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# Narcissism

Narcissism<sup>1)</sup> is a self-centered personality style characterized as having an excessive interest in one's physical appearance or image and an excessive preoccupation with one's own needs, often at the expense of others.

Narcissism exists on a continuum that ranges from normal to abnormal personality expression. Narcissistic personality disorder (NPD)<sup>2)</sup> is a personality disorder that is characterized by an excessive sense of self-importance, a lack of empathy for others, and a need for admiration. It is often associated with an inflated ego, a sense of entitlement, and a preoccupation with fantasies of power, success, and attractiveness. Narcissism is thought to be a result of a combination of genetic, environmental, and cultural factors, and it tends to manifest in early adulthood.

You will often hear people say, 'Oh, I'm very narcissistic,' or, 'It was a wound to my narcissism.' Such comments are not a true recognition of the condition; they are throw-away lines. To really recognize narcissism in oneself is profoundly distressing and often associated with denial.  
*Symington, Neville - "Narcissism: A New Theory" (Symington, Neville, 2013, pp.10)*

People with narcissistic personality disorder tend to have a distorted sense of their own importance, believing that they are special or unique and that they should be treated differently from others. They may have an exaggerated sense of their own achievements and talents, and they may expect to be recognized as superior, even when their accomplishments do not warrant it. They may also have an exaggerated sense of entitlement, believing that they deserve special treatment and that the rules do not apply to them.

Narcissistic individuals often have a lack of empathy for others and may be unable to recognize or understand the feelings and needs of others. They may use other people for their own gain, exploiting them for their own benefit without regard for the impact on the other person. They may also have a lack of interest in the well-being of others, and may be indifferent to the suffering of others.

Narcissistic individuals may also have a preoccupation with fantasies of power, success, and attractiveness. They may constantly seek attention and validation from others, and may become angry or hostile when they do not receive the admiration they feel they deserve. They may also have a tendency to exaggerate or fabricate their achievements and experiences in order to gain attention or admiration.

Treatment for narcissistic personality disorder often involves long-term psychotherapy, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy or psychoanalysis. Medications may also be prescribed to help manage any related symptoms, such as depression or anxiety. It is important for individuals with narcissistic personality disorder to work with a mental health professional in order to address the underlying causes of their narcissistic behavior and learn coping skills to manage their symptoms.

NPD is a complex personality disorder that can have significant impacts on an individual's relationships and functioning. It is important for individuals with narcissistic personality disorder to seek treatment in order to learn healthy ways of relating to others and to improve their overall quality of life.

## Subtypes of Narcissism

There are several different subtypes of narcissistic personality disorder<sup>3)</sup> that are often described in the literature:

- **Grandiose narcissism:** This type is characterized by an exaggerated sense of self-importance, a preoccupation with fantasies of power, success, and attractiveness, and a lack of empathy for others.
- **Vulnerable narcissism:** This type is characterized by a fragile sense of self-esteem, a need for constant validation and admiration from others, and a tendency to feel easily hurt or offended.
- **Malignant narcissism:**<sup>4)</sup> This type is characterized by a lack of empathy, a sense of entitlement, and a tendency to engage in manipulative or exploitative behavior. It is often associated with a lack of remorse or guilt and a willingness to engage in aggressive or sadistic behavior.
- **High-functioning narcissism:** This type is characterized by a confident and self-assured exterior, but a fragile and insecure sense of self-esteem underneath. These individuals may be able to maintain successful careers and relationships, but may struggle with issues of vulnerability and intimacy.

It is important to note that these subtypes are not necessarily mutually exclusive and that individuals may exhibit traits from multiple subtypes. It is also important to note that these subtypes are not officially recognized by the DSM-5, the diagnostic manual used by mental health professionals.

## DSM-5 Criteria

It is important to note that the subtypes of narcissistic personality disorder<sup>5)</sup> listed earlier (grandiose, vulnerable, malignant, and high-functioning) are not officially recognized by the DSM-5, the diagnostic manual used by mental health professionals to diagnose mental health disorders.

