



Reaffirming Individual Dignity: Exposing Coercive Control

CAUTION: If you suspect that your loved one or a parishioner is a victim of abuse, proceed cautiously and remember that your own safety (and that of your own family) is also at risk.

Note that abuse counselors customarily have security measures in place before they attempt to help a victim. Others ordinarily have no such protection. Your own reputation, psychological well-being, and physical safety could be targeted when you help someone who is a victim.

Listen to podcasts that allow victims to tell their dating & domestic violence stories to become aware of the risks that could be involved in controlling relationships. Reach out to Cleveland's Family Justice Center, or other domestic abuse organizations, for guidance when you help a victim. One of the least risky ways that an outsider can help prevent coercive control and abuse is to encourage every person (no matter their marital status) to maintain historically important relationships meaningfully and independently.

For help, contact the **Cuyahoga County Family Justice Center** at 216-443-7345 or the National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-7233. Read USCCB's "[When I call for Help](#)" for more information on the Church's response to domestic violence.

Segment #11

High Conflict + Personality Disorder

In these segments, the 10% of the population that makes up high-conflict personality (HCP) is being explored in order to better protect our Church communities from unnecessary turmoil. As a reminder from last month's segment, HCPs do something *extremely negative* that 90% of people would *never* do. They tend to have a dual-persona – charming in public and very difficult at home or among close relations. They increase turmoil within a community. They have a life-long pattern of all-or-nothing thinking, intense unmanaged emotions, extreme behavior, and a preoccupation with blaming others (their innocent Targets of Blame).

Many HCPs tend to also exhibit traits of one or more personality disorders. Learning these personality disorder traits can help make sense of confusing interactions with high-conflict people.

Personality disorders associated with HCPs

Certain personality disorders (those termed Cluster B) exhibit characteristics that are more likely to draw those with the disorder into intense, ongoing conflicts on a regular basis – essentially, high-conflict personality (HCP) behavior. Understanding signs of these personality disorders can help us anticipate behaviors and needs, as well as risks to ourselves and others.

Disclaimers: Personality disorders include many other, specific criteria not listed here and must be diagnosed by a professional. Disorders describe an enduring pattern of traits, rather than a reaction to an isolated incident. People may have disordered traits without having a full disorder. The disorders do not define the whole person. Some therapists are working on a “parts theory” understanding of personality, where a person has various parts to themselves, some of which (or many of which) may include disordered parts. Not all those with a personality disorder have a high-conflict personality, since some keep to themselves and have no Targets of Blame. The people with *both* personality disorder *and* high-conflict personality will be discussed here as they are more likely to cause unnecessary turmoil in a community.

The general public is welcome to become aware of the *possibilities* of the various personality disorder/high-conflict traits. The people who exhibit *the combination* of both a pattern of enduring personality disorder traits *and* a high-conflict personality (have Targets of Blame) make up the 10% of people who can easily ruin lives of those around them. Awareness about these patterns can help a community function well by being able to recognize possible patterns, understand how others may think, interact more carefully with others and not get emotionally hooked or conned.

There are 5 personality disorders that may also exhibit high-conflict personality:

- Narcissistic *and* high-conflict personality:
 - Charming at first but have a life-long pattern of believing they are hugely superior to others, demanding constant undeserved respect and attention. They often treat others with contempt. They insult, humiliate, mislead, and lack empathy for their Targets of Blame.
 - Common conflict traits: arrogance, superiority, lack of empathy, insulting, self-centered
 - Narcissist's worst fear: being seen as inferior
 - 6.2% of general population has narcissistic personality disorder (~22 million people in North America) - and likely half of those are *also* HCPs.

- Borderline *and* high-conflict personality:
 - Friendly at first but have a life-long pattern of suddenly and unpredictably shifting moods, making it feel like a split personality. They tend to settle into the negative state more often than the friendly state. They are very sensitive to rejection, frequently perceive abandonment in ordinary daily life events, and react to that perceived rejection with rage, control, and manipulation. The reaction is disproportionate to the event. One minute they are charming, friendly, and reasonable -- then the next they are screaming, blaming, attacking, crying, and/or seeking revenge for minor trigger event - then soon after, they are friends again without much recognition of the previous interactions. When they are angry, they can launch vicious attacks against their Targets of Blame (physically, verbally, legally, or socially).
 - Common conflict traits: sudden intense anger, wide mood swings, revenge, and vindication
 - (Note: this *BORDERLINE* personality disorder is different from a *BIPOLAR* personality disorder. In bipolar, the mood swings are less likely to be

related to any trigger event. Also, in bipolar, a person has longer periods of depression or elevated mood, with long periods of stability in between, as compared to the quicker shifts of borderline.)

