

NARCISSISM 101

by Reverend Theresa Crabtree

Narcissistic Personality Disorder vs Narcissistic Behavior

As the title implies, Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) is just that, a personality disorder. However, the term “narcissist” is batted around, often erroneously, among people who are judging others for certain behaviors they display. It is estimated that about 1 in 200 people truly have the disorder, as set by the criteria of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM).

One of the problems when it comes to diagnosing people with NPD is that they don't think they have a problem. Thus, they are not likely to seek treatment and likely to rebel against anyone who suggests that they get therapy.

According to the criteria in the DSM, in order to diagnose a person with NPD, they must exhibit five or more of the following behaviors:

- grandiose sense of self-importance
- obsessed with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty or ideal love
- believes they are special and unique and should only associate with other special people or institutions
- requires excessive admiration
- has a sense of entitlement
- takes advantage of others to achieve their desires
- lacks empathy
- arrogant

I can hear your wheels spinning as you start thinking about people you know who fit this bill. Likely, you either love or hate this person. More likely, it's a mixture of both if this is a family member or someone you are romantically involved with.

My purpose in writing this article is based upon how I have witnessed people reacting to those who have NPD... or more accurately, those who have not been diagnosed, but exhibit many narcissistic traits. There is a lot of negative judgment against these people. Oftentimes, it is “righteous” judgment, because they can and often do inflict a lot of pain on others. But if you get nothing else out of this, I hope you can walk away with the realization that underneath their grandiosity is hiding someone with a very insecure ego.

By holding onto grudges, hating, trying to save, bad mouthing... you name it, this only creates an increase of negative energy within you. It also cements the feelings of insecurity with the person exhibiting the NPD traits. Both lose and all that negative energy then permeates out in waves throughout the universe, gathering momentum with others who are doing the same.

I am assuming that those who are reading this are the ones accusing another of being a narcissist. Why? Because as mentioned above, the narcissist believes everyone else is the problem, so they wouldn't be drawn to this topic, unless they were curious about what everyone is saying about them (because it's always all about them).

So, if you are reading this article because you are in a relationship with someone with these traits and you're wanting some help in coping with them, you came to the right place. Not because I'm an expert on the topic, but because I offer resources, encouragement and an added bonus that most talk therapists don't offer, energy balancing.

In addition to the behavioral list above, there are other specific criteria in order to earn the label of having NPD. Up until I started researching NPD, did I realize that some people I felt for sure had this disorder (like my mom), did not meet the criteria. But that didn't solve the problem of how to deal with those who exhibit some of these traits. The question for me was how to counsel my clients because nearly every one of them are having troubles coping with people who exhibit narcissistic behaviors.

I began to notice two big trends. The most common was someone who has been hurt by their parents, loved ones or having problems with someone at work. To a lesser degree, they had friends with these behaviors. Less often, a client would show up because someone they knew (usually a conscious empath), would insist that they come to me for help to get rid of their "demons." In most cases, they were blaming everyone else for all their woes, needing to soothe their insecurity by winning people to their "side." These folks usually aren't ready to do their inner work, so there's not much you or I can do to help them.

However, the blessing was that this opened the door for the one referring the client to start seeing that they couldn't "save" another person, no matter how hard they tried. So, we talk about "planting seeds," and letting the other person choose whether to follow through and make more affirmative life choices or not. I share this in hopes that you will be discerning and know that you're spinning your wheels if you are doing more to a help person, than they are doing to help themselves.

Narcissist + Codependent = Hell on Earth

Before long, I began to realize the interdependence between someone who has narcissistic traits and those who have co-dependent traits. It is a perfect union, if living in hell is one's goal. In most cases, people drawn to those with narcissistic behaviors, have a healthy dose of co-dependent traits such as low self-esteem, looking outside themselves for safety and security, misinterpreting attention for love, lack of self-worth, etc. When you look at the match up, you'll see what I mean. Keep in mind the following is a very simplistic and generalized list.

In most cases, one displaying grandiosity feels they are superior to others. Who will get sucked into that? People with low-esteem who feel they don't measure up to others. They will feel their partner is superior to them... boom! There's the hook!

