

Abuse, Torture, And Trauma and Their Consequences and Effects

1st EDITION

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A Profile of the Narcissistic Abuser

Pathological Narcissism – An Overview

A Primer on Narcissism

And the Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD)

What is Pathological Narcissism?

Pathological narcissism is a life-long pattern of traits and behaviours which signify infatuation and obsession with one's self to the exclusion of all others and the egotistic and ruthless pursuit of one's gratification, dominance and ambition.

As distinct from healthy narcissism which we all possess, pathological narcissism is maladaptive, rigid, persisting, and causes significant distress, and functional impairment.

Pathological narcissism was first described in detail by Freud in his essay "On Narcissism" [1915]. Other major contributors to the study of narcissism are: Melanie Klein, Karen Horney, Franz Kohut, Otto Kernberg, Theodore Millon, Elsa Roningstam, Gunderson, and Robert Hare.

What is Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD)?

The Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) (formerly known as megalomania or, colloquially, as egotism) is a form of pathological narcissism. It is a Cluster B (dramatic, emotional, or erratic) Personality Disorder. Other Cluster B personality disorders are the Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD), the Antisocial Personality Disorder (APD), and the Histrionic Personality Disorder

(HPD). The Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) first appeared as a mental health diagnosis in the DSM-III-TR (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual) in 1980.

Diagnostic Criteria

The ICD-10, the International Classification of Diseases, published by the World Health Organisation in Geneva [1992] regards the Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) as "*a personality disorder that fits none of the specific rubrics*". It relegates it to the category "Other Specific Personality Disorders" together with the eccentric, "haltlose", immature, passive-aggressive, and psychoneurotic personality disorders and types.

The American Psychiatric Association, based in Washington D.C., USA, publishes the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fourth edition, Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR) [2000] where it provides the diagnostic criteria for the Narcissistic Personality Disorder (301.81, p. 717).

The DSM-IV-TR defines Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) as "*an all-pervasive pattern of grandiosity (in fantasy or behaviour), need for admiration or adulation and lack of empathy, usually beginning by early adulthood and present in various contexts*", such as family life and work.

The DSM specifies nine diagnostic criteria. Five (or more) of these criteria must be met for a diagnosis of Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) to be rendered.

[In the text below, I have proposed modifications to the language of these criteria to incorporate current knowledge about this disorder. My modifications appear in *italics*.]

[My amendments do not constitute a part of the text of the DSM-IV-TR, nor is the American Psychiatric Association (APA) associated with them in any way.]

[Click here to download a bibliography of the studies and research regarding the Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) on which I based my proposed revisions.]

Proposed Amended Criteria for the Narcissistic Personality Disorder

- Feels grandiose and self-important (e.g., exaggerates accomplishments, talents, *skills, contacts, and personality traits to the point of lying, demands to be recognised as superior without commensurate achievements*);
- Is *obsessed* with fantasies of unlimited success,

fame, fearsome power or omnipotence, unequalled brilliance (the cerebral narcissist), bodily beauty or sexual performance (the somatic narcissist), or ideal, everlasting, all-conquering love or passion;

- Firmly convinced that he or she is unique and, being special, can only be understood by, *should only be treated by*, or associate with, other special or unique, or high-status people (or institutions);
- Requires excessive admiration, *adulation, attention and affirmation – or, failing that, wishes to be feared and to be notorious (Narcissistic Supply)*;
- Feels entitled. *Demands automatic and full compliance* with his or her unreasonable expectations for special and *favourable priority* treatment;
- Is "interpersonally exploitative", i.e., *uses* others to achieve his or her own ends;
- Devoid* of empathy. Is *unable* or unwilling to identify with, *acknowledge, or accept* the feelings, needs, preferences, priorities, and choices of others;
- Constantly envious of others *and seeks to hurt or destroy the objects of his or her frustration. Suffers from persecutory (paranoid) delusions as he or she believes that they feel the same about him or her and are likely to act similarly*;
- Behaves arrogantly and haughtily. *Feels superior, omnipotent, omniscient, invincible, immune, "above the law", and omnipresent (magical thinking). Rages when frustrated, contradicted, or confronted* by people he or she considers inferior to him or her and unworthy.

