NPD, the brief explanation is that those with NPD feel entitled to special treatment. They have empathy but don’t use it unless it’s to their benefit.

“They have cognitive empathy,” Dr. Ramani says. “So they get it intellectually but not emotionally or behaviourally. They lack real understanding about how others are feeling from their actions.”

Narcissism skews more prominently in males, about 70 percent to 30 percent female.

The difficulty with narcissism is that a person can seem on the surface totally healthy, which makes their abuse confusing and others may reflect on their own actions instead.

Narcissists tend to do well in our society as their traits can be a recipe for success. Their grandiosity and lack of empathy ensures they can be cutthroat in business. Social media is also a source for the instant gratification and validation they crave.



Narcissists often:

		
Compete intensely	Lie compulsively	Need to be centre of attention
		
Need others to buy into their version of themselves	Blame others for their actions	Use others to serve their purpose
		
Do not invest emotionally in the needs of others	Freeze out people who do not do what they want	Isolate people they want to control

Are you vulnerable?

Narcissists look for:

- a) whether you will help them project a desired image to the world and,
- b) someone they can control.



They look for people who are:

- Kind, open, honest and trusting
- Are people pleasers
- See the best in people
- Are givers even at their own expense



When dealing with a narcissist:

- Don't argue with them.
- Don't personalise anything that they say
- Don't tell them they're a narcissist

Vector images: macrvector/Freepik, rawpixel.com/Freepik

Does any of this make you wonder if you might be a narcissist? Dr. Ramani believes our society has become more narcissistic but she says the difference is consistency and frequency of actions with little self reflection. "If you run on guilt or empathy, you're not a narcissist," Dr. Ramani says.

Narcissists come in different packages such as the overt, grandiose type known for being charming and successful, the covert, vulnerable type who can seem depressed, the malignant narcissist who has a sadistic streak, and many more.

Narcissists have trouble regulating their emotions and tend to be rageful. Yet they also have a child-like, vulnerable and needy side to them that allows their empathic victims to be captivated, becoming their protectors and cheerleaders.

But there is a darker side to their manipulations. Dr. Ramani believes that every domestic abuser is a narcissist. Furthermore, all sociopaths and psychopaths are narcissists.

In love with a narcissist

Early on, a relationship with a person with NPD can be exhilarating. The narcissist can be attentive to their partner's needs. This period is intense and the relationship moves quickly with the hallmarks of love bombing (see p.10).

The trouble occurs when the narcissist's mask falls. They depend on being idealised and relationships inevitably have conflict.

Narcissists don't accept criticism and they will view you as a threat if you want them to be accountable.

When you push back, you are no longer a reliable source of validation. If you leave, they will smear your name. You will be blamed and often accused of what they are doing to you. They will assert that they were honest and loving and that you threw their love away and acted without care for them. There will be zero responsibility taken for their actions, words and lies, regardless of what you discover they have really been up to.

Thus begins a cycle of valuing and devaluing, with partners becoming addicted to the good times. This is incredibly confusing and the psychological damage wears a person down. This can go on for years and often people don't realise this is abuse.

"We as humans are adaptive and adjust to toxic relationships," Dr. Ramani says. "We get used to a narcissist and it becomes our new normal. We are able to habituate to unhealthy circumstances."

The narcissist's need for validation means they will often cheat and lie with no regard for their partner and they will justify their behaviour.

"When you're a narcissist, you get bored," Dr. Ramani says. "Cheating is a great way to get new supply. And they feel entitled to cheat."

Narcissists don't love in the unconditional sense of that word. Their

relationships are more transactional.

"Narcissists view people as conveniences, opportunities and tools, and treat them accordingly," Dr. Ramani says. "When you are useful to a narcissist, he or she will leave you feeling as though the sun shines only on you. When they no longer need you, the sun will move behind a cloud."

At this time, there isn't a recognised treatment for NPD. Going to therapy and building their self-awareness and ability to empathise is seen as what they should do.

