

What Makes Narcissists Tick

Understanding Narcissistic Personality Disorder



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<p>Kathy Krajco is not a healthcare professional, and this publication is not intended as professional advice of any sort.</p>

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What Makes Narcissists Tick

Understanding
Narcissistic Personality Disorder

by

Kathy Krajco



www.OperationDoubles.com

*When the Truth seems like a lie
We should keep our mouths as shut as possible
To avoid innocently incurring the name of a liar.*

But here I cannot.

—Dante, *Inferno*, Canto XVI

Contents

PREFACE	XIII
Part I The Essence of Narcissism	16
1 Narcissus	18
2 Arrested Child Development	21
3 It's All About Attention	23
4 A House of Mirrors	28
5 The Darkness Within	32
6 Keeping Up Appearances	35
Part II The Danger of Narcissism	40
1 Predation	40
2 Manipulation	41
3 Protecting Ourselves	44
Meting Out Trust	48
Narcissism in High Places	50
Part III What is NPD?	56
1 Classification & Diagnosis	58
Examples of Mental Disorders	61
Legal Classification	62
Personality Disorders	63
2 Characteristics of NPD	64
Dignostic Criteria	70
Are NPD and Psychopathy the Same?	72
The Dissimulation Factor	78
Case Study in Dissimulation	81

3 Red Flags of Narcissism	87
Shows Off Goodness and Kindness	88
Vandalizes Others' Images	88
History of Past Upheavals	91
Hated for Mysterious Reasons by People Close to Them	91
Perplexing Behavior - Backward Reactions to Things	92
Tramples Privacy/Boundaries as a Control-Freak	94
Extreme Self-Absorption	95
Hostile Reaction to Attention or Credit Given Others	97
4 Seriousness of NPD	97
5 Prevalence of NPD	103
A False Picture	106
6 NPD - A Male Disease? An Adult Disease?	110
Part IV Nature or Nurture?	118
1 Is NPD Genetically Inherited?	118
2 Is It Caused by Chemical Imbalance?	118
3 Psychological Causes	120
Part V Meet the Narcissist: A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing	126
1 The Narcissist's Style	126
2 The God Complex	130
3 Attention: I Gotta Have It All	132
Getting It All	135
Denying Any	140
4 You Are an Object	144
5 Passing for Normal	147
6 In the Looking Glass	149
7 A Work of Art	152
8 The Self Absorbed	155
Tuning You Out	157
To be, or not to be... ..	159
Mirrors	160
Mirroring	164
The Doting Narcissist	167
9 Narcissists Are from Pluto	168
Alien Mentality	171

10 I Am a Machine	173
11 Who? Me? Responsibility? What Responsibility?	177
12 Lee Harvey Oswald	179
13 The Best Teacher in the School	190
14 How to Make a Narcissist	192

Part VI Faces of Narcissism **200**

1 The Manipulator	202
2 The Predator	207
The Transfiguration	208
Mask Switching	211
Stalking Mode	214
Narc Attacks	215
Rules of Engagement	220
3 The Abuser	225
Let's Play Pretend	228
Mental Cruelty	230
4 The Slanderer	235
What Makes Narcissists Different	237
Those a Narcissist Speaks Well Of	240
The Unblemished Victim	243
Character Assassination	245
Breaking the Silence	246
5 The Pathological Liar	248
Why Narcissists Lie Like Crazy	250
Cramming It Down Your Throat	253
Delusion	256
Consequences of Pathological Lying	256
6 The Con Artist	262
Essence of Con Artistry	263
Bank Examiner Con	265
How to Keep Con Artists Out of Relationships	268
7 The Bully	269
8 The Brother or Sister from Hell	274
9 Other Predators	275

