



## **The Effect of Narcissistic Personality on Interpersonal Communication**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Narcissistic personality disorder which closely associates with egocentrism –a personality characteristic in which people see themselves and their interest and opinions as the only ones that really matters. Narcissist personality disorder characterized with unstable and intense emotions, overly preoccupied with vanity, prestige, power and personal adequacy, lack of empathy, and an exaggerated sense of superiority.

According to Freud the narcissist's Ego is weak, disorganized and lacks clear boundaries. Many of the Ego functions are projected. The Superego is sadistic and punishing. The Id is unrestrained.

In this paper the researcher, tried to detect the narcissistic personality futures of the three biggest party leaders in Turkey. For that, researcher review the speeches made by the leaders in different settings which take place in Turkish newspapers in between first of October 2015 to the end of February 2016.

**Keywords:** Narcissism, narcissistic personality disorder, leadership and narcissism.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The word "narcissist" is used as an adjective to describe those with narcissistic personality disorder. Colloquially, it is used to describe people who have an overly positive opinion of themselves. Individuals described as "looking down on everybody," "not moving a finger to help," "wanting to have their cake and eat it too," "acting like they rule the world," and those who "have their nose in everybody's business" are usually narcissists.

In this presentation, various portraits of a narcissist will be presented. These portraits will depict the self-image of a narcissist, as well as his or her approach to other people and relationships. Perhaps you will find yourself, your spouse or children in these portraits. You will recognize your friends, or teachers, doctors, party officers or people in high positions. First, we shall discuss how a narcissistic personality forms. Then, we will examine prominent features of a narcissist, and illustrate their approach and behavior in interpersonal communications.

### **What is narcissism, and why does a person become a narcissist?**

The most distinguishing characteristic of people who have narcissistic personalities is their need for others' approval to maintain their self esteem. "Self esteem in individual's self-evaluation of how valuable and respectable they are. Those with high self esteem know they are loved, respected and deemed important by others. Those with low self-esteem, on the other hand, feel that they are not loved, respected or deemed important by others." (Seifert, 2004, s. 140).

We all like the approval of others, and dislike criticism. In this regard, we all have a bit of a narcissistic tendency. This tendency is normal; however, if an individual is overly concerned with their self-esteem, it may be narcissistic. Narcissists continuously seek the approval of others, thus how they look to the outside world is much more important than how they really are.



Narcissistic individuals experience a serious emotional deficiency, and worry about delivering a high performance. This is because narcissists receive conditional love from those close to them in childhood. In other words, narcissism is the product of a family environment where children are loved and spoiled infinitely only when they achieve certain things. The child experiences pleasant feelings such as pride, confidence, strength and uniqueness as long as he/she displays the behavior and success his/her parents expect and receives their praise. When the child fails to receive praise, their entire being fills with feelings of embarrassment, insufficiency and jealousy. These emotions lead the child to believe they are not accepted or loved.

A child who experiences negative emotions such as these fills up with anger, but he or she has to suppress this anger somehow. This is because his/her anger would hurt the already strained relationship with his/her parents. These emotions are increasingly accompanied by loneliness, emptiness, and anxiety. As the child keeps experiencing praise and criticism, he/she ebbs and flows between contradictory emotions and thoughts. When he/she achieves success, feelings of superiority and uniqueness over others and demands for everyone else to submit to his/her will surface. In case of failure or rejection, he or she experiences feelings of insufficiency and inferiority, as well as loneliness and disappointment. In this case, he/she experiences negative feelings such as not being worth loving, or being worthless and a failure. Going back and forth between these contradictory emotions becomes the essence that shapes a child's existence. In other words, his or her existence is defined by the thought that he/she is special on one hand, and insufficient on the other.

Due to the conditional and insincere relationship between the child and the parent, the different thought schemes of specialness and insufficiency exist side by side without becoming whole in the mind of the child.

As expected, the narcissistic individual is only happy when he/she experiences that he/she is special, and thus attempts to always create environments where he/she will feel this way. However, feeling special does not satisfy the narcissist, as the desire to be loved as a whole person always remains insatiated in his/her subconscious. It is only the individual's "special side" that experiences approval. Thus, it becomes compulsory to continuously stage being special.

