

FORGIVENESS, TRAUMA, SELF-DISCIPLINE, AND EMPATHY

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This deprogramming guide is in conversation format. I believe it to be self-explanatory. If you have any questions about it, e-mail me.

SCENARIO 1:

Trauma Survivor: I could kill you or do you, what would you prefer?

Empathetic Response: It sounds like you've been abused and manage it with a sense of humor. In the event you aren't kidding, I have some concerns. I forgive you and find it funny but unsettling.

Narcissistic Response: You don't make decisions, I do. I'll decide whether to kill or rape you when I'm ready. And, if you keep talking like that people won't take you seriously so I can get away with it.

SCENARIO 2:

Trauma Survivor: I just witnessed a rape and possible murder in the hotel next to mine. I called 911 and was on hold listening to recommendations for children's films for over an hour while the crime took place. One of the perpetrators had a gun. I was frightened to leave the room. And, I was annoyed and also a bit relieved that 911 didn't pick up. I was afraid if they did pick up that the other room would hear me reporting and they would come kill me. But, they had left the room with the body before 911 ever picked up and this was in San Francisco (true story). So, I hung up on the hold "music/ads" and called the front desk. I told them what I witnessed and said if they have video of the hallway outside my room they should call 911 and report it. They said they would and I changed rooms and later hotels. So, traveling at times makes me nervous now. You never know who might check in next to you.

Empathetic Response: Oh my God! That is horrifying. 911 didn't pick up? I have no idea what I'd do in your situation. I'm glad you are okay. And, San Francisco should look into increasing funding for emergency services, particularly 911.

Narcissistic Response: No one has time to listen to this and I'm not getting anything out of it. So, you need to focus on your future and just be glad you weren't killed. Maybe spring for a nicer hotel. What was it a Motel 6 on the industrial-side of San Francisco? Idiot.

Now, in scenario 1, if I'm the survivor I'm kidding if I say that and/or only speaking figuratively unless playing a role in a play and those are my lines. So, the empathetic person is correct with their response in both acknowledging my trauma, showing understanding for a possible coping strategy if or when triggered such as inappropriate humor, and forgiving should that prove to be the case. Empathetic people are patient and

understanding. And, totally reasonable to share that the phrasing was unsettling to gently set a boundary which can be later made more firm. But, the narcissist is abusive and identified the trauma and may be using triggers now revealed to coerce or intimidate the person with trauma. But, if they are a survivor too, they could just be responding to a perceived threat with their own perceived threat or arguably responding to vice with vice which is not showing mastery of #TaoFu which is responding to vice with virtue and we all have to forgive each other because sometimes we all respond to vice with vice, wrath might be your favorite and is mine too quite often, but, wrath is still a vice.

In the second scenario, that actually happened to me and it freaked me out and triggered my past trauma like you may not understand. But, the empathetic response was almost too co-dependent if the empathic person is a therapist or counselor. It's fine if the person with trauma is not looking for more than someone to listen. But, if they have a story and then demand something because of the story and believe you should give it because you are compassionate, don't give them anything but tea and sympathy. Real trauma survivors who are not narcissists do not use their pain to manipulate others and only wish for free expression and acceptance with understanding. Narcissists may also have traumatic life experiences, but, they use it for vice and as an excuse to abuse and exploit. That's not cool. And, if you spend too much time responding to them, you might start a ministry.

And, here's how you know when forgiveness is warranted and when it is not:

SCENARIO 3:

Person 1: Take off your clothes or I'll do it for you.

Person 2: You better be joking.

Person 1: I was just kidding. You are old enough to undress yourself and decide when it is appropriate to do so.

Person 2: I forgive you and I don't like being treated like a child.

SCENARIO 4:

Person 1: Take off your clothes or I'll kill you right now and then do what I want with your corpse.

Person 2: You better be kidding.

Person 1: (rapes Person 2)

Person 2: I do not forgive you and that's no way to treat anyone you pig. Have you seen "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo" starring Christopher Plummer and Daniel Craig? Check it out. Even if I don't survive, I think you'll find it tells your future.