

I must confess I was not aware of this particular term until I ran across an article on ghosting recently. Ghosting is essentially an extreme form of avoidance where a person severs all ties and disappears from your life. They do not respond to text or emails or Facebook or any other social media form. In many cases they will have blocked you. The same goes for phone calls or other attempts at contact. To be clear I am not drawing attention to instances of domestic violence or similar types of abuses where cutting a person out of their lives may be exactly what is called for. This is more along the lines of what may seem like a relatively minor incident or even no incident at all which triggers the ghosting. Nor am I speaking of knowing a person for relatively short periods of time. I am pointing to longer term relationships; be they friends or more where there has been a considerable and meaningful connection.

The person on the receiving end of ghosting frequently has to contend with feelings of loss, rejection and despair. They may be left feeling helpless and wondering what has happened to have caused a breakup in such a manner. I have had a few clients that have been ghosted in the past and I can confidently say it was a very trying time for them. Additionally, by way of disclosure I have been on the receiving end of ghosting, and while I may not have been distraught, I can certainly relate to how my clients were feeling.

One of the things I try to get across to people is that ghosting tells you a lot more about the person doing the ghosting than it does about themselves. No matter how they justify their behaviour, the fact of the matter is that they lack compassion and empathy for the other person. Ghosting is intended to punish and as such is intended to hurt the other person. One of the facets of ghosting is that very often the punishment does not seem to fit the crime. Not a very nice thing to engage in.

I suggest that in order to understand a part of this phenomena is to view it as part of the [Karpman Drama Cycle](#). Effectively, they have fulfilled the role of the punisher in your eyes. Yet in their worldview they see themselves as the victim so that they can justify their own behaviour. Sometimes, they have someone else stepping into the rescuer role, a third party of some description. The cycle continues on with the other person if you are out of the picture. My advice is to not attempt to rescue or demonstrate your victimhood. Keep out of that cycle as best as you can as its very destructive and vicious.

The other thing about ghosts is that they typically are low on self-awareness. Granted I have only a small sample to go on and as such we need to be careful not to take these insights as written in granite, but low self-awareness seems to be a feature of ghosting. Which makes sense given the lack of compassion and empathy displayed. Usually the more self-aware we are the greater our capacity for compassion and empathy.

Out of five instances of ghosting where I have had some association two of the people likely had a personality disorder. One seemed to display many of the characteristics of a borderline personality disorder and the other could likely be classified as narcissistic. The other three did not seem to have any particular personality disorder even though their behaviour was questionable. Some form of trauma may account for their behaviour but again that is speculation. The reason I mention this is that I read in another article that all ghosting was indicative of a personality disorder. This is not my experience of the phenomena.

One of the triggers for ghosting is that often the person has a low tolerance for conflict. They have great difficulty in being viewed as the bad person. For them it is far easier to avoid the situation and in turn the arguments that may ensue by simply disappearing. Mature healthy relationships handle conflict and anger towards each other via discussion and communication with plenty of tolerance thrown in. They do not disappear but rather are present in the relationship.

Ghosts frequently do not have the skillset to maturely deal with conflict or anger towards them. For them, someone being mad or angry with them can be intolerable. They sometimes feel inadequate at some level of being and it is often this inadequacy which drives their behaviour and causes them to ghost. Ghosting is a way of trying to control a situation via an extreme form of distancing. The conflict or imagined anger towards them makes them feel out of control and their need to be back in control outweighs everything else. Of course the thing to do if you're on the receiving end is to not chase. The old adage of working on yourself comes in handy here.

It also often helps that most often the behavior is not an indication of meanness from the ghost. Rather it is one of them being unconscious to some of the underlying mechanics that are at play in these instances. Which does not excuse the person, but it is a way of have a little compassion for them, as often they are hurt at some level of being as well.