

31st May – Narcissism Webinar



Common traits in a narcissist are as follows;

- They lack empathy.
- They need and demand attention.
- They are highly manipulative.
- They have an inflated sense of self-worth and importance.
- They are not interested in any form of constructive criticism.
- They create drama and crisis and always see the source of the problem as being external.
- They have a victim mentality.
- They are not interested in finding resolutions to problems.
- They often operate on the basis of 'divide and conquer'. They can make people feel absolutely amazing and yet drop them the moment they are no longer giving them what they need.
- Conversations with them are not straightforward. They are highly skilled at manoeuvring conversations in order to avoid any form of self-responsibility.
- They can sound very plausible, and very convincing even though there is no real substance to follow through into action.
- Bullies are often narcissists and they can be very skilled at manoeuvring others into position to join them.
- In both their words and actions there is almost always an underlying agenda, however this agenda is never openly disclosed.
- They taken ownership of the achievements of others. If something goes wrong it will be someone else's fault and if something goes right it will always be their achievement.

There is more than one type of narcissism and research has shown that they largely fall into four different types.

Open.

In many ways the open narcissist is one of the easiest to deal with, there is no effort to hide their self orientation, indeed sometimes they will occupy careers and positions that actually benefit from narcissistic traits stop it is not uncommon for CEOs of organisations to have narcissistic traits and these can initially appear to be of benefit for the organisation, particularly in the current climate of goal orientated materialistic profit-making culture. However ultimately a narcissist will inevitably create problems within the organisation. Fundamentally the motivation will always be about attending to their own needs rather than the needs of the larger organisation.

Malignant.

This is one of the most challenging forms of narcissism. These people are genuinely mean and spiteful stop they have no conscience, they don't care, and they are frequently highly dishonest. This is one of the most challenging forms of narcissism to deal with because they will blatantly lie in order to cover their tracks. These types of people will stop at nothing to achieve their ends regardless of who they hurt in the process stop When dealing with this sort of person, sometimes it can be a more viable option to cut your losses and walk away.

Covert.

A covert narcissist is highly manipulative, everything they do is manoeuvred and constructed and is the harm they cause is delivered 'below the belt'. They frequently come across as victims and always see themselves as hard done by. Rather like a bucket with a hole in it, no matter how much you give to them it will never ever be enough, there will always be another drama and another crisis and another problem. They perceive the world as causing them difficult and very rarely take any form of personal responsibility for themselves.

People who are highly empathic, are often vulnerable to the covert narcissist as primarily they present as someone who desperately needs help. The key here is in recognising the underlying motivation. Someone who is seeking help in order to resolve a problem will welcome help, strive to work through and process the difficulties and come out the other side feeling grateful. A covert narcissist will always have a problem. They're not seeking solutions or resolutions, the problems serve a purpose for them in gaining them the attention they demand.

They are often hypersensitive to criticism, and will have learned how to use criticism as a form of defence. Self-criticism for the covert narcissist is simply another method of making sure that no one ever challenges them and that others will seek to look after them, prioritising the narcissists needs above their own.

Communal.

This is the 'look at me, I'm so benevolent' narcissist. The communal narcissist is someone who makes a big deal within their immediate circles and communities. They may do a great deal of good offering seemingly many acts of kindness, however they do so in order to gain the attention and be seen from doing it. Their gestures of giving are loaded with expectations and additional agendas. They will constantly let everyone know how amazing they are and how much they are doing in order to gain the praise and affirmation they demand.

Non-narcissistic givers, give for the sake of giving. They do not require public acclaim doing so.

It is important to recognise that narcissistic traits exist in all of us and to learn to recognise the difference between, for example, someone who has experienced genuine adversity in their life and has struggled to develop their own self-esteem and has finally reached a space and time where they can genuinely and publicly taken ownership of their entitlement and celebrate their personal achievements, as opposed to someone who is fundamentally self absorbed, unable to demonstrate any form of genuine empathy to others and unable to see beyond their own needs.

Never confuse someone who is genuinely setting out to make a difference in the world and does so through exerting their own empowerment through altruism and in stepping up into their fullest potential. We need leaders and we need leaders who have ethics.

Always look beneath the surface.

What is conscious and what is unconscious?

With any narcissist, the information that is presented to us is always serving some sort of purpose. These are not people who you can take on face value. They are not straightforward. What you see is not what you get, and so to learn to identify and subsequently understand how to deal with these different types of narcissists we must always look at the motivation that lies beneath the surface.

Shame and Guilt.