"But they won't, because they don't believe anything is wrong with them," Dr. Ramani says.

It is quite difficult for a narcissist to change, almost like a nice person trying to become mean. If a narcissist does find their way into a therapy office, often it's for couples counselling or to fix a problem in their life.

"We as humans are adaptive and adjust to toxic relationships."

Partners overly focus on their narcissist to their detriment, thinking they can love someone better.

"I think our problem is it is all about the second chances we give them, we're a bit too heavy handed with the forgiveness," Dr. Ramani says.

There is a place for compassion for the narcissist, because many of us couldn't fathom their internal torment. But as Dr. Ramani says, that doesn't mean becoming their punching bag.

"You can sympathize with the origins of the narcissist's pathology but in no way does that mean you need to stick around with them and endure their abuse," she says.

"I used to conflate the two and that led me down a path of crippling depression." *





PROVIDING GUIDANCE: Revelstoke Victim Services

Prevention and clarity in crisis

Revelstoke's Victim Services helps those in situations of abuse, even before a crime has been committed.

"Someone can raise a flag through our office," program manager Stephanie Melnyk says. "It can indicate that something may be serious and that helps us be ready before something happens."

Melnyk has been in her role for five years and this year Jessica Knopf joined the team on a part-time basis, increasing their services to our community.

Victim Services is a comprehensive provincial government service available to witnesses, victims or those wondering and wanting more information.

They are also part of Revelstoke's wraparound care. They work with community agencies such as the Revelstoke Women's Shelter Society or Community Connections and make referrals when needed.

Stephanie and Jessica provide guidance with the court system, help with navigating government forms and accessing programs such as the Crime Victims Assistance Program. They are there to guide those who may feel overwhelmed and are a safe, confidential place to unload without judgment.

"We're not counsellors but we can listen, reflect back and help someone prioritise what's next," Melnyk says.

Women and men access the service at a ratio of about 70:30, dealing with the whole spectrum of crime. "We're here to help and be on that person's side 100 per cent," Melnyk says.

The program in Revelstoke is police-based. In larger communities there is also a community-based service.

Turning to Revelstoke's Victim Services

Sheanna Moore, 28, tells her story of domestic abuse and how Stephanie and Jessica helped.



Photo: Sheanna Moore

In 2019 I found myself requiring the assistance of Victim Services. I never thought I would find myself in this situation. I have been told that I do not fit the stereotype of domestic abuse. But the truth is, there is no stereotype. It can happen to anyone.

I realized quickly that the average person is not equipped with the skills or knowledge to support victims of abuse.

Everyone in society understands that abuse is bad, but when it comes to talking about it, it makes people extremely

uncomfortable. I experienced people avoiding eye contact, changing the subject, telling me they didn't want to hear the details, and downplaying what I had to say.

People don't want to believe that someone they know is capable of this type of behaviour. Naturally, people want to give others the benefit of the doubt. It left me feeling unsupported and alone.

I found that I could turn to the women at Victim Services when I was trying to process everything that was happening. Stephanie helped me understand better what abuse looks like. She reinforced that I did the right thing by reporting the abuse

"I have been told that I do not fit the stereotype of domestic abuse. But the truth is, there is no stereotype."

and that the consequences of that were not my fault. I think there are a lot of victims that feel a sense of guilt for reporting the abuser.

They validated how I was feeling and gave helpful advice on how to handle

others around me. Their advice made a big difference on how I dealt with everything, which helped me move forward with my life. Most importantly, they listened to my truth and believed my truth, when others did not. I have the upmost respect and gratitude for these women.

I hope that more women have the courage to come forward and speak their truth because there is no shame in seeking this service.

Revelstoke's office is in the police station, which Melnyk says makes people think the two are fused and can be off-putting for those concerned with involving police. But she stresses that interactions are with her or Jessica and the individual coming to them is in control.

