

The Cult Leader Primer

“Tales of the Victim’s Life”

The following quotes were taken from, *Malignant Self Love: Narcissism Revisited*, Narcissus Publications, Prague and Skopje, 2003, written by Sam Vaknin, PhD. In the original quotes Narcissist, Narcissism or some facsimile appeared. However, Dr. Vaknin gave permission to change these to read “cult”, “cult leader” or the like. From our perspective of working twenty years with these groups and individuals we have found no better description than those penned by Dr. Vaknin.

“The cult leader affects his victims by infiltrating their psyche, by penetrating their defenses. Like a virus, he establishes a new genetic strain within his/her victims. It echoes through them, it talks through them, it walks through them. It is like the invasion of the body snatchers. You should be careful to separate yourself from the “cult leader” inside you, this alien growth, this spiritual cancer that is the result of being a member of a cult. ...To cope with the cult leader, he forces you to ‘walk on eggshells’ and develop a *Cult Self* of your own. It is nothing as elaborate as the cult leader’s *Self* – but it is there, in you, as a result of the trauma and abuse inflicted upon you by the cult leader.”

“...Like his disorder, the cult leader is all-pervasive. Being the *victim* of a cult leader is a condition no less pernicious (causing harm or ruin) than being a cult leader. Great efforts are required to abandon a cult leader and physical separation is only the first (and less consequential) step. One can abandon a cult leader – but the cult leader is slow to “abandon” his victims. He is there, lurking, rendering existence unreal, twisting and distorting with no respite (no let up), an inner, remorseless voice, lacking in compassion and empathy for his victims. The cult leader is there in spirit long after he has vanished in the flesh.”

“This is the real danger that the victims of the cult leader face: that they become like him, bitter, self-centered, lacking in empathy. This is the last bow of the cult leader, his curtain call, by proxy as it were.”

“Thus, perhaps we should invent VoCL, Victims of Cult Leaders. They experience shame and anger for their past helplessness and submissiveness. They are hurt and sensitized by the harrowing experience of sharing a fake existence with a fake person, the cult leader. They are scarred and often suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

“The cult leader abuses his victim verbally, mentally, spiritually, or physically (often in all four ways). He infiltrates their defenses, shatters their self-confidence, confuses and confounds them, demeans and debases them. He invades their territory, abuses their confidence, exhausts their resources, hurts their loved ones, threatens their stability and security, involves them in his paranoid states of mind, frightens them out of their wits, humiliates and insults them privately and in public, points out their shortcomings, criticizes them profusely and in a “scientific and objective” manner – and this is a partial list. Very often, the cult leader acts sadistically in the guise of an enlightened interest in the welfare of his victim. He acts the guru to their need for guidance... the father figure... the teacher, the only true friend, the old and experienced.”

“The hearts of cult leader’s victims are captivated. They love monsters. They try to understand abusers. They make excuses for the inexcusable. They mitigate their private holocaust. They legitimize abhorrent crimes. They lie to themselves. They are immorally not in touch with their real emotions. And, this way, they perpetuate their own abuse, their own torture, they collaborate with the terrorists that are and were their only family.”