Prevalence and Age and Gender Features

According to the DSM-IV-TR, between 2% and 16% of the population in clinical settings (between 0.5-1% of the general population) are diagnosed with Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD). Most narcissists (50-75%, according to the DSM-IV-TR) are men.

We must carefully distinguish between the narcissistic traits of adolescents – narcissism is an integral part of their healthy personal development – and the full-fledge disorder. Adolescence is about self-definition, differentiation, separation from one's parents, and individuation. These inevitably involve narcissistic assertiveness which is not to be conflated or confused with Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD).

"The lifetime prevalence rate of NPD is approximately

0.5-1 percent; however, the estimated prevalence in clinical settings is approximately 2-16 percent. Almost 75 percent of individuals diagnosed with NPD are male (APA, DSM-IV-TR 2000)."

[From the Abstract of Psychotherapeutic Assessment and Treatment of Narcissistic Personality Disorder By Robert C. Schwartz, Ph.D., DAPA and Shannon D. Smith, Ph.D., DAPA (American Psychotherapy Association, Article #3004 Annals July/August 2002)]

Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) is exacerbated by the onset of aging and the physical, mental, and occupational restrictions it imposes.

In certain situations, such as under constant public scrutiny and exposure, a transient and reactive form of the Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) has been observed by Robert Milman and labelled "Acquired Situational Narcissism".

There is only scant research regarding the Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD), but studies have not demonstrated any ethnic, social, cultural, economic, genetic, or professional predilection to it.

Co-Morbidity and Differential Diagnoses

Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) is often diagnosed with other mental health disorders ("co-morbidity"), such as mood disorders, eating disorders, and substance-related disorders. Patients with Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) are frequently abusive and prone to impulsive and reckless behaviours ("dual diagnosis").

Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) is commonly diagnosed with other personality disorders, such as the Histrionic, Borderline, Paranoid, and Antisocial Personality Disorders.

The personal style of those suffering from the Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) should be distinguished from the personal styles of patients with other Cluster B personality disorders. The narcissist is grandiose, the histrionic coquettish, the antisocial (psychopath) callous, and the borderline needy.

As opposed to patients with the Borderline Personality Disorder, the self-image of the narcissist is stable, he or she are less impulsive and less self-defeating or self-destructive and less concerned with abandonment issues (not as clinging).

Contrary to the histrionic patient, the narcissist is achievements-orientated and proud of his or her

possessions and accomplishments. Narcissists also rarely display their emotions as histrionics do and they hold the sensitivities and needs of others in contempt. According to the DSM-IV-TR, both narcissists and psychopaths are "tough-minded, glib, superficial, exploitative, and un-empathic". But narcissists are less impulsive, less aggressive, and less deceitful. Psychopaths rarely seek Narcissistic Supply. As opposed to psychopaths, few narcissists are criminals. Patients suffering from the range of obsessive-compulsive disorders are committed to perfection and believe that only they are capable of attaining it. But, as opposed to narcissists, they are self-critical and far more aware of their own deficiencies, flaws, and shortcomings.

Clinical Features of the Narcissistic Personality Disorder

The onset of pathological narcissism is in infancy, childhood and early adolescence. It is commonly attributed to childhood abuse and trauma inflicted by parents, authority figures, or even peers. Pathological narcissism is a defence mechanism intended to deflect hurt and trauma from the victim's "True Self" into a "False Self" which is omnipotent, invulnerable, and omniscient. The narcissist uses the False Self to regulate his or her labile sense of self-worth by extracting from his environment Narcissistic Supply (any form of attention, both positive and negative).

There is a whole range of narcissistic reactions, styles, and personalities – from the mild, reactive and transient to the permanent personality disorder.

Patients with Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) feel injured, humiliated and empty when criticised. They often react with disdain (devaluation), rage, and defiance to any slight, real or imagined. To avoid such situations, some patients with Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) socially withdraw and feign false modesty and humility to mask their underlying grandiosity. Dysthymic and depressive disorders are common reactions to isolation and feelings of shame and inadequacy.

