

# **I don't care. Its all about me: Narcissism**

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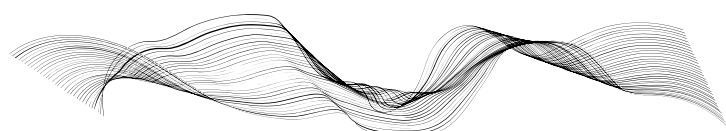
Across the restaurant table sits a girl with bright red nail varnish and a perfectly matching pedicure. Her dress; immaculately white and simple. In the mist of the odour of cigars and cigarettes one can smell the faint whiff of her perfume being carried along the room. Just as the perfume clutched onto the smoke in the air she also hung on to the gentleman's every word sat across from her. He, dressed in discreet designer had a strong, passionate voice. It quivered when he spoke for too long, which became quite endearing. As she tilted her head to the side she looked at him for the longest of time while he romanticized stories of his adventurous life.

In front of her sat a handsome man she thought. The lines on his face and his disheveled hands ignited the feeling that there was something broken inside of him. Remaining with that thought she gently reached for his hand. Her touch was to ease whatever discomfort lay under the surface of his well put together exterior. A moment of skin on skin. Let me in she thought. Her movement so delicate but enticing. He smiled at her gesture, returned her gaze and continued his conversation poetically.

The man across from her was no stranger to dating women. He had for as long as he could remember always been accustomed to beautiful ladies

or rather they had always been accustomed to him. Although most would say he had been unlucky in love, he would say he had never been lucky enough to find the one. However he refrained from talking too much about his relationships. He danced around the edges of his past, brushing them off as distant encounters and remaining vague. Instead he wanted to make sure she felt the object of his affection. He seemed an intricate and interesting man or rather that's what he hoped others would think of him. He had not led a boring or a sheltered life, in fact he liked to echo his unique and somewhat unbelievable accomplishments confidently. He still, however, had big plans for his future, which he incessantly told her whilst they sipped red wine amongst the dimly lit restaurant lights.

Although, wine was not her favourite drink, he insisted she partake in a toast. He was demanding and direct at times but only because he was trying to introduce her to new experiences he insisted. Whilst he studied her petit fingers wrapped around the bottom of her glass, he couldn't help but think she was a breath of fresh breathing new life into him. She had a way of making him feel like he was the most important person in the room..... and that he liked. She knew exactly what to say and precisely when to lay the slightest touch upon his person. It was as if she knew him he pondered. Yet even though the time spent together had been hardly anything at all, things were moving quickly. Very quickly.



**Above perfectly sets the scene of a romantic date. One falls in love with the descriptive words that portray the people and their surroundings. However, that is all it is, an interesting story that details the aesthetics. Nobody really finds out the character, morals or type of person that's sits across from each other. Instead it is set up for one to become lost in decorative language and ones own assumptions and judgments as they read a long.**

In the time someone meets a narcissist a whole lot will have been spoken about. However, the devil is not in the detail but what is left unsaid. Above no one would be able to work out who was the narcissist. However that's because narcissists don't wear signs on their head. Nor do they show their narcissistic personality disorder right away.

A narcissist sets the scene for their unsuspecting victim. They allow you to see what they want you to see. They appear inviting, charming, endearing, humble, generous, driven, modest or even a little too confident. Which ever way they do appear is the way that works best for them.

## **Im not going crazy: recognising the abuse**

Experiencing narcissistic abuse causes one to actively close up. I censored myself because I felt I couldn't explain to anyone what was actually going on. The right words eluded me when I tried to explain what was happening. Narcissistic abuse actively dumbs a person down because they do not believe in their own thought process.

The process to getting better came from listening to other people's perspectives and experiences. Through doing so I was able to find the terminology that explained what I was going through. It allowed me to label my experiences which helped me organise my thoughts. I was able to conceptualise and eventually articulate what was going on. I realised what I already knew deep down inside, which was I wasn't going insane. It wasn't me overthinking or making things up in my head. This was actually happening to me.

The first time you feel like you're not going insane is when you realise that there are other people going through the same ritualistic torture. This realisation allows you to get your own sense of reality back. It allows the feelings of anxiety, fear and depression to be validated, which in turn helps you regulate your emotions better.

I realised I had been living in a cult of two. Everything that I felt in the relationship I was purposely made to feel. The chaos, the gaslighting, the projection and the catastrophising, were all orchestrated to make me feel helpless. It was strategically executed to ensure any personal will was destroyed and any essence of self belief and self worth was taken from me. It was engineered so I built my own prison.

I am writing this blog for those that are experiencing or have experienced narcissistic abuse. I hope that with reading this you realise that what is happening to you is not normal, it is not deserved and it is not your fault.

Every human being deserves to experience life to the fullest happiest and healthiest extent. No one deserves to be locked in the parameters a narcissistic marks out for you to live in. No one deserves to live in a bubble of confusion and paranoia. Please know that you are important, you are someone, you are worthy and you deserve better.