The DSM-5 criteria for narcissistic personality disorder include the following:

- A grandiose sense of self-importance, exaggerated achievement, or talents, or a belief that they are special or unique and should be treated as such
- A preoccupation with fantasies of power, success, or attractiveness
- A belief that they are entitled to special treatment or privileges
- A lack of empathy for others and a lack of concern for the impact of their actions on others
- A tendency to exploit or manipulate others for their own gain
- A lack of remorse or guilt for their actions

To be diagnosed with narcissistic personality disorder, an individual must meet at least five of these criteria. It is important to note that these criteria are not specific to any particular subtype of narcissism and that individuals with narcissistic personality disorder may exhibit traits from multiple subtypes.

## Narcissistic Supply

“Narcissistic supply”<sup>6)</sup> refers to the attention, admiration, or other forms of validation that an individual with narcissistic personality disorder craves and seeks out in order to maintain their sense of self-worth. This need for narcissistic supply is often driven by a fragile and insecure sense of self-esteem and a deep-seated fear of failure or inadequacy.

Narcissistic individuals may go to great lengths to obtain narcissistic supply, seeking out attention and admiration from others through their appearance, accomplishments, or personal charm. They may also engage in behaviors that are designed to draw attention to themselves, such as grandiose displays of wealth or status.

Narcissistic individuals may become dependent on narcissistic supply as a way of boosting their self-esteem and maintaining their sense of self-importance. If they do not receive the attention and admiration they crave, they may become angry, depressed, or anxious.

It is important to recognize the role that narcissistic supply plays in the behavior of individuals with narcissistic personality disorder, as it can help to better understand their motivations and behaviours. It is also important to be aware of the ways in which narcissistic individuals may try to obtain narcissistic supply and to be mindful of the impact of this behavior on others.

## DARVO

DARVO<sup>7)</sup> stands for Deny, Attack, and Reverse Victim and Offender. It is a tactic that is sometimes used by perpetrators of abuse or wrongdoing in order to deflect blame and avoid accountability for their actions.

In a DARVO response, the perpetrator may first deny that the abuse or wrongdoing took place. They may claim that the victim is lying or mistaken, or that the events in question never happened. They may also attack the victim's character or credibility, in an attempt to make the victim appear untrustworthy or unreliable.

Finally, the perpetrator may try to reverse the roles of victim and offender, portraying themselves as the real victim and the person accusing them of abuse or wrongdoing as the perpetrator. For example, they may claim that they are the ones being wronged or that they are the ones being attacked or mistreated.

Here are a few examples of DARVO responses:

- “I can't believe you're accusing me of abuse. You're the one who's always causing problems. I'm the victim here.”
- “I didn't do anything wrong. You're just trying to make me look bad. You're the real abuser.”
- “This never happened. You're lying. I'm the one who's being mistreated here.”

It is important to recognize DARVO responses and not be swayed by them. It is also important to hold perpetrators of abuse or wrongdoing accountable for their actions and to support victims in seeking help and seeking justice.

# Gaslighting

Gaslighting<sup>8)</sup> is a form of psychological manipulation in which a person or group causes another person to doubt their own perceptions, memories, or judgment. It is a subtle and often insidious form of abuse that can be difficult to recognize, especially if it has been going on for a long time.

The term “gaslighting” comes from the 1938 play “Gas Light,” in which a man manipulates his wife into thinking she is going crazy by dimming the gaslights in their home and then denying that anything has changed when she points it out. The term has since been used to describe similar forms of manipulation and psychological abuse.

Here are a few examples of gaslighting:

- A partner tells their spouse that they are overreacting or being irrational, even when the spouse's concerns are valid.
- A boss tells an employee that they are being too sensitive, even when the employee has legitimate complaints about their treatment at work.
- A parent tells a child that they are lying or exaggerating, even when the child is telling the truth.

Gaslighting can be especially damaging because it can cause the victim to doubt their own perceptions and experiences, leading to feelings of confusion, self-doubt, and anxiety. It is important to be aware of the signs of gaslighting and to seek support if you are being subjected to this form of manipulation.