The interpersonal relationships of patients with Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) are typically impaired due to their lack of empathy, disregard for others, exploitativeness, sense of entitlement, and constant need for attention (Narcissistic Supply).

Though often ambitious and capable, inability to tolerate setbacks, disagreement, and criticism make it difficult for patients with Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) to work in a team or to maintain long-term professional achievements. The narcissist's fantastic grandiosity, frequently coupled with a hypomanic mood, is typically incommensurate with his or her real accomplishments (the "Grandiosity Gap"). Patients with Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) are either "cerebral" (derive their Narcissistic Supply from their intelligence or academic achievements) or "somatic" (derive their Narcissistic Supply from their physique, exercise, physical or sexual prowess and romantic or physical "conquests").

Patients with Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) are either "classic" (meet five of the nine diagnostic criteria included in the DSM), or they are "compensatory" (their narcissism compensates for deep-set feelings of inferiority and lack of self-worth). Some narcissists are covert, or inverted narcissists. As co-dependents, they derive their Narcissistic Supply from their relationships with classic narcissists.

Treatment and Prognosis

The common treatment for patients with Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) is talk therapy (mainly psychodynamic psychotherapy or cognitive-behavioural treatment modalities). Talk therapy is used to modify the narcissist's antisocial, interpersonally exploitative, and dysfunctional behaviours, often with some success. Medication is prescribed to control and ameliorate attendant conditions such as mood disorders or obsessive-compulsive disorders.

The prognosis for an adult suffering from the Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) is poor, though his adaptation to life and to others can improve with treatment.

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The Narcissist's Entitlement of Routine

I hate routine. When I find myself doing the same things over and over again, I get depressed. I oversleep, over-eat, over-drink and, in general, engage in addictive, impulsive and compulsive behaviours. This is my way of re-introducing risk and excitement into what I (emotionally) perceive to be a barren life.

The problem is that even the most exciting and varied existence becomes routine after a while. Living in the same country or apartment, meeting the same people, doing essentially the same things (though with changing content) – all "qualify" as stultifying rote.

I feel entitled to more. I feel it is my right – due to my intellectual superiority – to lead a thrilling, rewarding, kaleidoscopic life. I feel entitled to force life itself, or, at least, people around me – to yield to my wishes and needs, supreme among them the need for stimulating variety.

This rejection of habit is part of a larger pattern of aggressive entitlement. I feel that the very existence of a sublime intellect (such as myself) warrants concessions and allowances. Standing in line is a waste of time best spent pursuing knowledge, inventing and creating. I should avail myself of the best medical treatment proffered by the most prominent medical authorities – lest the asset that is I be lost to Mankind. I should not be bothered with proofreading my articles (or even re-reading them) – these lowly jobs best be assigned to the less gifted. The devil is in paying precious attention to details.

Entitlement is sometimes justified in a Picasso or an Einstein. But I am neither. My achievements are grotesquely incommensurate with my overwhelming sense of entitlement. I am but a mediocre and forgettable scribbler who, at the age of 39, is a colossal under-achiever, if anything.

Of course, the feeling of supremacy often serves to mask a cancerous complex of inferiority. Moreover, I infect others with my projected grandiosity and their feedback constitutes the edifice upon which I construct my self-esteem. I regulate my sense of self-worth by rigidly insisting that I am above the madding crowd while deriving my Narcissistic Supply from this very thus despised source.

But there is a second angle to this abhorrence of the predictable. As a narcissist, I employ a host of Emotional Involvement Prevention Mechanisms (EIPM). Despising routine and avoiding it is one of these mechanisms. Their function is to prevent me from getting emotionally involved and, subsequently, hurt. Their application results in an "approach-avoidance repetition complex". The narcissist, fearing and loathing intimacy, stability and security – yet craving them – approaches and then avoids significant others or important tasks in a rapid succession of apparently inconsistent and disconnected behaviours.

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Pathological Narcissism

A Dysfunction or a Blessing?

Comments on recent research by Roy Baumeister.