Part VII What's in There **278**

1 What Narcissists Say	283
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2 Do They Have Feelings?	285
3 Are They to Blame?	287
Part VIII The Narcissist's Strategy	292
1 Grandiosity Veiled	293
2 The Art of Lying	296
3 Projection	300
The Projection Machine	306
Projective Identification	312
4 Control by Temper Tantrum	316
Forcing Submission to Abuse	320
Acting Like It Didn't Happen	324
5 Shock Tactics	326
Outrage	330
6 The Perfect Crime	332
7 Getting Away With It	334
8 Withholding	336
9 So, how do I win this game?	337
Part IX The Teeter Totter Game	340
1 The Rules	342
2 Physical Bullying	345
3 Refuse to Acknowledge Your Presence	347
4 Denigrate Others	349
5 Devaluing Contributions	352
6 Devaluing Help	353
7 Belittling Ability & Achievement	358
8 Refusing to Acknowledge Rights	359
Part X The Rat Game	362
1 The Treat	362
2 Why the Rats Keep Trying	365
Part XI Controlling the Pathological Space	368
1 Reign of Terror	371

The Power Play	374
Pocketing the Prey	377
Little Reign of Terror Inside a Collective Bully	380
Inside a Class	385
What Keeps a Reign of Terror Going	387
2 "Innocent" Bystanders	389
Moment of Truth: What are you doing?	393
Can it happen here?	394
3 Outsiders	398
Part XII Controlling Your Borders	402
1 Personal Boundaries	403
2 Who has the right to make a decision?	407
3 Privacy	409
4 Your Chattel	410
5 Your Person	411
Violations of Person	412
6 Your Body = Your House	414
7 Your Mind = Your Inner Sanctum	416
Violations of Mind	418
The Media	418
Religion	420
8 The Holy Grail	422
Part XIII Must I leave him?	426
1 Why people ask the question	426
Co-dependance	428
The Cycle of Abuse	429
Bad Reasons	431
2 Begging the question	433
3 Denial	435
Part XIV The Important Stuff	440
1 Why Do You Put Up With Abuse?	443
2 How to Help the Abused	444
3 Children of Narcissists	445
4 On Your Feelings	451

On Conflicted Feelings	454
5 On Forgiveness	455
6 Where Logic Leads	459
Part XV Appendix	464
1 Monty Python's Flying Circus	464
The Argument Clinic	464
The Dead Parrot	473
The Black Knight	476
2 Brainwashing	480
Index	499
About the Author	505

PREFACE

The purpose of this book is to help the average person understand a mental illness about which little has been written for a general audience. Understanding what makes narcissists tick enables you to make wise choices in dealing with a narcissist.

Since psychopaths are narcissists, those interested in psychopathy may find this information helpful.

I really mean it when I say that this publication is not intended as professional advice of any sort. Though you probably will find solace in these pages, you will not get counseling or support in them. I just explain what's going on in plain English with concrete, everyday examples of the abstractions in the professional jargon.

This is a big book. I didn't write it expecting everyone to read it all. For example, some parts are more applicable to someone living with a narcissist, while others are more applicable to someone dealing with a narcissistic bully in the workplace. Do read the first chapter first, but then skip around and read the parts you are interested in.

I am not a healthcare professional. For advice, seek out one in the appropriate field. These are just the explanations, observations, study and reasoning of one who has had long experience with narcissists and knows others with such experience. I have no credentials. If you want help with a paper, go to an authoritative source.

Do keep in mind that many normal people have narcissistic traits and that all people behave narcissistically at times and toward certain people. Infants and little children naturally go through a narcissistic stage of development.

Sensitivity to narcissistic injury is universal, inbred, and healthy. In fact, normal people are quite likely to respond to narcissistic abuse by giving a narcissist a dose of his or her own medicine. So, don't go jumping to conclusions about people.

A specific behavior, such as ignoring somebody, can occur in widely varying contexts. So, it can be done for many reasons, not just narcissistic reasons. Therefore, a handful of behaviors common to narcissists does not a narcissist make. There are few behaviors so unique to persons suffering from NPD that they should serve as red flags. Usually these signal behaviors are perplexing, the kind that make you pinch yourself, because they are the exact opposite of what a any normal person would do or say in that situation.

In short, if you have any doubt about whether a person suffers from Narcissistic Personality Disorder, he or she probably doesn't. Only a qualified physician can diagnose NPD.

Kathy Krajco
January 2007, U.S.A.

PART I

The Essence of Narcissism

The Essence of Narcissism

To understand what is going on in your relationship with someone suffering from Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD), we must dig down to the root of the disease. Ready to take a stab at it?

