Socialized Narcissists

Narcissists are the greatest obstacles to world peace and individual joy. They have been instrumental in the many social and ecological disasters throughout history. In some ways ‘history’ is a story of Narcissists and their narcissism. Narcissistic personality disorder has one outstanding personality trait. It is a complete lack of empathy and compassion for their fellow beings. It is proposed here that a weaker form of the disorder called the ‘socialized’ narcissist is needed to understand how society is evolving into an aggressive mode where empathy and compassion are becoming extinct. Socialized narcissists have not been identified before because of most people does generally not see them as ‘abnormal’ or ‘mentally ill’ and therefore they have not become a part of the diagnostic criteria used for ‘personality disorders’ in the psychological and psychiatric paradigms. Less formal labels such as ‘asshole’ etc. may identify them but this does not give any insight into their patterns of behavior and their destructive potential or a way to deal with them. By ‘socialized’ I mean they are actually a milder form of ‘narcissist’ described in the ‘The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders’ [DSM] manual of diagnosis. This is an ongoing work and will be revised as needed.

The Diagnostic Criteria from the DSM is the standard classification of mental disorders used by mental health professionals in the United States and Europe. The Narcissist [more aggressive and easily identified variant] is characterized by “a pervasive pattern of grandiosity (in fantasy or behavior), need for admiration, and lack of empathy, beginning by early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts, as indicated by five or more of the following in levels that cause significant problems for others and themselves”. Some or all of the following traits indicate the presence of this disorder.

Note that all people may express some of these traits some of the time, all the time at non-destructive levels, or as manifestations of other personality disorders such as ‘bi-polar’ [formerly ‘manic-depressive’] disorder without being a narcissist in either the ‘strong’ [formal DSM model] or ‘weaker’ [‘socialized’] form described in this article.

The DSM list is as follows:

1. **Lacks empathy:** is unwilling to recognize or identify with the feelings and needs of others. You are only chess pieces in their games with others. Authors Note: Narcissists lack empathy probably because of the absence in their brains neural systems of the appropriate structures. This appears to be firstly a genetic condition and secondly enhanced with learned or mimicked behaviors. The genetic component and its physiological expression in ‘brain wiring’ may someday be empirically demonstrated with tools such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). Regions of ‘empathy’ or ‘compassion’ might be located in normal or empathetic people and then compared to the presumably absent or differently ‘wired’ images of brain activity starting with extreme versions of narcissism such as in psychopaths and then examined in socialized narcissist. This really isn’t the point of this discussion since a whole new set of problems is involved in any kind of research of such a volatile topic. The important this to take away from this is to see that the socialized narcissist has a personality disorder that they didn’t ‘choose’. Their aggressive and/or ‘poor me’ behaviors aren’t the result of a conscious choice over empathic and thoughtful ones. In fact we will see that there is some predictability to their behaviors no matter how random they may appear. The robotic needs listed above as the benchmark traits do not cover the ways they can surprise you with their devious and ‘creative’ modes of attack and manipulation. MUCH MORE RESEARCH IS NEEDED IN THIS AREA.

2. **Has a grandiose sense of self importance** (e.g., exaggerates achievements and talents, expects to be recognized as superior without commensurate achievements)
3. Is preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love. They will fabrication 'truth' as they see it and lie about their past in order to fit into the current version of their fantasies about who and what they are.

4. Believes that he or she is "special" and unique and can only be understood by, or should associate with, other special or high-status people (or institutions), they believe themselves to be authorities and defer only to others in power over them especially if they perceive their 'superiors' as authorities.

5. Requires excessive admiration. Note: A hallmark of the narcissist is that they will flip-flop very quickly between the 'I am superior to you' rant and the 'poor me' monologue in an attempt to get your attention, admiration, or sympathy...they shift the conversation always back to themselves and expect others to listen to them while not returning the favor.

6. Has a sense of entitlement, i.e., unreasonable expectations of especially favorable treatment or automatic compliance with his or her expectations. This is especially true if they are in some sort of power position over others...they equate their power with always being right even when it contradicts something they have done or said in the past.

7. Is interpersonally exploitative, i.e., takes advantage of others to achieve his or her own ends while believing that others are trying to exploit them.

8. Is often envious of others or believes that others are envious of him or her, is threatened by others ideas, creativity or status and believes that others are trying to remove them from their position or take their possessions including their 'loved ones'.

9. Shows arrogant, haughty behaviors or attitudes, believes that they are always right (i.e. never wrong) and will lie to preserve their status and position when confronted by the truth or when shown the contradictions in their stories. Truth is seen to be an enemy to the controller or narcissist especially if it is in the way of their self-interests.

The 'socialized' narcissist includes these behaviors but also some more subtle traits that allow them to remain in society. One of the key tools of both types is the 'poor me' strategy to get attention for themselves while taking advantage of empathetic peers. This could be the never-ending complaints of a co-worker or the boss who flip-flops between the overtly aggressive 'I know everything' and 'I'm always right' to the covertly abusive or 'poor me' narcissist like a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. These narcissists will make snide comments, attack you and dismiss your work or contributions when there are no witnesses while maintaining the 'great person' image amongst their non-victims. This leaves you with the negative energy they have dumped on you, ruining your day, and sometimes your life. They have set it up so that you will look like a fool if you try to point out their behavior to others who have never seen their dark side.