## **What makes a narcissist?**

**Researchers believe that NPD is heritable as well as being learned behaviour (Sierra 2025).** Even though more research is needed many psychologists and psychiatrists think that the genetics of a person play a role. For instance people may have more of a predisposition for developing a NPD due to inherited characteristics. Individuals can naturally inherit temperaments that are highly strung or aggressive. Those that do develop a narcissistic personality disorder have a difference in the way their sympathetic nervous system is hardwired. This is the part that is in charge of the fight or flight response. NPD is developed as a defence mechanism, therefore people with NPD are always in the fight response.

**Narcissist make other narcissist.** The dynamic between caregiver and child plays a big role in how a NPD can develop. One of the ways a NPD can develop is through what is called 'modelling' (Johnston 2023 p.68). A narcissistic caregiver will put themselves at the head of the family. They

are the people in control of the family dynamic. If a child particularly looks up to the caregiver or is always chasing after their affection then a child can start 'modelling' the caregivers actions. When the caregiver is seen to be hostile, aggressive and use manipulation tactics to get what they want a child will grow up seeing this. They will either think this is the way one should act or they will mimic those actions in order to please the narcissist and to initiate some sort of bond between them.

**If a child has had a particularly traumatic upbringing** due to a caregiver with NPD then a child may also repress a lot of their memories. These repressed memories will be stored in the unconscious mind in order to safeguard them from unwanted feelings that have been experienced. This is actually a survival mechanism and NPD is develop through the need to survive (Hayes 2023). The unconscious mind can be the catalyst towards a persons reactionary attitude and developed personality. Without realising they are being influenced by these traumatic memories even if they have not been brought to the surface of their conscious mind. These memories are still there and still able to influence an individuals personality.

The majority of the time a child never knows where they stand with a narcissistic caregiver. Narcissistic caregiver see their child as an extension of themselves (McKenna).

## **Child and caregiver live symbiotically in a controlling and strained environment.**

They will inflict upon their own child the repetitive cycle of idolising and devaluing and instinctually the child will become accustomed to walking on egg shells. This repetitive cycle is utterly devastating to a child. There is no consistency to the bond because as soon as they may feel some sort of love or care it is taken away from them. In response to this the body lives in a heightened state of stress and anxiety and out of survival will develop overtime a NPD as a response. Skinner's work attributed to the understanding that if a child is withheld love and affection then they will seek out adoration. Narcissist seek out this adoration due to the lack of positive regard they received growing up.

**A child that can do no wrong** and has no experience of consequences can also lead to an NPD. An unbounded child lacks a life template that is fostered through boundaries and constraints. A sense of entitlement will develop in the child viewing the world through a self centred lens (Schie et al 2020). Without guidelines and being held accountable they start to believe that they are more deserving and special which also has an effect on their capacity to empathise with others and make meaningful connections. Their isolated environment makes them feel disconnected from societal norms and values and they can even experience a state of anomie. Life becomes meaningless because everything is too easy so it ceases to hold value and this affects their mustering of a sense of self and

identity, which has effects on their self worth. Confront these people as adults and you will be met with contempt and anger in order for them to protect their delusional paradigm created to exist in.

If a child experiences trauma and NPD develops as a way to survive then an arrested development takes place. NPD prohibits a person from interacting securely. A child from the ages of 5-11 starts to become aware of other people and develop their social awareness. (Hey-kiddo). However, NPD prohibits this ability or reverts the person back to being a toddler in the way that their attention is only focussed on them. This means that the awareness of other peoples needs and wants around them are completely disregarded (Johnston 2023 p64).

Finally it is argued that **the culture we are brought up in** today is a catalyst for narcissistic personality disorders. The first half of the 20th century saw the cultural model of patriarchy centred around virtues of sacrifice, duty and discipline (Dell'Amico 2022). Family, community and interests have now taken a back seat, where moral values and ideologies have changed or at least been weakened. This paradigm shift brings with it an array of new symptoms not commonly come across in the first half of the 20th century. In the article Dell' Amico (2022) makes reference to many psychologists and psychotherapists that noticed in the last half a 20<sup>th</sup> century there has been an increase in depression and malaise.

**‘About a third of my patients are suffering no clinical definable neurosis, but from the senselessness and emptiness of their lives’**

**Carl Jung**



Dell' Amico (2022) points to Luigi Zola explanation that at the begging of the 20<sup>TH</sup> century the educational system perceived the child as a 'perverse polymorph'. The child would inevitably be guilty of moral faults out of line with parental and social expectations and thus would be fine tuned with rules of punishment. Dell'Amico (2022) further highlights that social and parental expectations are internalised which shapes the internal monitor known as the Freudian super ego. The Id's needs and drives and the super ego's moral expectations resulted in conflict leaving the child dealing with feelings of guilt.

