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18 Signs You're Dealing With A Narcissist

Posted: 02/04/2014 8:33 am EST | Updated: 02/04/2014 8:59 am EST



Chances are, you've encountered a narcissist. You know, that friend who somehow manages to revert every topic of conversation back to himself; the colleague who is always bragging about having the latest, greatest ____; the family member who thinks she is hotter, smarter and just generally *better* than you at everything.

But sometimes the signs of narcissism are a little more nuanced. They're not always as obvious as media depictions would have you believe. And yes, it's possible to have some traits of narcissism without having full-blown, clinically diagnosed narcissistic personality disorder (<http://www.dsm5.org/Documents/Personality%20Disorders%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>), which is when narcissism starts to have a serious, negative impact on everyday life and relationships.

"People are on a continuum -- there's a range of narcissism," W. Keith Campbell, Ph.D., head of the Department of Psychology at the University of Georgia and co-author of The Narcissism Epidemic: Living in the Age of Entitlement

FROM OUR PARTNERS

<http://www.amazon.com/The-Narcissism-Epidemic-Living-Entitlement/dp/1416575995>), explains to HuffPost. "Most people are sort of in the middle, though some are more extreme than others."

When you think about the people you come into contact with every day -- whether it be a friend, romantic partner or colleague -- do any of the following seem to ring a bell? If so, you may be dealing with a narcissist.

They're likable -- at least, at first glance.

Narcissists tend to be great at first impressions, coming across as very charismatic and personable, which is also why they can perform quite well in job interviews (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/09/narcissists-job-interviews-narcissism-self-promotion_n_1412206.html). "Often the image you see of someone who is narcissistic at the beginning could be very positive, but over a longer term, it turns out to be more negative," Campbell says. "So that's where the surprise comes in -- it's like, 'Oh my gosh, this is the person I just hired, and now look at what I'm dealing with.'"

Not all narcissists are loud and proud. In fact, some are quiet and shy.

While the loud and braggy types are the ones people usually picture when thinking about narcissists, they can actually be quiet and reserved. Zlatan Krizan, Ph.D., an associate professor in the Department of Psychology at Iowa State University, explains that there's actually two kinds of expressions of narcissism: grandiose, which is where the bragging and showing off is exhibited, and shy, where a person may not be as forthright "or be out there with a bullhorn, but is sitting in the corner, fantasizing about when their day will come, and resenting others."

That's not to say that narcissists are always either grandiose *or* shy. In most people, there's elements of both shy narcissism and grandiose narcissism. "We like to put people in a box," Krizan says, "but when you look at how these personality traits present themselves, you see separation only at extreme levels."

They can often be found in leadership roles.



Not that that makes them good leaders (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/01/21/narcissists-leaders_n_4619682.html), notes Jean Twenge, Ph.D., a professor in the Department of Psychology at San Diego State University and co-author of The Narcissism Epidemic with Campbell. But

narcissists often find themselves in leadership positions because "people who are narcissistic want to be leaders. They don't necessarily make better leaders, but they want to do it, so they're more likely to end up in those positions."

They always manage to make the conversation about themselves.

"You could start talking to a person about how you have cancer, and pretty soon you're talking about their new car," Campbell explains.

They're also guilty of name-dropping.

It's all in the name of self-promotion and making themselves seem better -- which includes the tactic of name-dropping, Campbell says.

Not every story a narcissist tells is one of victory. But even in the stories of tragedy or failure, there's an air of entitlement and victimization.

Narcissists will often tell stories about themselves -- sometimes repeating the same story over and over again -- and many times, the story will be about an instance of personal heroism or an exploit. But even when a story is of something negative that happened, it'll never be the narcissist's fault. There's "more emotional victimization," Krizan explains. There's still an air of self-reference "about not being understood or people not recognizing your value. It's about me and how I'm great," but others aren't realizing it.

They like nice things.



Now, we're not saying that all shopaholics or materialistic people are narcissists, or that all narcissists are also shopaholics. But one of the hallmark traits of narcissism is the desire to display high status, and this is often done with material items, Twenge says.

