

MODULE 8.3

THE YELLOW ROCK MENTALITY

Learning and implementing “yellow rock” communication is a critical skillset to develop when you find yourself forced to co-parent with a narcissist. The reality is “yellow rock” is so much more than a form of communication, it’s an overall mentality that paints us in the best possible light when those in the family court system are watching.

The Yellow Rock Mentality is a difficult concept for many to absorb, accept and implement. Many get stuck on the notion that they should not be forced to co-parent with a narcissist (or to be friendly with their abuser) and while I agree with that wholeheartedly, we are forced to face some very harsh realities in the family court system. Protective parents are often painted as hysterical, enmeshed alienators. This is the absolute reality of what we are up against it and in many ways, we are outnumbered. The reality is that we are in a very broken system and I do not see that changing anytime soon.

What do we do? While our hands are tied by a broken system, we do have choices about how we show up:

- **Gray Rock:** the goal is to become as boring and unassuming as a gray rock. The gray rock isn’t noticeable to the casual observer, it doesn’t garner attention. The gray rock is cool to the touch and a bit aloof. It is just there – not bothering anyone and not engaging. This is the ideal presentation if you are dealing with a narcissist and do not have children.
- **Yellow Rock:** At the foundation, the yellow rock is still a gray rock but there is something a bit different about it. There is something about the yellow rock that catches your attention; it is likeable. With a gray stone as its base, it is smooth, cool and collected, but it has an air of friendliness, happiness, optimism, enlightenment and intellect. This is the ideal presentation if you are co-parenting with a narcissist and, under the watchful eye of the family court system.

Gray rock is the recommended style of communicating with a narcissist however, it drastically hurts healthy parents because it makes us appear cold, rigid, uncompromising, and angry. Gray rock communication often backfires in family court proceedings because opposing counsel will use it to paint a picture of someone who is uncooperative and bitter. Gray rock-ing makes a healthy parent seem like part of the problem in the conflict.

Those of us who are forced to co-parent with narcissists are under a microscope when it comes to our actions, presentation, co-parenting and communication. Going yellow rock is not acting and it’s not manipulation. It’s our authentic truth; it’s who we are with or without the narcissist. It’s the way we stay true to ourselves as we navigate this foreign land that we find ourselves in. We stay

true to who we are, we still get to maintain boundaries and, we present well to the family court professionals. It goes against everything we've been taught by the Domestic Violence community and, the Narcissistic Abuse community.

The way I see it, we have three options:

1. We “gray rock” the hell out of this chapter in our lives which preserves our own personal peace of mind and sanity but likely has ramifications to us and to our children. We are willing to take that risk.
2. We stand up for what is right. We go head-to-head with the family court professionals who have a great deal of power over us and our children. There are consequences and they can be harsh.
3. We practice radical acceptance, consider this just “a chapter” (or three) in our lives and show up, “yellow rock-ing” the hell out of life, the court system and this current situation while reminding ourselves that, “this too shall pass.” We operate from a place of strategy.

What does Yellow Rock-ing look like?

- It is disconnecting from the narcissist but not from yourself.
- It is operating from the here and now while focusing on forward movement, not the past.
- It is sticking to facts in a friendly but non-emotional way.
- It is understanding the pathology of the narcissist (fragile, ego-driven, non-empathetic beings) so you can be strategic in your communication.
- It is being realistic when it comes to your expectations of the narcissist.
- It is stepping away when needed and not responding when upset or triggered.

What are some phrases to use while Yellow Rock-ing?

- While I do not agree with you, you have every right to feel the way you do.
- I think we may need to agree to disagree on this topic for now.
- That is a very strong accusation. Can you help me to understand why you feel this way by sharing examples?
- I want to understand your position but I sense that you are angry right now. I'm hoping we can revisit this topic when things deescalate a bit?
- I'm hoping we can both take time away from this topic to regroup as we are not going in a positive or productive direction. Let's revisit this next week.
- I'm sorry that you feel this way. Moving forward, I'd like to keep our communication focused on the children.

Your turn:

1. _____
2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Yellow Rock in Action

Example:

Question: Hi Tina: I'm hoping to attend Piper's gymnastic class on Tuesday. Can you remind me of the time?

Response: "I look forward to the point in our co-parenting relationship when we can come together at gymnastic lessons and other activities. With the current level of conflict in our case, I don't think it's healthy for the children but I encourage you to enjoy activities with them during your parenting time. I would welcome you to attend the end of year gymnastics performance on October 12th and I've added it to the Our Family Wizard calendar."

Example:

Statement: "I fixed the zipper on Piper's jacket which has been broken for months. Maybe you should use the child support money to buy her a new jacket since hers is old and tattered!"

Response: "Thank you for fixing her jacket – I always tell Piper that you can fix anything!"

Example:

Question: "I have an unexpected work trip scheduled for the first week in January. Can I switch the first weekend for the second week that month?"

Response: "I look forward to getting to a place in our co-parenting relationship where we can be more flexible with the schedule. For the time being, I would like to follow the parenting time schedule created by Judge Perry. I am happy to keep Piper while you are away for work."

It's NOT Always About the Narcissist

Contrary to what they've conditioned you to believe, it's not all always about the narcissist. On the flipside, it's all about the Judge and the other professionals who are formulating their opinions of you, the narcissist and your case. When we focus on the narcissist, we are driven by hurt and anger and it shows in our communication. Even bigger, we give away our power when we allow the narcissist to control our reactions and we further fuel them.

Going "yellow rock" is operating from your place of authentic truth. When we go yellow rock, it allows us to take our power back and sit in our own light. Our authentic truth is what we want the court to see. Our authentic truth is how we want to show up in the world. Yellow-rocking is showing up as the best possible version of yourself- that has nothing to do with the narcissist.