

TORCH & SOUL

YOU DON'T HAVE TO ANSWER THAT

A practical response guide for narcissistic conversations that keep pulling you into defending, explaining, and reacting.

ONE INTERACTION. ONE PURPOSE. ONE USABLE PLAN.

Decide what belongs in the exchange, what does not require engagement there, how to return to purpose, and when your part is complete.

15–25 MINUTES • REUSABLE • DOWNLOADABLE + PRINTABLE

You are preparing your side of the interaction. You are not taking responsibility for controlling theirs.

Ignite Your Purpose. Fuel Your Soul.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

This is not a script that controls the outcome

Use this tool for one upcoming, current, or recurring interaction you cannot or do not intend to avoid.

Use it when you still have to deal with them

- ☐ Children or family logistics
- ☐ Work, money, property, or shared responsibilities
- ☐ A question, decision, request, or confirmation that genuinely needs a response
- ☐ A recurring exchange where you keep defending, explaining, reacting, apologizing, or losing the original issue

This tool will not

- ☐ Tell you to ignore every message or never explain yourself
- ☐ Diagnose motive or decide every difficult interaction is manipulation
- ☐ Give you words another person cannot twist, reject, or argue with
- ☐ Replace legal, custody, workplace, financial, safety, medical, or mental-health guidance
- ☐ Make agreement, validation, apology, or changed behavior the measure of your success

THE STANDARD

A successful interaction means you completed your necessary task as proportionately as you could. It does not require the other person to agree, understand, calm down, or stop pushing.

PART 1

What is this interaction actually for?

Choose one interaction and name its concrete purpose in one sentence.

The interaction

Who is involved, what channel will be used, and when does it need to happen?

The concrete purpose

What needs to be communicated, answered, requested, decided, confirmed, or completed?

What I wish would also happen

Name the understandable wish that they finally understand, admit, agree, apologize, validate, or respond differently. This wish does not have to become the task.

PURPOSE ANCHOR

This interaction is for: _____

PART 2

What actually requires my response?

A question, accusation, or demand does not automatically become your assignment.

What belongs to the interaction?

- ☐ Information needed to complete the practical purpose
- ☐ A direct question that affects the decision or logistics
- ☐ A fact you are genuinely responsible for confirming or correcting
- ☐ A time-sensitive obligation that cannot reasonably wait
- ☐ A response required by a professional, legal, custody, workplace, or financial process I understand

What do I actually need to communicate, answer, or decide?

IMPORTANT

Selective engagement is not blanket silence. Some information legitimately requires a response. The surrounding pressure does not get to decide what that information is.

PART 3

Where do I usually get pulled in?

Use your actual interaction history. Identify what changes your behavior or moves you away from the purpose without diagnosing why it happens.

- ☐ An unrelated accusation
- ☐ An old grievance
- ☐ A demand that I justify myself
- ☐ A baiting remark or insult
- ☐ A sudden topic change
- ☐ An attack on my character
- ☐ Pressure for an immediate answer
- ☐ Repeated requests for more explanation
- ☐ A threat, consequence, or urgent tone
- ☐ Something else:

The pull-off-course point I am most likely to follow

What I usually do next

Defend, explain, correct, react, apologize, answer a side question, abandon the original purpose, or something else?

NOTICE THE TURN

The derailer matters because it changes what you do. You do not need to prove why the other person used it before you prepare for it.

PART 4

What doesn't need to be resolved here?

Something can matter without belonging to the interaction you are completing now.

Put it here	What belongs in this category?
BELONGS TO THIS INTERACTION	Directly affects the purpose, information, decision, logistics, or obligation.
MAY MATTER, BUT NOT HERE	Could deserve attention separately, but is not required to complete this exchange.
PULLS ME OFF PURPOSE	Historically recruits me into defending, explaining, reacting, or another argument.
REQUIRES A PAUSE OR DIFFERENT CHANNEL	I need more information, time, regulation, documentation, or more appropriate conditions.
MY PART IS COMPLETE	My necessary task is done even if the other person continues pushing.

My “not this interaction” list

NOT A VERDICT

You are not declaring these issues unimportant forever. You are deciding what does not have to be resolved inside this exchange.

PART 5

My return and completion plan

Prepare one concise return anchor and define completion before pressure begins.

My return anchor

Use your own words. Keep it tied to the purpose, not to convincing the other person.

Supporting examples

- ☐ “I am responding to the scheduling question.”
- ☐ “That is separate from what needs to be decided today.”
- ☐ “I do not have enough information to answer that yet.”
- ☐ “I have shared the information needed for this decision.”
- ☐ “I am not discussing that in this exchange.”

These are examples, not guaranteed scripts. Change them to fit your real obligations, voice, channel, and situation.

My part is complete when

COMPLETION

The necessary information was sent, the relevant question was answered, the decision was stated, the logistics were confirmed, or continuing adds no useful information.

YOUR PLAN

Interaction Plan

Complete this page before the interaction. Keep it where you can see it if the exchange begins to move away from its purpose.

This interaction is for:

What I actually need to communicate / answer / decide:

What I do not need to resolve in this interaction:

Where I am most likely to get pulled in:

If that happens, I return to:

My part is complete when:

MY AUTHORITY

I can decide what belongs in this interaction without answering everything placed in front of me.

PART 6

What actually happened?

Use the exchange as information for future preparation, not as a verdict about the entire relationship.

Was the practical purpose completed? What happened?

Where did I stay with the purpose?

Where did I get pulled off course?

What did I answer that genuinely required a response?

What did I answer that did not need an answer there?

What would I prepare differently next time?

USE THE RECORD

The goal is not perfect performance. The goal is a more usable plan based on what actually happened.

COMPLETION

Your part can be complete

You have completed the job when you can name the purpose, the response that belongs to it, the predictable derailers, your return anchor, and the point at which your necessary task is done.

You may still feel misunderstood. They may continue asking, accusing, changing topics, or pushing for more. Their continuation does not automatically create a new obligation for you.

You also do not have to turn every response into silence. Some questions deserve an answer. Some corrections matter. Some obligations are real. The decision belongs to the purpose and the actual situation, not to a blanket rule.

Reuse the plan

- ☐ Use the same plan again when the purpose and predictable derailers remain similar.
- ☐ Revise the return anchor if it did not help you stay with the task.
- ☐ Move an issue into a separate interaction if it matters but did not belong here.
- ☐ Use qualified professional support when specialized obligations or danger are involved.
- ☐ If clarity repeatedly collapses across many different situations, that is a broader job than this one-interaction tool.

FINAL STATEMENT

I can answer what belongs to this interaction without accepting every question, accusation, or demand as mine to resolve.

With truth and fire,

Melissa | Torch & Soul

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Educational-use boundary

This product is an educational interaction-planning tool. It does not diagnose another person, determine motive, control another person's response, or provide legal, custody, workplace, financial, safety, medical, or mental-health guidance. When immediate danger, threats, stalking, coercion, court orders, employment requirements, or specialized obligations are involved, use qualified professional and emergency support appropriate to your situation.