"One place to differentiate it is that sometimes the shopaholic will tell you what good a deal she got on something, and the narcissist is more likely to emphasize how prestigious or status-oriented the thing is," she says. "The really prototypical example: They drive up in a Ferrari, but they won't tell you what a good deal they got on it."

Appearance is everything to them.

Narcissists are not necessarily more attractive than other people, but they "do take care of their appearance and place an importance on looking physically attractive," Twenge says. Not everyone who makes a point to take care of their appearance is a narcissist, she adds, but "well-applied nails, hair and so on would be an indicator."

On Facebook, they have lots of friends -- and not a single bad picture.



"People who are narcissistic use it to maintain status, and so what they do is they tend to have more attractive photos, and more self-promoting, broader networks -- more 'friends' -- on Facebook," Campbell explains.

They are strongly averse to criticism.

While no one can honestly say they *like* receiving criticism, people with narcissism are hyper-sensitive to it, Krizan says.

Excuses are a narcissist's best friend.

Narcissists tend to externalize blame, pinning the blame on everyone but themselves. "They're good at making excuses and not taking credit for mistakes they make," Campbell says.

They leave a trail of wreckage behind them.

Does this person have a history of bad relationships and work experiences? Consider that a red flag. With narcissist CEOs for instance, you'll see that "that they've gone into companies, kind of wrecked them, then moved onto something else," Campbell explains. "In relationships, they may have infidelity, which destroys that relationship, and then they'll move on to another one."

And in that vein, they may be more likely to cheat.



That's because a narcissist won't put the feelings of the partner above his or her own. There's also the undeniable self-esteem boost that comes when you find out another person -- even if that person is not your partner -- is attracted to you. Together, these two elements help to explain why infidelity may be more common among narcissists, Campbell says.

Everything is personal.

Particularly in the quieter narcissists, there may not be signs of overt self-reference and promotion. But there is defensiveness and reactive anger if they are not recognized or if they can't get their way. "If you do something to [the narcissist] that he doesn't like, it means you're against him or you don't understand him," Krizan explains.

A narcissistic person probably has no idea he or she is a narcissist.

"Narcissism in itself is sort of a double whammy, not just because you have disturbances or believe you're special in some way more than others, but because those things in themselves will prevent you from seeing that you have these problems," Krizan says. In the more shy narcissists who may also experience symptoms of depression or anxiety, those other things may spur them to get professional help. But "the grandiose people, because they feel superior or because they may even have initial success, they're very unlikely to seek treatment," he explains. "It would only be after they develop so many problems where they ask themselves, 'I feel so great, I know I'm awesome, but why did everybody leave me?'"

You find yourself resorting to flattery just to maintain the peace with a narcissist.

While the best way to deal with a narcissist is to just cut the cord and run, there are certain circumstances where you have no choice but to deal, Twenge says. Maybe the narcissist is a family member, or maybe it's your boss. In these cases, flattery is the best way to avoid conflict.

Narcissists are *not* low in self-esteem.



A common belief is that people who are high in narcissism are secretly low in self-esteem -- but this just isn't true. As far as narcissists in a typical population are concerned, "they have a very high self-esteem and don't have a deep-seated insecurity, as far as we can tell," Twenge says. Indeed, Campbell adds that narcissists seem to be confident through and through.

Men are more likely to be narcissists than women.

And the level of narcissism is higher among today's millennials than previous generations at similar ages, Twenge adds. As far as whether some professions or cultures have more narcissists than others -- more research needs to be done to determine that.