I think it is incredibly helpful to identify the difference between shame and guilt. If someone behaves in a manner that hurts another person or causes distress, it is a valuable tool to discover how they are actually feeling about what they have done.

Shame is the younger sibling of guilt. When we feel shame, we are generally feeling vulnerable, open and exposed. We are mortified about the way that people see, we wish the ground would swallow us up. Shame demonstrates that we are worried about how people see us. Ultimately it is the position of concern for oneself.

Guilt however, is a completely different ballgame. When we feel guilt, we are mortified that we have hurt someone else or cause damage to someone or something. Our concern is not about ourselves it is about the other.

Narcissists are renowned for experiencing shame but not guilt. The resolution to alleviate their feelings is not about making sure they never do something again because they don't want to hurt someone else. The resolution is about making sure that they are never exposed again. In the case of the malignant narcissist, they are highly likely to continue to live dishonestly, they will just be more meticulous in making sure they are never found out.

So what of the kind of traits that we see in people who have been deeply affected by being in relationship with a narcissist?

This can be any kind of relationship. It could be a colleague or a manager, a family member, parents or siblings. It could be a close friend or even a group of friends.

- A chronic sense of low self-esteem.
- Afraid of getting it wrong and equally afraid of getting it right.
- They are often plagued by self-doubt.
- They are afraid to receive for fear of an alternative agenda.
- They find it hard to trust, not only others but themselves as well.
- Hard to have a voice.
- Do not feel worthy of being listened to.
- Struggle with their own sense of entitlement.
- Automatically put the needs of others before their own.
- An extremely heightened sense of empathy, to the point of not only being sensitive, but also of being highly absorbent.
- Empathic not only to others but also to the atmosphere around them.
- High levels of ongoing anxiety particularly in relationship to others.
- They often live on high alert and anticipate danger and disaster.
- They always feel as though they are to blame.
- They are derailed easily and can find it virtually impossible to succeed at anything.
- They often sabotage their own opportunities.
- They can never quite allow themselves to succeed.
- They have a huge internal critic.
- Addiction to perfection that has been derived as a form of defence to avoid being persecuted and targeted and yet it also feels unsafe to shine.

So how do we recover and rebuild lives and indeed ourselves if we have been adversely affected in a relationship with a narcissist?

The key lies in our sense of self and our personal sense of identity and giving ourselves permission to move beyond the trail of deception and establish the truth of who we are.

- Make a commitment to yourself. The moment we make a commitment to ourselves, the very nature of making that commitment establishes the fact that we are someone.
- Understand the difference between self-esteem and confidence enabling yourself to build both.
- Develop affirmations that promote your sense of self and your own identity.
- Remind yourself that you are defined by who you actually are, not by the things that someone else says about you.
- Remember that you are the source of change in your world and remember that there are always choices available to you.
- Give yourself permission not to continue to go back time and again in the hope that someone else will change.
- Develop discernment. Your vibe attracts your tribe. Make choices in who you spend your time with.
- Develop discernment.
- Develop your skills of identification. Find out whether someone experiences guilt or shame.
- Use your heightened empathy as a skill to support your awareness of who someone really is and of their underlying motivations.
- Recognise whether someone has an investment in finding change of resolution or whether their behaviour, words and actions are letting you know that they do not wish to change.
- Recognise that you cannot get them to grow and change unless they desire this for themselves.
- Recognise that they are not your responsibility and that you cannot necessarily fix them.
- Recognise when someone does not have the ability to hear you. Acceptance of this extremely liberating as it stops us from investing energy in something that isn't going to happen.
- Learn to listen to yourself. Not only your mind but also your body. Your mind may play tricks with you and if you have developed autopilot responses to a particular type of person you will need to override your mind and learn to listen to your body instead. Your body will never lie to you.
- Learn to understand your emotions as a source of our and empowerment rather than a hindrance and an enemy from within.
- Boundaries! Boundaries! Boundaries! Give yourself permission to say NO. No is a boundary. Respect is a boundary.
- Shift your perspective of failure and develop the ability to see every experience as an opportunity.
- Create accountability. Narcissist will avoid accountability at all costs. Make sure you leave a paper trail or only have conversations in front of people to reduce the opportunity for manipulation.
- Develop your communication skills, build stock answers that allow you to maintain your boundaries and create accountability. (see the non-defensive communication section of the A-Z of emotional health free online library) www.azemotionalhealth.com
- Develop your ability to be okay with not being okay.
- Take small steps and don't be hard on yourself.