When we interact with someone, our actions draw feedback in response. Our actions aren't just acts, as if we are communicating by kissing or punching that other person. Usually our communicating actions are words and other media of communication such as facial expression, tone of voice, diction (word choice), posture, gestures, and so forth.

Think of all this as information in a message we're sending.

It draws continuous feedback. This feedback isn't just what that other person does or says back. It's also the information in the look on his face, the tone of his voice, his diction, posture, gestures, and so forth.

We are alert to this feedback, because it is the only evidence we have that communication is actually taking place. Even communicating computers continually issue feedback information about the data they are receiving, as during a download. For example, the only way a server on the Internet knows that it maintains a connection to your computer is through the constant feedback your machine sends, which essentially acknowledges the receipt of every packet of information by answering "Got it...got it...got it...got it...."

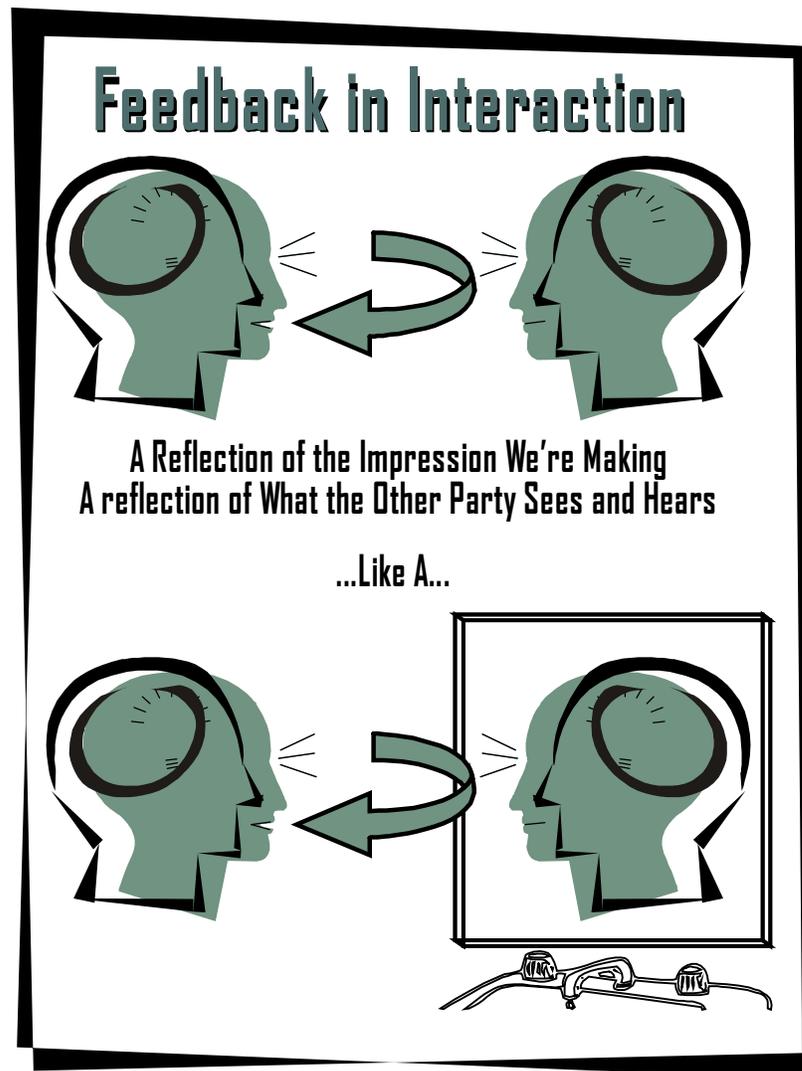
We humans rely on this feedback information to judge whether our message is being understood and how it is being received. For example, a teacher constantly studies the looks on the faces of a class to see if they are getting what she says. She responds to this feedback, either judging that it's safe to go on or that she should try to make the point more clear. Again, for example, if you are correcting a child and you see him start to hang his head, you respond by letting up. Or, at least if you aren't a narcissist you respond that way: a narcissist will do the opposite and pile on.

Why?

This bounced-back information reflects the **impression** we're making on whomever we're interacting with. If what we're saying brings a smile to his face, for example, we see that we're making an agreeable impression on him. In other words, in this bounced-back information, we get a **reflection**, or an **echo**, of that

impression. A reflection of our **image**.