When the narcissistic individual becomes an adult, he remains in the fangs of things he/she believes makes him/her special, just like an addict. He/she strives to attain professional success, authority, and the power to impress others. He does not even consider thinking of others around him when trying to reach these targets. As he cannot accept failure or being ordinary, he strives for nothing. He falls into a world of loneliness. As he feels frustrated, those around him feel frustrated as well (Hasanoğlu, A. (2012). *Spiritual hunger and Narcissism*).

### **Narcissistic personality traits**

The masks narcissists put on for others to see, in order to cope with the feeling of valuelessness they experience deep inside, become their true personality. The components of this feeling of valuelessness are insufficiency, embarrassment, weakness and inferiority. These threatening feelings cause the development of various behavioral masks. The most distinct and widely observed one of these behavioral masks is grandiosity. The person attempts to make up for the feeling of valuelessness deep inside with a self-image and self-presentation of grandiosity. There are a few main characteristics that display the feeling of grandiosity:

**Boasting:** The individual continuously and exaggeratedly attempts to boast about the characteristics that he/she values and believes others value as well. This may be physical appearance, power, wealth, intelligence, analysis skills and so on, depending on the

individual or the environment. The narcissist does not mention these characteristics appropriately or moderately, and aims to impress and grab the attention of others to satisfy his/her hunger for approval.



If they help someone, their ultimate aim is to be thought of as "good" or "helpful". Thus they make their help known to others, and want their names to be mentioned. Help and aid boosts their ego.

***They are intelligent, ambitious and successful.*** Narcissists feed on compliments. They work hard to receive compliments and hold onto those they already have received. They try very hard to show their superiority, they are easily noticed by their circles and they impress others easily. Thus it is very likely for narcissists to be successful or attain respectable positions. Their achievements feed their vanity even more.



However, they do not have many friends, nor can they form strong friendships. This is natural, as they give much more importance to having admirers than having friends. As a result, they become people of high status who are very lonely and at the top.

Narcissists have another characteristic that is well liked at first glance, which initially creates a positive impression: humility. Narcissists ***like to create the impression that they are humble.*** They have a softness or a smile on their face. This is why they might

be mistaken as naive or reliable people by those who do not know them very well. Thus, narcissistic tendencies **can be disguised by acts of humility or tolerance**. However, in fact they frequently use humility as a tool to garner other people's admiration. (Sözen, 2009).

Narcissism can be spotted from a strange gleam in the eyes of the affected individual, especially in advanced cases. Some people consider this gleam as a semi-state of rapture, while others consider it as half-insanity.

***They are self-serving.*** Narcissists always think of themselves and their own interest, and do not care for the negative influence of their behavior on others. The thoughts and behavior of others are only worthy if they serve the goals of the narcissist, and such behavior receives compliments from the narcissist. Otherwise, they do not bother to hear the opinions of others, let alone listen to. However, more intelligent narcissists will try to hide their true stance by asking questions or pretending to take up an interest in other people. Narcissists do not hesitate to be unfair to others; often they are not even aware that they are being unfair, as they believe everything they do is fair.



Since they do not care for the opinions and emotions of others, people usually drift away from them after a short while. Narcissists expect service without compensation. When they do not get what they want, they react through verbal attacks, nervous fits or emotional and physical harassment. If someone exposes their selfishness, they may become very condescending and aggressive. Being met with reactions that may hurt their self esteem, such as being laughed at, is the greatest attack against their self esteem.

***They cannot empathize.*** Since they do not respect or listen to others, they cannot understand their feelings either. When self-consciousness is combined with failure to understand others, a narcissistic personality develops. Others exist to praise and approve of them. They always expect sacrifice from others, because narcissists believe they are worth making any kind of sacrifice over. They are not givers, they are receivers. They enter romantic relationships only to be approved of. This is why they cannot remain in close relationships, marriage, or good friendships.



***They usually lie a lot.*** They can take any action to make others retain the impression that they are perfect: They may change their value, lie, cheat, or deny their actions. They may commit crimes if necessary.



***Power and money are important to them.*** They cannot contain their anger and they become aggressive when they cannot reach their material or spiritual desires that correspond to their own plans and goals. These are often losses for others and gains for them. They want to be in positions where they are the center of attention, are the object of others' focus and control events. Their desire to gain the admiration and love of others is very strong. They design crisis scenarios to gain attention. They hold the belief that they must control everything and everyone.