"There is absolutely nothing that needs to be shared with police or any other agency without the consent from that person," Melnyk says.

"We know how important it is, right from that first phone call, to build a relationship of trust and openness with the victim so they know what they can expect from the process. I find people appreciate that honesty and decide for themselves what they want to do."

One aspect in turning to a police-based victim services is that Melnyk can liaise with police if need be.

Restraining orders, or peace bonds as they are now known as since there is more to them than distance, are not easy to get as the other party has to agree to the terms. So instead Victim Services can provide help with safety planning and build an early relationship with police if need be.

Often the line between emotional abuse and physical violence is crossed when the victim decides to leave.

"The primary reason someone testifies about their experience is because they want the behaviour to stop."

"It's when the abuser believes they have lost control," Melnyk explains. "She may have left the house three months ago but if he still has power, the dangerous point hasn't been met yet. Yet when she says I'm leaving you, or she's standing up for herself, that's when they realise the control is slipping and that's when they would escalate and use a different tactic to get control back."

For cases where a crime has been committed and it's going through the court system, Victim Services provides direction. Some domestic violence cases don't make it to trial if crown counsel (the prosecutor appointed by the provincial government) has a strong case. The defence might aim for a middle ground, such as a guilty plea in exchange for a lesser sentence. In some cases this is done through a peace bond, which will have conditions such as no drinking or completion of a partner-assault response program. This means the offender receives no long-term criminal record but they do have a police file and they do have to enter a guilty plea.

"That never goes away," Melnyk says. "It's a really good thing when someone can stand up in court and say they're guilty, even if they don't believe it in the moment, as it can be a huge turning point for potential reform."

Melnyk is noticing more domestic violence and sexualized assault cases

Understanding rage

Anger is often first felt as fear or hurt but anger is the more socially acceptable emotion. Psychologist Mark Goulston explains in his book *Talking to Crazy* that violent people have a lack of object constancy.

"Object constancy is the ability to retain a positive attachment to another person even if you're disappointed, hurt or angry with them," he writes. "Violent people have a lower tolerance for frustration and lose all emotional and psychological connection with anyone who upsets them. When the connective link breaks, people become objects to be destroyed in the same way as one might smash a tennis racket to the ground following a lousy shot."

Dr Ramani Durvasula puts it simply in her book *Don't You Know Who I am: The ability to inflict harm and violence on someone they purport to love reflects the lack of a healthy psychological core and the presence of deep insecurity.*

going through the court system based on credible evidence such as witness testimony or the woman herself telling her story. "The primary reason someone testifies about their experience is because they want the behaviour to stop," Melnyk says. "They don't want others to be hurt in the future. It's an emotional process and not easy. It's a way to stand up to the violence they experienced."

Children who witness violence

Children are the first collateral victims of growing up in an abusive home. Later in life they suffer in the forms of chronic illnesses, higher suicide risks and likelihood of being victims or perpetrators of intimate-partner violence.

Between 30% and 70% of children exposed to domestic violence are also subjected to child abuse. But they don't need to witness it to be adversely affected.

A Canadian Department of Justice report notes, "The operative factor, identified by medical child development experts, is the level and effects of stress in the home."

Maclean's published an investigative piece on Canada's domestic violence crisis called *We Are The Dead* (Sept, 2019).



It includes the following quote from Australian journalist Jess Hill's book *See What You Made Me Do: Power, Control and Domestic Abuse*. "The unifying ingredient among abusers is a radioactive sense of entitlement. The animating force behind their violence is the belief that their feelings are more important than those of their partners and children."

Coercive control illegal elsewhere

England and Wales became the first countries, in 2015, to make it a crime to engage in coercive control with an intimate partner. In 2019, Scotland and Ireland followed suit.

Canada criminalizes harassment, assault, sexual assault, and stalking. The words "coercive" or "controlling behaviour" are not in the Criminal Code.

Professor Evan Stark, an American expert on the theory of coercive control, says it "achieves compliance by making victims afraid, depriving them of their rights, resources, and liberties."