Those preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, power, beauty and ideal love are likely to attract others who do not have the confidence to create these successes, yet want to be a part of that ride. On the flip side of the coin, the one with these narcissistic traits may be drawn to a partner with the same ideals. Things may go along rather smoothly, unless the partner starts to "outshine" them. They want the focus to stay on themselves.

When someone believes they are special and unique, they are likely to pull in people pleasers with low-confidence who feed this belief by idolizing them. That fits right in with the need for excessive admiration, arrogance and entitlement. They all expect others to fill their needs.

Those who are manipulative and take advantage of others are going to hook into people who have low esteem and will be subservient to their needs. This also relates to those who exhibit lack of empathy. It's easier to manipulate someone when you can justify any of your actions. So, they will pull in people who feel they are not worthy and feel "less than" others. These codependents may have already convinced themselves that no one else will ever love them, so they better take what they can get.

The one with the narcissistic trait of envy, is not likely to pull in someone that they envy because they don't like the competition. The common dance here is to pull in someone who wants to be like them or more accurately, who envies them for their perceived traits... until they get behind closed doors and the "public" mask comes off.

Unfortunately, it's usually the wrong mask that comes off. It is important to reiterate that the basic root of most narcissistic traits has to do with their underlying insecurity. Consciously or not, they will do anything they can to not show their vulnerability or to let anyone see their weaknesses. In more severe cases, they don't even know they are insecure because adopting these behavioral patterns has become a part of who they are. They have come to believe in their own lies, their mask has become their reality. It is true that our thoughts, words and actions create our reality.

So, again, I hope that you will see that those who are hurting you are doing so because of their own unresolved issues. That does not excuse their behavior. It also does not mean that you should try to save them or stay in an abusive situation. The success rate for a true narcissist to resolve their past in order to heal is very low because they are not likely to seek treatment. They are more likely to lash out and do anything they need to do in order to prove they aren't insecure. They keep themselves locked in this pattern.

Unless a true narcissist seeks professional help in getting to the root of their problems and desire to change their behaviors, you can expect that if they do change, it will only be for the worst. That statement will either make you feel relief because you feel like you have permission to get the monkey off your back or it will feel like you just swallowed a ton of cement because you can't save the person. Some will remain in denial, determined that if they love them enough or change themselves to suit them, then their loved one will change their narcissistic habits.

This article is not meant to fix those with strong narcissist traits, it is to encourage those in relationship with them. So, let's talk about some things you can do to cope, whether or not you choose to keep this person in your life.

Parents with Narcissistic Behaviors

Perhaps the most common relationship my clients have with those with narcissist traits is one or both of their parents or other prominent childhood caretaker. This is often where the problem lies, improper parenting. Most narcissists are bred by either over-indulging parents or abusive and neglective parenting. They may be mirroring their excessive parents who doted on them or held high expectations for them. The child gained security by doing what was expected of them. Those who were abused and neglected often had to find their security and place in life by any means they could find. Without good role models, bad behaviors were often adopted. This is the common birthing place for narcissistic and co-dependent traits.

Since those who adopted narcissistic tendencies aren't likely to come to me for counsel, it's not surprising that my clients tend to exhibit insecure co-dependent behaviors rather than narcissistic traits in which they hide their insecurities. So, the focus with my clients is how to turn one's weaknesses into strengths. Since I am an energy healer and spiritual counselor, my goal is to help the client reach higher states of awareness. Thus, compassion, self-love, allowance and inner work to heal unresolved trauma are top goals.

First thing to be considered is whether the offending parent or caretaker is still alive. If not, then I offer information about what happens in the after-life. Whether the parents are still alive or not, the client will receive help with letting go of the guilt, blame, shame, anger, sadness, etc. One way to do this is to try to put yourself in their shoes. If you know their history, you will likely recognize that they were acting out as a response to their own unresolved issues. That alone can prompt enough compassion to start releasing the pent-up negative thoughts and emotions one has been harboring since early childhood.

Again, this does not excuse their behavior, but hopefully, it will be enough to help one to understand just how important it is to resolve emotional trauma. Otherwise, the abusive behavior is likely to continue to be generational. The buck *can* stop with you.