***They are always right.*** As narcissists see themselves as superior, intelligent and valuable, they believe they are right under all conditions. Thus they believe their desire





to do something is sufficient for that thing to be done. They do not like to hear opposition, when their wishes or actions are criticized, or when they are met with opposition, they get the impression that they are not being valued and become even angrier. They react harshly and become aggressive. This is because they believe they are always right and that they never make mistakes. When something goes wrong, it is most certainly someone else's fault. If they cannot find someone to blame, they blame the system. Thus, they never apologize. They do not believe they have a personality disorder; moreover, they accuse those around them with having personality disorders.



***They are jealous.*** They exaggerate their talents, importance, and values. Since they believe they are superior to others, they communicate arrogantly. If they manage to gather people who approve of and admire their attitude, they feel secure and they become happy. They are jealous of intelligent, wisdom and talent, and they envy the successes and talents of these people. They believe other people are secretly jealous of their own talents.



***They like to show off and always need to talk about themselves.*** Narcissists cannot stand being ordinary. They must be the center of attention everywhere. So, they vocalize personality traits that satisfy their narcissistic tendencies. In this context, they consolidate a part of their personality, such as their honor, intelligence, physical strength, sense of humor or good looks, with their narcissism.



When the individual self-essentializes through one aspect of their personality, when he/she is asked who they are, they define themselves with their fame, wealth, achievements, and so on. An individual who self-essentializes with objects that he/she owns, he/she does not react to an insult to their personality, but reacts harshly to an insult to those objects.

Even when they talk nonsense, they feel like they have said something very important. Many narcissists talk incessantly; for instance, they forget to eat because they talk so much, and keep everybody waiting. They place their own ego before other people.

### **Signs of Narcissism in Interpersonal Communications**

The primary characteristics of narcissists, which have been outlined above, indicate as a whole the behavior and attitudes they employ in their interpersonal communications. However, it would be beneficial to discuss what narcissists do/do not do within the framework of certain principles that indicate proficiency in interpersonal communications.

### **Proficient communicators think critically and rationally**

Critical thought is rational thought; it is causal, impartial and understandable. It requires intelligence, attention, and the maximum clarity possible. (Miller, 1997). One cannot be proficient or successful in communication without critical thinking.

Narcissists are able to think in an intelligent and critical manner; however, when they are the subject of their criticism they are always positive, and when others - especially those who negate them - are the subject of their criticism, they are always negative. They believe that they are correct on every subject, and that others should be criticized because all that they themselves do and say is correct. They have ultimate success, while others have ultimate failure.

Critical thinking requires thoroughness. It requires an awareness about the reasons of our thoughts and actions (Langer, 1989). However, narcissists are not aware of their own statements and the reasons behind these statements. Moreover, they have no tolerance for not being listened to, and especially for disagreement with their opinions.



### **A proficient communicator realizes the role of power**

Power is related to the ability to change or control another person's acts. This ability should be used effectively, and it requires an individual to change himself/herself, as much as it allows them to change others. Narcissists usually lean towards changing others. They use any type of power they have (legal, reward-punishment, brute force, power of information, power of expertise, and so on) for this. On the other hand, they regard themselves as perfect and never consider changing. They think it is the other person who should change, not them.

### **Proficient communicators are ethical**

Human communication brings up ethical questions, and good and bad, right and wrong, and moral and immoral need to be taken into account. Ethical behavior involves a person's moves and behavior and his or her separation of moral (ethical, good, right) and immoral (unethical, bad, wrong). Thus, every instance of communication has an ethical dimension (Neher&Sandin, 2007; Bok, 1978). It cannot be expected of a narcissist to be ethical, nor is it possible. They can tell any lie, deflect truth, and may even become aggressive to attain power and money.

### **Proficient communicator is an effective listener**

Listening is a complementary element of communication. Those who have underdeveloped listening skills cannot become proficient in communication. Narcissist enjoy speaking more than they do talking. That they sometimes appear to listen in order to make a positive impression does not change this fact. They do not listen because they do not have the ability to empathise.

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