

Speaker 1 ([00:00](#)):

If it's October (which it is) then it must be ADHD Awareness Month (which it is) and it's ADHD Awareness Month, it must be time for TADD talks from ADDA. They're kind of like TED talks but shorter, snappier, ADHD-friendly, if you will. And this year they're all about executive function. You know ...that front part of our ADHD brains that helps us plan and prioritize and remember what we're doing and follow through. Or not. So here's your chance to hear from 31 different experts. It's just another way ADDA supports adults with ADHD. Let's listen in..

Dr. Sarkis ([00:39](#)):

Hi, I'm Dr. Stephanie Sarkis. I'm coming to you from Tampa Bay, Florida. And today ADDA has invited me to share my thoughts about why people with ADHD are prone to toxic relationships and gaslighting. So first, a little bit about gaslighting. What is gaslighting? Gaslighting is a series of manipulation techniques with the goal of gaining control of another person's or group of people. It's part of emotional abuse, which is part of domestic violence. And the goal of it is to keep a victim off kilter and to make them question their reality. Different ways of people do this as they will say what you're seeing and hearing isn't what really happened. You're told that other people are saying things about you. You are love bombed in the beginning of a relationship, which means that your relationship starts off really, really intensely.

Dr. Sarkis ([01:26](#)):

And it's different than an ADHD kind of intense relationship. This is where someone pressures you to move in with them right away. There are comments made about how you're the best person ever and they've never been anybody like you. And that can feel really good to hear that, but it's way over the top. So also when you have that love bombing, it's usually followed by some guilt and shaming. And when people with ADHD encounter this type of relationship there's already a certain level of guilt and shame that people with ADHD experience because of feeling like we can't do as much as other people do. And everyone's working, you know, less hard as you and they're getting more work done. You're working five times the amount, you're looking half the amount of work done, you're told that your brain doesn't work correctly.

Dr. Sarkis ([02:16](#)):

You're told not to trust your intuition and it's so to be susceptible to this type of personality, which is kind of a narcissistic type of personality. As so you may find these kind of relationships in families in friendships at work, in romantic relationships, and it can really cause issues with self-esteem. Because when you have ADHD you automatically have issues with self-esteem because again, we're told from early age that our brains don't work the same as other people's. So, I, it's something where we are susceptible to it because also social skills issues, if someone tells you that they find your ADHD endearing that's maybe the first time someone's ever said that to you. But you'll find out later in this type of relationship with a narcissist gas lighter that your ADHD is weaponized against you, which means that you're told that, that you're crazy because of your ADHD.

Dr. Sarkis ([03:10](#)):

You're told that that all the relationships issues are your fault because you have ADHD. I've even had clients where the narcissistic spouse hid their items and then told them like a wedding ring and told them, Well this is because you're ADHD. You can't keep track of things. And what it does, it already again, enacts that guilt and shame. And it, because we've been told is people with ADHD that that what

we're doing isn't the right thing. We are more likely to buy into someone telling us that ADHD is the problem and that we are the issue in the relationship. We're much more likely to blame ourselves which I think is a very normal thing for people with ADHD to experience. And so you can feel like in this type of relationship that again, you know, what am I doing wrong?

Dr. Sarkis ([03:55](#)):

You're constantly questioning yourself as to what did I do wrong this time? It must be my ADHD. When in fact this is a person that is trying to get control and power over you. And again, the way they do that is that they look for vulnerable people. And as a person with ADHD, you may have vulnerabilities to being manipulated just like if you have ADHD and depression or ADHD and anxiety and no one is immune from this type of, of predator. But again, people with ADHD, we tend to have some characteristics and make us more prone to it. I think also we tend to look for the best in other people and we look at what the potential someone could be rather than where they're actually at. And I think it's really important that we look at how is someone treating us now?

Dr. Sarkis ([04:40](#)):

And it's not just what people say, it's what they do. So they may tell you that you're great, but are they following through with treating you with love, kindness, and respect? I think that's really important. When you realize you're in this type of relationship, one of the best things you can do is go no contact, which means you block their phone number, block your emails, block their social media accounts, because when you leave this type of relationship, the person will do something called hoovering, which means they try to suck you back into the relationship. And they will do that by doing kind of a fake apology, which isn't really an apology cause they still find a way to blame you in their apology. They will also promise you things that they didn't fulfill when you were in the relationship. So like if they said to you, you know, we're going to go to Tahiti for vacation, and then eventually they told your relationship, Well, you know, because the way you behaved, we're not going to go.

