

EXPLORING YOUR FULL SEXUAL POTENTIAL, PART 22: WHEN NEEDY BECOMES NASTY



It is difficult and shameful to acknowledge that you are needy. You do everything you can to gently help other people out. But you remain unseen. Even worse is handling the frustration that this leads to. There is anger and resistance. You are more angry than people realize, you can become nasty and because of this the shame keeps on growing.



Gregor from Poland wrote to me:

"I know that there was rage in my life. My wife, Susan, still thinks that is what I am like. She fears saying something or doing something that lets the green monster of the Hulk out of his container. I think I am no longer that guy ... for the most part. But the fear remains in Susan. Sometimes, I wonder: is the green monster part of me truly gone, or have I just learned to repress it, which is what Susan possibly feels."

What is the tension that Susan senses? Who is this green Hulk? Is he dangerous, and need we fear him? How can we change?

1. The harm of Squaw Camp

Men who struggle with SSA's have not left the female world, Squaw Camp, at an early age whilst most other young boys aged 2 to 4 did. Although Squaw Camp feels comfortable, it also causes infinite jealousy of male peers and a natural longing for another life, a real male life. At age 11 or 12, the yearning becomes romantic and gets sexualized. This constitutes the mechanism of same-sex attractions; this is the coping mechanism by which you feel good about yourself in spite of dwelling in Squaw Camp.

In that camp of childhood, boys who never left had to become compliant good little boys in order to fit in. But that adjustment goes at a price, namely anger and rage, deep down inside. No wonder Gregor feels there is this Hulk, this green monster, lying dormant. He is aware, but not aware. Shame hides his inner self from view.



In the previous part we saw how we became generous helpers and caretakers in order to be accepted and loved in Squaw Camp. But what if the response does not lead to love and acceptance? What if there is no gratitude? What if we are taken for granted?

We may very well find ourselves becoming resentful and angry at the person we have so generously “helped.” We’ve done something we didn’t want to do, we’ve done something that was not our responsibility to do, we’ve ignored our own needs and wants, and we get angry about it.

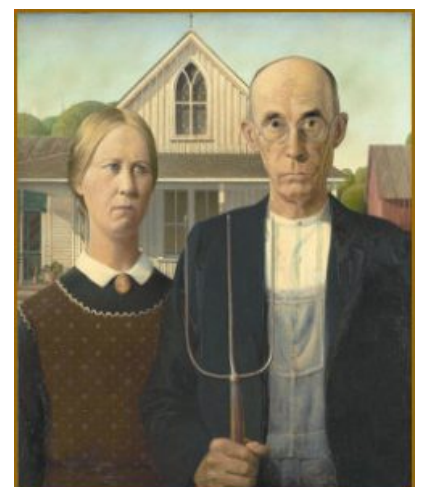
We receive no admiration for our help, not enough appreciation for the sacrifice we have made. The victim isn’t behaving the way he or she should. This person is not even taking our advice, which we offered so readily.

In her book on codependency, Melody Beattie writes:

“This person is not letting us fix that feeling. Something doesn’t work right or feel right, so we rip off our halos and pull out our pitchforks.”

2. The Pitchfork

Talking of pitchforks, in a famous American painting ‘*American Gothic*’ by Grant Wood in 1930, we see two very law-abiding looking rural people, posing ever so saintly. But the man has already pulled out the pitchfork. Do you think he is heavily codependent too? (kidding).



It was actually the painter’s dentist. We can imagine how this man in the painting is feeling very disappointed about how his kind behavior over the years has not been valued at all. His

wife standing next to him, looks concerned about his reaction. What a big pitchfork, and what a suppressed anger in his face!

There is no denying any more! Susan was right: there is a green monster inside.

To a large extent, we all can be Gregor at some time in our life. By being taken for granted by the people who we try to rescue and save, we feel disappointment, if not to say anger and dismay. Sometimes we do our best to hide it. But sometimes we let loose our fire and fury.

Susan was afraid, and still is afraid of the rage lurking inside her husband. After all, she probably had experienced it at some point. And truth is, we show our fierceness particularly with family members. Something about family tends to bring out the real us.

Whether we show, hide, or partially hide our agitation and resentment, we are aware of something going on.

More often than not, the people we rescue sense our shift in mood. And then a weird interaction occurs which adds to the negative feelings of the rescuer.

The persons who we view as incapable victims, respond to our anger. Usually it is a response to our taking responsibility for that person, which directly or indirectly tells him or her how incapable we believe he or she is. People resent being told or shown they are incompetent, no matter how loudly they plead incompetency. And they resent us for adding insult to injury by becoming angry with them after we point out their incompetency. It can lead to a major explosion. We can, and many of us do, rescue on a daily basis.

3. Daily fatigue

Matthew from Ohio wrote about our previous article on 'Being Needy':

"Hugely insightful article. Brings a lot of insight into daily causes of emotional strain and fatigue."