The child today is considered naturally innocent rather than what was described as the perverse child of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Dell'Amico 2022). Instead it is argued that the child in the quest for self realisation is encouraged to push boundaries and break rules to aid in and fulfil his or her natural development affirmed as power, admiration, success and visibility (Dell'Amico 2022). Today the individual self is what matters most. The gradual changing of the cultural model has today been sculpted by the media, social media and the internet. It has manifested a harmful stereotype of beauty, power and success thus hijacking the child's mind and proving difficult and impossible to achieve. Carl Rodgers spoke about the incongruence that is created within an individual when societal expectations do not sync up with a persons authentic self. There is an incongruence between what a person ought to be compared to what he or she actually is (McLeod 2025). This has consequences for a child as it deters them from reaching their full potential and also creates a lack of self worth. Dell'Amico (2022) refers to people today being preoccupied


with the performance principle. This is centred around the never ending effort to increase ones own visibility and success. Therefore Dell'Amico (2022) states that to hide failed attempts and incongruence a person puts on a mask. This is an attempt to bury their shame of the incongruence they struggle with. However, there is always a fear of being unmasked. With this it breeds anxiety, envy and contempt which spews from the perception of their own inferiority. Today we have identified this as cultural narcissism. The child today battles with shame rather than guilt. Dell'amico (2022) refers to Kohut who aptly describes we have turned from the guilty man to the tragic man.

## **Narcissistic relationships come in all shapes and sizes**


A narcissistic relationship becomes a cult of two or as the French call it Follie a deux. This aptly means a psychosis shared by two people.

THERE IS THE MOTHER THAT FEELS LIKE SHE HAS NO WHERE TO TURN AND NO ONE TO SPEAK TO. SHE SPENDS HER DAYS VOLUNTEERING AS ITS THE ONLY FREEDOM SHE IS ALLOWED AND EVEN THAT IS DUBIOUSLY LOOKED UPON. SHE HAS LITTLE ACCESS TO MONEY, SHE IS NOT ALLOWED FRIENDS AND HER WHEREABOUTS ARE CONSTANTLY MONITORED. THE NARCISSIST HAS RISEN THEIR CHILDREN TO BLAME THEIR MOTHER. THEY BELIEVE SHE IS THE ONE THAT CAUSED THEIR MARRIAGE TO FAIL. THE NARCISSIST HAS SMEARED HER NAME AND LABELED HER INSANE DUE TO HER EMOTIONAL

OUTBURSTS FROM THE PAIN AND LONELINESS SHE ENDURES. HOWEVER, AT EVERY INSTANCE THE NARCISSIST USES THIS TO HIS ADVANTAGE TO BACK UP HIS CLAIMS THAT SHE IS SLOWLY LOSING HER GRIP WITH REALITY.



THERE IS THE ESTRANGED LADY FROM HER FAMILY THAT HAS BECOME ISOLATED, LONELY, PARANOID AND DEPENDANT ON THE NARCISSIST. SHE HAS BEEN MANIPULATED INTO NOT TRUSTING HER FAMILY OR FRIENDS BECAUSE THE NARCISSIST HAS LABELLED THEM AS JEALOUS AND INTERFERING. HE REGULARLY FINISHES WITH HER AND MOVES ONTO ANOTHER SUPPLY WHEN FEELING BORED AND UNSTIMULATED. THINGS HAVE BECOME TOO PREDICTABLE AND THE VALIDATION HE SEEKS FROM HER JUST DOES NOT CUT IT ANYMORE. HE NEEDS MORE. HE FREQUENTLY INVESTS HIS EFFORTS INTO DRUG FUELLED DEBAUCHERY BENDERS THAT LAST WEEKS. HE DISAPPEARS, RETURNING HOME WEEKS LATER EXPECTING TO PICK UP WHERE HE LEFT OFF. HE HAS INVITED WOMEN INTO THE MARITAL HOME AND BECOMES ENRAGED IF SHE DARES TO CONFRONT HIM.



THERE IS THE PREOCCUPIED MAN THAT WORKS LIKE A DOG TO ENSURE HE KEEPS HIS NARCISSISTIC WIFE HAPPY. HE HANGS ONTO THE MOMENTS THAT ARE GOOD WHICH ARE FEW AND FAR BETWEEN. HOWEVER, HE IS

CONVINCED THAT ONE DAY HE WILL BE SEEN FOR HOW HARD HE WORKS AND HOW MUCH HE LOVES HER AND THINGS WILL FALL BACK INTO PLACE. THIS MAN LIVES ON HOPE AND LIVES IN FEAR MOST OF THE TIME. HIS FRIENDS CALL HIM A FOOL AND BELIEVE HE IS IN DANGER LIVING WITH THIS NARCISSIST. SHE HAS ON MANY OCCASIONS INJURED HIM AND EVEN PUSHED HIM DOWN THE STAIRS. SHE ALWAYS MANAGES TO MAKE HIM FEEL AS IF ALL OF THIS WAS HIS FAULT OR THAT IT DIDN'T HAPPEN THE WAY HE THOUGHT IT DID. SHE HAS EVEN INJURED HERSELF INFLICTING CUTS AND BRUISES INSISTING THAT HE DID IT TO HER.

## **Tactics the narcissist employs**

### **Love bombing**

The act of idolising and showering a person with adoration and attention. It is part of the cycle of narcissistic abuse that is employed either intentionally or unintentionally. The narcissist whilst love bombing will shower the individual with gifts and praise. He or she will talk about the future and confess their love prematurely. They will be highly communicative with their feelings and be especially affectionate and caring.

### **Gaslighting**

The term gaslighting is taken from the 1938 film Gaslight. Its about a married couple, the husband tries to make the wife think she is loosing her mind so he can take her money. At night he dims the gaslights but tries to make her believe that this sudden darkness is all in her head. Therefore gaslighting is employed for people to question their own sanity.