Is pathological narcissism a blessing or a malediction?

The answer is: it depends. Healthy narcissism is a mature, balanced love of oneself coupled with a stable sense of self-worth and self-esteem. Healthy narcissism implies knowledge of one's boundaries and a proportionate and realistic appraisal of one's achievements and traits.

Pathological narcissism is wrongly described as too much healthy narcissism (or too much self-esteem). These are two absolutely unrelated phenomena which, regrettably, came to bear the same title. Confusing pathological narcissism with self-esteem betrays a fundamental ignorance of both.

Pathological narcissism involves an impaired, dysfunctional, immature (True) Self coupled with a compensatory fiction (the False Self). The sick narcissist's sense of self-worth and self-esteem derive entirely from audience feedback. The narcissist has no self-esteem or self-worth of his own (no such ego functions). In the absence of observers, the narcissist shrivels to non-existence and feels dead. Hence the narcissist's preying habits in his constant pursuit of Narcissistic Supply. Pathological narcissism is an addictive behavior.

Still, dysfunctions are reactions to abnormal environments and situations (e.g., abuse, trauma, smothering, etc.).

Paradoxically, his dysfunction allows the narcissist to function. It compensates for lacks and deficiencies by exaggerating tendencies and traits. It is like the tactile

sense of a blind person. In short: pathological narcissism is a result of over-sensitivity, the repression of overwhelming memories and experiences, and the suppression of inordinately strong negative feelings (e.g., hurt, envy, anger, or humiliation).

That the narcissist functions at all - is because of his pathology and thanks to it. The alternative is complete decompensation and integration.

In time, the narcissist learns how to leverage his pathology, how to use it to his advantage, how to deploy it in order to maximize benefits and utilities - in other words, how to transform his curse into a blessing.

Narcissists are obsessed by delusions of fantastic grandeur and superiority. As a result they are very competitive. They are strongly compelled - where others are merely motivated. They are driven, relentless, tireless, and ruthless. They often make it to the top. But even when they do not - they strive and fight and learn and climb and create and think and devise and design and conspire. Faced with a challenge - they are likely to do better than non-narcissists.

Yet, we often find that narcissists abandon their efforts in mid-stream, give up, vanish, lose interest, devalue former pursuits, fail, or slump. Why is that?

Narcissists are prone to self-defeating and self-destructive behaviors.

The Self-Punishing, Guilt-Purging Behaviors

These are intended to inflict punishment on the narcissist and thus instantly relieve him of his overwhelming anxiety.

This is very reminiscent of a compulsive-ritualistic behavior. The narcissist feels guilty. It could be an "ancient" guilt, a "sexual" guilt (Freud), or a "social" guilt. In early life, the narcissist internalized and introjected the voices of meaningful and authoritative others - parents, role models, peers - that consistently and convincingly judged him to be no good, blameworthy, deserving of punishment or retaliation, or corrupt.

The narcissist's life is thus transformed into an on-going trial. The constancy of this trial, the never adjourning tribunal *is* the punishment. It is a Kafkaesque "trial": meaningless, undecipherable, never-ending, leading to no verdict, subject to mysterious and fluid laws and presided over by capricious judges.

Such a narcissist masochistically frustrates his deepest

desires and drives, obstructs his own efforts, alienates his friends and sponsors, provokes figures in authority to punish, demote, or ignore him, actively seeks and solicits disappointment, failure, or mistreatment and relishes them, incites anger or rejection, bypasses or rejects opportunities, or engages in excessive self-sacrifice.

In their book "Personality Disorders in Modern Life", Theodore Millon and Roger Davis, describe the diagnosis of "Masochistic or Self-Defeating Personality Disorder", found in the appendix of the DSM III-R but excluded from the DSM IV. While the narcissist is rarely a full-fledged masochist, many a narcissist exhibit some of the traits of this personality disorder.

The Extracting Behaviors

People with Personality Disorders (PDs) are very afraid of real, mature, intimacy. Intimacy is formed not only within a couple, but also in a workplace, in a neighborhood, with friends, while collaborating on a project. Intimacy is another word for emotional involvement, which is the result of interactions in constant and predictable (safe) propinquity.