When the offending parent is still alive, it is highly likely they are still exhibiting the same narcissistic traits as when you were young. So, the problem is how to cope with them. The first order of business is to set boundaries. Then let the parent or family member clearly know what your boundaries are. If they choose to continue to harass and criticize you, then you have some options.

First, is not to take what they say so personally. I know, that's a hard one, but when you think about it, they are reflecting onto you and others their own faults. Although they aren't likely to change, you might want to offer getting counseling with them so that you can both communicate better. If that falls on deaf ears, then consider seeking counseling or other resources to help you learn how to better deal with them.

As a coping mechanism, you might want to consider visiting them less often and for shorter periods of time. If you're on the phone and they start going into their recognized patterns, make up an excuse and end the call. Try to change the subject. Escape to the bathroom and take several deep breaths in and out until you can calm yourself. When you are calm, you will have more clarity and will be better able to "tune in" and get Guidance on how to handle the situation when you get out of the bathroom. Too bad most bathroom windows are too small to make a getaway. 😊

What is important, is to have realistic expectations. Understand that they are likely not to change. They are more likely to continue blaming you and others for their problems until death do they part. They are swallowed up in negativity and the greatest expectation is that they will likely not pull themselves out of it. That leads to another important thing to consider. Are you trying to "save" or "change" them? If so, you are wasting a lot of time, energy and possibly money trying to win their approval or get them to see life from a brighter perspective.

Therein lies the challenge of expressing unconditional love. Now this is a tall order for any human, even those whom we adore, because even in that case, we still hold expectations and at some time, they are likely not to measure up. True unconditional love is a rarity on earth that is most often expressed by sincere monks and gurus who've been developing this level of love for many

decades (and lifetimes). But it is a great goal to strive for. You can do your best to unconditionally love the offensive parent, but that does not mean that you have to be their sacrificial lamb.

The most challenging role is if you are their main caretaker and you can't just walk away or visit them less often. My prayers are with you, for this will likely be your greatest challenge in this lifetime. It is going to be very important for you to not personally take on their negativity. It will likely serve you well to have a professional therapist or counselor that you can confide in and to receive support from. You're going to need it, especially if you don't have siblings who are also supportive of the parental care. Check local agencies and their insurance company for caretaking options.

You will want to be very careful so that you don't get swallowed up in their negativity to the point where you lose yourself and stop being compassionate. Daily meditation, respite time away from them, focusing on gratitude and anything else you can do to amp up your self-love is going to be a necessity rather than a luxury.

Narcissism in the Bedroom

The next most common relationship my clients have with someone with narcissistic traits are their spouses and lovers. Keeping in mind that these traits can be anywhere from mild to severe, some behaviors are easier to overlook, whereas some of these partners may become physically, verbally, mentally and emotionally abusive. It is important to come to the understanding that it is not your role or ability to change anyone. Thus, get the focus on recognizing and healing your own weaknesses. Then you will be better prepared to handle or exit the relationship.

When a client comes to me for a SoulCleanse, I offer several tools to help them to empower themselves. Self-empowerment is the most important first step you can do in any abusive situation. You can't change others, but you can change yourself and how you act and react in any given situation. As you empower yourself, one of two things usually occurs. You begin to remember who you are and as your confidence and love of self increases, you naturally will not tolerate the negative behaviors of the one you are paired with.

The law of attraction is always in existence. Thus, an energetic chasm will occur. If your partner doesn't increase their own self-love, then a deeper chasm will develop. Once you begin to assert yourself, the partner will either try to hook you in deeper or will start looking for an easier target. Then it will be a matter of taking steps to get out of the relationship.

You can offer to go to couple's counseling first. However, you will need to present this idea in a way that your partner doesn't feel like you are pointing your finger at them. Stating that you are interested in both of you learning how to communicate better or learn better problem-solving skills may keep them more open to the idea of couple's counseling. If they refuse, then consider getting counseling for yourself or at least, check out the resources on my website related to narcissism and co-dependence. Get support from someone qualified to help you see things from a new perspective.