## List of common gaslighting techniques

Gaslighters have many techniques<sup>9)</sup> (Common gaslighting techniques|Wikipedia CCSA 3.0)<sup>10)</sup> highlighting the comorbidity of narcissism with the other dark tetrad traits machiavelism and sadism:

- Obfuscation – Abuser deliberately obfuscates an issue.
- Withholding – Abuser pretends not to understand the victim.
- Countering – Abuser will vehemently call into question a victim's memory in spite of the victim having remembered things correctly.
- Blocking and diverting – Abuser changes the conversation from the subject matter to questioning the victim's thoughts and controlling the conversation.
- Trivializing – Abuser makes the victim believe his or her thoughts or needs are not important.
- Forgetting and denial – Abuser pretends to forget things that have really occurred; the abuser may deny or delay things like promises that are important to the victim. Although anyone can deny or delay, the gaslighter does it regularly in the absence of real external limitations. The gaslighter may make up or create artificial barriers to allow themselves to deny or delay that which is important to the victim.

## Well known / Public Figures in Narcissism

There are several researchers who have made significant contributions to the study of narcissism and narcissistic personality disorder. Here are a few of the leading researchers in this field:

- **Keith Campbell and Jean Twenge:** Campbell and Twenge are authors ([Jean M. Twenge, W. Keith Campbell, 2009](#))<sup>11)</sup> and researchers who have studied the rise of narcissism in modern society and the potential consequences of this trend.
- **Craig Malkin:** Malkin is a clinical psychologist and the author of "Rethinking Narcissism" ([Craig Malkin, 2016](#)), a book that offers a more nuanced view of narcissism and offers strategies for dealing with narcissistic individuals.

Maybe it's easier to tell yourself you're the problem than to accept the possibility he won't change. *Craig Malkin, Rethinking Narcissism: The Secret to Recognizing and Coping with Narcissists*

### John G. Gunderson

John G. Gunderson<sup>12)</sup> (June 20, 1942 – January 11, 2019) was a psychiatrist and researcher who made significant contributions to the study of personality disorders, including narcissistic personality disorder. One of his criticisms of the diagnosis of narcissism was that it was too broad and that it did not adequately differentiate between different types of narcissistic behavior.

Gunderson argued that the DSM-IV (the diagnostic manual used at the time) included a wide range of narcissistic behaviors under the umbrella of narcissistic personality disorder, including both grandiose and vulnerable forms of narcissism. This led to confusion and difficulty in accurately diagnosing and treating individuals with narcissistic personality disorder.

Gunderson also argued that the DSM-IV criteria for narcissistic personality disorder were too broad and that they did not adequately capture the complexity of narcissistic behavior. He argued that the criteria should be more specific and should take into account the different subtypes of narcissism, such as grandiose and vulnerable narcissism.

Overall, Gunderson's criticisms highlight the need for more nuanced and specific criteria for diagnosing narcissistic personality disorder, in order to better understand and treat this complex and often misunderstood disorder.<sup>13)</sup>

### Sam Vaknin

Vaknin<sup>14)</sup> is a self-proclaimed narcissist, narcissism expert and the author of several books on the topic, including "Malignant Self-love: Narcissism Revisited." ([Sam Vaknin, 2015](#)) and "Confessions Diary of a Narcissist" ([Sam Vaknin, 2013](#))

### Sam Vaknin, "Malignant Self-Love"

"Malignant Self-love: Narcissism Revisited"<sup>15)</sup> is a book written by Sam Vaknin<sup>16)17)</sup>. The book is a

comprehensive examination of narcissistic personality disorder, including its causes, its symptoms, and its effects on the lives of those who have it.

In the book, Vaknin argues that narcissistic personality disorder is a result of a combination of genetic, environmental, and cultural factors. He also suggests that the disorder is more prevalent in certain occupations, such as politics and the arts, and that it is often associated with high intelligence and charisma.

Vaknin examines the various symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder, including an exaggerated sense of self-importance, a need for admiration, a lack of empathy, and a tendency to exploit others for one's own gain. He also discusses the impact of narcissism on relationships and the difficulties that narcissists may face in maintaining healthy, fulfilling connections with others.

Hate is the complement of fear and narcissists like being feared. It imbues them with an intoxicating sensation of omnipotence. *Sam Vaknin, Malignant Self-Love: Narcissism Revisited*

Overall, "Malignant Self-love" is a detailed and in-depth look at narcissistic personality disorder and its effects on individuals and society. It offers a unique perspective on this complex and often misunderstood disorder.

