

DIVORCE COACHING:
Your Roadmap to
Healing, Clarity, and
Strength



*A guided journey to rebuilding your
identity and confidence after separation*

BY RAQUEL SOTELDO, RP

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Introduction

If you grew up with a narcissistic parent or survived emotionally abusive relationships, you may still carry patterns that affect every part of your life — self-doubt, guilt, hypervigilance, people-pleasing, or fear of conflict. I specialize in helping adults heal the deep, lasting impact of narcissistic abuse, toxic family systems, and generational trauma.

About My Practice:

My name is *Raquel Soteldo*. I am a *registered psychotherapist, divorce coach, and family mediator in Ontario*. I am a *founder of Soteldo Psychotherapy Clinic and Director of Narcissistic Abuse Recovery Clinic Canada™*. My clinic offers specialized care for survivors of narcissistic parents, emotionally immature families, and high-conflict or manipulative relationship dynamics. My approach integrates psychotherapy, trauma recovery work, hypnotherapy, and coaching to help you rebuild confidence, boundaries, and identity clarity.

Areas I Support:

- Narcissistic family systems
- Adult children of narcissistic caregivers
- Complex trauma & CPTSD
- Identity loss, shame, and inner-child wounds
- Trauma bonds and emotional confusion
- High-conflict separation & divorce coaching
- Trauma-informed family mediation

Therapeutic Approach:

I offer a steady, validating, and structured path forward that blends trauma-informed psychotherapy with evidence-based strategies, emotional stabilization, and practical tools. Clients describe the process as grounding, eye-opening, and “finally being understood.”

Next Steps:

Virtual sessions available across Ontario.

Reach out to schedule a consultation.

Book here: [Soteldotheapy.janeapp.com](https://www.soteldotheapy.janeapp.com)



About Me



Hi, I'm **Raquel Soteldo, RP**

Founder, Soteldo Psychotherapy Clinic

Director, Narcissistic Abuse Recovery Clinic Canada™

I help smart, capable people untangle themselves from the emotional chaos of narcissistic and high-conflict relationships—so they can rebuild a life that actually feels like theirs.

For over a decade, my work has focused on the intersection of attachment wounds, trauma, and relational abuse, especially in the context of separation, divorce, and co-parenting with difficult or narcissistic ex-partners. I combine deep clinical training with practical, coaching-style strategies to support clients who are not just surviving a breakup—they're rebuilding an entire identity.

My Professional Background

I am a Registered Psychotherapist (RP) with a Master's degree in Counselling Psychology and specialized training in:

- Narcissistic abuse and coercive control
- Trauma-informed and attachment-based therapy
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and third-wave CBT approaches
- Behavioural interventions and systems-focused work with families and couples
- Clinical supervision, consultation, and program development

Over the years, I've worked in:

- Private practice, supporting adults, couples, and families
- Clinical programs, including behaviour-based interventions and mental health services
- Consulting and training, teaching clinicians how to assess and treat narcissistic abuse and high-conflict dynamics

As the Founder of Soteldo Psychotherapy Clinic, I lead a growing group practice dedicated to trauma-informed, evidence-based care. As Director of Narcissistic Abuse Recovery Clinic Canada™, my focus is on research-informed, structured recovery pathways for survivors of narcissistic and high-conflict relationships.

What I Do Now

My work now centres on two main pillars:

1. Psychotherapy & Recovery Work

- Helping clients process emotional, psychological, and relational trauma
- Supporting people through separation and divorce from narcissistic or high-conflict partners
- Addressing anxiety, depression, self-doubt, and identity wounds that come from years of emotional abuse

2. Divorce Coaching for High-Conflict & Narcissistic Dynamics

- Guiding clients through the emotional and strategic side of separation
- Helping you understand what's "normal" vs. what's manipulative or abusive
- Supporting you in creating boundaries, safety plans, and communication strategies
- Preparing for mediation, court-related stress, and ongoing co-parenting with a difficult ex

My style blends clinical depth with clear, direct, and actionable coaching. I won't just nod and say "tell me more"—I will help you name what's happening, understand the patterns behind it, and design a concrete plan to move forward.

My Approach in Session

Clients often describe my approach as:

- Warm, grounded, and non-judgmental – You can bring the messy, contradictory parts of your story. I expect it.
- Psychoeducational – I explain why things are happening, not just what you feel. When you understand the psychology, you stop personalizing someone else’s pathology.
- Structured and strategic – Especially in high-conflict divorces, we work with timelines, scripts, and realistic, step-by-step action plans.
- Empowering – My goal is that you leave sessions with more clarity, more language for your experience, and more confidence in your sanity and decisions.

You will never be told to “just communicate better” with someone who is actively harming or destabilizing you. We honour reality, not fantasy.

Who I Work Best With

I am an especially good fit if you:

- Are in, leaving, or recovering from a narcissistic or high-conflict relationship
- Are navigating separation, divorce, or co-parenting with an ex who is controlling, manipulative, or emotionally abusive

- Second-guess yourself constantly and struggle with gaslighting, self-doubt, and guilt
 - Are outwardly high-functioning but inside feel exhausted, confused, or broken
 - Want both emotional support and practical tools—not one or the other

Many of my clients are professionals, parents, caregivers, and leaders who are used to being the “strong one.” They often say, “I should have known better” or “I help others with their problems—how did this happen to me?”

Part of our work is dismantling that shame and helping you see how very understandable it is to get pulled into these dynamics—and how possible it is to rebuild.

Why I Care About This Work

I’ve sat with countless clients who whisper, “No one has ever understood this before,” or “Everyone else thinks I’m overreacting.” Narcissistic and high-conflict dynamics are often minimized or misunderstood, even in mental health and legal systems.

My mission is to:

- Give language to what you’ve lived through
- Validate the invisible and often prolonged forms of abuse
- Help you rebuild your sense of self, safety, and dignity
- Offer a path forward that is evidence-informed, compassionate, and realistic

This isn't just about getting through a breakup. It's about reclaiming your life, your body, your mind, and your future.

Beyond the Therapy Room

Outside of direct client work, I:

- Train and supervise other clinicians in narcissistic abuse and high-conflict dynamics
- Develop workshops and programs for therapists, organizations, and community groups
- Design structured recovery frameworks and tools for people going through separation and divorce from narcissistic partners

My hope is that you don't just feel better—you feel better equipped. My work is always guided by a blend of research, clinical wisdom, and real-life practicality.

If You're Reading This, You Don't Have to Do This Alone

If you're in the middle of a separation, contemplating leaving, or trying to recover from a relationship that has left you doubting your own reality, you are not "too much," "too sensitive," or "crazy."

I'm here to walk with you through:

- Clarity – understanding what you're dealing with
- Stabilization – reducing chaos, panic, and reactivity
- Strategy – making thoughtful, informed decisions for you and, if applicable, your children
- Healing – reconnecting to your values, identity, and capacity for safe, reciprocal love

If this resonates with you, I'd be honoured to support you—through psychotherapy, specialized narcissistic abuse recovery work, or divorce coaching tailored to high-conflict and narcissistic dynamics.

Contents

Sections 1–2: Understanding

You gain clarity about the patterns and psychological dynamics.