The word *image* in this context doesn't just refer to our outward appearance. It usually refers mainly to our character, what kind of person we are.



So, that other person is, as it were, a **mirror**, echoing the **image** of his impressions as feedback. When he is **paying attention** to us, it's our own **echoed image** we see in the mirror of his face. Mostly in his eyes.

Though we are aware of this reflection while interacting with others, normally it's but one of many considerations in the moment-by-moment choices we make about our behavior. It may, for example, influence our word choice, tone of voice, facial expression, and so forth.

But honest people rely on this feedback only to warn them of misunderstanding or hurting the other party's feelings. They don't prostitute themselves to it. For, that's the essence of hypocrisy, as in the politician who says one thing before the people of one town and a contrary thing before the people of another town. Honest people don't **shape** their behavior to reflect a warped/untrue image of themselves. In other words, they don't act the way they do entirely **for effect** = to **look** or **sound** or **seem** a certain way.

Unless they happen to be talking to themselves in the mirror like Hamlet does in his fiery soliloquies. If you've ever made a speech to yourself in the mirror, you know that it's entirely for effect. When we are thus playing to our image reflected in a mirror, we are operating in a special mode. In fact, in that special mode we typically address ourselves in the second person (as "you" instead of "I").

Fortunately, before the bathroom mirror is normally the only time normal adults behave entirely for effect.

Certain other circumstances may come close though. For example, when we meet a stranger, especially if he or she is a potential mate or an important person, we are anxious to make a good impression and may start posing a bit before that mirror. Which is why we say stupid things at such moments: we're thinking about how we sound instead of what we're saying. Being on a job interview is a similar situation. Those who keep their wits about them and don't play to the mirror are the ones smart employers want.

If you're with me this far, you can understand what is different about narcissists. So, keep a tight grip on that thought: **Attentive** people's faces are **mirrors** that we see our **image** reflected in. The problem with Narcissus is that he can't get enough of his.

1.1 Narcissus

The painting below is by John William Waterhouse. It depicts an interaction between Narcissus and his lover, Echo. It's a *figurative* depiction of their moment together, so you must imagine the *literal* picture.



"Er, let me see how I can put this. Here you have those two beautiful young lovers, off all by themselves in such a romantic setting. It's even springtime. You can tell by the flowers. Narcissus was hunting, but you can see he's cast aside his bow and arrows. Hmm. I wonder what they could be doing. Hmm.

That's about as intimate a human interaction as there is, isn't it?

Yet who — or rather *what* — is Narcissus making love to?

Echo is gazing upon him with a look that needs no words. Though it is wistful, it is to die for, the look every man dreams of getting from his lover. It would make Tarzan thump his chest and give a Tarzan yell.

But what's with Narcissus? What does *he* see in that look on her face? Nothing. He doesn't even see *her face*: he isn't looking at it. Instead, he is looking at his own reflected image, as in a mirror. Is this guy crazy, or what? Look at her! She's a 10!

Yet Waterhouse shows that he's oblivious to *her*. He has eyes for nothing but the **image of himself** he's casting. He's gazing upon it with every bit as much admiration as she's gazing upon him. **That's why Waterhouse shows him not even looking in her direction: he might as well not be.** He doesn't see *her*. He sees nothing but the flattering image of himself reflected in her face.

That is, he doesn't see her **face**: he sees only the **expression** on it. In fact, Waterhouse is being downright sarcastic, because he depicts Narcissus quite literally "prostituting" himself before his reflected image. Prostrating himself

before it is actually a formal act of worship. Judging from the way Narcissus is acting, he doesn't even know Echo's there. She might as well be that handy pond.

Something has gone terribly awry here, hasn't it? While it's normal to be aware of our reflection in the feedback we're receiving from someone, it's abnormal to be totally absorbed in it, to the point that you are unaware of anything else, including that other person.

Notice that Narcissus is performing to get and hold 100 percent of Echo's attention while giving her zero in return. Which means that she is as insignificant to him as an object, a mirror. Indeed, when was the last time you paid any attention to a handy mirror you were just checking yourself out in?