- Borderline's worst fear: being abandoned.
- 5.9% of the general population has borderline personality disorder (~20 million people in North America) – more than half of those likely *also* have HCP.

- Antisocial (“against-society”, AKA Sociopathic) *and* high-conflict personality:
 - Charismatic and charming at first, but they are the ultimate con artist and master manipulator. They are characterized by a lack of conscience, deceitfulness, and a willingness to be cruel to achieve their goals. They are insincere and have dishonest relationships to get what they want, though it is not obvious to others at first. Their public personality is a cover for their life-long drive to dominate others through lying, fast talking, stealing (including from their own family), publicly humiliating people, psychological cruelty, dragging innocent people through court, physically injuring them and in extreme cases murdering them. Antisocial HCPs have potential to be very dangerous. They violate social rules and norms without remorse and are said to have no conscience. They seem to enjoy conflict. They are “like toddlers” in that if you stand in their way, they will push you aside, destroy your reputation or even kill you to get what they want – all with no remorse. Targeting people is what antisocial HCPs do.
 - Antisocial HCPs often hook people by telling sad, dramatic stories of victimization. They gain entry into a community by asking for a helping hand. They prey upon innocent people in vulnerable periods of life, because those people are codependent and inclined to please, help, trust, and want to be close to a dynamic and charming person. Antisocial HCPs recruit many Negative Advocates who will defend them and try to make it seem like the Target of Blame is the problem. Antisocial HCPs will turn your own family, your own friends, your own community, and usually your own children against you. Antisocial HCPs tend to become worse if they attend counseling, since they learn to mimic the counseling language of empathy and caring in order to manipulate others further. (Sometimes, antisocial personality disorder is considered an extreme subcategory of narcissistic personality disorder.)
 - Common traits: criminality, lying, cruelty, fearless, enjoys bullying/hurting others, likes to dominate
 - Antisocial/sociopath's worst fear: being dominated by others

- 3.6% of the general population has antisocial personality disorder (~13 million people in North America; almost 1 out of every 25 people) – *most of these* also have HCP.
- Note: Beware of being told to cut off your friends and family, for any reason. This is a warning sign. Don't allow your life to revolve around just one person. **Ninety percent of people would want you to have your friends and to spend time with your family members.**
- Histrionic *and* high-conflict personality:
 - Exciting and dramatic at first, but often tell wild, extreme, and sometimes totally false stories with gross exaggerations that generally are lacking in detail. They tend to be flamboyant and like to be center of attention. Constantly dramatic with superficial, short-lived emotions that come and go quickly and are not organized. They tend to have shallow relationships. Dramatic intimacy, telling people to keep something secret while ironically telling everyone about it themselves. They spread rumors but will say they are “not allowed to tell who told them”. Their actions don't follow their words (they threaten to never see someone again - but quickly resume the relationship anyway). They act helpless and seek others to care for them and their problems. They think people care more about them than they do. Over time they can be emotionally draining and harmful to those around them, particularly their Targets of Blame. Comes from the word “hysteria”.
 - Common traits: excessive drama, highly emotional, exaggerates, demands attention, may lie
 - Histrionics' worst fear: being ignored
 - 1.8% of US population has histrionic personality disorder (~6 million people in North America) – *many of those* are also HCPs
- Paranoid *and* high-conflict personality:
 - Life-long pattern of being deeply suspicious, constantly fearing betrayal, imagining complex conspiracies against them, and possibly launching preemptive attacks against their Targets of Blame. This is a pattern of fear, rather than isolated, occasional incidents of reasonable fear.
 - Common traits: extreme fearfulness, mistrusts everyone, fears conspiracies and betrayals
 - Paranoid's worst fear: being betrayed.

- 4.4% of US population has paranoid personality disorder (~16 million people in North America) – but *only few of those* also have HCP (more often, they prefer not to engage with others).

For more information:

- ⇒ 5 Types of People Who Can Ruin Your Life: Identifying and Dealing with Narcissists, Sociopaths, and Other High-Conflict Personalities, by Bill Eddy, LCSW, Esq., copywrite 2018
- ⇒ It's All Your Fault! 12 Tips for Managing People Who Blame Others for Everything, by Bill Eddy, LCSW, Esq., copywrite 2008