Sections 3–4: Stabilizing

You learn trauma responses, safety planning, and emotional regulation.

Sections 5–6: Strategizing

You gain tools for communication, court, and co-parenting.

Sections 7–8: Rebuilding

You begin identity restoration and future-relationship readiness

Final Section: Integrating

You shift from surviving to leading your own life.



01

“Why Divorcing a Narcissist Is Different (and Why You Are Not “High Conflict)”

Divorcing a narcissistic partner is unlike any other separation. It is not a simple ending of a relationship — it is the dismantling of a psychological system built on power, control, and emotional domination. Many survivors describe this stage as “escaping the relationship while still being held hostage by the legal system.” This experience is not a reflection of your competence, intelligence, or emotional capacity. It is a known pattern documented across decades of clinical research and intimate partner violence (IPV) literature.

As a psychotherapist specializing in narcissistic abuse recovery for over 20 years, and as the Founder of Soteldo Psychotherapy Clinic and the Director of the Narcissistic Abuse Recovery Clinic Canada™, I have supported hundreds of survivors who believed something was wrong with them— only to realize that what they endured was a strategic pattern of psychological manipulation, not an ordinary relationship breakdown.

The key to navigating this kind of divorce is understanding the dynamics at play. When you understand the why, you gain the vision, clarity, and groundedness needed to make strategic, protective decisions for yourself and your children.



The Narcissistic Divorce Pattern

Research repeatedly shows that individuals with narcissistic traits demonstrate:

- Lower empathy
- Poor emotional regulation
- Higher entitlement
- Increased likelihood of infidelity
- More game-playing in relationships
- Reflexive blame-shifting
- A fragile sense of self-esteem masked by grandiosity

These traits—especially when entrenched—are linked with higher levels of psychological aggression, coercive control, and post-separation abuse (Dinić et al., 2023; Willis et al., 2023).

When the relationship ends, the narcissistic partner does not perceive it as an ending. They perceive it as:

- A threat to their ego
- A challenge to their control
- A loss of supply
- A public humiliation
- A wound that must be “corrected”

Because of this, they often escalate behaviours rather than withdraw. Where a typical divorce involves grief, negotiation, and closure, a narcissistic divorce becomes a battleground for dominance.



You may see patterns such as:

- Sudden refusal to negotiate
- Endless legal threats
- False allegations
- Weaponizing the children
- “Accidental” financial sabotage
- Rewriting history to portray you as unstable
- Public smear campaigns
- Triangulation through lawyers, family, or social media

Studies on legal abuse show that abusers often use court systems as an extension of coercive control (Gutowski & Goodman, 2023). This is not you “being dramatic”—it is a recognized framework within IPV research.

You Are Not High Conflict — You Are Being Targeted

Family court systems often categorize these cases as “high conflict,” implying mutual dysfunction. However, extensive literature on coercive control and post-separation abuse documents that, in many cases, one partner is driving the conflict while the other is attempting to maintain stability, safety, and sanity (Douglas, 2018; Elizabeth, 2019).

Let this be clear:

**You are not high-conflict.

You are being dragged into conflict.**

Most survivors are the calmer, more compliant, more organized parent — often the primary caregiver. But because narcissistic patterns involve:

- Blame
- Smear campaigns
- DARVO (Deny, Attack, Reverse Victim and Offender)
- Projection
- Pathological lying

...the survivor often appears emotionally overwhelmed, while the abuser appears composed, polished, charming, and convincing.

This is a paradox recognized in research as abuse-generated instability, where trauma symptoms (anxiety, tears, confusion) are misinterpreted as pathology rather than a survival response.

You're not unstable.

You're responding normally to an abnormal situation.

Divorce Coaching Reframe: You Are the CEO of This Transition

In divorce coaching with narcissistic abuse survivors, I teach a specific mindset:

**Your ex is predictable.

Your strategy must be intentional.**

You do not need to:

- be more flexible,
- be more empathetic,
- be more patient,
- or learn to co-parent with someone who refuses to be a parent.



You need:

- ✓ A strategic plan
- ✓ Predictive understanding of narcissistic patterns
- ✓ Communication scripts
- ✓ Nervous system regulation tools
- ✓ Documentation systems
- ✓ A legal-psychological lens
- ✓ A coaching structure that keeps you grounded

This workbook gives you the framework.

Coaching sessions personalize it to your case.

SECTION 1 — Exercises

Exercise 1: Naming the Pattern, Not the Person

This exercise shifts your mindset from self-blame to pattern recognition — one of the most powerful tools in recovery.

Step 1 — List three behaviours that destabilized you during the relationship or separation.

Examples:

- Sudden rage over small requests
- Changing the narrative after every argument
- Insults hidden inside “jokes”
- Threatening to “take the kids”
- Stonewalling important discussions

List here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Step 2 — Categorize each behavior using these labels:

- Gaslighting
- Intimidation
- Financial Control
- Legal Abuse
- Parental Manipulation
- Emotional Withholding

Categorize here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Step 3 — Write this sentence underneath each:

“This is a pattern of abuse, not a reflection of my worth.”

Bring this exercise to your coaching session. We will use it to build your *Court-Safe Narrative*, which is essential in high-conflict cases.



Exercise 2: “Why I’m Leaving / Why I’m Staying Gone” Letter

This exercise strengthens your clarity and commitment.

Prompt:

Write a one-page letter to your present self or future self answering:

- What did staying cost me emotionally?
- What did staying cost me physically?
- What did staying cost me financially?
- What did staying teach my children?
- What could returning to this dynamic cost my future?

Purpose:

This letter becomes:

- an anchor on difficult days,
- a regulatory tool during legal intimidation,
- and a protective reminder during hoovering attempts.

Write here:

In coaching, we refine this into a Personal Impact Statement, which many clients use effectively during mediation, therapy, and even court evaluations.

Case Vignette (De-Identified)

Maria, a client in her mid-40s, spent years believing she needed to “communicate better” with her narcissistic ex-partner. During divorce, he filed 11 motions in 18 months, accused her of alienation, and demanded full custody despite being minimally involved for years. Maria believed she was failing.

In coaching, we reframed:

- Her anxiety = trauma response, not dysfunction
- His litigation pattern = legal abuse, not parenting concern
- Her fear of speaking up = conditioned compliance

With structure and coaching, Maria:

- documented confidently,
- responded strategically,
- stopped reacting emotionally,
- protected her children’s routines, and
- settled with majority decision-making and a parallel-parenting structure.

You can learn these same skills.

You don’t need to “be stronger.”

You need a system — and that’s what this workbook provides.



02

Understanding Narcissism & Narcissistic Abuse Dynamics

To divorce a narcissist effectively, you must understand the psychological mechanisms behind their behaviour. Not just the label — the function. Narcissism exists on a spectrum, from traits to full Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD). Most abusive partners are never diagnosed. Their behaviors often exist in the grey zone of pathological narcissism, marked by chronic entitlement, emotional volatility, and exploitative relational patterns.

