

A.C.A.L.M.E.R.M.E

**M IS FOR MEANING**

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The people who are impossible to please, the angry ones, the sarcastic ones, the demanding divas, and the gossips you just know have bitched about you behind your back, what exactly have you made their behaviour mean about you?

Let me tell you what it means.

It means nothing.

Yep, that's right. **Nothing.**

We spend a lifetime making other people's shameful behaviour mean terrible things about ourselves.

- We blame ourselves.
- We hold ourselves responsible for their toxic choices, actions, and moods.
- We can't help it - we were literally programmed to take the blame.

Until we understand that our dysregulated choices, feelings, and thoughts have been shaped by the toxic messages other people have projected onto us, we stay:

- Emotionally stuck.
- Hypervigilant.
- Self-critical.

- Constantly making everything that goes wrong mean something dreadful about us.

When someone acts in an intimidating, critical, or unkind way, our past emotional experiences are immediately triggered. Our fear response kicks in. We don't stop to think: is this even about me?

Instead, we rush to blame ourselves because long ago, it felt safer to admit it was our fault than to stand up to an angry or neglectful adult. We made their projections mean:

- We were wrong.
- We were stupid.
- We were too much.
- We were not enough.

We punished ourselves then and if we're not careful, we'll punish ourselves now.

But now you know better, you can do better. You have a choice. You can either continue making other people's moods, cruelty, or chaos mean something devastating about you or, you can make it mean nothing at all.

Their behaviour says *everything* about them and *nothing* about you.

Line drawn.

The meaning you once attached to these painful experiences is simply not true. It never was. Throughout your childhood you were conditioned to believe something was wrong with you. You were shamed and blamed for other people's unhappiness. You learned to overcompensate, to fix, to people-please - all to survive. That survival strategy is the root cause of every self-sabotaging behaviour you've struggled with:

- the perfectionism.
- the addictions.
- the broken relationships.
- the endless guilt and shame...

...and it changes today. Every pain, every heartbreak, every wound - they are all linked to the false meanings you attached to yourself because of other people's failures.

Next time someone criticises, intimidates, dismisses, or hurts you, pause; do *not* make it mean anything about you. Instead, silently send it back to where it belongs. Their lies are not your truth. If you feel strong enough, you can even calmly ask:

- What do you mean by that?
- Why do you feel that way?

You don't have to explain yourself, defend yourself, or apologise for existing. Do not feed the beast.

I used to be so over-sensitised to shame and ridicule that even light-hearted jokes could wound me. Anything anyone said - every eyeroll, every comment - I made it mean something terrible about me. It was exhausting. Now I know better, I do better and so will you.

- We must stop dragging painful meanings from the past into the present.
- We must allow Awareness, Conscious Conversation, Acceptance, and Logical Perspective to give meaning to who we are *today*.

Catch yourself before you spiral into the old rabbit hole of self-punishment and guilt.

It's not called an emotional war for nothing!

## **CHALLENGE IT TO CHANGE IT JOURNAL PROMPTS**

### M IS FOR MEANING

- What have you made your pain-filled past **mean about you?**
- What changes today?
- What have you learned about 'giving meaning':

**Meaning is our fifth step.**