## **Projection**

Narcissists use the projection tactic to project the blame onto the other person. Its a defence mechanism and is done so often that it is usually considered to be an unconscious trait. However, narcissist would never want to consider taking responsibility of anything that they do because if they did it would break the paradigm of reality that they chose to live in.

## **Hoovering**

This is when a narcissist may feel that you are leaving them. They will use threats, false crisis, smear campaigns and love bombing in order to pull you back in.

## **Censorship**

Narcissist chip away at their victims self worth by picking on everything the do or say. Eventually a person wilfully censors themselves out of being afraid they say something wrong or the narcissist doesn't like what they say.

## **Triangulation**

This is where the narcissist will bring a third person into the dynamic for various different and manipulative reasons. They will do this to inflate their own ego, it may be to prove they are right in a situation, to gain sympathy or to invalidate the other person's feelings by attaining support from the third person. Another reason why narcissists use triangulation is to separate people and pit people against each other. It causes people to stop speaking to each other which then allows the narcissist to further control and manipulate each person.

## **Verbally degrading**

Narcissists do this to deplete any sort of self the person may have. They will insult, nit pick and invalidate the things a person may do and say. This done constantly and has an effect on a person's behaviour, voice, self worth and confidence.

## **Smear campaigns**

Smear campaigns are used to tear away at someone's reputation and character. It is spiteful and calculated and is done to make people pull away from an individual or think differently about them. At the same time the narcissist will use this as a chance to maintain his image or gain sympathy from others.

## **Isolating**

Isolating is the best way that the narcissist maintains control over their victim. This is achieved by the narcissist isolating a person from their friends and family. The narcissist employing tactics of manipulation such as lying about family members being jealous of their relationship or inventing stories that cause the individual to pull away from their family and friends. Eventually the individual has no support network, instead the voice of the narcissist and their beliefs is the only things they hear and believe. This is how the folio et deux is perfected and executed.

## **Threats**

Threats are a control tactic and are to instil fear into the victim, to keep them afraid of leaving or having any will to do anything on their own terms.

## **Catastrophising**

This is a form of exaggerating used by the narcissist which helps the narcissist gain attention and sympathy.

## **DARVO**

Deny, Attack and Reverse Victim and Offender. This is a form of gaslighting. It is used when the naracsits is called out on their behaviour. Firstly they will deny it, then attack the person by insulting them and reverse the

scenario where they turn the blame back onto them. Before the other person knows it the narcissist has placed themselves as the victim and the other the offender.

## **Trauma Bonding**

When a person is under narcissistic abuse they will endure the stages of love bombing and devaluing on a repetitive cycle (Quinn 2024). This repetitive, abusive cycle eventually becomes normalised in the victims mind.

Narcissistic abuse happens gradually, slowly getting worse and worse the more the person stays with their abuser.

**What cements the trauma bond?:** The love bombing stage is so powerful at the beginning that when the relationship enters the first devaluing stage the individual scrambles to try and get back to how things once were. When all the tactics such as gaslighting, isolation and projection have been employed the individuals becomes more susceptible to bearing the blame of things going wrong in the relationship. They will reflect on how big of a mood change has taken place and start to believe that the narcissist sudden hostility seems so out of character that they really must be the ones that have done something wrong.



When the victims have endured the devaluing stage numerous times, the victims of this abuse are manipulated into believing that they are deserving of it. So when the narcissist eventually stops the devaluing there is a sense of relief. Suddenly the narcissist pulls them out of the feelings of despair. The narcissist acts as the saviour to the despair they are experiencing when reality they are the ones who caused it.

Here a trauma bond is developed.

A person's self worth is so low at this point that they do not accept what is happening to them. Instead they cling to the positive moments whenever they are granted some. In the end the devaluing stage become so regular that simple gestures and common decency your expected to have towards your partner is made to be more than it should be by the victim.

## **Narcissistic characteristics**

To be diagnosed with NPD a person must have at least 5 out of the 9 criteria (Cleveland Clinic).

1.

**Grandiose sense of self importance, exaggeration of achievements and talents and expecting to be recognised as superior**

2. **Preoccupation with fantasies of success, power, beauty and idealisation**

3. **Belief in being special and that they can only be understood by or associated with other high status people (or institutions)**
4. **Demanding excessive admiration**
5. **Sense of entitlement**
6. **Exploitation behaviours**
7. **Lack of empathy**
8. **Envy towards others or belief that others are envious of them**
9. **Arrogant, haughty behaviours and attitudes**

The narcissist's characteristics mentioned above are not overtly displayed on your first encounter with them. Instead narcissist perfect a social mask that they wear and display in public to others. Harvey M Clekely called this the mask of sanity. It hides their contempt, jealousy, lack of empathy and entitlement. It is their mask of sanity that is there to hoodwink those around them into believing they are charming, friendly and empathic.

### **The narcissistic spectrum**

Before we go any further it must be understood that narcissism is a spectrum. There are those with narcissistic traits and those with narcissistic personality disorder at the other end. However within the narcissistic personality disorder there is what is explained to be the lesser, mid, grand and even ultra narcissist (Tudor 2022). According to Tudor (2022) this reflects how instinctual to how calculated a narcissist is. The

further along the spectrum the more the narcissists self-awareness comes into play.