The Psychology of Narcissistic Abuse

1. Idealization: “You’re perfect, as long as you worship me.”

At the beginning, narcissistic individuals often present as:

- intensely charming
- attentive
- affectionate
- deeply connected

This phase forms rapid attachment and often mirrors your deepest desires. Research refers to this as love-bombing—a process where intense attention creates accelerated emotional bonding and dependency.



2. Devaluation: “You’re the problem.”

Once the narcissist feels secure or bored:

- criticism increases
- empathy decreases
- your needs are framed as demands
- your emotions become burdensome
- moving goalposts become constant

Gaslighting peaks in this phase.

Studies show narcissism is significantly correlated with gaslighting behaviors (Dinić et al., 2023).

3. Discard & Hoovering: “I’m done — unless I need supply.”

This can happen once or in cycles.

You may experience:

- sudden coldness
- affairs
- public humiliation
- silent treatment
- abrupt abandonment

...but also:

- tearful apologies
- promises of change
- “You’re my soulmate” messages
- attempts to draw you back in

This intermittent reinforcement is psychologically addictive. Trauma bonding is well-documented in IPV research.



Trauma Bonding: Why You Stayed

Staying in a narcissistic relationship does not reflect weakness.
It reflects neurobiological conditioning

Trauma bonding is driven by:

- cycles of reward & punishment
- inconsistent affection
- fear of abandonment
- cognitive dissonance
- isolation
- erosion of self-worth

This is the SAME cycle used in:

- cult dynamics
- hostage relationships
- authoritarian systems

Your brain adapted to survive.

Coaching helps break this conditioning safely and systematically.

Understanding Manipulation Tactics

Gaslighting

A systematic pattern of undermining reality.
Not confusion — *control*.

Projection

They accuse you of what they are doing.

DARVO

Deny, Attack, Reverse Victim and Offender — a manipulation tactic extensively supported in clinical literature.

Triangulation

Bringing a third party (family, lawyer, even the children) into the dynamic to destabilize you.

Smear Campaigns

Narcissists protect their public image at all costs.

Controlling the Narrative

You may be portrayed as:

- unstable
- dramatic
- alienating
- emotionally reactive

When in reality, these symptoms are often trauma responses to abuse.

SECTION 2 — Exercises

Exercise 1: Mapping the Narcissistic Abuse Cycle

Draw a circle and label:

- Idealization
- Devaluation
- Discard/Hoover

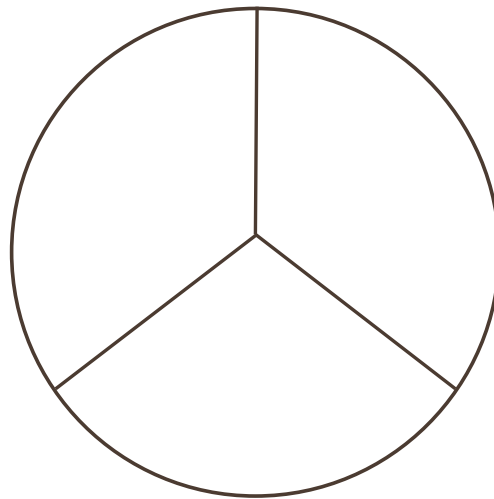


Under each, list:

- What they did
- How you felt
- How you coped
- What you needed but didn't receive

Bring this to coaching — we convert it into a pattern timeline that is extremely useful for court and therapeutic clarity.

Draw here:



Exercise 2: Compassionate Reframe

Complete these prompts:

1. I stayed because...

(List 5–10 reasons)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

2. These reasons show I value...
(e.g., loyalty, family, stability, love)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

3. I now choose to use those strengths for...
(e.g., protecting my peace, healing, rebuilding confidence)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

*Self-compassion is the antidote to self-blame.
Coaching reinforces this reframe until it becomes embodied.*

Case Vignette (De-Identified)

Daniel, a father of two, believed he was the abuser because his ex frequently told him:

- “You’re crazy.”
- “You’re unstable.”
- “You’re emotionally abusive.”
- “You’re the problem.”



In therapy and coaching, we identified:

- He was reacting to severe gaslighting
- His “reactivity” was trauma-driven
- His ex was projecting her behaviors
- His children were being triangulated

Once Daniel recognized the pattern:

- He became calmer
- He stopped JADE-ing (Justifying, Arguing, Defending, Explaining)
- His ex’s tactics lost power
- His legal case stabilized

Understanding the dynamics is the key to escaping them.

03

The Psychological & Physical Impact of Narcissistic Abuse

How Chronic Manipulation, Gaslighting, and Coercive Control Reshape Your Mind, Body, and Nervous System

Narcissistic abuse does not look like traditional, easily recognizable forms of violence. Its weapons are subtle but devastating: gaslighting, emotional coercion, chronic invalidation, intimidation, abandonment cycles, stonewalling, and unpredictable rage. These behaviors erode a survivor's sense of self slowly and systematically.

This is why survivors often say things like:

- “I don't know who I am anymore.”
- “I can't think clearly.”
- “I feel like I'm losing my mind.”
- “Even after leaving, I'm exhausted.”

These aren't exaggerations — they are clinically documented responses to prolonged psychological abuse.



How Narcissistic Abuse Affects the Brain

Long-term coercive control impacts:

1. The Prefrontal Cortex (decision-making)

Chronic invalidation and gaslighting weaken your ability to:

- make decisions quickly
- trust your judgment
- plan ahead
- think clearly under stress

Survivors often describe “brain fog,” “frozen thinking,” or “mental paralysis.

2. The Limbic System (emotion processing)

Frequent emotional attacks keep your brain stuck in survival mode. This creates:

- hypervigilance
- fear of making mistakes
- emotional overwhelm
- reactivity or shutdown

3. The Stress Response System (fight/flight/freeze/fawn)

Narcissistic abuse teaches your nervous system that:

- anger = danger
- boundaries = punishment
- needs = threats
- silence = instability

Your body adapts to survive, often through fawning — people-pleasing, appeasing, or over-accommodating.

Psychological Effects of Narcissistic Abuse

Survivors frequently experience:

Complex Trauma (C-PTSD) symptoms

- hypervigilance
- intrusive thoughts
- nightmares
- emotional numbing
- collapse after stress
- intense startle response

Self-Blame & Shame

Gaslighting conditions you to believe:

- “It’s my fault.”
- “I’m too sensitive.”
- “I should have known better.”

Shame is a manipulation tool, not an internal truth.

Identity Erosion

After years of walking on eggshells, survivors often lose touch with:

- personal interests
- preferences



- confidence
- intuition
- core values

This identity collapse is common — and fully reversible.

Physical Effects: Your Body Has Carried the Story

Chronic emotional abuse activates the body's stress systems, which can lead to:

- headaches
- migraines
- muscle tension
- digestive issues
- autoimmune symptoms
- chronic fatigue
- hormonal dysregulation
- inflammation
- sleep disturbances

Many survivors are surprised to discover the physical toll of psychological abuse.

Post-Separation Symptoms: Why You May Feel Worse After Leaving

Leaving an abusive relationship does not immediately relieve symptoms — in fact, many survivors experience an initial decline in functioning due to:

1. Disruption to the trauma bond

Your brain is withdrawing from unpredictability and intermittent reinforcement.