Depending on your circumstances, such as having children under your care; whether you are legally married or not; who owns or has the lease on the home; and the severity of the abusive behavior; it can be easy to end the relationship or it can be dangerous to do so. Check around to find out what support there is within your family and circle of friends, as well as from other

resources such as “safe houses” and assistance for single parents. In some cases, you may need the help of the police just to get out of the house.

As was mentioned previously in regards to abusive parents, with your partner, you will need to set doable boundaries. Preferably, you can set them together. However, those leaning towards narcissism aren't likely to give a hoot about your boundaries, because their life is focused solely on their needs and desires. Let that be a clue to what you are dealing with. You will need to accept that this is who they are and when you rock the boat, it's more likely you that will get thrown overboard and left to fend for yourself as they sail away. Don't take it personally. Remember that they are projecting their weaknesses onto you. Self-empowerment will be crucial so that you can extricate yourself out of the situation. Expect that they will likely not change, except for the worse.

Keeping in mind that those with narcissistic traits are operating from a base of insecurity, it is likely that they will try to keep you hooked in. Well, at least until they find someone else to fill the role they need. One way that many keep their partner hooked is by isolating them from friends and family. Thus, if this has happened with you or if you have spurned the support of others through the years, you may feel like you have no one to turn to. However, when you are ready to get out of the relationship, contact them anyway. Hopefully, you will find there are some who are happy to hear that you are finally waking up and taking control of your life. You won't know who is there to help you until you reach out. So, do it!

Friends with Narcissistic Tendencies

Another group that my clients have problems with are their friends who exhibit narcissistic tendencies. As you begin to love yourself more and to make better life choices, it is quite common that a natural separation will occur. This is due to the “law of attraction.” When your vibration rises because you love yourself more, those who remain at a lower vibration will no longer resonate with you.

For example, if you are an addict and get sober, those you got high and drunk with aren't going to appeal to you anymore. You know that if you hang out with them, you're likely to get sucked back into it. They aren't going to want to hang out with you, either, once they realize you are serious about beating the habit. So, naturally you will move apart. The commonality no longer exists. Energetically, your vibe is raising, while theirs remains the same or continues to lower.

If the friends you hung out with are gossips and you stop gossiping with them, they'll seek out others to gossip with. You can bet that you will be the target of the gossip, at times, but let that go. I am reminded of the saying, “Great minds discuss ideas; average minds discuss events; small minds discuss people.” Strive to be great!

We create our reality with our thoughts, words and actions, in the current moment. Thus, the important thing to do if you want to become self-realized is to monitor yourself. As soon as you catch yourself thinking, saying and doing things of a negative nature, immediately stop and refocus onto something that is more uplifting and inspiring. At first this can be hard to do, if you have lived a life focused on negativity due to low-esteem and self-love, but the more you do it, the easier it gets.

So, if you are moving on up the self-love ladder while your friends are sticking to the negative lifestyle, a natural chasm will begin to occur. In those cases, you likely won't have to end the

friendship, just spend less time with them and eventually, they will call you less often. They will be more likely to hang out with those they can commiserate with. Misery loves company.

With those you hope to salvage the friendship, again, you will need to set boundaries. Let them know what the new boundaries are. You can expect that they will likely push your buttons and not respect your wishes. Those with narcissistic traits don't usually like change and will do what they can to keep you from rocking the boat. There are some who will simply shun you (and not usually gracefully) and walk away in search of others who will better fulfill their needs. Let them walk. In other cases, you may need to walk away, but do so as gracefully as you can. Recognize that they aren't likely to change. Love yourself enough to pull out of the negative drama.

Remember that they are operating from their own unresolved issues. You aren't their counselor and it isn't your responsibility to fix them. It will have to be up to them to decide that they want to change their ways and to seek counseling and do the necessary inner work. That is their responsibility.

Do your best not to take on their negativity. Their opinion of you is just that, their opinion. You do not have to take it on as your reality. True friendship is about supporting each other. It's a two-way street. You'll only get burnt out if you try to force them to change. It's a much wiser choice to use your time and energy getting yourself firmly rooted with a foundation of self-love. Then, at best, you can be a role-model for those who are truly seeking to make better life choices.