PDs interpret intimacy as counter-dependence, emotional strangulation, the snuffing of freedom, a kind of death in installments. They are terrorized by it. To avoid it, their self-destructive and self-defeating acts are intended to dismantle the very foundation of a successful relationship, a career, a project, or a friendship. Narcissists feel elated and relieved after they unshackle these "chains". They feel they broke a siege, that they are liberated, free at last.

Read this:

The Relief of Being Abandoned

The Default Behaviors

We are all, to some degree, inertial, afraid of new situations, new opportunities, new challenges, new circumstances and new demands. Being healthy, being successful, getting married, becoming a mother, or someone's boss – often entail abrupt breaks with the past. Some self-defeating behaviors are intended to preserve the past, to restore it, to protect it from the winds of change, to self-deceptively skirt promising opportunities while seeming to embrace them.

Moreover, to the narcissist, a challenge, or even a guaranteed eventual triumph, are meaningless in the absence of onlookers. The narcissist needs an audience

to applaud, affirm, recoil, approve, admire, adore, fear, or even detest him. He craves the attention and depends on the Narcissistic Supply only others can provide. The narcissist derives sustenance only from the outside - his emotional innards are hollow and moribund.

The narcissist's enhanced performance is predicated on the existence of a challenge (real or imaginary) and of an audience. Baumeister usefully re-affirmed this linkage, known to theoreticians since Freud.

The Narcissist as a Failure and a Loser

Three traits conspire to render the narcissist a failure and a loser: his sense of entitlement, his haughtiness and innate conviction of his own superiority, and his aversion to routine.

The narcissist's sense of entitlement encourages his indolence. He firmly believes that he should be spoon-fed and that accomplishments and honors should be handed to him on a silver platter, without any commensurate effort on his part. His mere existence justifies such exceptional treatment. Many narcissists are under-qualified and lack skills because they can't be bothered with the minutia of obtaining an academic degree, professional training, or exams.

The narcissist's arrogance and belief that he is superior to others, whom he typically holds in contempt - in other words: the narcissist's grandiose fantasies - hamper his ability to function in society. The cumulative outcomes of this social dysfunction gradually transform him into a recluse and an outcast. He is shunned by colleagues, employers, neighbors, erstwhile friends, and, finally, even by long-suffering family members who tire of his tirades and rants.

Unable to work in a team, to compromise, to give credit where due, and to strive towards long-term goals, the narcissist - skilled and gifted as he may be - finds himself unemployed and unemployable, his bad reputation preceding him.

Even when offered a job or a business opportunity, the narcissist recoils, bolts, and obstructs each and every stage of the negotiations or the transaction.

But this passive-aggressive (negativistic and masochistic) conduct has nothing to do with the narcissist's aforementioned indolence. The narcissist is not afraid of some forms of hard work. He invests inordinate amounts of energy, forethought, planning, zest, and sweat in securing narcissistic supply, for

instance.

The narcissist's sabotage of new employment or business prospects is owing to his abhorrence of routine. Narcissists feel trapped, shackled, and enslaved by the quotidian, by the repetitive tasks that are inevitably involved in fulfilling one's assignments. They hate the methodical, step-by-step, long-term, approach. Possessed of magical thinking, they'd rather wait for miracles to happen. Jobs, business deals, and teamwork require perseverance and tolerance of boredom which the narcissist sorely lacks.

Life forces most narcissists into the hard slog of a steady job (or succession of jobs). Such "unfortunate" narcissists, coerced into a framework they resent, are likely to act out and erupt in a series of self-destructive and self-defeating acts (see above).

But there are other narcissists, the "luckier" ones, those who can afford not to work. They laze about, indulge themselves in a variety of idle and trivial pursuits, seek entertainment and thrills wherever and whenever they can, and while their lives away, at once content and bitter: content with their lifestyle and the minimum demands it imposes on them and bitter because they haven't achieved more, they haven't reached the pinnacle of their profession, they haven't become as rich or famous or powerful as they deserve to be.