2. Post-separation abuse

Narcissists often escalate through:

- legal harassment
- financial sabotage
- co-parenting manipulation
- smear campaigns
- sudden emotional attacks

3. Safety & stability overwhelm

New decisions, new routines, new responsibilities — all while exhausted.

4. Nervous system recalibration

You are no longer in survival mode 24/7, so trauma processing begins. This is why coaching is essential: you need guided tools to regulate your body and reclaim your clarity.

SECTION 3 — Exercises

Exercise 1: Trauma Symptom Inventory (Self-Assessment)

Rate the following from **0 (none)** to **10 (severe)** over the past 2 weeks:



- Sleep Problems
- Difficulty concentrating
- Emotional numbness
- Intrusive thoughts
- Startle response
- Anxiety or panic
- Depression / hopelessness
- Physical symptoms (pain, migraines, stomach issues)
- Over-accommodation (fawning)
- Avoidance of conflict

Reflection Prompt:

Which 2–3 areas feel most urgent or overwhelming right now?

Bring this inventory to your coaching session for personalized strategies.

Exercise 2: Survival Logic → Healing Logic Reframe

Draw three columns titled:

Column 1: Symptom

(e.g., I overexplained everything.)

Column 2: Survival Logic

(“Explaining kept me safe. It prevented rage.”)

Column 3: Healing Logic

(“I can learn to communicate briefly and directly in safe relationships.”)



04

“ Strategic Leaving, Safety Planning & Emotional Readiness

Leaving a narcissistic relationship is not a single moment — it is a strategic process requiring preparation, emotional support, and a realistic understanding of post-separation behaviours.

You are not “just leaving a relationship.”

You are escaping a system of control that will attempt to re-establish itself.
The safest separations involve:

- planning
- consultation
- documentation
- coordinated professional support

This section helps you prepare with clarity and courage.

Emotional Readiness: You Don't Need to Feel Brave — You Need to Feel Supported.

Most survivors leave when:

- the pain outweighs the fear
- they reach emotional exhaustion
- the children begin showing symptoms
- a moment of clarity appears
- a final breach of trust occurs

You are not weak for staying.
You were surviving.

Leaving requires:

- realistic expectations
- boundaries
- external validation
- a step-by-step plan

And most importantly: a support team.

The Four Domains of Leaving

I teach clients to evaluate leaving through four domains:

1. Safety Readiness

Ask yourself:

- Is there any risk of physical harm?
- Have threats increased recently?
- Has there been stalking, surveillance, or intimidation?
- Are the children unsafe or highly distressed?

You cannot strategize if you are unsafe.

2. Stability Readiness

Consider:

- housing
- finances
- employment
- transportation
- childcare
- digital security

Survivors often underestimate the importance of quiet planning.



3. Support Readiness

This includes:

- a lawyer who understands coercive control
- a therapist trained in trauma
- a divorce coach specialized in narcissistic abuse
- trusted friends or family
- financial advisors if needed

Your team protects your clarity.

4. Psychological Readiness

This is not the absence of fear — it is the presence of:

- clarity
- resolve
- guarded hope
- willingness to follow a plan

We build psychological readiness one session at a time.

Strategic vs. Emotional Leaving

Leaving strategically means:

- not announcing your exit before preparation
- securing documents
- gathering evidence
- creating a parallel parenting request
- building your financial snapshot
- preparing emotionally for the backlash

Narcissistic partners often escalate when they sense a loss of control. Strategy protects you from the fallout.

SECTION 4 — Exercises

Exercise 1: The “Stay vs. Leave” Grid

Draw a 2×2 chart:

Top Row:

- If I stay another year
- If I leave within 6 months

Columns:

- Impact on Me
- Impact on My Children

In each square, write:

- best case
- likely case
- worst case

	Impact on Me	Impact on My Children
If I stay another year	Best Case: Likely Case: Worst Case:	Best Case: Likely Case: Worst Case:
If I leave within 6 months	Best Case: Likely Case: Worst Case:	Best Case: Likely Case: Worst Case:

This creates clarity based on logic, not fear.



Exercise 2: Safety & Strategy Checklist

Rate each item as Done, In Progress, or Not Started:

Legal Prep

- Consulted with a coercive-control-informed lawyer
- Gathered financial documents
- Secured identification for self + children
- Started a documentation log

Emotional Prep

- Identified safe people to disclose to
- Prepared a nervous system plan for separation
- Identified triggers + coping tools

Practical Prep

- Secured private email + passwords
- Backed up phone data + photos
- Created emergency safety contacts
- Organized children's documents

Bring this checklist into coaching — we will convert it into a 90-Day Exit Plan.

Case Vignette (De-Identified)

Leila, a client in her early 30s, wanted to leave but felt terrified. Her ex had never hit her, so she assumed she wasn't experiencing abuse. But he controlled money, monitored her location, threatened custody loss, and manipulated her family.

We mapped her safety, stability, support, and psychological readiness.

Within 3 months:

- She secured housing
- She built a financial plan
- She disclosed safely
- She contacted a lawyer
- She left without a major explosion

Her ex escalated post-separation, as predicted. But because she had a plan, she remained grounded and credible.

Your exit must be protective, not reactive.
Coaching ensures you don't do this alone.





05

“

Legal Abuse, Court Manipulation & Navigating High-Conflict System

*How Narcissists Weaponize Institutions, and How You Stay
Grounded, Credible & Protected*

Divorcing a narcissist is not just a relational process — it is a legal and psychological marathon. Survivors frequently enter the legal system believing that truth, documentation, and common sense will prevail. They quickly discover:

- Courts reward composure, not truth.
- Narcissists perform exceptionally well in structured, performative environments.
- The system often labels coercive control as “high conflict.”
- Emotional truth is not legal evidence.
- Professionals may be manipulated by the narcissist’s charm.

None of this is your fault.

You are entering a system that is not yet trauma-informed, not yet coercive-control-informed, and often ill-equipped to recognize psychological abuse.

This section teaches you how to navigate it strategically, regulated, and empowered.

What Is Legal Abuse?

Legal abuse occurs when a narcissistic or abusive ex-partner uses the court system as a weapon, not a forum for resolution.

Common patterns include:

1. Excessive litigation

- Filing unnecessary motions
- Threatening court to intimidate you
- Refusing to negotiate in good faith
- Reopening settled issues

2. Deliberate delays

- Not responding to disclosure requests
- Missing deadlines
- “Forgetting” necessary documents
- Pushing hearings months out

3. Smear campaigns in affidavits

The narcissist paints themselves as the stable, reasonable parent — and you as unstable, controlling, or alienating.

4. False allegations

- Claiming you are withholding the children
- Accusing you of mental illness
- Suggesting you're “uncooperative.”
- Exaggerating minor conflicts
- Framing protective actions as “alienation.”

5. Financial warfare through the courts

- Withholding support
- Underreporting income
- Hiding assets
- Forcing repeated court appearances to drain your finances

6. Using professionals as pawns

The narcissist manipulates:

- lawyers
- mediators



- child protection
- teachers
- therapists
- the children's doctors

Their goal is to create confusion, which undermines your credibility.

Why Narcissists Shine in Courtrooms

The courtroom is a stage. Narcissists are performers.