Stark noted coercive control replaced domestic violence as the primary form of abuse when women gained some sort of equality in the home.

SUPPORTING YOURSELF

In an abusive situation, your positivity and light diminish slowly over time. Supporting yourself with kind and validating self talk (like how you'd speak to a child) is helpful.

Find comfort in doing things that you enjoy and boost your confidence.

Take the time to focus on yourself and your goals. Often we can spend our energy focusing on others and trying to decipher their actions. Getting knowledge helps to answer your questions. Understanding is the key to getting better. There is a plethora of books and YouTube videos that can help with this.

Dealing with others

Unfortunately those around you, while they may mean well, may not be the best to turn to as it can be difficult for them to understand your situation.

People often want to believe the best in others and may tell you to keep trying, that relationships take work. Sadly with abusive relationships, mature interactions and long-term change are often a mirage.

Others may also inadvertently place pressure on you to leave. Choose carefully who you confide in and consider turning to a professional counsellor.



SUPPORTING OTHERS

While it may be hard to stand by and watch someone stay in a bad situation, the best thing you can do to help is to be there for them with no judgment.

Allow a space where you can both be honest but don't make your observations something they need to act on. Often an abusive situation has enough stress and a pressure and anything more can make someone retreat.

Ways to support:

- Tell them if you're worried about them.
- Tell them if what's happening is wrong as they may think it is normal.
- Take them on activities that give their mind a break and boost their self esteem.
- Understand that they may often feel lonely and isolated. But if they are in an abusive intimate relationship, they are also likely to be trauma bonded (p. 10).
- Don't be impatient with them. Being in an abusive situation can be a long process spanning years.
- Don't feel like you have to choose sides. Simply provide support and

encouragement for someone you care about.

■ Monitor your own mental health. You're not a counsellor and you don't have to take on the role of a constant emotional shoulder.

■ Get outside help. Contact an agency such as the Revelstoke Women's Shelter Society, Moving Forward women's group, Moving Mountains men's group, a family doctor, Revelstoke Community Connections, or Revelstoke Victim Services.

■ Ask if they have a safety plan in case the worst-case scenario occurs. This includes having money in a separate bank account, having important documents (prescriptions, contracts, identification) in a safe spot, and a safe place to turn to.

BOUNDARIES

Boundaries are our defence against abuse and manipulation.

Our boundaries are what we deem appropriate behaviour. This will be different for everyone and you can tell when a boundary is being crossed when you feel uncomfortable.

Whether you listen to this feeling or not gives insight into where you could work on your relationship with yourself.

When you speak up to someone about feeling uncomfortable, their reaction will tell you about them. If they minimise your feelings or react negatively, this is someone to be careful around.

Abuse is a slippery slope of boundary crossing over time. Insecurity makes us vulnerable to abuse. If we believe that we need to prove ourselves or be more than we are, we are more likely to accept and rationalise boundary crossing and be easier to manipulate.

If you are a people pleaser, you may be so skewed in knowing what is healthy for yourself that maybe feeling bad, such as feeling guilty for saying no, may be an indicator that you have finally done something right for yourself.

BOOKS

All at Revelstoke Library. You can put a hold on these if they're checked out.

■ **Why Does He Do That** by Lundy Bancroft: Explains the minds of men who control and tear down their partners.

■ **When Love Hurts** by Jill Cory and Karen McAndee-Davis: Helps to clear your confusion and show you paths to regain control of your life. Includes helpful lists and worksheets.

■ **Emotional Blackmail** by Susan Forward: How to recognize and handle people, including those you care about, when they try to manipulate you.

■ **Boundaries** by Dr Wendy Cloud, Dr. John Townsend: How to set healthy boundaries with others and yourself. If the religious undertones are too much, try Anne Katherine's similar-titled book.

■ **The Gifts of Imperfection** by Brene Brown: An inspiring guide to feeling and believing you are worthy as you are.



