

Narcissistic Traits and Relationship Dynamics

1. Narcissists are individuals, who need perfect mirroring, perfect stroking, perfect responses.
2. They need to be in control. When injured or insulted, they typically withdraw or isolate themselves. They do not realize that their withdrawal evokes certain subconscious anxieties in others, especially in significant other relationships, if the narcissist is in relationship with a partner with borderline personality features. .
3. Narcissists are driven by the need to be liked, desired, and appreciated. They tend to isolate themselves emotionally or physically. They fear a loss of specialness, and are easily injured or outraged when not properly understood. They are dominated by guilt and self-hatred, and have idealized and omnipotent fantasies. "
4. They are preoccupied with a loss of self-regard, while having an over investment in self, and will do anything to preserve a sense of specialness, and attempt to prove themselves by isolation from others and concentration on perfection, power and omnipotence. This tendency to withdraw is accompanied by a driving need to be desired and appreciated, and the narcissist becomes easily injured, insulted, and outraged when not properly mirrored or understood by self-objects.
5. The narcissist, preoccupied with self-regard and driven by and overwhelming desire to be appreciated, lives with the paradox of hatred turned inward to the self and distorted entitlement fantasies. Thus healing occurs when the narcissist is guided away from the guilt, exhibitionism and arrogance and led toward a resurgence of natural curiosity.
6. For the narcissist, there are two central issues:
 - a. The child's search for the missing entitlement.
 - b. The sense of being the "chosen one" whose concentration on perfection, power and omnipotence leads to a perfect harmony with God. Narcissists seek out others to confirm or justify exaggerated entitlement fantasies and distortions that the world is deeply indebted to them. Example: "Why should I get a job? You know I am special! I'm going to be an actor or actress!

7. Clinically, the narcissist personality disorder (developed in 1968 by Heinz Kohut) is viewed as a developmental arrest in which the main caretakers have withheld phase appropriate mirroring responses. Freud initially conceived of narcissism as the state of self-directed libido.
 - a. Kohut saw the self as an independent structure that evolves along a developmental timeline. NPD is the result of developmental arrest during the normal stage of narcissism, especially during the phase when the child was engaged in a normal state of grandiosity. This grandiose phase is typical in the development of self in that this stage was followed by transmutual internalization and channeling of idealistic aims into more realistic goals. Kohut maintained that primary infantile narcissism is injured by maternal shortcomings, and that empathic responses are needed to modify excessive feelings of rage and guilt. In other words, the child was not able to "dream." This pathology manifests itself in the inability to love others, a lack of empathy, emptiness, over dependence on acclaim, boredom, and an unremitting need to search for power, while making the person unavailable to others.
 - b. Klein (a theorist in 1955) stated in summary that a child recognizes the importance of the mother and the breast. Once an infant recognizes the wholeness of the object and its relation to the self (object-relations theory), at about six months, the infant can then start searching freely out beyond the breast into the environment, usually first with the father. If this bond with mother is disturbed prematurely, it results in a challenge or stirs up rivalry with the father prematurely. One cannot leave the breast or turn to the father until the infant first feels safe with the mother. Guilt, arrogance and exhibitionism are then manifested as a way to attempt to resolve this uncompleted developmental stage. Guilt turns inward, leading to self-persecution and self-hatred, loss of curiosity, individuality and thinking.

Unknown aspects of the self keep the narcissistic partner in a continual state of anxiety. Turning away from self to others by making excessive demands through arrogance and intolerance, is an expression of the narcissist's need to be all knowing, God-like, the provider, the protector, and oftentimes the one who takes over in treatment. Many narcissists who are striving to be successful are not developmentally ready for the challenge. For narcissists, the lack of a "mirroring mommy" to reflect the child's normal and healthy narcissist endowments, or to empathize with the child's excessive demands, can result in faulty reflections of the child's true talents, ambitions, goals and aims.

8. In relationships, the narcissist who is "in love" is highly cathected to someone who has qualities that he or she wishes to have or had and no longer possesses (beauty, power, organization, sense of self: ability to be alone). The narcissist then tries to own these qualities or to possess them through envy. In other words in finding a love relationship, one will often choose someone who has qualities that are lacking in one's self
9. As painful as it is to be with an unavailable narcissistic partner, it can also be a highly charged erotic experience. Narcissists tend to stir up envy and greed in others because they are good at withholding from partners, combined with charm to lure their partners back into the so-called "loving" relationship. Thus partners of narcissists are oftentimes confused, while feeling abandoned. The highs can be high and the lows, quite low!
10. Narcissists oftentimes draw to them partners in relationship who fear abandonment, and who experience narcissist traits themselves but in a more significant way. Thus shame is the driving force with them in comparison to the guilt of a narcissist. Shame-b~ individuals often referred to as borderline personality disordered individuals, do not have much sense of self. They tend to have a distorted sense of self: and poor bonding abilities. They tend to be overly invested in others, and are dominated by abandonment anxiety. In the attempt to defend against shame and embarrassment for having needs and desires, they will frequently turn to self-soothing modalities in the form of foreign objects, substance abuse, addictive relationships, promiscuity, deviant compulsive behaviors, suicide attempts, and other act to ward off nameless dread. They oftentimes experience need as shame!
 - a. In love relationships they tend to distort and misperceive the good intentions of others. Thus containment is the best approach for them so that they can make good use of perceptions and experiences, and to take some control over their own destinies.

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