They thrive in environments where:

- They can charm authority figures
- They can position themselves as the victim
- They can deliver a curated narrative
- Emotional detachment appears as “stability”
- Your trauma reactions are misinterpreted as instability

You may look like the “emotional parent,” while the narcissist appears calm, logical, and well-prepared — because their entire reputation is at stake.

You are not “losing your composure.”

You are showing normal trauma responses inside a system that values stillness over truth.

This is exactly why coaching is essential.

DARVO in the Courtroom

DARVO = Deny, Attack, Reverse Victim and Offender

Example:

You: “He’s been threatening to withhold the children.”

Him: “She is lying. She’s the one withholding them. I’m the victim here.”

Experts recognize DARVO as a primary tactic used in abusive dynamics — but court professionals do not always catch it.

Your job is not to expose DARVO.

Your job is to not get pulled into its emotional trap.

Coaching teaches you how to respond without reacting.

The Narcissistic Court Narrative

A narcissist will often portray:

Themselves as:

- reasonable
- victimized
- child-focused
- misunderstood
- financially burdened
- cooperative (on paper)



You as:

- unstable
- exaggerating
- alienating
- emotional
- vindictive
- unpredictable

This is not personal.

It is strategic.

They are constructing a version of reality that benefits them.
Your job is to present facts, not emotions.

Your Legal Survival Principles

Principle 1: Your credibility is your currency.

Everything you communicate must be factual, brief, and consistent.

Principle 2: Documentation wins cases — not emotions.

Never argue feelings in court.
Only facts, dates, impacts, and patterns.

Principle 3: Never react to bait.

The narcissist wants you to explode, cry, or defend yourself.
Your neutrality is power.

Principle 4: The “reasonable parent” always wins.

Your tone, stability, and conduct matter more than your evidence.

Principle 5: Show, don’t tell.

Provide documentation, not accusations.

Principle 6: Use parallel communication channels.

Parenting apps → always.

Texts → never.

Phone calls → no.

Voice notes → no.

How to Document Like a Professional

Your documentation should be:

- Factual (“He was 45 minutes late for pickup.”)
- Child-focused (“This affected bedtime and school the next day.”)
- Neutral in tone (“Noted.” / “Received.”)
- Chronological
- Consistent

Your documentation should not be:

- Emotional
- Speculative
- Accusatory
- Wordy
- Defensive



Remember: the judge may read every word one day.

Your BIFF Response Templates (Brief, Informative, Friendly, Firm)

When they bait you:

“Thank you for your message. I will follow the parenting plan as written.”

When they accuse you falsely:

“This is not accurate. Please refer to the communication from [date].”

When they send long emotional paragraphs:

“I will respond to relevant items related to the children.”

When they demand immediate answers:

“I will review this and respond within 48 hours.”

When they insult you:

No reply.

Silence is a boundary.

Preparing for Court or Mediation

The narcissist will:

- appear calm
- deny everything
- perform victimhood
- shift blame
- exaggerate your reactions
- use the children as leverage

You must:

- stay regulated
- answer only the question
- speak slowly
- breathe
- never defend character — only behavior
- return to facts
- avoid tangents

Your job is not to win the argument.
Your job is to be credible.

SECTION 5 — Exercises

Exercise 1: Evidence vs. Emotion Grid

Create 2 columns:

Column A — Evidence (To Use in Court)

- dates
- screenshots
- late pickups
- schedule violations
- refusal to communicate through the app
- impacts on children

Column B — Emotion (To Process in Coaching)

- anger
- fear



- resentment
- grief
- anxiety
- Overwhelm

Evidence	Emotion

Bring Column A to legal appointments.
 Bring Column B to coaching.

Exercise 2: My Court-Day Regulation Plan

Complete the following:

- breathe slowly
- plant my feet on the floor
- relax my shoulders

2. My grounding sentence will be:

“I am here to protect my children and my future, not to convince my ex.”

3. I will contact these support people after the hearing:

-
-

4. After court, I will regulate by:

- walking
- showering
- eating
- resting

Small, predictable rituals restore safety.

Case Vignette (De-Identified)

Olivia, age 42, faced an ex who filed seven motions in one year. Each time, he accused her of alienation and emotional instability. Olivia cried during three hearings, and her ex used it as “proof” that she was not stable.

In coaching, we taught Olivia:

- how to regulate before hearings
- how to document calmly
- how to use BIFF responses



- how to avoid JADE traps
- how to communicate like a “reasonable parent”

Within six months, her ex’s motions were dismissed.

The judge noted that she was consistent, factual, and stable.

Credibility wins.



06

“

Parallel Parenting & Protecting Your Children From Conflict

*Why Co-Parenting Fails With Narcissists — and How You
Create Stability for Your Kids*

Most parenting programs and articles assume two things:

- Both parents want to work together.
- Both parents prioritize the child's well-being over ego.

Neither is true in a narcissistic dynamic.

This is why co-parenting does not work with a narcissist.

It requires cooperation — something a narcissist is neurologically, emotionally, and behaviorally unwilling to provide.

Parallel Parenting ≠ Co-Parenting

Parallel parenting is a structured, low-conflict model designed for:

- high-conflict cases
- situations involving coercive control
- relationships where communication is unsafe
- protecting children from emotional manipulation

Parallel parenting reduces contact to the bare minimum.

It protects children's emotional space.

It protects YOUR nervous system.

And it prevents the narcissist from using co-parenting as a weapon.



Why Co-Parenting With a Narcissist Fails

1. They prioritize control, not cooperation.

Every discussion becomes a power struggle.

2. They use communication to bait and destabilize.

Frequent messaging → frequent conflict.

3. They triangulate the children.

They turn the children into:

- messengers
- spies
- emotional regulators

4. They undermine your parenting.

Constantly contradicting rules and routines at home.

5. They create chaos to maintain control.

Sudden schedule changes.

No-shows.

Manipulating transitions.

Parallel parenting stops these patterns.

What Children Actually Need After Narcissistic Divorce

Children need:

- predictability
- emotional attunement
- structure
- low-conflict environments
- healthy boundaries
- one calm, stable parent
- safety above all

Notice this: children only need one regulated parent to thrive.

You can be that parent.

Building a Parallel Parenting Structure

Key components:

1. Communication ONLY through written apps

- No phone calls
- No texts
- No verbal discussion

2. Highly detailed parenting plan

Leave nothing open to interpretation.



3. Separate decision-making zones

Avoid joint decision-making whenever possible.

4. Structured transitions

Predictable, brief, neutral.

5. Minimal emotional content

You share logistics — nothing more.

6. Boundaries around children's communication

Children are not informants.

Communication Scripts for Children

(Use these EXACT phrases — no need to improvise.)

1. *"Daddy/Mommy said you don't love me."*

"I'm so sorry you heard that. I love you very much. Adults sometimes say things when they are upset. You are safe with me."

2. *"Why don't you and Daddy/Mommy get along?"*

"We see things differently, and that's okay. Our job is to love you and keep you safe."

3. *"I don't want to go today."*

"Thank you for telling me. I hear you. You still need to follow the schedule, and I'm here for you when you come home."

4. “Daddy/Mommy said you’re lying.”