Are you listening?

Often we focus more on the words someone is saying. To be a better listener, try to understand how they are feeling.

Listening doesn't mean we agree with them. They may be complaining or not making sense. And while we may feel an urge to fix, defend or give advice, we don't have to do anything. The other person may simply want to be heard.

This is how we grow connection, in accepting others and their feelings in that moment.

- Try to understand how they are feeling.
- Do this by paraphrasing what they have said, "so you feel like..." or ask "What are you feeling?" Allowing someone to define their feelings is a surprisingly impactful way of release.
- Sometimes we want to share our own experiences. While there may be similarities, it isn't the same and it can make the person's own situation seem unimportant. Wait until you have relaxed into general conversation before sharing.

Consider before giving advice

Advice can be detrimental as it suggests someone is incapable of thinking on their own. It also creates a dependency on the person with all the answers plus an expectation to follow through. If it's not, the person may feel they are a disappointment or not being smart.

Use your judgement to

determine times when advice is needed. Otherwise, trust someone to make their mistakes and be a steady force for them to turn to.

It's ok to care and worry that they will make wrong turns. If you feel the urge to problem solve ask, "What do you think you should do?" and help brainstorm.

Negative thoughts? Feeling like crap?

Here's a quick trick using cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) to uplift your mindset.

NEGATIVE THOUGHT	EVIDENCE THAT THIS IS TRUE	REBUTTAL (argument against this thought)

Social support goes virtual

Women's group goes online during pandemic

With Covid-19 stay-at-home precautions, Revelstoke women's group Moving Forward saw an increase in participation.

Local women connected via Zoom for their weekly painting and yoga classes and supported each other during the unusual time.

"That's what the program is about, having social contact in times of need to stay healthy mentally," program coordinator Anneliese Neweduk says.

Moving Forward gives women access to free activities and individual assistance, which can be different for everyone. The Revelstoke Women's Shelter Society receives funding through grants and donations. The group began in 2014 to help women transition from the shelter into the community. Today it has evolved to connect all Revelstoke women.

"You don't have to be experiencing domestic violence to get support from the shelter," Neweduk explains.

women

Neweduk has a degree in psychology and a background in social services. She's available to chat one-on-one and can refer women to other shelter services or resources in the community.

With her guidance during the pandemic, Moving Forward released a cookbook (see RevelstokeWomensShelter.com), distributed at-home art kits and planter pots, and sent weekly emails with resources and self-care tips.

The group offers a monthly schedule of activities with experienced teachers in trauma-informed yoga and meditation, art and music classes, plus outings to local performances.

"The program is available to women on an as-needed basis, drop in when you want," Neweduk says. "After you do free art for an hour, no-one leaves feeling bad."

In the future Neweduk hopes to

Support for



Anneliese Neweduk is the program coordinator for Moving Forward.



Moving Forward
movingforward@telus.net
 250-814-8387

Moving Forward participants did live art classes from home.

introduce workshops on finance and budgeting, tech literacy, journaling, cooking, and outdoor activities.

Moving Forward is held in its own space at the United Church on Mackenzie Avenue. If you walk by and the whiteboard is outside, feel free to drop in.

and



Moving Mountains men's group holds regular campfires with the Aboriginal Friendship Society.
Photo: Alex Cooper.

Men experience abuse too

Gary's ex-wife often hit him and called him names

Gary's* (*name changed) ex-wife punched him during the fifth year of their relationship.

"You're already hitched, you already have a family," he explains. "That first time you get hit, you make excuses. Oh they were super stressed out."

Gary experienced what this magazine is about. An abusive relationship that started out perfect and then slowly deteriorated.

"The start was unreal, nothing ever went wrong," Gary says. "The rest of relationship, well you're holding onto the past."

Men and women have similar stories of abuse, indicating perpetrators are not similar in gender but rather in their choice of actions and ability to find someone open and trusting to control.