Narcissism in the Work Place

The next level of people with narcissistic traits are bosses and co-workers. We often think of narcissism as being people who are arrogant, manipulative and controlling. However, those who express entitlement and have problems with envy often express it by always complaining and blaming others for e-v-e-r-y-t-h-i-n-g. They may come across as being arrogant in a back door kind of way. These are the folks that say things like, "If I came from a rich family like him, I'd be in that leadership role now and I'd do a lot better job of it!" Playing the righteous indignation victim role is their way of covering up their feelings of lack and security. Of course, the reality is that they don't put forth the effort or have the knowledge or skills to be successful... or do possess them but don't have the courage to move forward. Thus, they displace the blame, while holding onto the feelings of entitlement and fantasies of their greatness.

Depending on the size of the business where you work, you will likely encounter at least one true narcissistic and likely to encounter even more with some narcissistic traits. They often show up as the controlling and manipulative boss or the back-stabbing co-worker. In some cases, if this is a job and not a career or you really don't like the job, it may be easier just to move on and find a better opportunity.

If not, then use the same strategies as already mentioned. As much as you can, set your parameters. This may be hard to do with a controlling boss, but you likely have some kind of a job description from when you were hired. If there is a HR Department, ask them for a copy. If not, try to work with your boss and get a written, clear and concise job description. This may get you fired, but at least you both will know what is expected of you while on the clock. You aren't their slave and you have rights. You can go to my narcissism resource page and find some tips in how to deal with this type of a boss.

Before you accept the next job, ask for your job description to be in writing so that you and your boss clearly know what is expected of each other. Both of you should sign and date it. That will also give you a foothold if things escalate to the need for a lawsuit.

When it comes to co-workers, one course of action is to stay out of the gossip sessions, they tend to only breed more negativity. Keep your morals, smile and be as friendly as you can to everyone. Do your best never to state anything negative about anyone. If someone gossips about you and gets into the “he said she said this about you” game, let it be, without needing to defend yourself, especially the unimportant rumors. If everyone knows that you never say an unkind word to others, they are more likely not to believe the gossip, who often says unkind things about others. Again, let others form their own beliefs and opinions. Don’t feel you need to overwork to prove yourself. Just be yourself and attend to your work. In that way, you can be a role-model for others and hold onto your dignity.

The main ingredient is to amp up your self-love. As you empower yourself more, you will be less upset about what others say and do. Eventually, it won’t bother you at all because you will see that their unkind words and actions are a result of their own insecurity. In many cases, the negative behaviors of the boss and co-workers and even yourself are the result of unresolved emotional issues. So, have compassion for yourself and others, but don’t be their doormat.

Once you snitch or complain to a boss about a co-worker, they are likely to retaliate, so avoidance and unnecessary interaction is a safer bet in many cases. You’ve likely already noticed that the person who gets fired first is the one that is bullied. That’s often because the bully is a master at manipulation and using others to make them shine. As you empower yourself more, you will find that you are bullied less. Again, it goes back to energetics and the law of attraction. When you stand up for your rights or don’t do things to help the bully look better, then the bully will look for an easier target.

What often happens in the workplace is that one person is not doing their job. So, others do their job for them so that things will run smoothly and the job gets done. Then the one not pulling their weight takes the glory. If the others don’t cover for them, the entitled one may stir up rumors, saying that others are not doing their job. Depending on the circumstances, this can be tricky to navigate. It may boil to the point where you quit the job. In the meantime, do your best not to be caught up in the negativity of discontent because you aren’t getting the recognition you feel you deserve. Rather, keep your focus on what your job description is and feel gratitude and satisfaction within yourself for a job well done.

When one needs approval from others, they set themselves up for disappointment. Work towards having your own measure of satisfaction for your efforts. What you will want to do is not get swallowed up when others don’t meet your expectations or you don’t feel appreciated or recognized. This is giving your power over to others. Of course, we all like to be appreciated and receive recognition for our deeds, but when you let go of the expectation of it and nurture it within yourself, life will be much more enjoyable.