“I’m sorry you heard that. Adults sometimes disagree. What matters is that you’re safe, and I’m here to listen.”

Consistency heals the emotional confusion children feel.

SECTION 6 — Exercises

Exercise 1: Parallel Parenting Principles

Complete the following:

- “In my home, I want my children to feel...”
- “I will communicate with my ex only through...”
- “I will respond to messages within...”
- “I will no longer participate in...”
- “My primary parenting values are...”

Use the space below:

Bring these into coaching to build your formal parenting plan language.



Exercise 2: Post-Transition Decompression Plan for Children

List soothing options for after transitions:

- quiet play
- snacks
- warm bath
- predictable routine
- walk outside
- calming music
- early bedtime
- no questions about the other parent

Predictability restores emotional safety.

Case Vignette (De-Identified)

Jason, age 38, shared week-on/week-off custody with his narcissistic ex. Transitions were chaotic. His son often returned dysregulated, angry, or withdrawn.

With coaching, Jason implemented:

- a decompression zone
- no questions about the mother
- a predictable dinner-bath-bed routine

- 4a communication boundary
- a “calm home” principle

Within two months, his son’s tantrums decreased, sleep improved, and school reports stabilized.

Children respond to structure + safety.





07

“

Rebuilding Your Sense of Self, Boundaries, and Identity

Reclaiming the You That Was Buried Under Narcissistic Abuse

Leaving a narcissistic partner is not simply exiting a relationship — it is stepping out of a psychological ecosystem that trained you to disconnect from yourself in order to survive. Narcissistic abuse is not a “relationship problem.” It is a total identity distortion system that affects:

- how you see yourself
- how you interpret your emotions
- how you trust your decisions
- how you perceive conflict
- how you understand love
- how you relate to your body
- how you respond to boundaries

It is common — nearly universal — for survivors to emerge from these relationships asking:

- “Who am I?”
- “What do I even like?”
- “Why can’t I make decisions?”
- “Why do I feel guilty saying no?”
- “Why do I still hear their voice in my head?”

This is not you being dramatic, weak, or unhealed.

This is the predictable result of emotional domination, gaslighting, chronic criticism, invalidation, and coercive control.

Your identity was not destroyed; it was suppressed.

Buried under fear.



Buried under appeasement.

Buried under survival mode.

This section is about reclaiming your internal world — the one no one can ever take from you again.

Why Narcissistic Abuse Dismantles Identity

Narcissistic partners do not relate; they extract.

Their needs become the center. Your needs become “problems.” Over time, the narcissistic dynamic subtly but powerfully conditions you to disconnect from your own selfhood.

Here’s how identity erosion happens:

1. Chronic Self-Doubt

Gaslighting makes you question your memory, perception, and judgment.

2. Emotional Suppression

Expressing discomfort or needs often led to rage, withdrawal, or punishment — teaching you to silence yourself.

3. Boundary Erosion

Your “no” was ignored, mocked, guilt-tripped, or punished. Buried under appeasement.

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3. Boundary Erosion

Your “no” was ignored, mocked, guilt-tripped, or punished.

4. Role Absorption

You were assigned a role: caretaker, stabilizer, ego-buffer, emotional regulator, problem-solver.

Roles leave no room for identities.



5. Isolation and Disconnection

Abusers weaken your external support, making you dependent on their approval.

6. Internalized Criticism

Their voice becomes your inner critic:

“You’re too sensitive.”

“You’re dramatic.”

“You’re lucky I tolerate you.”

7. Fear-Based Decision Making

Over time, your body learns that choices = conflict.
So you avoid decisions to stay safe.
This isn’t personality — it’s conditioning.

But here is the most important truth:

**What becomes conditioned can be de-conditioned.

What becomes learned can be unlearned.

What becomes suppressed can be restored.**

Rebuilding Identity: The Three Pillars

This recovery phase is about restoring the foundations of who you are — authentically, confidently, and safely.

There are three key pillars:

Pillar 1 — Emotional Identity: Relearning Your Internal World

Your emotional identity is your capacity to:

- know what you feel
- trust what you feel
- express what you feel
- take action based on what you feel

Narcissistic abuse teaches you the opposite:

- “Your feelings are wrong.”
- “Your feelings create problems.”
- “My feelings matter more.”
- “Your upset is an inconvenience.”

You begin to mistrust your own signals.

Healing involves:

- naming your internal experience
- validating your emotions
- identifying what your body is telling you
- reconnecting with intuition
- responding to feelings instead of suppressing them

In coaching, we re-learn emotional literacy — without guilt or fear.



Pillar 2 — Boundary Identity: Redefining What You Allow and Protect

Boundaries are not walls.

Boundaries are rules for how you treat yourself.

Narcissists punish boundaries because:

- boundaries limit their control
- boundaries require accountability
- boundaries disrupt manipulation
- boundaries protect your autonomy

So survivors learn to avoid boundaries to stay safe.

Part of rebuilding identity is learning:

- you have permission to say no
- your needs matter
- you do not have to justify limits
- other people's emotions are not your responsibility
- guilt is a conditioned response, not a truth
- boundaries are evidence of healing

Boundary work is a cornerstone of coaching.

We practice it, script it, role-play it, and strengthen it.

Pillar 3 — Self-Concept Identity: Reclaiming Your Worth & Capacity

Your self-concept is the story you tell yourself about who you are.

Narcissistic abuse creates a warped narrative:

- “You’re difficult.”
- “You’re not enough.”
- “You’re crazy.”
- “You’re unlovable.”
- “You can’t manage without me.”

None of these were ever true.

They were weapons.

Rebuilding your self-concept involves:

- rewriting your internal narrative
- building self-trust
- recognizing your resilience
- validating your lived experiences
- identifying your strengths
- reclaiming your preferences
- redefining who you want to be moving forward

This is identity liberation.



SECTION 7 — Exercises

These exercises are specifically designed to reverse abuse conditioning and strengthen your authentic self.

Exercise 1: The “Not Anymore” List

A reclaiming ritual for your boundaries and self-worth

Write three statements for each prompt:

1. I am no longer available for...

(What you will no longer tolerate)

Examples:

- walking on eggshells
- performing emotional labor for unregulated adults
- minimizing my needs
- silencing my truth
- carrying someone else’s chaos

2. I now choose...

(What you actively choose moving forward)

Examples:

- emotional safety
- reciprocity
- slow, grounded decision-making
- kind, secure relationships
- peace in my home

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2. I now choose...

(What you actively choose moving forward)

Examples:

- emotional safety
- reciprocity
- slow, grounded decision-making
- kind, secure relationships
- peace in my home

3. I am learning to trust myself when...

(How you recognize your inner wisdom)

Examples:

- I feel uneasy
- I feel joy
- I sense misalignment
- I need rest
- I speak up

Write Here:

Bring this list into coaching so we can turn it into a Living Boundary Blueprint.

Exercise 2: Reintroducing Yourself to Yourself

After years of survival mode, your preferences may feel distant.

Complete the following:

- “The activities that make me feel most alive are...”
- “I feel most like myself when...”



- “If I weren’t afraid, I would...”
- “Three things I want to reclaim are...”
- “My future self is asking me to...”
- “What I deserve but didn’t receive is...”