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The Narcissist's Confabulated Life

Confabulations are an important part of life. They serve to heal emotional wounds or to prevent ones from being inflicted in the first place. They prop-up the confabulator's self-esteem, regulate his (or her) sense of self-worth, and buttress his (or her) self-image. They serve as organising principles in social interactions.

Father's wartime heroism, mother's youthful good looks, one's oft-recounted exploits, erstwhile alleged brilliance, and past purported sexual irresistibility – are typical examples of white, fuzzy, heart-warming lies wrapped around a shrivelled kernel of truth.

But the distinction between reality and fantasy is rarely completely lost. Deep inside, the healthy confabulator knows where facts end and wishful thinking takes over. Father acknowledges he was no war hero, though he did his share of fighting. Mother understands she was no ravishing beauty, though she may have been attractive. The confabulator realises that

his recounted exploits are overblown, his brilliance exaggerated, and his sexual irresistibility a myth. Such distinctions never rise to the surface because everyone – the confabulator and his audience alike – have a common interest to maintain the confabulation. To challenge the integrity of the confabulator or the veracity of his confabulations is to threaten the very fabric of family and society. Human intercourse is built around such entertaining deviations from the truth. This is where the narcissist differs from others (from "normal" people).

His very self is a piece of fiction concocted to fend off hurt and to nurture the narcissist's grandiosity. He fails in his "reality test" – the ability to distinguish the actual from the imagined. The narcissist fervently believes in his own infallibility, brilliance, omnipotence, heroism, and perfection. He doesn't dare confront the truth and admit it even to himself.

Moreover, he imposes his personal mythology on his nearest and dearest. Spouse, children, colleagues, friends, neighbours – sometimes even perfect strangers – must abide by the narcissist's narrative or face his wrath. The narcissist countenances no disagreement, alternative points of view, or criticism. To him, confabulation IS reality.

The coherence of the narcissist's dysfunctional and precariously-balanced personality depends on the plausibility of his stories and on their acceptance by his Sources of Narcissistic Supply. The narcissist invests an inordinate time in substantiating his tales, collecting "evidence", defending his version of events, and in re-interpreting reality to fit his scenario. As a result, most narcissists are self-delusional, obstinate, opinionated, and argumentative.

The narcissist's lies are not goal-orientated. This is what makes his constant dishonesty both disconcerting and incomprehensible. The narcissist lies at the drop of a hat, needlessly, and almost ceaselessly. He lies in order to avoid the Grandiosity Gap – when the abyss between fact and (narcissistic) fiction becomes too gaping to ignore.

The narcissist lies in order to preserve appearances, uphold fantasies, support the tall (and impossible) tales of his False Self and extract Narcissistic Supply from unsuspecting sources, who are not yet on to him. To the narcissist, confabulation is not merely a way of life –

but life itself.

We are all conditioned to let other indulge in pet delusions and get away with white, not too egregious, lies. The narcissist makes use of our socialisation. We dare not confront or expose him, despite the outlandishness of his claims, the improbability of his stories, the implausibility of his alleged accomplishments and conquests. We simply turn the other cheek, or meekly avert our eyes, often embarrassed.

Moreover, the narcissist makes clear, from the very beginning, that it is his way or the highway. His aggression – even violent streak – are close to the surface. He may be charming in a first encounter – but even then there are telltale signs of pent-up abuse. His interlocutors sense this impending threat and avoid conflict by acquiescing with the narcissist's fairy tales. Thus he imposes his private universe and virtual reality on his milieu – sometimes with disastrous consequences.

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The Cult of the Narcissist

The narcissist is the guru at the centre of a cult. Like other gurus, he demands complete obedience from his flock: his spouse, his offspring, other family members, friends, and colleagues. He feels entitled to adulation and special treatment by his followers. He punishes the wayward and the straying lambs. He enforces discipline, adherence to his teachings, and common goals. The less accomplished he is in reality – the more stringent his mastery and the more pervasive the brainwashing.