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Conversations

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Debbie Leigh Kuhns Moss

As long as they get their way, no problem! The minute you don't do what they want, all Hell breaks loose.. No one can do anything any better than them. They deserve everything and you have to supply. Their children are more beautiful, talented and noble than any other children; as long as they are idealizing that parent.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 7 · May 5 at 5:31am



Julie Moll · Works at Scribblyitalyartretreat.com

YES! The Narc I'm talking about will PRAISE her daughter on Facebook- so wonderful, beautiful blablablah- but in private tell her: "you can't get that job because you're not pretty enough" .. so sad :(

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 1 · May 17 at 10:07am



Debbie Leigh Kuhns Moss

Julie Moll, the child never knows when they are doing right.. The child is always in the approval seeking mode.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · May 17 at 12:12pm



Julia Dray · Top Commenter · University of the West of England

My Dad is a narcissist. It is horrendous. He's more the quiet kind really. Everyone thinks he's so damn lovely when they meet him but he is in fact emotionally cruel and

impossible to live with. My mum managed 25 years with him but she nearly went crazy. I moved out because I was going crazy, 1 of my sisters no longer has contact with him and the other has kept him at arm's length since she was 16 coz she realised how damaging he is. I haven't seen him for 5 months because I can't really face it. Worst part is, even though he's almost completely alone now he doesn't realise it's him that's driven everyone away. Most parts of this article rang very true for me, especially the parts about appearance, liking nice things, having high self esteem, leaving a trail of wreckage behind, being cruel and having an air of entitlement and victimization, I recognise all of that. Oh: and about having no idea that he has a problem. He thinks he's perfect and that it's everyone else who has a problem, which is supposed to be a sign of insanity.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 7 · May 2 at 4:13am



Julie Moll · Works at Scribblyitalyartretreat.com

I don't agree with this article - they do have deep, deep insecurities and a false sense of self that is held up by putting up a façade of a perfect image and superiority. Anything that reveals the phoniness of it all -watch out for an attack. I'm dealing with a family member. I should say female family member too- I know I'm am what is called an "empath" - I didn't know this person was a Narcissist- until I tried to (finally) put my foot down and disagree with her. I always knew she was what you'd say shallow, materialistic and competitive- even with her own daughters when it comes to her beauty- and always with a superiority complex- will say hurtful things to feed into their feeling superior. I Finally put my foot down on something said to me- that was a "dig" - and WOAH! Watch out! The Narc sees this as a personal attack and twists it around on you because you are confronting all they have- which is their built up façade- not a real personality- that has depth, empathy and uniqueness.- Plus "opinions" not formed by information and personal passions- "opinions" stated to manipulate or again build/ uphold their façade. It's very scary and warped- I was so shocked I researched and analyzed and all the pieces finally fit into place with her personality as a Narc. After months we still are not talking.. silent treatment of a Narc. :(

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 8 · Edited · April 8 at 9:02am



Christine Haigh · Top Commenter

You're so right on, Julie!

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 1 · May 11 at 5:45pm



Louise Dear · Works at Powerworks

It took me 6 months to realise that I was going out with a narcissist, I mistook boldness and flattery for love and dumped him as politely as I could. Did not anticipate the bile anger & disbelief he then directed at me for at least 2years - far exceeding our short time together! To anyone here getting that sinking feeling, run fast and be firm! These people are toxic, controlling and try to cut you off from friends and family.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 10 · February 16 at 1:01am



Alfred Vincente · Top Commenter

I seem to attract them. They will drain you dry. If you are a magnet, maybe because you are a good listener or whatever, be on guard all the time.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 7 · April 3 at 8:34am



Carly Trusiteministry Williams · President at Williams Marketing and Advertising

Alfred Vincente Empat#ic

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 1 · April 9 at 4:21pm



Claire Thomas · Top Commenter · Ojo Caliente, New Mexico

i was wondering why this one person initially came over as being very loving and turned. now i get it.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 10 · January 4 at 12:14am



Kimberley Sebborn · City of Sunderland

Ive only just noticed all the signs. He was so caring and loving then suddenly arrogant and selfish. Bordering sociopathic. I have no idea what to do.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 5 · January 14 at 3:41pm



Kathleen Dw Scott

Kimberley Sebborn - Run!

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 17 · February 4 at 10:55am



Vanessa Mumford



Run fast.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 7 · February 14 at 4:39pm

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Alfred Vincente · Top Commenter

I have run into women narcissists as well. And check out Facebook, a narcissist playground

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 4 · February 27 at 11:19am



Will Hopkins · Top Commenter · Works at Peace, Love & Understanding

I'm the victim you never hear about. Not only are women rife with this problem these days, as are men (I just don't date men), but WOMEN...wake the f--- up!