Write Here:

These prompts restore your internal compass.

Exercise 3: The Identity Reconstruction Map

Draw four columns:

Column 1 — Who I Became in the Relationship

People-pleaser, anxious, silent, apologetic, self-doubting, small.

Column 2 — Why I Became This

To avoid conflict.

To stay safe.

To protect the children.

To survive.

To reduce eruptions.

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To avoid conflict.

To stay safe.

To protect the children.

To survive.

To reduce eruptions.

Column 3 — What This Says About My Strengths

I am loyal.

I am adaptable.

I am compassionate.

I am protective.

I am resilient.

Column 4 — Who I Am Becoming Now

Confidence.

Boundaries.

Authentic.



Self-respecting.
Emotionally grounded.
Future-oriented.

Who I became in the Relationship	Why I became this	What this says about my Strengths	Who I am becoming Now

This exercise reframes trauma into resilience.

CASE VIGNETTE (De-Identified)

Jade, a 39-year-old professional and mother of two, came to coaching saying, “I don’t know who I am outside of him.” Her ex had ridiculed her interests, mocked her emotions, and controlled her finances. She couldn’t choose a restaurant without anxiety.

In three months of identity reconstruction work, Jade:

- rediscovered long-abandoned passions
- set small, consistent boundaries
- reconnected with friends
- created a new morning routine

- began journaling again
- rebuilt her financial autonomy
- started trusting her decisions

By month six, she said:

“For the first time in years, I feel like I exist.”

Rebuilding identity is not about “finding yourself.”

It is about returning to yourself.

What Identity Healing Looks Like in Real Life

Identity healing feels like:

- making a decision without fear
- resting without guilt
- saying no without apology
- trusting your future
- believing in your strength
- feeling spacious instead of constrained
- feeling clarity instead of fog
- recognizing early red flags
- choosing emotionally safe people
- being proud of your boundaries

You begin to feel like a person again, not a reaction to someone else’s emotional volatility.

And from here, you begin to build a life that is not shaped by survival, but by truth.



SECTION 7 — Closing Reflection

Ask yourself:

“What parts of myself am I ready to reclaim?”

“What parts of my old identity no longer serve me?”

“Who am I becoming?”

You have permission to rebuild slowly.

You have permission to change your mind.

You have permission to set boundaries.

You have permission to take up space.

You have permission to be whole again.

Identity restoration is not just possible —
it is already happening inside you.



08

“

Love After Narcissistic Abuse: Dating, Trust & Healthy Relating

*People often say, “I’ll never date again.”
That’s not fear — that’s nervous system protection.*

Healing requires:

- restoring trust in your perceptions
- rebuilding your internal safety cues
- understanding what healthy love looks like
- developing boundaries that prevent reenactment

Dating after narcissistic abuse is not about being perfect — it's about being aware, grounded, and self-respecting.

What Healthy Love Actually Looks Like

Healthy partners:

- repair conflicts instead of escalating them
- honor your boundaries
- show consistency, not intensity
- take accountability
- communicate with kindness
- value emotional safety
- respect your healing
- treat your children with empathy

Healthy love is not dramatic.

It's stable. Predictable. Gentle. Safe.

Red Flags to Never Ignore Again

From your past relationship, identify the top signs you missed or rationalized. Common examples include:

- fast attachment (“love bombing”)
- jealousy framed as passion
- inconsistency masked as being “busy”
- lack of empathy
- dismissiveness
- secretiveness around technology
- rage over minor things
- projection (“you cheated!” when you didn’t)

New Rule:

Your body always knows.

Listen to the tightening, the doubt, the hesitation.

Green Flags to Actively Seek

Healthy potential partners are:

- patient
- emotionally regulated
- humble
- securely attached
- consistent in communication
- respectful of boundaries
- responsible with money, home, and energy
- kind under stress
- Green flags are not glamorous — they are safe.



SECTION 8 — Exercises

Exercise 1: Your Red Flag Inventory

Write your top 10 red flags from past relationships.
Then write one boundary for each.

Example:

Red flag: dismissing my feelings

Boundary: if someone mocks my feelings twice, I will not continue dating.

Red flag: _____

Boundary: _____

Red flag: _____

Boundary: _____

Red flag: _____

Boundary: _____

Red flag: _____

Boundary: _____

Red flag: _____

Boundary: _____

Exercise 2: Your Green Flag Wishlist

Write the top 10 qualities you want from your future partner.

Ask yourself:

- Who do I want to grow beside?
- How do I want to feel daily?
- What emotional environment do I want around my children?

Write here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Bring this list to coaching — we turn it into a **Dating Clarity Plan**.



You've done incredibly deep work in this workbook.

You've reflected, remembered, unpacked, grieved, planned, and reclaimed parts of yourself that may have been silent for years.

This workbook is the beginning.

Coaching is the transformation.

Why Work With a Narcissistic Abuse-Informed Divorce Coach?

Most professionals don't understand coercive control.

They minimize it, mislabel it, or misinterpret your reactions.

In coaching with me:

- you don't have to explain the abuse
- you don't have to justify your feelings
- you don't have to deal with being misunderstood
- you don't have to navigate this alone

You get:

- ✓ Clear strategies for high-conflict divorce
- ✓ Emotion regulation tools for court & communication
- ✓ Email, app, and legal documentation scripts
- ✓ Parenting support for children affected by conflict
- ✓ Identity rebuilding
- ✓ Confidence restoration
- ✓ Future relationship preparation
- ✓ A safe, validating, trauma-informed space

What We Do Together

We create:

- your Divorce Strategy Plan
- your Parallel Parenting Blueprint
- your Court Communication Script Library
- your Nervous System Regulation Toolkit
- your Identity Recovery Map
- your Future Relationship Readiness Plan

Each session moves you closer to clarity, calm, and control.

Your Next Step: Book a Divorce Coaching Session

If this workbook resonated with you — if you recognized yourself in these pages — then you are ready for deeper, personalized support.

Together, we can:

- stabilize your case
- protect your emotional health
- support your children
- design the life waiting on the other side

➔ Book your first session with me:

*Raquel Soteldo, RP***

Founder – Soteldo Psychotherapy Clinic

Director – Narcissistic Abuse Recovery Clinic Canada™

You deserve support. You deserve clarity. You deserve peace. You deserve a life beyond abuse.

Bringing Your Healing, Strategy, and Identity Together

You have just moved through a comprehensive deep-dive into narcissistic personality dynamics, trauma responses, legal system navigation, strategic separation, parallel parenting, and post-abuse relationship skills. This is not simple information — it is a complete reframing of your lived experiences, validated through research, and structured to support both your emotional recovery and your practical navigation of high-conflict divorce.

You've done an extraordinary amount of emotional labor to get here. This final section ties everything together so you leave with clarity, direction, and a sense of grounded empowerment.

You Are Not Who You Were When You Began This Workbook

At the beginning of this journey, you may have felt:

- confused
- ashamed
- overwhelmed
- reactive
- isolated
- unsure of your perceptions
- afraid for your children's stability
- terrified of the court system
- desperate for relief

Now, you have:

✓ Language for what you lived through
Narcissistic abuse. Gaslighting. Trauma bonding. Legal abuse. Coercive control.