What daily causes of strain and fatigue is Matthew possibly hinting at?

We know that some of us become so tired from the enormous burden – total responsibility for all human beings – that we may skip the feelings of pity and concern that accompany the rescue act and move ahead to anger.

The cycle consists of our giving more than we receive. Then we feel abused and neglected because of it. We wonder why, when we anticipate the needs of others, no one notices our

needs. We may become seriously depressed as a result of not getting our needs met.

We feel anger and resentment toward potential victims. We may even be angry all the time. A person with a need or problem provokes us to feel we have to do something or feel guilty. After a rescue, hostility toward this uncomfortable predicament bubbles up. There are so many contradictory feelings to manage, to juggle, to process and yet to hide, that we feel stressed, tired and burned out.

Strangely enough, a good caretaker feels safest when giving, not when receiving. We may even feel guilty and uncomfortable when someone gives to us or when we do something to meet our needs. We feel it is not our job to meet our own needs: we are following our own little private computer-script in which it is our job to be sacrificial. The other did not ask for the help or the rescue; it is our computer-script compelling us to do this.

4. The negative outcome

The outcome of the computer-script is a disaster. Mr. Nice Guy becomes frustrated, and ultimately resentful and nasty. Caretaking breeds anger. Caretakers become angry parents, angry friends, angry lovers. We may become unsatisfied, frustrated, and confused. We end up in turmoil. Ultimately, we become the victim of our own behavior. We may even get angry if someone refuses to be "helped". *"Okay", so we yell, "have it your way. It is your decision, but please remember that I told you so!"*

And so, Mr. Nice Guy marches off in anger, creating much fear in the person who indeed did not ask, nor want, the "help" so generously and sacrificially offered.

And for Mr. Nice Guy, the feelings of being loved and embraced are even farther away than ever. The computer-script has failed to deliver. But he knows no other way. Life becomes heavy.

"Why does this always happen to me?", so you feel. After all, you do everything you can to spontaneously help people out, but at the end of the day you are seen as a sissy. You end up being told you are not male enough, not a jerk enough, not a real man enough. Or you even sense this conclusion with no words said. As a consequence you find yourself heading back for Squaw Camp with your tail between your legs. Perhaps tomorrow everything will be better.

Shall we forever be victims? The root cause is the rescuing and caretaking. These are roles and tasks that you have come to set for yourself, but when they become a compulsion, an automatism and the default mode of operation, then this behavior leads to its opposite. The frustration that this rescuing behavior generates, causes anger and nastiness, and when these

feelings are expressed, then emotional needs are even less met than they were before. You have created a treadmill, a vicious circle, and a hopeless one at that. You have become codependent. In doing so, you eventually become a victim. The truth is, you are victimizing yourself.

It is an old feeling, ingrained at an early age, but the cause is not hopeless. It is merely a matter of gaining insight, of gazing at truths, and sometimes allowing a process of grieving.

It can get even worse.

5. The emerging of narcissism

Chuck from New York wrote to me:

"I have some questions. I've known "needy" SSA guys, but I've also known very self-involved narcissistic SSA guys who do very little for anyone but themselves. Is the narcissism covering up the neediness or are there several types of SSA guys and some who don't follow the scenario you've expressed in the article on being needy?"

Chuck is right: there is more to be said. Although generalizing can be tricky, we need to see that the childhood neediness can lead to nastiness. And there are various ways that this can express itself.

When neediness gets a nasty flavor, we must nevertheless realize that sadness is the common theme, humming in the background. The nastiness can become very pervasive, but at all times it has understandable roots.

More often than not, a dysfunctional family lies at the root of the longing and yearning of men who experience SSA. The affirmation of the child for who he genuinely is, had strings attached. The parental love was there, but it was conditional. For a multitude of reasons, the parents were needy themselves, and the child got caught in the middle of the parental needy relationships. The family structure is called a narcissistic-triad family structure.

In these cases, one or both parents have great narcissistic needs, and they see children as an extension of their own person. They feel they have rights (thereby turning the tables around in the family), the right to be admired, to be cared for, to be made proud, and to have children who generate a perfect looking family. The child must fulfill narcissistic fantasies of an ideal home, and it is the child's job to live up to those wishes and expectations. Only then can the child receive some love and approval, but there are strings attached and the parent can withdraw and wallow in self-pity at the drop of a hat.

The child can become a disappointment. At an early age he experiences the extent to which the parent can show rage and fury when a narcissistic blow has been inflicted by the child. He becomes a bad child, an insufferable child, a hopeless child and is, more often than not, sent to his room, excluded from the family circle. No brats are allowed in the living room when parental feelings have been hurt.

The extent to which this family drama takes place, the frequency, the viciousness, the selfishness and the plain egoism of a dysfunctional parent, is a decisive factor in the psychological development of the child from that moment on.