All narcissists embark upon a self serving thought process and life journey no matter what. They are constantly hungry for praise, validation, adorations, control and the feelings of significance and importance. Other people are simply a means to attaining those needs. Tudor (2022) describes this need as a need for fuel. This fuel keeps them ticking over. Any depletion of this fuel results in feelings of unease, which is rooted in the unaddressed self worth and anxiety they have managed to master at avoiding through attaining validation and adoration off other people. In order obtain such needs the narcissist provokes, manipulates and plays with their supply/victims through the narcissistic abuse cycle. The emotional responses the supply gives the narcissist makes them feel better about themselves (Tudor 2022).

But make no mistake the narcissist will get bored with you just like a child gets bored with their favourite toy. Your reactions become predictable to them. Your subservience becomes pathetic and with that the validation and significance you give them is just not doing it for them anymore. Once they know they have you right where they want you, you become too familiar and they need a new challenge. As the saying goes **‘familiarity breeds contempt’**, and this is exactly what happens. They develop a distaste for your presence and everything about you becomes an annoyance or a burden to them. Therefore narcissists will always have

other supplies on hand to obtain the adequate dosing of fuel they need in order to function.

**The lesser narcissist** aptly explained by Tudor (2017) has an instinctual self serving thought process. Therefore their reactions are completely instinctual and they lack self awareness. How they operate is literally mechanical and rooted in impulse. They are not aware of their emotions but impulsively seek out their fuel when feelings of unease and anxiety begin to present (Tudor 2017). They exist only in a world that is formulated around serving their needs with no idea why they think in such a way. There is no cognitive, conscious or calculated thought process to their actions and reactions. They believe they are right and justified in the way they act and with that they lack any tactfulness the mid or greater narcissist has. Lesser narcissist are not apt in managing their emotions and can come across extremely volatile if rubbed the wrong way. It is an instinctual reaction rooted in how they have learnt to survive in the world. For the lesser narcissist, cognitive functioning as to why they do what they do does not ever enter their mind (Tudor 2017). This is their baseline and how they react and think is completely normal to them. Those that question it are the ones with the problem and Tudor (2017) highlights that these people will never see otherwise nor have the ability to.

People that deal with **mid range narcissists** often feel like they are losing their mind. This is because their self awareness and ability to control their emotions is available to them (Tudor 2017). This makes them a lot

harder to work out and develops within the victim a perpetuating occurrence of self doubt in just who and what they are actually dealing with. The victims of mid range narcissists will endure a pattern of behaviour of superficial good days and then drastically terrible days. This is because the mid range narcissist unlike the lesser narcissist is more in control of their instinctual reactions, therefore have the ability to be calculated (Tudor 2017). He goes on to add that these people are aware that particular actions will invoke a response in the victim that will satisfy their needs. Yet they remain unconscious as to why and nor do they care. Mid rangers do not know they are a narcissist just as the lesser has no idea (Tudor2017). Instead they believe they are empathic and fair along with all the other virtues they feel they should be credited with.

**The greater narcissist** knows what they are. They know they are a narcissist and as Tudor (2017) aptly explains they are aware that they need fuel in order to survive. He adds that unlike the lesser and the mid the greater narcissist is aware of their emotional emptiness and their stunted emotional spectrum. This awareness makes them extremely calculated and extraordinary manipulators. They are very aware of the pain and hurt they inflict. However, this is a necessity, a simple by product for their own survival in this world (Tudor 2017). Greater are deliberate in everything they do, they are in control of their actions and reactions (Tudor 2017). Moreover there is a deep malevolence that sits at the core of them, which makes them enjoy all the pain, chaos and hurt they create. Therefore they can stop their behaviour anytime they want but they don't because they simply enjoy it too much (Tudor 2017).

## **The predator and its prey**

Narcissists are said to have a specific type of person they go for but that is not exactly true. Narcissists are partial to empathic, co-dependants and people pleasers . Those with unresolved issues make productive prey because they are easier to control (Carter 2020). Certainly those with attachment styles of fearful and anxious make no doubt appealing victims as they are able to easily extract the fuel they need in order to make them feel better. They certainly do have a refined sense in how to spot these types of people. Voids and unresolved trauma of other people's are a frenzied feeding ground for narcissists to procure supply and fuel. However, narcissists can unbalance the most securest of people. The secure, pretty well put together people are not always safe from the compelling allure of the narcissistic charm and manipulation. That's because narcissists are adept listeners and skilled at working out the needs of others and fulfilling them.

Narcissists don't come in a one size fits all package. Some have the capacity to adapt, they learn and improve on their ability to manipulate. Some are better at it than others. Narcissists that are in the mid range and above have the ability to emulate and fake emotions with better timing and skill. Their charm is more refined due to their emotional control and better cognitive functioning of how to satisfy their own needs (Tudor 2017).

## **Hey.....just be aware.**

We are all looking for love but sometimes when we are struggling inside, it makes us vulnerable and it is very easy for us to accept people into our lives that show us a bit of attention. People who are vulnerable, that are empathic and people pleasers are more likely to ignore red flags.