✓ Evidence-based frameworks

You now understand the psychological mechanisms behind the behavior

✓ Tools that protect your peace and credibility

Scripts, boundaries, communication templates, parenting structures.

✓ Nervous-system-informed guidance

Regulation practices, self-compassion tools, and symptom reframes.

✓ A realistic lens on high-conflict divorce

You now know the system, the patterns, and the predictable behaviors.

✓ A path forward into identity, love, and self-respect

Rebuilding yourself with clarity and confidence.

You are not the same version of yourself who tolerated emotional neglect, coercion, minimization, or psychological chaos.

You are becoming someone new:

aware, grounded, strategic, and self-protective.

Where to Go From Here

Healing from narcissistic abuse is nonlinear — there will be breakthroughs and setbacks. What matters is that you now have a framework and foundation. And you do not have to walk the next stage alone.



The next steps typically include:

- Refining your legal strategy
- Building a stable parallel parenting system
- Reinforcing internal boundaries and self-trust
- Integrating grounding techniques into daily life
- Reconstructing identity and self-worth
- Preparing for healthy future relationships
- Creating a sustainable life vision beyond survival

This is where divorce coaching becomes transformative — personalized, stabilizing, structured support that accelerates your healing and strengthens your strategy.

You Deserve a Life Beyond Survival

You deserve:

- calm
- relational safety
- financial stability
- supportive love
- a regulated nervous system
- a secure home for your children
- freedom from walking on eggshells
- mornings not governed by anxiety
- evenings not dictated by fear

And you deserve a guide who understands the landscape you are navigating — legally, emotionally, and psychologically.

Your next chapter is waiting.

And it can begin now.

Author's Note



From Raquel Soteldo, RP

Founder – Soteldo Psychotherapy Clinic

Director – Narcissistic Abuse Recovery Clinic Canada™

You have just completed a powerful and emotionally courageous journey. Working through this workbook required honesty, insight, and incredible strength. You confronted truth, named patterns, processed grief, and opened yourself to a new path — one built on clarity, dignity, emotional safety, and self-trust.

I want you to know something deeply and completely:

****You were never the problem.**

You were surviving a system designed to diminish you.**

If you felt confused — that was because you were manipulated.

If you felt anxious — that was because you were intimidated.

If you felt small — that was because your light threatened someone who could not shine themselves.

If you felt unsure — that was because your confidence was strategically eroded.

And now?

Now you are here.

Awake.

Expanding.

Reclaiming.

Your story is not ending.

It is beginning with a new narrator — you.

My Wish for You

I hope that as you turn these pages, you feel:

- more grounded
- more validated
- more self-aware
- more courageous
- more empowered
- more hopeful
- more in control of your path

You may still have moments of fear.

Moments of grief.

Moments of overwhelm.

Moments of anger or disbelief.

That is normal.

Healing from narcissistic abuse is not a straight line — it is an unfolding.

You are not expected to navigate all of this alone.

Support is not a luxury — it is a necessity.

Guidance is not weakness — it is wisdom.

And community is not optional — it is life-giving.

A 5-Phase Model of Healing & Growth After Narcissistic Abuse

This pathway is the therapeutic and coaching framework I use inside the Soteldo Psychotherapy Clinic and the Narcissistic Abuse Recovery Clinic Canada™.

It outlines the stages survivors move through as they rebuild their lives after coercive control and high-conflict divorce.

Phase 1 — Stabilization & Safety (First 2–8 weeks)

Goals:

- reduce reactivity
- understand nervous system responses
- prioritize legal and emotional safety
- implement parallel parenting boundaries
- stop JADE communication
- create internal grounding

Primary Tasks:

- clarity
- containment
- safety structures

Phase 2 — Orientation & Education (Weeks 4–12)

Goals:

- learn narcissistic patterns
- understand trauma bonding

- rewrite the self-blaming narrative
- shift from emotional to strategic thinking
- strengthen executive functioning

Primary Tasks:

- learning
- reframing
- cognitive empowerment

Phase 3 — Identity Reconstruction (Months 3–9)

Goals:

- reclaim self-worth
- rebuild preferences and values
- learn healthy communication
- restore authentic self-expression
- strengthen boundaries

Primary Tasks:

- self-discovery
- reconstruction
- empowerment

Phase 4 — Future Relationship Readiness (Months 6–12+)

Goals:

- understanding attraction patterns
- screening new partners for red & green flags

- practicing secure relational behaviors
- integrating emotional safety into dating

Primary Tasks:

- practice
- discernment
- relational safety

Phase 5 — Thriving & Expansion (12 months+)

Goals:

- designing a life aligned with values
- trauma-informed self-leadership
- financial independence
- emotional freedom
- post-traumatic growth

Primary Tasks:

- expansion
- leadership
- embodiment

Acknowledgments

To the survivor reading this:

- Thank you for choosing yourself.
- Thank you for doing this work even when exhausted.
- Thank you for believing in your own value, even in moments of deep self-doubt.
- Thank you for daring to imagine a future beyond chaos and fear.

You are not alone.

Hundreds of survivors have walked this road — and every one of them has risen.

So will you.

A Closing Blessing for Your Journey

May you walk with clarity and courage.

May your nervous system find peace.

May your home be filled with softness and laughter.

May your children feel the safety you create.

May you move toward relationships built on respect, curiosity, stability, and care.

May your future no longer be built on fear, but on truth, dignity, and joy.

You deserve the life waiting for you.

And I would be honoured to walk with you on the next part of your journey.

With respect and solidarity,

Raquel Soteldo, RP

Founder – Soteldo Psychotherapy Clinic

Director – Narcissistic Abuse Recovery Clinic Canada™

References

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BONUS READING LIST

Evidence-Based Books, Articles & Resources for Deeper Healing

On Narcissistic Abuse & Coercive Control

- “The Body Keeps the Score” — Bessel van der Kolk
- “Why Does He Do That?” — Lundy Bancroft
- “Stalking the Soul” — Marie-France Hirigoyen
- “Psychopath Free” — Jackson MacKenzie
- “The Gaslight Effect” — Dr. Robin Stern

For High-Conflict Divorce & Court Navigation

- “Splitting: Protecting Yourself While Divorcing a Borderline or Narcissist” — Bill Eddy
- “BIFF for Co-Parent Communication” — Bill Eddy
- “High Conflict People in Legal Disputes” — Bill Eddy

On Trauma, Attachment & Recovery

- “Attached” — Levine & Heller
- “Polyvagal Theory” — Stephen Porges
- “Complex PTSD: From Surviving to Thriving” — Pete Walker
- “The Wisdom of Trauma” — Gabor Maté



Healing, Self-Worth & Identity

- “Set Boundaries, Find Peace” — Nedra Glover Tawwab
- “Daring Greatly” — Brené Brown
- “You Are the One You’ve Been Waiting For” — Richard Schwartz (IFS)

Healthy Love & Relational Safety

- “Hold Me Tight” — Dr. Sue Johnson
- “The Science of Trust” — John Gottman
- “The Love Prescription” — Gottman Institute