Dr. Sarkis ([05:28](#)):

Then all of a sudden when they're trying to ho you back in, they'll start saying to you, Well, we can always take that vacation at Tahiti. But just be aware that once you go back in the relationship, the relationship will become just as bad as it was before and then it'll get worse. Worse. And this is not a relationship that is going to heal. This is a relationship that you need either need to go no contact or low contact. Low contact is a possibility when you're co-parenting with someone that's a narcissist or gas lighter because you can't go no contact. But there are different co-parenting strategies such as having a detailed parenting plan using a, a parent coordinator to help the two of you work through parenting issues can be helpful as well. Now why do people behave this way? Why do they become toxic people Or gaslight?

Dr. Sarkis ([06:13](#)):

Sometimes it's learning information from your family of origin, the family you grew up with. Maybe parents were toxic people. Maybe they use manipulation. So a child learned that this is the way that you interact with people. Or it could just be, I call people are someone who born with bad wiring and they get a dopamine boost from controlling people. You know, most of us get a dopamine boost from doing a job at work or petting our dog or playing other kids, but they get a dopamine boost from manipulating people. Now, either way, as someone got to this behavior, they're still a hundred percent responsible for it. And that doesn't mean that you need to stay in a relationship with someone while they're trying

to figure out their issues. This can take if a person is having gas lying behaviors that can take pretty in-depth therapy, but they have to be willing to get help.

Dr. Sarkis ([06:58](#)):

And that can be tricky. Sometimes this type of personality feels like they don't have an issue. But you as a person that has been in relationship with someone like this, I would recommend therapy because there are a lot of issues that go with being manipulated to that level and also having ADHD or depression anxiety on top of that. Our grief can be deeper than other people's grief. The rejection sense of dysphoria can be pretty rough. So I think it's really important that you talk with someone especially someone, a mental health professional that specializes in ADHD and also narcissistic abuse. So you can heal from this and you can go on to having happy, healthy relationships, but just beware of people that may not have your best interests in mind. I think it's, it's really important that we look at you.

Dr. Sarkis ([07:43](#)):

Does this person care about me? Are they treating me with respect, courtesy are they listening to me? Do they continually interrupt me? And not in an ADHD way, but because they want to dominate the conversation. Do they talk about other people in an unkind way? Do they tease their pets or their kids in a, in a, in a way that's harmful? Those are the things we need to look for. And if you're out on a date with somebody like this and you get a red flag right away from their behavior, like they're talking only about themselves or they are, you know, calling their family different, you know, derogatory names you need to just get up and leave and don't worry about not being polite. Sometimes you just need to get up and leave because the more time you spend with this type of personality, the more likely you are to get sucked into it.

Dr. Sarkis ([08:29](#)):

So again, really important that you go no contact or low contact if you co-parent with someone like this. Have a detailed parenting plan and also seek a mental health counseling. And also keep up your treatment for ADHD too, because when we have appropriate treatment for ADHD and studies show that stimulant medication is the most effective treatment, we are more likely to have those split that decide if something somebody said, if being around them is in our best interest. We're more likely to be able to think more clearly of our executive functions like planning for thought to be able to make better decisions about just life in general and especially around the people that we want to be around. So this is Dr. Stephanie Sarkis, I'm the author of Gaslighting and also Healing from Toxic Relationships and Sensible Solutions to Adult ADHD. I'm glad you could join me today for ADDA's TADD Talk about Toxic Relationships and Why People with a ADHD are Susceptible. If you want more information about my work you can find me online @ <https://stephaniesarkis.com/> And you can also reach me on a contact page there that sends it right to my email. So thank you. Thank you for listening.

Speaker 1 ([09:44](#)):

Hey, congrats you did it - listened to the entire TADD talk! And if you think this is great info, there's even more at the 2022 international ADHD conference. It's a hybrid conference that happens November 16th through the 19th live in Dallas, Texas, simulcast on the web as a virtual event. Find out more at ADDA - that's add.org, where you can catch ADHD webinars, join peer support groups, and get ADHD classes. It's truly priceless, but membership costs less than \$8 a month. Okay. Enough of the chatter... we'll see you tomorrow with more executive function information.