Everyone Exhibits Narcissistic Traits

In summary, no matter how hard you try, it is not your responsibility to change anyone. You didn’t come to earth to change others, you came because you wanted to master yourself. In order to move up the ascension ladder, you will need to take on some of the narcissistic traits yourself.

What?!? Well, let's take another look at these traits, keeping in mind that when they are in balance and coming from a foundation of self-love, they really aren't so negative at all.

It can be good to feel self-important. If you are expressing love through your thoughts, words and actions, then these are the core reason why you are here on earth... to express Divine Love in your unique way. I'd say that's pretty important and I appreciate every time that you do just that, because those acts of Love ripple forth and touch everyone in a positive way.

In order to create anything, it begins with a thought, so having fantasies and visualizing what you want to create, whether it is success, power, beauty or love is a necessary step in the manifestation process.

You are special and unique. Like snowflakes and fingerprints, there are no two humans or souls who are exactly the same. Celebrate your uniqueness, rather than giving up your true essence to blend in with the crowd. No one has the same experiences or expressions that you have to offer to the world.

Requiring admiration can be good when it is you that admires yourself. That is self-love in action. Celebrate when you see yourself becoming more at one with Divine Love. Now, you don't want to be publicly pronouncing your greatness to others. Instead, let them discover your greatness and choose whether to verbalize it or not.

You are entitled to every blessing you receive and all that life has to offer. That is your birthright. When you consider that we are all connected, that we are all One, then you will note that you are entitled. You don't have to earn God's love. You don't have to earn your right to be here and to express your creativity. Being a co-creator is what you are. Being an expression of Divine Love is who you are. So, keep your focus on your True Roots and enjoy the journey of self-discovery.

Using others to achieve your own needs is a must. That's because we are all in this together. We are all connected. When you know your strengths and weaknesses and then can work well with others who you complement, then between you, the weaknesses become weaker and the strengths will strengthen. That's the premise of team work. Then the limits to what can be created are limitless. So, when you can, work with people who bring out the best in you, while you encourage others to follow their dreams.

The basic definition of envy is "to desire." Desire is the greatest cause of remaining stuck on the "reincarnation wheel." If you want to stop spinning your wheel and gain mastery over life, then place your desires on what you can accomplish that is a reflection of Divine Love while still in human form. Can you think of a more important goal than that?

Let your arrogance be a reflection of knowing your importance as a child of God. Know that you are as equally important as any other human, angel, master or other creation with consciousness. We are all a part of the Source, with none having higher or lower value. We are all a hologram of the whole. Your worth and abilities while in human form are of equal value as all others.

So, know that you too can attain all nine of the traits of narcissism, but aim for balance that will lead you toward a life of inner peace. Have compassion for those who suffer from insecurity, but have enough love and compassion for yourself not to be drawn into their negative vortex. Instead, keep your gaze steadily on being an expression of Divine Love.

Unconditional Love

You can still love those with negative narcissistic traits. In fact, unconditional love is the goal of your Soul. However, if you can't get to a state of inner peace while in relationship with that person, then you become part of the problem and not the solution. You may be in over your head and need to remove yourself from that person for a while or permanently. In either case, know that from the Soul's perspective, all is well. Your role is to express unconditional love of yourself first, because you can't give what you don't have.

Sometimes the best show of love you can give to a narcissist or one who has strong narcissistic traits, is to walk away. Like an addict, sometimes one has to hit "rock bottom" before they reach up for a helping hand. At times, it may be the one with narcissistic traits that has to hit bottom before reaching out for help. At times, it is the one who has been victimized by those with narcissistic traits who have to hit bottom before reaching out for help. Reaching out for help is not a sign of weakness. It is an expression of self-love.

Take time every day for inner-reflection. Do all you can to gain inner peace. This will give you clarity. Clarity will make it easier for you to make better life choices which lead to self-love. Self-love will lead to Divine Love.

It is my hope that you will see glimmers of your True Roots and find your way back to your True Self. Know that you are loved beyond measure.

Be love, always all ways.

Reverend Theresa Crabtree

For resources and guidance, visit theresacrabtree.com/narcissism

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