Moreover, people with insecure attachment styles are more likely to romanticise toxic actions because of such things as co-dependancy issues, a lack of boundaries and self love. Therefore these fast pace relationships appear to be what we need. They make us feel worthy again and happy. However, these feelings are superficial because all interaction with a narcissist are fake.

What we must understand is that when we enter relationships broken we become susceptible to allowing people in our lives that fill our voids. Allowing a narcissist into our lives and allowing them to fill our voids with their superficial love and adoration sets us back even further than where we were when things do go wrong. When a narcissist pulls away and starts to degrade and devalue a person the void that was being masked by their superficial charm is still there. The void only then gets bigger and our feelings of low self worth and co-dependancy are then reinforced with their abusive behaviour.

## **When the mask drops**

A lot of people outside of the relationship will never see the other side of the narcissist. They will never see the true levels of evil they can drop to when the fake charisma and charm is turned off. This leaves the person who is being abused in a relationship in a very vulnerable and isolated state. It makes them feel they have no one to turn to because they feel no one would believe them.

Those that get into a relationship with a narcissist will unfortunately see the whole show. They will see the narcissists public face and the face behind closed doors. People that have been involved in narcissistic relationships have often expressed statements such as, 'one day they left the house and never came back the same'. This is when the narcissist decides to drop their mask. 'It is as if a different person walked through the door' victims of narcissistic abuse recall. This is scary and earth shattering. You are no longer in the relationship with the person you thought you was with.

## **Flying monkeys**

The terminology 'flying monkeys', is derived from the film the wizard of oz because the Wicked Witch of the West employs the use of flying monkeys by putting them under her spell to carry out her evil deeds (Rolfe 2024).



Narcissists don't really have friends because anyone that gets too close to them gets exploited and goes through the same cycles of abuse. Instead narcissists have what you call flying monkeys. These people do the bidding of the narcissist. There may appear to have a friendship but its not what you or I would call a friendship, nor is it built on any sort of healthy foundation.

Flying monkeys carry out the evil deeds of the narcissist for various reasons and they come in all different shapes and sizes. Flying monkeys, help with smear campaigns, enable the narcissistic abuse and can also partake in the narcissistic abuse. They are often groomed by the narcissist to become useful participants in their manipulative endeavours and cycle of abuse (Carter 2022)

At the one end of the flying monkey spectrum are those that suffer with people pleasing tendencies and poor boundaries therefore they can't say no to the narcissist (England 2023). Moving along there are the individuals that want to please the narcissist. They want to be his/her number one flying monkey and so jump at what the narcissist tells them to do. They too are self serving and wilfully ignorant to the narcissistic abuse the victim endures. Further along the flying monkey scale and it's not surprising to find that some of these people possess a lot of narcissistic traits themselves (Lerner 2024). These people will enable the abuse and also perpetuate it.

Flying monkeys protect and enable the narcissist and with that a lot of these type of people possess a high degree of apathy. When enduring narcissistic abuse in front of these types of people, no matter how obvious it becomes these people remain bystanders.

**Have you ever wondered why flying monkeys dislike you so much?** The narcissist likes to remain in high regard and somewhat the pinnacle of his or her circle. Introducing you could possibly make them feel less idolised. In this case the narcissist employs the triangulation tactic by manipulating the mind of the flying monkey into thinking that the victim has something against him or her. The narcissist will then also be in the victims ear telling them that his friends (flying monkeys) doesn't like them. This tactic deters each party from speaking to each other and stops any sort of friendship because both parties think each person holds something against each other.

**Why would a narcissist want to do this? What is there to gain from this?**

It's a tactic that allows the narcissist to control the victims reality and how they think people perceive them, how they perceive others and also themselves. The victim starts to think that maybe they really are not a good person just like the narcissist has told them. This manipulated sense of reality will contribute to further emotional bonding to the narcissist. It creates an anxious attachment style that keeps the person in chase mode.

**Categories of narcissist**

There are also more than one category of narcissist, which is why many people when leaving a narcissistic relationship feel shocked that they ended up in the same situation when dating again. Many think that they know all the signs and what to look for. They mistakenly think that having been through it once they are therefore armed with the knowledge of what to watch out for.

When most people speak about narcissism they depict the grandiose narcissist. Which can lead people to overlook different types of narcissist that operate in the real world. There are perceived to be eight categories of narcissism. Below I will explain three.

## **Grandiose narcissist**

These narcissists are charming and very confident. They like to be the centre of attention and need to feel seen. Grandiose are significance driven. It's very easy for people to feel intimidated by these types of people because they can come across arrogant (Cuncic 2025). They often act like they know more than they actually do. The higher degree of self awareness the better the charm and conversational awareness. These type like to overtly talk about themselves and their accomplishments and openly

belittle other people's opinions (Cuncic 2025). The grandiose because of their need to be centre of attention will not typically place themselves against those that can outshine them whether that be financially, physically or knowledgeably depending on what they lead with. Therefore being overshadowed can cause considerable discomfort in these types of people. Grandiose narcissists also thrive in being the big fish in the small pond.