Women's shelters exist for many reasons including the difference in physicality between men and women. One in three women experience physical abuse from an intimate partner, yet one in four men do

(statistic from the U.S., 2010).

Previous societal expectations of women, such as being submissive to their husbands, have remnants and stigma attached today, as do men's roles. "We're raised to not cry, shake it off," Gary says. "You're told you better have a strong set of shoulders because you hold people together, you're a man."

Interpersonal qualities that keep us healthy, such as kindness, compassion, respect, vulnerability, and warmth are often devalued for men, labelled as weak. As Gary points out, he feels that stereotypical masculinity has been entrenched for generations.

"I feel like a lot of emotional stuff never gets talked about with guys," he says. "We go for beers, get drunk and sleep on a friend's couch."

Gary was afraid of losing his children and he says that's why he stuck around longer than he wanted to.



Taha Attiah is the program coordinator of men's support group Moving Mountains.

Men's issues

Men's group Moving Mountains has been running in Revelstoke since 2018, with Taha Attiah as the program coordinator.

"We are open, accepting and flexible," he says. "We aim to help men feel welcomed for who they are. Over time, men learn that they can drop their guard. The result is a refreshing change from the conversations we have in other areas of life."

Attiah provides one-on-one support on the phone or in-person and the group meets throughout the week. It also moved online in response to Covid-19.

"Our group comes from many walks of life, so issues vary," Attiah says. "We talk about health, relationships, work, family life, and more. There is a lot of wisdom shared and the perspective gained in our group can be life changing."

For Attiah, the success is evident in the community it has formed. "Ride shares, help finding housing, job hunting, and more," he says. "When people feel comfortable and welcome enough to ask for help — that's the kind of trust that shows a group like this is succeeding."

"You feel helpless all the time," he says. "You can't breathe without permission, you can't just walk out the door because if you do that you're a bad dad and you're never going to see your kids again."

Gary feels there isn't enough resources for men but also is unsure if he would access them if there were.

Men

Moving Mountains
movingmountains@telus.net
250-837-1572

Local Services

RevelstokeLife.ca

Comprehensive list with information of local health and social services

RevelstokePrivateMHProviders

.weebly.com

Find a local counsellor

RevelstokeCYMHSU.wordpress.com

Child and Youth Mental Health and Substance Use Collaborative

Community Connections

Counselling, food bank, family development support, housing assistance
314 Second St E, 250-837-2920

Community-Connections.ca

Revelstoke Victim Services

Support through crisis and court system
250-837-9260, victim.services@revelstoke.ca

Salmon Arm Victim Services

1-250-832-0005 (community-based)

Revelstoke Women's Shelter Society

Transition house, resources regarding abuse, emotional support
24/7 Helpline: 250-837-1111, Office: 250-837-4382, forsythe@telus.net

Moving Forward

Local women's shelter women's group. Social activities and emotional support.
250-814-8387, movingforward@telus.net

Moving Mountains

Local men's group. Social activities and emotional support.
250-837-1572, movingmountains@telus.net

Men's Campfire Group

Revelstoke Aboriginal Friendship Society
250-814-7990

Community Response Network

Education and prevention of elder and vulnerable adults abuse and neglect
revycrn@gmail.com

Ministry of Child and Family

Development, Revelstoke

250-837-7612

Revelstoke RCMP (police)

404 Campbell Ave
Emergency: 911, Office: 250-837-5255

Health Services

Queen Victoria Hospital

24/7 emergency care, morning-after pill, STI & pregnancy tests
1200 Newlands Road, 250-837-2131

Sexual Health Clinic

STI tests, birth control, pap screening, pregnancy testing
Wednesday evenings
#201, 101 First St W, 250-814-3854

Selkirk Medical Group

Family doctors
#201, 101 First St W, 250-837-9321, SelkirkMedicalGroup.ca

Dr. Lora Cruise

Family doctor
222 First St E, 250-837-7997, DrLoraCruise.com