What does this mean? It means that no communion or communication is taking place. No human being communicates with a mere object like a mirror. This is mere intercourse, a one-way street. There is no give-and-take with a narcissist: it's all you give and they take.

And so, remember that attentive people's facial expressions (and other forms of expression, such as tone, gestures, and behavior) are mirrors that we see our current image reflected in. Narcissus can't get enough of his.

Which is to say that he can't get enough **attention**. So, he can't let anybody else have any.

Whenever he can get away with it, he denies attention to those around him and avoids, blocks, or ignores their attempts to express themselves. If you ask for his attention, he acts as though you're asking for the sun, the moon, and the stars. As if it would cost him an arm and a leg. Normal people often are so perplexed by this that they blow it off as some misunderstanding.

Narcissus is so avaricious about attention that he can't even stand to be in a room where anybody else gets any. Get some in front of him, and you might as well eat before a starving man, flash cash before a penniless man, or wave heroin before an addict in withdrawal: he will attack you for it. It has the same effect on his brain as a drug, so the more he gets, the more he needs. And, like a drug, he prizes it far more than any amount of money it may cost to maintain the source of a constant supply.

In a very real way, attention *is* a drug. Like dope, attention makes people feel good by delivering a "hit" of certain neurotransmitters (chemicals that transmit, or block the transmission of, electrochemical currents) in the brain. Like

anything that does this (viz., sex, risk-taking, power), in excessive amounts it's addictive. And, simply because it works, nothing is as addictive as a pain killer. Hence Narcissus is well-named from the Greek word for *narcosis*.

Attention is his pain killer.

1.2 Arrested Child Development

The pain? There may be exceptions and other causes or contributing factors, but it is widely believed (and my own experience with narcissists bears this out) that it is the pain of being judged as something to be ashamed of as a little child, during that crucial stage of personality development when the ego is all and fragile to boot. Being judged a disappointment. Not-good-enough to be acceptable to [at least one parent](#)^[120].

Because something's wrong with you. What? Good question. That's *The Big Mystery*.

But you've always known that nobody holds and cuddles you or picks you up when you cry, or comes around just to giggle in your face and talk to you and play with you for awhile. And you're finding out that you can never get it right, because you're always too "this" or too "that." You never say anything worth listening to. You never do anything worth noticing. You never deserve a compliment or praise. You shouldn't be encouraged to aim high, because that would give you the wrong idea and make you think you have what it takes to achieve something out of the ordinary.

But you need plenty of *negative* attention and criticism. Because you screw up all the time. Wet the bed? O God! That's worse than spilling milk. Over that the ear-piercing screaming will run for ten minutes straight.

Then she'll tell you that she has problems so you shouldn't be doing anything that bothers her.

How can a little child live up to that standard? They are always getting muddy or spilling milk or something. And notice the perversion of roles in that twist. In other words, you must see to it that Mamma has no trouble. She isn't here to take care of your needs and troubles: you are here to take care of hers. Because Mamma is a big baby. And, you are defective because you have problems that give Baby Mamma trouble.

Ah, the abuse that takes on a life of its own and keeps on abusing.

So, though she's dead and gone, Mamma becomes his demon. And here Narcissus is, an adult but still feeling the shame and trying to get right for her. He too is a case of arrested child development: he is still that child and still in that child's abyss of unbearable pain, doomed to forever try to claw his way out of the dungeon of her low regard.

Like his narcissistic parent, he rejects that child. He has replaced it with an imaginary self. It is perfect, godlike, mighty. Indeed, he cannot bear to look within and know his true self. So, he pulls the wool over his eyes by portraying a false, grandiose image of himself to gaze upon in **mirrors**.

Rather like a child playing "Pretend" — dressing up in his daddy's clothes before a mirror or imagining that he's Superman. Hey, nobody hurts *his* feelings!



But that isn't him. That's an imaginary him. The ideal him. Of course, this is a normal stage in child development. Children easily lose themselves in this game of "Pretend."