## **Covert narcissist**

These types of narcissists can be overlooked and it's easy for them to go under the radar for some time before you actually realise what they are (Clarke 2023). They prefer to remain behind the scenes compared to being in the spotlight. Coverts display a vulnerability that you will not see in the grandiose. They craft themselves as the nice guy by appearing shy, reserved, fair and empathic. They have a victim mindset which causes people to view them as harmless and act sympathetically towards them (Clarke 2023). Covert narcissists will disarm you with their anxious vulnerability and misunderstood persona. They humbly brag, using statements that appear altruistic along with employing self-pity to manipulate their victims. They are hypersensitive creatures that ruminate on feelings of neglect and do not respond well to criticism (Reid). Their delusions of persecution and being the victim mixed in with their delusions of being the good guy breeds an even stronger sense of entitlement when fully unveiled. They are self-absorbed often being morose and dismissive. Their emotional abuse is more underhanded and subtle than the

grandiose. They can become extremely vengeful and hostile when offended due to their greater emotionality. The grandiose has more 'mind theory' than that of the covert narcissist. The covert narcissist because of being so self involved as the victim is not as adept at reading the needs and desires of others as well as the grandiose narcissist. Moreover, it is not uncommon for a grandiose to be able to play the covert narcissist.

## **The communal narcissist**

The communal narcissist positions themselves in social settings. They head or partake in charity events and volunteering in communities (Resnick 2023). This person wants to be perceived as selfless and altruistic. The communal narcissist will virtue signal in order to gain recognition for his generous and self denying display that only exists when others are there to witness it. They inhibit envy and jealousy when others are perceived as out shining their so called good nature. They believe such attention and recognition should be reserved for them and only them (Talago 2024). The communal narcissist utilises their good deeds as a way to supply themselves with attention and validation (Resnick 2023). They gravitate to organising social events and taking on more responsibility than others in order to procure a following of admirers to feed their needs of adoration and significance. Through this the communal narcissist is able to exercise being a gate keeper, which allows them to have control over their environment and thus feeds their need for power and mitigate any potential threats.

## **The malignant narcissist**

The malignant narcissist is considered far more dangerous than the other types. The interpersonal abuse experienced is much more cruel. Ramani (2021) explains that these narcissists have more of an intense focus on power, pleasure and profit. She adds that this means that they are drawn to behaviours such as gambling, over spending and drug addiction. They are extremely deceitful and have an intense need to protect their interests. They are often extremely paranoid individuals believing people are out to get them. Malignant narcissism is associated with the dark triad. This consists of narcissism, psychopathy and Machiavellianism. Ramani (2021) states these people are not psychopaths but it's very easy for them to be mistaken for one. Instead these people display a lot of the characteristics of the psychopathic charm. They are impulsive and they have little regard for consequences. They are also far more exploitive than other narcissists. The Machiavellianism in the malignant narcissist is displayed as traits of being cunning and highly focused and attentive to their superficial reputation and how people see them. Ramani (2021) explains that malignant narcissist is the step before psychopathy because they appear so similar. However the only difference is psychopaths don't get underlying feelings of unease. The malignant still has this issue and sources fuel to extinguish this. Their calculated behaviour and interpersonal abuse is traumatising for victims to go through. They can be aggressive and intimidating not just physically but the psychological manipulation is exceptionally vicious (Ramani 2021). A malignant will insult, rage and be extremely vindictive that many victims of a malignant narcissist end up living in fear.

## **Desensitisation**

Someone that has endured narcissistic abuse for a long period of time can become desensitised to the abuse (Simon 2021) . This means that as a coping mechanism they have taught themselves to shut off their feelings and become numb.

It's not uncommon after breaking up with a narcissist to find it difficult making connections or bonds with other people (Huston 2016). The anxious feeling that something bad is going to happen distorted my ability to rationalise and read my own reality for a long time.

## **I picked up narcissistic traits**

Through becoming desensitised my nervous system had begun to rewire itself to operate from survival mode. I had unresolved anxiety and my self worth was shattered. I became instinctually reactive and defensive in order to self sooth my anxiety and lack of self worth. The knee jerk reaction qualities were unthoughtful and contemptuous. But as much as they were knee jerk it didn't go unnoticed. I could see myself mirroring the things my narcissist had done with me, only now I was doing them to someone else. It

was as if I was cocooning myself in this personality traits in order to protect myself. Fortunately I still had my self awareness. I was aware that if I didn't deal with these unresolved emotions then I could quite easily succumb to living like this, which is not at all what I wanted to live like.

## **There is no happily ever after**

You will never be enough for a narcissist. Thinking that suddenly something will snap and things will fall into place or go back to how things first were is wishful, broken thinking. Things do not go back they get worse.

You will never build and nurture any type of relationship with a narcissist. Nothing grows. There are no plans for the future. In their world conscious or unconscious of this, others exist only so they can exist.

## **Narcissist swing back round**

Narcissist do not care about who they destroyed last. However, if you manage to pick yourself up and start doing well while the narcissist has gone, they will always swing back round, sooner than they anticipated themselves.

