

Narcissism: The Disorder vs. the Personality

Frankly, people with other disorders often slam narcissists. Completely unfair. Who created a hierarchy of mental health issues. Simply put, like any other disorder, if you accept it, work on it and change it then the words sometimes associated with it...like "Hopeless" or "Incapable" need to be distinguished. The traits of narcissism are **nasty**. No denying it. But...I hope to illustrate some differences between the personality and the disorder.

Dr. Allan Schwartz wrote an article that is far better at distinguishing the two so I am going to share it. Again this is a reprint of his article and is found at <https://www.mentalhelp.net/blogs/the-narcissist-versus-the-narcissistic-personality-disorder>.

Here is his take:

...many readers are somewhat confused about the differences between people who are narcissistic versus those who have a narcissistic personality disorder. There is a large difference between the two. Let's explore those differences:

Narcissistic Personality Disorder:

According to the Mayo Clinic "Narcissistic personality disorder is a mental disorder in which people have an inflated sense of their own importance and a deep need for admiration. Those with narcissistic personality disorder believe that they're superior to others and have little regard for other people's feelings. But behind this mask of ultra-confidence lies a fragile self-esteem, vulnerable to the slightest criticism."

This personality disorder causes people to misunderstand what is really going on with the individual. For example, some one like this will seem to be arrogant and filled with self-confidence. However, just beneath this shallow surface lies a person who feels a deep sense of shame and humiliation and low self-esteem. That is why they are so easily hurt in the face of criticism.

These are people who do not function well. They alienate friends and family and come to feel socially isolated and depressed. This is very difficult for them because they do not want to think anything is wrong. Narcissistic Personality Disordered people are caught between

thinking they are superior and feeling miserable, all at the same time.

Narcissism:

There are people who are narcissistic but who do not have a mental illness. These people are experienced as obnoxious because they feel superior to others and see nothing wrong with that. They have little or no empathy with the feelings, conditions, situations or plight of others. These are people who feel entitled to the best of everything while looking down on those who show admiration for them. They also have no difficulty exploiting others in order to get what they want. It's important to understand that they have no awareness and no insight into what they do. As a result, they feel no shame or remorse.

It is said that, both in the present and historically, there have been leaders who were narcissists. Narcissists have a knack for getting into positions of power and have no difficulty exercising that power. Some of them exemplify evil in the world. Among these are Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Pol Pot and others. There are some who are successful in business because they have friends who help guide them. One example is Bill Gates, Larry Ellison and more.

It's important to remember that the major distinction between the narcissist and the narcissistic personality disorder is that the narcissist is not mentally ill, does not have a personality disorder and is most interested in gaining power, money and prestige. Too many narcissists succeed in their pursuits. There is no need to worry about the self-esteem of the narcissist, they have an over-abundance of it.

I saw a post this morning where someone said, "Many therapists and Dr's have told 'me' that they would diagnose Trump with the disorder."

Bullshit.

I worked 7 years in the field and am a consumer now. If I had a nickel for every time a QMHP (Qualified MH Practitioner) told me they and no one in the field ever diagnose someone without first doing an intake.

Plus if you read the article above it clearly shows that Trump has the Personality and not the disorder.

At the end of the article, he summarizes as follows:

"It's important to remember that the major distinction between the narcissist and the narcissistic personality disorder is that the narcissistic is not mentally ill, does not have a personality disorder and is most interested in gaining power, money, and prestige. Too many narcissists succeed in their pursuits. There is no need to worry about the self-esteem of the narcissist, they have an over-abundance of it."

The personality revolves around Power. Believing you are superior and you set your own rules and standards. Virtually any Senior level management falls into this category. My whole work life I saw employees terminated for breaking a rule that Senior Management broke with no repercussions. ***Believing that is "ok" is the personality...you live by your own set of rules***

I was diagnosed with borderline personality along with Narcissistic Personality Disorder. So in addition to the article above, I want to share how it has played out in my life, focusing on this piece of Dr. Schwartz article.

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While there may be some debate as to when your Narcissism begins or when it's at its peak.

At age 4 I observed my Mother attempt suicide. That was the start of my borderline (abandonment) and many would agree that age 4 is the height of most peoples' narcissism. Remembering that at that age you pretty much believe every action is a reaction to what you have done.

I've never felt superior to anyone...maybe smarter. It's more like I never really knew who I was so I would be all over the place on any given day. I always considered myself as the exception. If you started off with "Most people" I would always identify as the exception. If you have read some of my blog, it's stated pretty clearly that shame, humiliation, and low self-esteem were and are issues. I 100% fit into that. I appear to be confident and outgoing but am terrified of abandonment so being "in control" gives me a (false) sense of security.

I really want people who suffer from mental health issues or treat people to take this entry to heart. Please don't tell me it's "hopeless," and don't "grade" a disorder. Please understand, like any disorder, it begins with a desire to change.

When we stumble or fall, reach out to us. Validate our feelings without excusing the behavior. Show some kindness and caring.

#DarkPersonalities

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I hope I was able to help distinguish the difference between the disorder and the personality.