The – often involuntary – members of the narcissist's mini-cult inhabit a twilight zone of his own construction. He imposes on them a shared psychosis, replete with persecutory delusions, "enemies", mythical narratives, and apocalyptic scenarios if he is flouted.

The narcissist's control is based on ambiguity, unpredictability, fuzziness, and ambient abuse. His ever-shifting whims exclusively define right versus wrong, desirable and unwanted, what is to be pursued and what to be avoided. He alone determines the rights and obligations of his disciples and alters them at will.

The narcissist is a micro-manager. He exerts control over the minutest details and behaviours. He punishes severely and abuses withholders of information and those who fail to conform to his wishes and goals.

The narcissist does not respect the boundaries and privacy of his reluctant adherents. He ignores their wishes and treats them as objects or instruments of gratification. He seeks to control both situations and people compulsively.

He strongly disapproves of others' personal autonomy and independence. Even innocuous activities, such as meeting a friend or visiting one's family require his permission. Gradually, he isolates his nearest and dearest until they are fully dependent on him emotionally, sexually, financially, and socially.

He acts in a patronising and condescending manner and criticises often. He alternates between emphasising the minutest faults (devalues) and exaggerating the talents, traits, and skills (idealises) of the members of his cult. He is wildly unrealistic in his expectations – which legitimises his subsequent abusive conduct.

The narcissist claims to be infallible, superior, talented, skilful, omnipotent, and omniscient. He often lies and confabulates to support these unfounded claims. Within his cult, he expects awe, admiration, adulation, and constant attention commensurate with his outlandish stories and assertions. He reinterprets reality to fit his fantasies.

His thinking is dogmatic, rigid, and doctrinaire. He does not countenance free thought, pluralism, or free speech and doesn't brook criticism and disagreement. He demands – and often gets – complete trust and the relegation to his capable hands of all decision-making. He forces the participants in his cult to be hostile to critics, the authorities, institutions, his personal enemies, or the media – if they try to uncover his actions and reveal the truth. He closely monitors and censors information from the outside, exposing his captive audience only to selective data and analyses.

The narcissist's cult is "missionary" and "imperialistic". He is always on the lookout for new recruits – his spouse's friends, his daughter's girlfriends, his neighbours, new colleagues at work. He immediately attempts to "convert" them to his "creed" – to convince them how wonderful and admirable he is. In other words, he tries to render them Sources of Narcissistic Supply.

Often, his behaviour on these "recruiting missions" is different to his conduct within the "cult". In the first phases of wooing new admirers and proselytising to

potential "conscripts" – the narcissist is attentive, compassionate, empathic, flexible, self-effacing, and helpful. At home, among the "veterans" he is tyrannical, demanding, wilful, opinionated, aggressive, and exploitative.

As the leader of his congregation, the narcissist feels entitled to special amenities and benefits not accorded the "rank and file". He expects to be waited on hand and foot, to make free use of everyone's money and dispose of their assets liberally, and to be cynically exempt from the rules that he himself established (if such violation is pleasurable or gainful).

In extreme cases, the narcissist feels above the law – any kind of law. This grandiose and haughty conviction leads to criminal acts, incestuous or polygamous relationships, and recurrent friction with the authorities. Hence the narcissist's panicky and sometimes violent reactions to "dropouts" from his cult. There's a lot going on that the narcissist wants kept under wraps. Moreover, the narcissist stabilises his fluctuating sense of self-worth by deriving Narcissistic Supply from his victims. Abandonment threatens the narcissist's precariously balanced personality.

Add to that the narcissist's paranoid and schizoid tendencies, his lack of introspective self-awareness, and his stunted sense of humour (lack of self-deprecation) and the risks to the grudging members of his cult are clear.

The narcissist sees enemies and conspiracies everywhere. He often casts himself as the heroic victim (martyr) of dark and stupendous forces. In every deviation from his tenets he espies malevolent and ominous subversion. He, therefore, is bent on disempowering his devotees. By any and all means. The narcissist is dangerous.

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The Narcissist as VAMPIRE or MACHINE

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