You see they leave you at your lowest, a shell of a person and a paranoid broken wreck. Eager to shut the door behind them. Tudor (2017) says the lesser is simply programmed to act this way. Therefore leaving the victim is simply instinctual when craving a need for fuel. The mid range would



recognise leaving the other person whilst they are broken makes them feel better. So the mid range acts on it as it's a way to survive. However the greater is acutely aware that it makes them feel better but they are also acutely aware that they revel in the pain they have inflicted upon their victim (Tudor 2017). Tudor (2017) states the difference is that the Greater's need for fuel supply is driven by malice. The greater has the capacity to plot and calculate leaving their victim so in a way that it would extract as much fuel as possible from them.

It throws a narcissist off if they see their ex supply happy, thriving and enjoying life again. They can not refrain from swinging back round using their superficial charm to tell you how happy they are for you. When a narcissist see's the victim thriving then the contempt disintegrates slightly. Suddenly you don't seem as pathetic as you once did which now intrigues them. You are a bubbling sauce of fuel that can be used adequately once again in their narcissistic abuse cycle. Letting them back in will once again result in all the progress and confidence you have accumulated disintegrating. Relationships are competitions to narcissists, they cant have you doing better than them. To think that you can move on makes them uncomfortable because they need to know you're lying half dead in wait incase they need you again.

Finally, like with attachment styles, personality disorders are not always agreed upon. Those who research, study, experience or suffer with NPD all have their own individual opinions on this subject. You cant always say a person with NPD acts exactly like this or that because each individual is unique. However, there are indeed commonalities that one will see

between people with NPD but they are never carbon copies of each other. Just as individuals that don't suffer with NPD and are able express sincerely a range of emotionalities, we too are not carbon copies of each other.



The lights in the restaurant don't seem as dim as they did before. Music is still faintly humming in the background and the aroma of fine wine lingers around the table. By now he had undone the top button on his shirt and was slouched back in his chair. His mobile flashed as it has been doing for some time now. Seemingly unaffected he says, 'I'll get back to them later. Work. Text messages. Emails. It never ends', and rolled his eyes ever so slightly.

She wasn't sure what he did. But whatever it was, it sounded demanding and important. Asking if he could see her again rolled off his tongue casually. Blushing she nods and swirls the last contents of her drink around. Just before he is about to finish the rest of his wine his phone rings and then it rings once more. For a moment she see his lips purse together and he ruminates on whatever thought is passing through his mind looking at his phone. The name Sophie with a big red love heart placed after her name is repeatedly popping up on his screen,

She feels a sense of unease and in that moment notices a shift in the atmosphere. There is something not quite right and for a split second the man in front of her appears as someone else. A man she doesn't recognise. Just as quick as the thought entered her mind he unravels the atmosphere by leaning in.

Charmingly he laughs, 'I'm sorry about this. It is my sister. We are extremely close, I told her about my date with you and I guess she is a little eager to find out how it has gone.' His voice sounding extra refined and proud.

He places the phone now in his pocket. On silent. No more phone calls.

The night is coming to an end. In the pit of her stomach she feels a gnawing sensation of anxiety that now lingers around her perception of him. It's as if the haze of delight and the intoxication of the atmosphere was wearing thin and she was beginning to wake from whatever reality she had been propelled into. Her gut was telling her something was off. The feeling burrowed deep into her surplex transmitting signals to her brain. She tensed up. Stop it she thought, what is the matter with you! Then out of nowhere she exclaimed, 'Why don't you ring your sister back?

Who? he blurted, as if caught off guard.

She couldn't help but think how strange that sudden reply was. In fact nothing seemed right everything seemed strange now.

Regathering his thoughts he says, 'Oh my sister'. He checks his watch and dismissively gestures with his hand 'She will be in bed now. Another time.

Recomposing himself he leans in again, 'There will be another time' won't there?'

His eyes locked in with her gaze. Unable to think she offerers a smile.

As confidently and arrogantly as ever he takes it as a yes and ties up the night. 'I think it's time for you to go home, you look tired and you don't want me making you late for work tomorrow'.

The bill was paid and the night and the girl were neatly but hastily packed away into a taxi. She looked out of the window as she departed, his Cheshire Cat smile brimming from ear to ear is what remained as she drove into the distance.

She never did hear from him until a week later through text message.

**'Darling. Im sorry for this late message, I should have called sooner. However, I had to travel across the country the next day. Work. Disaster struck and only I could sort it. In a haste I left my personal phone in my study. I hope you forgive me. Let me make it up to you and I can tell you all about it. Hope you have not been missing me as much as I have been missing you.'**

Suddenly that tugging feeling in the bottom of her stomach appeared again. She was not in a rush to get back to him. To tell you the truth everything was telling her to stay away from him. Something just didn't feel right. Deciding with her gut she puts the message and any thought off him to the back of her mind and carries on with her day.

6 months later whilst shopping in the village centre she heard children's laughter outside a sweetshop. A heavily pregnant woman steps out dressed immaculately. Then, following her out..... there he was. A little girl with an ice lolly in her hand reached up to him as if to ask him to pick her up. As he bent down, he locked eyes with her. It was a cold stare. Not like the ones he given her in the restaurant. Then, if only for a second she saw that man again, the one she saw that night in the restaurant that pursed his lips ruminating in thought. The man she didn't recognise.

He aptly dismisses her gaze as if he doesn't know who she is and tentatively immerses himself into his father role.

**The gut she thought, never lies.**

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