Socialized narcissists typically go to 'finishing schools' like college where they learn the finer points on how to manipulate people intellectually and emotionally. They can also hone their backstabbing skills in fraternities and sororities. They can also develop their skills as they rise up corporate ladders by imitation. Universities and colleges are rife with narcissists since holding court in classrooms, meetings and laboratories feeds their sense that they are 'geniuses'. Almost all Ph.D.s believe themselves to be geniuses even without commensurate achievements. There are always reasons why their genius has not been recognized, always the faults of others! Some profession naturally attracts narcissists who want to 'hold court' and dominate others such as teachers, preachers, principles, psychologists, psychiatrists, doctors, businessmen, coaches, and the list goes on. Their need to have an audience that they can control and rule is very seductive to them. Uneducated narcissists typically have less refined social skills and are more obvious in their behaviors. The socialization of the narcissist is dependent on many factors such as family role models and genetics, education, economic background, religious extremism, and cultural
reward systems that showcase narcissist celebrities, the wealthy, and powerful as the ultimate role model.

Here are some behaviors and traits that the 'socialized' narcissist might exhibit [in addition to those of the DSM narcissist]:

1. **The ‘Poor Me’ monologue.** This may seem like a contradiction to the ‘I know everything and I am the best’ traits above, but in fact anything that gets your attention and draws it away from others is a stronger drive than their concern for how you see their overly positive self-image or negative ‘I am a victim’ image.
2. **Interrupts conversations.** This is one of the most annoying of traits since there is a complete disregard for conversations already going on and the people involved.
3. **Their time is precious, yours is not.** How about the boss or co-worker who wants to start a conversation with you even as you are leaving work? This is extended to meetings where the narcissist drones on, runs on past the scheduled end, and generally expects you to drop everything for them without regard to your timetable.
4. **Excessive or inappropriate praise of others** in order to ‘set them up’ to use them or as a set up for their own aggrandizement. The praise is frequently a trap to get your attention and then they can launch into their monologue.
5. **Has to ‘win’ no matter what.** You are a chess piece to them, typically a pawn and expendable especially if it leads to a ‘win’. Cheating and lying are OK in a narcissists mind if it leads to them to a ‘win’.
6. **Jumping to conclusions.**
7. **Invading your private life.** This can be very stressful, since they ‘don’t take hints’.
8. **Guilt gifts, bribes, and offers they know you won’t accept**
9. **They will consciously set you up to fail or look bad in front of others.** This includes subtle put-downs and snide comments that you can’t respond to.
10. **The unfinished sentence set up.** This is used with others when you are not around...usually it is couched in a carefully crafted and apparently presented in a neutral way or even ‘pseudo-positive’ tone. It relies on the listeners ‘fill in the blank’ response to finish the lie or negative comment about you in a way that narcissist wouldn’t. This is one of their best backstabbing strategies since the listener also becomes a victim if caught and the narcissist can say it never happened or they misunderstood etc. The narcissist can avoid the consequences of the behaviors of the others they direct at you and always look good.
11. **Kings and Queens: the ‘what a great person’ image.** Used to make you look bad usually to strangers that have been suckered into the narcissist’s lies. Much like 10 above these unaware victims can be led into all sorts of wrong ideas about you without questioning the motives or integrity of the narcissist. The narcissist king or queen uses many of these ‘tools’ to hold court.
12. **They are always right no matter what the evidence shows**
13. **Poor communicators.** Intentional use of pretentious and unnecessary language, deliberate obfuscation of ideas, and use of techno-babble to make the uninformed feel left out.

The socialized narcissists pose a greatest threat to the world because of their widespread pervasiveness and numbers, but also because tend work with and conform to the orders of full-blown narcissist or outright Sociopaths [highly intensified dangerous version]. Both narcissistic personalities frequently form collective social networks in social, political and workplace environments. Thus they are found in disproportionately high numbers in critical positions of social, economic, and political power lording over less aggressive or empathetic ‘subordinates’. They shape, control, and taint the agendas of institutions at all scales around the world. Their ‘leadership’ is really a ‘controllership’ guided only by Machiavellian self-serving motives, by poor and thoughtless judgment, overtly active or highly secretive suppression of other people’s work or creative solutions to problems, and a **profound lack of insight.**
Narcissists can superficially disguise themselves as ‘sympathetic’ or ‘understanding’ by imitating socially acceptable behaviors of normal or truly empathetic persons. The can act like they care but only if it ultimately serves their interests. Both types can be very intelligent and creative (especially in their manipulation of others) in spite of a lack of empathy thus creating situations where they can invent and maintain the illusion of being a ‘caring’ person while stabbing you in the back!

Narcissists are the least likely people to see their disorder or get help. Given the descriptions in this article, I have personally seen narcissists use these tools to label others [for self-serving purposes] while never seeing these very traits in themselves! Unfortunately the psychiatric and psychological communities are rife with narcissists and are extremely unlikely to diagnose this in patients [there is no real ‘cure’ for narcissism and therefore no money making potential if correctly diagnosed]. They are even less likely to see it in themselves!

Understanding the psychology of both types of Narcissistic Personality Disorder, from mild to severe, is essential if we want to regain joy in our lives and maintain a defense against their invasiveness and negativity. Their chameleon-like morality (i.e. opportunistic adaptability to take whatever moral position advances their self-interests) appears to give them a long-term 'survival' advantage over empathetic and caring people in a world of increasing population and decreasing resources.

This 'survival guide' is being developed to help us regain control of our personal and work lives. Tools will be added to help defend us from the random attacks of these 'users'.

Resources: The medical, psychiatric, psychological and social aspects of Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) are described in more detail at the following excellent web sites:

http://www.mentalhealth.com/dis/p20-pe07.html

http://www.halcyon.com/jmashmur/npd/traits.html


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