

Narcissistic Personality Disorder

Narcissism has not received as much attention as other psychological disorders, and yet it is often the cause of abusive behaviour and the core problem of many that suffer from addictions. In fact, it has been called the most hidden disorder of our time.

In spite of the narcissist's air of self-sufficiency, this individual is actually needier than most people. But to admit that the narcissist is needy, to admit that a person or a relationship is important to this individual, forces the narcissist to face feelings of deficiency. This, in turn, will create intolerable emptiness, jealousy and rage inside of the narcissist. To prevent this from occurring, the narcissist must find a way to get his/her needs met without acknowledging those needs or the person who meets them. The narcissist accomplishes this by viewing people as objects or a need-fulfilling function.

With his/her spouse and family, the narcissistic individual does not even pretend to be grateful. They belong to him/her and are supposed to meet the narcissist's every need. Not only will the narcissist's spouse and children's efforts to please this individual not be appreciated but they can always count on the narcissist's criticism when what is offered is beneath his/her standards.

A person suffering from narcissism will tend to either choose a fellow narcissist as a partner or someone who feels inadequate, invisible, and needs to hide in a relationship. This suits the narcissist just fine since s(he) doesn't want to recognize the existence of another person.

As long as nothing infiltrates the narcissist's cocoon, the narcissistic individual will not be aware of any serious personality problems. The narcissist thinks s(he) has it all, and those who know this individual will agree, since the narcissist has carefully selected them to be part of his/her world and thereby bolster the narcissist's view of him/herself.

In spite of the narcissist's aura of grandiosity and bubble of self-sufficiency, *the narcissistic individual is extremely thin-skinned.* This individual constantly takes offense at the way people treat him/her (e.g., they don't treat him/her with enough respect and don't appreciate this individual enough) and frequently feels mistreated. This may be the only clue that there is something wrong with the narcissist, but don't be fooled - the person with NPD is suffering from a serious psychological disorder. While the narcissistic individual may not feel the emptiness of his/her life, this individual's behavior and attitude cause suffering in all those with whom s(he) has intimate contact.

It is important when dealing with a narcissistic individual or someone with strong narcissistic traits to keep remembering that s(he) is not a very conscious human being, especially when it comes to their own behavior. Although much of the narcissist's behavior can be experienced as emotionally abusive (e.g., their arrogance, dismissive attitude or the need to be right), the narcissist isn't necessarily trying to make you feel bad about yourself. In fact, the primary goal of the narcissist is to make him/herself feel good, even at the expense of others. The narcissist's inattentiveness, brashness and insensitive comments may seem as if s(he) is deliberately trying to hurt you, when in reality, most of the time the narcissistic individual frankly could care less

about how you feel. Most narcissistic individuals are oblivious to others and to the feelings of others. The only time you become important is if you upset the status quo in any of the following ways:

- *The narcissist needs you in some way or wants something from you.*
- *You confront the narcissist.*
- *You threaten to change things.*
- *You threaten to end the relationship.*

For this reason it is important to not take what a narcissistic individual says or does personally. This, of course, is a very difficult task. But if you remember that in a narcissistic individual's world, s(he) is the center of the universe and everyone else is but a mere satellite revolving around the narcissist, it might help.

The only time most narcissistic individuals deliberately try to hurt others is when they themselves feel criticized or threatened in some way (e.g. if you dare to question their ability or knowledge, if you tell them they are wrong about something, or if you challenge their authority). *This is when you will feel their full wrath.*

How Emotional Abuse Does Damage

The primary effects of emotional abuse on the victim are depression, lack of motivation, confusion, difficulty concentrating or making decisions, low self-esteem, feelings of failure or worthlessness, feelings of hopelessness, self-blame, and self-destructiveness. Emotional abuse is like brainwashing in that it systematically wears away at the victim's self-confidence, sense of self-worth, trust in his or her perceptions and self-concept.

Emotional abuse poisons a relationship and infuses it with hostility, contempt, and hatred. No matter how much a couple once loved each other or a child loves their parent, once emotional abuse becomes a consistent aspect of the relationship, that love is overshadowed by fear, anger, guilt and shame.

Your Abuse Journal

Begin by writing down all the incidents of emotional abuse that you can remember. Take whatever time is necessary, but write down all the details, including what abusive tactic your partner/parent used and how it made you feel.

Growing up in a Dysfunctional Household

If you were abused or neglected in any way as a child or if you grew up in an alcoholic or tremendously dysfunctional household, you are carrying the emotional scars of your childhood with you today. The abuse, deprivation, or neglect that you suffered damaged your self-esteem, causing you to underestimate your abilities and desirability.

If you were a victim of emotional, physical or sexual abuse as a child, you may have been an easy target for abusive partners when you became an adult. Because survivors of childhood abuse generally have a great deal of shame and suffer from low self-esteem, they feel no one will want them. When someone does pay attention to them they are grateful and vulnerability may blind them to any obvious signs of abusiveness, a need to control or dominate or a tendency to be possessive that are exhibited in their partner.

Why Stay in the Relationship

There are many reasons why victims of emotional abuse continue to stay in unacceptable, even dangerous relationships. I've listed the most common below. Note which statements apply to you?

- *My partner told me it was my fault and I believe her.*
- *I'm afraid I am as unlovable (unattractive, stupid, irritating) as he says I am.*
- *I'm afraid no one will ever love me again like she does.*
- *I'm afraid of my own anger or my own potential to be abusive (it's better to be the victim than to be the abuser).*
- *I don't want to leave him all alone.*
- *I'm afraid of what he will do if I try to leave.*
- *I don't want to take the kids away from him.*
- *I'm afraid I can't make it on my own financially*

What to do

If you find yourself or a loved one in a Narcissistic relationship, please seek counseling. It is a rocky road to see the truth when you have been brainwashed for so long. Helping hands are most essential. If you are in a relationship, evaluate your support network and use them; include a professional counselor. If you are a bystander, make a statement of support for this individual offering assistance in any way that seems acceptable. They need your help.