

A NARCISSIST---"THE SPECIAL ME"

GOAL: To increase awareness and recommend possible solutions to dealing with and working with a person with narcissistic tendencies.

Suppose someone who is intellectually astute, a critical thinker, uses common sense, and cares about their fellowmen is experiencing a narcissistic person---the challenge is ominous! (Now, I didn't mean experiencing a person with a healthy ego—I meant a person who meets the psychiatric diagnosis criteria of a Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD)—including a very large sense of self without obvious caring for other people).

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF NARCISSISM:

The truly diagnosed narcissist lives in a world of personal needs, expectations, and attempted manipulation of other people. This persona of "The Special Me" exemplifies arrogance, a lack of empathy, a need for admiration, and a sense of great personal importance. With this preoccupation with the self, there is no desire for intimacy and difficulty in loving another person or believing that another person is worthy of experiencing their love. Their behavior diminishes human goodness and pisses people off! There is an overt desire to be surrounded only by their perception of the "the best people"—and those people are similar to their feelings of self-importance. Their false promise of future improved behavior is often accompanied by gifts and promises of improved behavior. Such efforts to improve behavior are not usually kept.

It is more than a personality disorder/trait or a self-absorbed person with a healthy ego. About .5% to 5% of the population meet the criteria of a diagnosed psychiatric condition called Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD), with higher rates in men than women. Such a diagnosis was previously outlined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), the American Psychiatric Association's reference book on mental health conditions. However, many still recognize the psychiatric definition of the condition as "a general pattern of grandiosity, need for admiration, and lack of empathy for others."

The psychiatric diagnosis requires more than a healthy ego problem! It is when these traits exhibit overt inflexibility, cause personal functional impairment, maladaptive behaviors, or cause personal excessive stress that they meet the historical and psychological definition of Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD). Many of us have a few narcissistic personality traits without being a true narcissist; however, the more traits of this kind that are encountered, the more harm there is to human relationships.

Four accepted general psychiatric hallmark traits of a true narcissist for further clarification (not just a mere healthy ego or self-obsession) are:

1. **Lack of Empathy**—expecting others to think and feel as they do.
2. **Grandiosity**—expecting entitlement to the best and desire to be treated as special.
3. **Exploitation**—taking advantage of others to achieve their ends.
4. **Fragility**—lashing out at others when things do not go their way, feeling insulted or criticized.

Financial abuse is one of the most significant barriers to leaving an abusive spouse. As previously implied, the person with diagnosed NPD is self-indulgent, boastful, and overconfident. The true narcissist blunders into their world, pushing others aside without concern for immediate consequences, future ramifications, or rules regarding expected behaviors of the corporation, organization, or related entities. There is little to no empathy and concern for others. This self-indulgent behavior is often rewarded by others no matter the consequences—mainly due to a lack of understanding of narcissistic behavior by the unfortunate recipient. Love is conditional, and you are granted their presence, kindness, and concern as a gift if you idolize them, regardless of their selfish behaviors. Being egocentric is all about personal interest and admiration of oneself. After all—they think—the world revolves around them, and therefore, they are to be admired. With the obvious inability to truly care about others, there is an air of self-importance and preoccupation with success in what they feel they control. Most often, their success is deemed to be only a product of their doing, not anyone else who also worked hard for the purpose or intent of the job.

This knowledge is empowering, as it is often easy to recognize people you work with or have close relationships with a person displaying these traits! The chance for personal change by a diagnosed narcissist is related to the personal realization of their problem—and then change is still difficult.

A full-blown symptomatic Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) is not usually recognized by the person exhibiting such behavior.

ORIGIN:

Genetically, no gene produces narcissistic behavior. A reasonable, acceptable psychiatric supposition is that during childhood, their self-confidence in behavior (good or bad), any decision (right or wrong), boastful behavior, and overconfident behavior (appropriate or not) is admirably relished and rewarded by parents and significant others.

FUTURE PREDICTIONS OF CURE:

Unfortunately, narcissism is self-perpetuating. That is, there is a constant personal reminder of “how wonderful I am” with personal ego needs met by self-indulging pride. If you think you can change a person’s narcissistic/selfish behaviors (or want to change a diagnosed Narcissistic Personality Disorder), ---think again—as the behavior is rewarding to the person providing a perpetuating continuing support of personal grandiosity. Do what you must; however, their glory and continued uncaring of others meet their needs.

The intended “dirty work” toward others is often accomplished through overt and covert manipulation of others to meet the diagnosed Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) aggressive needs. Without the accomplices realizing it, the accomplices respond on behalf of the narcissist. Smiling and feeling the accomplished reward, the narcissist gets their manipulative attempts/result(s) accomplished through others. And their covert smile of narcissistic accomplishment goes on and on.

DIAGNOSING NARCISSISTIC PERSONALITY DISORDER (NPD):

Mark Zachary Rosenthal, Ph.D. (a clinical psychologist at Duke University Health) identified the symptoms in an acronym that identifies the personal feelings of a diagnosed NPD. An abbreviation identifying nine significant NPD traits is S-P-E-C-I-A-L-M-E (Special Me). If someone consistently displays at least five of the SPECIAL ME traits (as follows), they meet the diagnostic criteria for NPD.

The S-P-E-C-I-A-L-M-E TRAITS

- S:** A Sense of importance
- P:** Preoccupation with power, beauty, or success
- E:** Entitlement
- C:** Can only be around important and special people
- I:** Interpersonal exploitation for personal/own gain
- A:** Arrogant
- L:** Lack of empathy
- M:** Must be admired
- E:** Envious of others or believe that others are envious of them

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT:

The treatment for NPD can be difficult, but several professionally accommodated therapies can often help. A common intellectual thought is to “recognize the true narcissists.” So, now that you know who they are by their characteristics, make individual demands as to individual behaviors of quality expectations that require them to perform to your specifications and care about the needs of others—maybe a firm job description? Because you are trying to relate to a person who has a lifetime concerned only with the support of the narcissistic/selfish self, it is usually wise to dismiss the chance of any positive behavior to meet your personal need(s). This behavior is not deserving of other’s attention, support, or positive expectations. With such awareness, it is wise to never have such a person in any role where empathy, caring, or logical concern for others is needed.

With such inappropriate behavior evidenced by a known history and negative outcomes, it becomes even more important for close associates to understand and not encourage or support the continuation of narcissistic behaviors. However, try to understand this--- In an unfortunate role where you are required or must be with or around a true narcissist, it is recognized that rehabilitative efforts are usually not worth your time and effort as rehabilitation is often not possible—and there are probably more worthwhile efforts of your choosing.

Therefore, let us more fully understand this psychiatric phenomenon of NPD to make intelligent choices because of our increased recognition of the possible signs and symptoms that cause a need for informed management of the person on behalf of a corporation, organization, or related entity. The secret to future success involves a careful approach when selecting and requiring positive performance from associates, friends, and employees.

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