## Somatic and Cerebral Narcissism

First described by Sam Vaknin, cerebral narcissists and somatic narcissists<sup>18)19)</sup> are two subtypes of narcissistic personality disorder that are distinguished by the way they seek narcissistic supply.

Cerebral narcissists are individuals who seek narcissistic supply through their intelligence, knowledge, or academic achievements. They may brag about their educational degrees or their intellectual accomplishments, and they may try to impress others with their knowledge or wit.

Somatic narcissists, on the other hand, are individuals who seek narcissistic supply through their physical appearance, their sexual conquests, or their athletic abilities. They may be preoccupied with their appearance and may constantly seek attention and admiration for their looks or their physique.

Both cerebral and somatic narcissists have a grandiose sense of self-importance and a need for admiration from others, but they differ in the way they go about seeking this attention. It is important to note that these subtypes are not officially recognized by the DSM-5, the diagnostic manual used by mental health professionals to diagnose mental health disorders.

My girlfriends and spouses found it impossible to digest this eerie transformation from the gregarious, darkly handsome, well-built and sexually insatiable person that swept them off their feet - to the bodiless, flabby, bookwormish hermit with not an inkling of interest in either sex or other carnal pleasures. I miss my somatic half. I wish I could find a balance, but I know it is a doomed quest. This sexual beast of mine will forever be trapped in the intellectual cage that is I, Sam Vaknin, the Brain. *Sam Vaknin*<sup>20)</sup>

## Dr Ramani

Dr. Ramani <sup>21)</sup> Durvasula is a licensed clinical psychologist and a Professor of Psychology at California State University, Los Angeles. She is an expert on narcissistic personality disorder has written two books, published numerous articles and a Youtube Channel<sup>22)</sup> on the topic.

Our systems reward manipulators, entitled people, and bullies. You will stand back and watch a deceitful coworker get promoted, or a pathological CEO get a \$20 million bonus, or a tyrant get elected or appointed to an important leadership position. *Ramani S. Durvasula, "Don't You Know Who I Am?": How to Stay Sane in an Era of Narcissism, Entitlement, and Incivility*

Dr. Durvasula is known for her work on the impact of narcissism on relationships and her efforts to educate the public about narcissistic personality disorder. She is the author of "Should I Stay or Should I Go: Surviving A Relationship with a Narcissist" ([Ramani S. Durvasula Ph.D, 2017](#)), a book that offers advice and strategies for dealing with narcissistic individuals in personal and professional relationships and "Don't You Know Who I Am?: How to Stay Sane in an Era of Narcissism, Entitlement, and Incivility" ([Ramani S. Durvasula Ph.D, 2019](#)).

Dr. Durvasula is also a regular media commentator on topics related to narcissism and has appeared on numerous television and radio programs to discuss her work. In addition to her research and writing, she also maintains a private practice in Los Angeles, where she helps individuals and couples dealing with narcissistic personality disorder and other mental health issues.

## Les Carter

Les Carter<sup>23)</sup> is a licensed professional counselor and the author of "Enough About You, Let's Talk About Me: How to Recognize and Manage the Narcissists in Your Life" ([Les Carter, 1. Edition \(18. Januar 2008\)](#)). He is an expert on narcissistic personality disorder and has extensive experience working with individuals who have this disorder.

In his work, Carter focuses on helping individuals understand and defend themselves against the manipulative and destructive behavior of extreme narcissists. He emphasizes the importance of setting boundaries and maintaining a healthy sense of self-worth in the face of narcissistic abuse.

In my history of conducting anger workshops, it became abundantly clear that self absorption, control cravings, and the lack of empathy were at the base of most interpersonal problems. So my therapeutic focus went deeper into the direction of understanding narcissism as a means of finding resolution to mood and relationship strains. *Les Carter*

In 2018, he founded the Surviving Narcissism, which includes the Surviving Narcissism YouTube channel<sup>24)</sup> and the Dr. Les Carter YouTube channel<sup>25)</sup>. In addition to his writing and speaking, he also maintains a private practice in Dallas, Texas, where he helps individuals and couples dealing with narcissistic personality disorder and other mental health issues.

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