

## Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD)

**Mauritz Fensham\***

*Self Employed, Hong Kong Island, Hong Kong*

**\*Corresponding Author:** Mauritz Fensham, Self Employed, Hong Kong Island, Hong Kong.

**Received:** October 09, 2020; **Published:** October 31, 2020

Know someone who expects constant admiration, who thinks they're better than everyone else, but flies off the handle at the slightest criticism? These tips can help you recognize and cope with a narcissist.

### What is (NPD)?

The word narcissism gets tossed around a lot in our selfie-obsessed, celebrity-driven culture, often to describe someone who seems excessively vain or full of themselves. But in psychological terms, narcissism doesn't mean self-love at least not of a genuine sort. It's more accurate to say that people with (NPD) are in love with an idealized, grandiose image of themselves. And they're in love with this inflated self-image precisely because it allows them to avoid deep feelings of insecurity. But propping up their delusions of grandeur takes a lot of work and that's where the dysfunctional attitudes and behaviors come in.

Narcissistic personality disorder involves a pattern of self-centered, arrogant thinking and behavior, a lack of empathy and consideration for other people, and an excessive need for admiration. Others often describe people with NPD as cocky, manipulative, selfish, patronizing, and demanding. This way of thinking and behaving surfaces in every area of the narcissist's life: from work and friendships to family and love relationships.

People with NPD are extremely resistant to changing their behavior, even when it's causing them problems. Their tendency is to turn the blame on to others. What's more, they are extremely sensitive and react badly to even the slightest criticisms, disagreements, or perceived slights, which they view as personal attacks. For the people in the narcissist's life, it's often easier just to go along with their demands to avoid the coldness and rages. However, by understanding more about narcissistic personality disorder, you can spot the narcissists in your life, protect yourself from their power plays, and establish healthier boundaries.

### Signs and symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder

- Grandiose sense of self-importance
- Lives in a fantasy world that supports their delusions of grandeur
- Needs constant praise and admiration
- Sense of entitlement
- Exploits others without guilt or shame
- Frequently demeans, intimidates, bullies, or belittles others.

Focus on your own dreams. Instead of losing yourself in the narcissist's delusions, focus on the things you want for yourself. What do you want to change in your life? What gifts would you like to develop? What fantasies do you need to give up in order to create a more fulfilling reality?

### Set healthy boundaries

Healthy relationships are based on mutual respect and caring. But narcissists aren't capable of true reciprocity in their relationships. It isn't just that they're not willing; they truly aren't able. They don't see you. They don't hear you. They don't recognize you as someone who exists outside of their own needs. Because of this, narcissists regularly violate the boundaries of others. What's more, they do so with an absolute sense of entitlement.

Make a plan: If you have a long-standing pattern of letting others violate your boundaries, it's not easy to take back control. Set yourself up for success by carefully considering your goals and the potential obstacles. What are the most important changes you hope to achieve? Is there anything you've tried in the past with the narcissist that worked? Anything that hasn't? What is the balance of power between you and how will that impact your plan? How will you enforce your new boundaries? Answering these questions will help you evaluate your options and develop a realistic plan.

Consider a gentle approach: If preserving your relationship with the narcissist is important to you, you will have to tread softly. By pointing out their hurtful or dysfunctional behavior, you are damaging their self-image of perfection. Try to deliver your message calmly, respectfully, and as gently as possible. Focus on how their behavior makes you feel, rather than on their motivations and intentions. If they respond with anger and defensiveness, try to remain calm. Walk away if need be and revisit the conversation later.

Don't set a boundary unless you're willing to keep it. You can count on the narcissist to rebel against new boundaries and test your limits, so be prepared. Follow up with any consequences specified. If you back down, you're sending the message that you don't need to be taken seriously.

Be prepared for other changes in the relationship. The narcissist will feel threatened and upset by your attempts to take control of your life. They are used to calling the shots. To compensate, they may step up their demands in other aspects of the relationship, distance themselves to punish you, or attempt to manipulate or charm you into giving up the new boundaries. It's up to you to stand firm.

Don't argue with a narcissist. When attacked, the natural instinct is to defend yourself and prove the narcissist wrong. But no matter how rational you are or how sound your argument, they are unlikely to hear you. And arguing the point may escalate the situation in a very unpleasant way. Don't waste your breath. Simply tell the narcissist you disagree with their assessment, then move on.

Know yourself. The best defense against the insults and projections of the narcissist is a strong sense of self. When you know your own strengths and weaknesses, it's easier to reject any unfair criticisms leveled against you.

Spend time with people who give you an honest reflection of who you are. In order to maintain perspective and avoid buying into the narcissist's distortions, it's important to spend time with people who know you as you really are and validate your thoughts and feelings.

Make new friendships, if necessary, outside the narcissist's orbit. Some narcissists isolate the people in their lives in order to better control them. If this is your situation, you'll need to invest time into rebuilding lapsed friendships or cultivating new relationships.

**Volume 9 Issue 11 November 2020**

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