I'm the brilliant, hardworking guy that doesn't look quite as good as these strangers, or have as much money, or am as dazzling. I'm the guy you treat like a "best bud" while I am attempting to cultivate a real relationship based on lasting values based upon real friendship, as you all run off with these guys, and, sooner or later, come back to us good guys, broken, and bleed all over us, breaking our hearts once again (because we care about you), saying something like, "You would never treat me like that," while blubbering.

Then we get to watch you get cynical, wearing your "I've been hurt before" like a thorny crown. How impressed we are that in your pain, you learn the... [See More](#)

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 4 · February 14 at 2:49pm



Julia Dray · Top Commenter · University of the West of England

Errr OK. What has any of that got to do with Narcissistic Personality Disorder?! On another note, you have some serious issues there - not all women all like what you've just described. Sounds like you've had some repeat experiences with a few women but please don't generalise us all, we don't all need to wake the fuck up!

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 3 · May 2 at 8:57am



Julie Moll · Works at Scribblyitalyartretreat.com

Yes, You're sounding like you are having painful feelings about issues that don't really pertain to narcissism- sounds like you may have trouble finding nice women that take you romantically, more than just a buddy to cry on your shoulder. Don't blame women for falling for cruel Narcissistic guys- Yes a narc may look good, have all the outside attributes- but also will woo and win you over with romance and charm that is irresistible (I know I've gone through this too) I know I'm an empathy- and it's almost as if narc's seek you out like prey to feed off- A Narc will make you feel like you are the only person in the world for them- a "cosmic soul mate" it's very seductive- because that's what we want- we want men that make us feel beautiful and special. Men that are romantic. Maybe- ? Instead of being a shoulder to cry on- you need to make it clear you are romantic- woo her instead of being buddy- Take her out- don't be used just to soak up her mess.. Women also will feel your bitterness- that's a scary turn off..)

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · May 17 at 9:19am



Chris Fisk · Top Commenter · Nashua, New Hampshire

"Men are more likely to be narcissists" Proof? I have seen a LOT of evidence to the contrary (just watch any advertisement directed toward women "Because you're worth it"). That last bit is unsubstantiated male-bashing.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 3 · February 27 at 7:35pm



Andrew Thomson

Agreed. I've come across a lot more narcissistic women than I have men in my life.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 3 · March 2 at 5:50pm



Julia Dray · Top Commenter · University of the West of England

Guys I'm thinking that is a fact that comes from actual research from large samples of different populations. Your own personal life experiences won't necessarily reflect that.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 1 · May 2 at 8:58am



Will Hopkins · Top Commenter · Works at Peace, Love & Understanding

Statistically, this is true, but narcissism is so PREVALENT these days that the numbers don't really mean much at all. However, I do feel that the article was centered around male-bashing.

Funny how women found their independence by sinking to the level of the enemy they screamed so loudly about 50 years ago.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 3 · May 2 at 9:03am

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New Beginnings Therapy

It seems quite agreed in the therapeutic community as far as I can see that Narcissists do in fact have low self esteem as the esteem they have is based on fear and based on I am better than rather than being a healthy sense of self love which brings good healthy self esteem and a healthy sense of shame. The narcissistic self esteem is more the kind that a bully would have dominating others while that being based on feeling less than others and an attempt to overcome that. Narcissists are shame based and have not been able to develop a sense of themselves which embraces others and sees the world as revolving around them. The rest of the article I would agree with and found informative.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · May 25 at 4:44am



Astrid Sorrell · The University of Adelaide

I work with one, this person is of the worst kind, also drinks far too much and smokes like a train, abuses, cries when it suits to get the victim status. The kids are always scared. Does no work, demands and make more demands. I have her figured, as I have read much about the narccassis, also to be aware they are bullies and if their anger is out of control could resort to murder!!!!

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · May 22 at 6:40pm

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