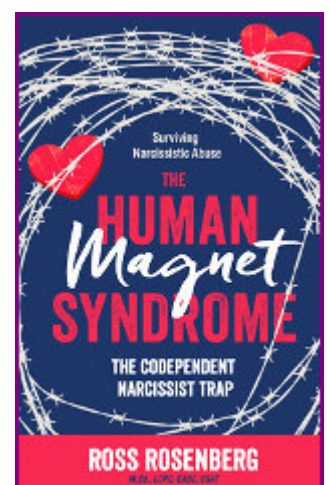
6. Different outcomes

The ball can roll different ways, and to answer Chuck's question mentioned above, the outcome can vary from sad, to nasty, and perhaps in some children even to the development of a narcissistic emotional manipulator. The child's personality traits may become as ugly as the parents' traits were.

If the child was able to adapt to the narcissistic parental demands by becoming the gifted or pleasing child, then he will likely become a codependent. A people-pleaser is born, a fixer, a cooperative caretaker who hardly knows what his own emotional needs look like. He may even have forgotten that he has needs at all. This can be seen as a dysfunctional outcome, and a very sad state of mind, hopelessly and eternally caught in the self-sacrificing nice guy pose. We witness a guy being incessantly nice when occasionally he should be more reserved or selfish.

But the turn of events can be even more dramatic. He can become a bad child forever. In his book 'The Human Magnet Syndrome' Ross Rosenberg states:

"The emotional manipulator parent will hold a grudge against their seemingly broken and imperfect child who they will forever experience as embarrassing and disappointing. Because of this child's "imperfections," the narcissistic parent's self-serving and selfish needs for affirmation, recognition and praise will not be actualized. This poor and defenseless child will, therefore, be destined to experience a much harsher, more desolate and more neglectful or abusive childhood than the "gifted" and "pleasing" child.



Sadly, the developmental path of the future emotional manipulator adult is more traumatic and psychologically damaging than its gifted counterpart. Since this child is unable to

live up to his parental fantasies, he is unfairly labeled as disappointing and difficult – labels that are inaccurate pronouncements of his value to the parent and, ultimately, to himself. This egregiously damaging verdict will eventually become the basis for the child's own self-contempt and deeply damaged self-esteem. Over time, the child will internalize his parent's mistreatment of him and begin to agree with the emotional manipulator parent that he is indeed disappointing, ungrateful and damaged. This is a label that is likely to stick for a lifetime."

This child will become narcissistic himself, viciously fighting to attain love from others, and realizing that his reaction is never enough. So he never even tries to give something back, because the cause (to please others) is hopeless.

This child does not give (as the codependent child does), he has no confidence in that approach, so by trial and error he has learned to just take.

He takes center stage, he takes attention, he takes the top-dog position, he has learned to love himself if no-one else is apparently prepared to do so, and he demands to be applauded. He doesn't wait for it, he has learned to manipulate it, need be. He grows into an emotional manipulator, the only way to get his emotional needs met (after all, life is short).

A deep resentment, a profound sadness, an emotional shortage of love, and an over-acting to cover up the loneliness, traumas and shame of the past, form a mental turmoil, often too contorted for the individual to figure out. So denial and emotional numbness (disassociation) set in, two ways in which the mind can delete traumatic memories and move on (without resolving the painful issues themselves).

We see this behavior quite often at Gay Pride Parades, where being the center-stage drama queen, viciously demanding attention and showing outrageous behavior as a kind of middle finger stuck in the air toward the onlooking crowd, conceal a hurting soul.

Rosberg writes:

"Without these defenses, the child, and the adult he will become, will not only remember the trauma, but will also emotionally re-experience the debilitating shame, anger, loss of hope and desperation that they experienced during the trauma.

Because the resulting embarrassment, shame, self-hatred, neediness and the expansive reservoirs of rage are too unbearable to accept (consciously experience), they are consigned to the dark expanses of the unconscious mind, locked behind iron-reinforced concrete walls of denial – resisting any attempts at expression or recovery. Only through a selfish and egotistic approach to others (relationships) could they feel good about them-

selves.

The ability to manipulate or exploit others, combined with an exaggerated sense of their own importance, helped them to survive their traumatic childhood. These repressed feelings (and memories) will only see the light of day through bouts of deep depression, narcissistic rage or with experienced psychotherapists."

7. Conclusion

Addressing the subject of past hurts and shattered dreams are part of the problem-solving process. We need to admit the neediness, and to stop fooling ourselves that all was well in our lives. We need to acknowledge unmet emotional needs, and to allow feelings of grief and deprivation to come to the surface. We need to stop rescuing others and learn to see that rescuing is merely a cover-up for our own neediness and sense of deprivation. We need to accept that affirmation was not sufficiently conveyed to us in the years when we were dependent on adults.

We are the adults now, and we must start taking care of ourselves, first and foremost. And if we find ourselves using emotional manipulation as an instrument of interaction in order to protect ourselves, we need to learn to trust others; we are no longer a dependent child.

To be continued.

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