Kitty, dear, let's pretend --' And here I wish I could tell you half the things Alice used to say, beginning with her favourite phrase 'Let's pretend.' She had had quite a long argument with her sister only the day before — all because Alice had begun with 'Let's pretend we're kings and queens;' and her sister, who liked being very exact, had argued that they couldn't, because there were only two of them, and Alice had been reduced at last to say, 'Well, YOU can be one of them then, and I'LL be all the rest.' And once she had really frightened her old nurse by shouting suddenly in her ear, 'Nurse! Do let's pretend that I'm a hungry hyaena, and you're a bone.'

— Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*

Some children get stuck in the Land of Pretend and don't distinguish between fantasy and reality, creating an imaginary, ideal friend. Children do this because they feel so small and insignificant in our world. So they "pretend" a different one, one more to their liking. Their principal aim is to be important and grand

like grown-ups.

Important enough to be worthy of some attention. They will actually die for want of attention, because their budding personalities cannot take the damage being disregarded does to their tender self esteem.

Once fully formed, the personalities of children outgrow the need to create an imaginary, "dream" self. They then become **themselves**. It's like they accept and marry themselves, merging with themselves, as their personality integrates. In their thoughts they normally refer to themselves as "I" — not "you" or that imaginary "he" or "she."

But the dysfunctional personalities of people suffering from NPD remain forever in this disordered, half-formed state. They are in a permanent identity crisis.

They don't identify with themselves! They still identify with that imaginary self — a fictional character!

Consider that — in their thoughts, normal people never refer to themselves in the same terms that an author refers to the characters in a novel, as "he" or "she." We never step that far outside ourselves. And only when bawling ourselves out do we distance ourselves by addressing ourselves as "you."

How can anyone who doesn't have a proper relationship with himself have a proper relationship with anyone else?

1.3 It's All About Attention

A false image is, of course, a work of art, an idol. And a lie. A narcissist **identifies** with this **image**, not his true inner self. So, all he cares about is his image, not what kind of person he really is. Indeed, the latter has no real existence in his world.

In **identifying** with his image, he's identifying with an ephemeral figment that has but virtual reality, a purely immanent existence as a reflection in the **attention** shone on him by others. No attention, no image. No image, no self!

So, no normal person can imagine what it's like living in the mind of a narcissist. But we can take what we do know and apply logic to it for drawing conclusions. For example, what would it be like if you weren't always *there* for yourself? If

your experience of your own existence was limited to seeing yourself reflected in mirrors?

You'd be forever posing before a mirror, wouldn't you? In fact, if you looked around and saw all the people/mirrors around you reflecting someone else (i.e., paying attention to someone else) and none reflecting you, you'd experience an existential crisis.

This phenomenon is strangely reminiscent of what happens when game birds hatch and "imprint" on their human caretakers instead of Mother Bird. Something essential never happens in the formation of their "bird mind."

So, it's all about attention. Narcissus' life is a game of monopoly for it all. And *people are just mirrors* to him.



He won't listen to you: you must listen to him. He won't look at you: you must look at him. Because you are just his mirror. This is no exaggeration: if you grew up in a home with a narcissistic parent, you grew up in a home with a parent whom you never had a **conversation** with.



There are two things to keep in mind about being someone's mirror.

👁️ One is that a mirror is just an object, not a person in its own right. It's

there for *his* sake, like the rest of the furniture, to reflect his image by shining attention on him. In other words, he is the center of his universe and the world revolves around him.

As every mother knows, this is the mentality of an infant. It's natural in infants, who have not yet acquired a personality. We see it throughout nature. It's what makes baby birdies erupt in loud chirping, stick their heads up out of the nest, and stretch their gaping mouths wide — each struggling to chirp louder, stick his head up higher, and stretch his gaping mouth wider than everybody else — every time Mother comes near. This mentality is adaptive in infants. It makes them behave in a way that stimulates Mother's instincts to forget her own needs and see entirely to theirs. And it makes the biggest attention-getter in the nest most likely to survive.

 The other thing to keep in mind is that mirrors are all pretty much the same. Narcissus doesn't notice anything particular about any of them because he's too busy maneuvering to get and hold their attention and too busy admiring the important image of him they're reflecting in the inordinate amount of attention he gets from them. Since people are just mirrors to him, he has no more interest in them than you or I have in a mirror we are studying our image in.

And since he has no interest in them, a narcissist has a knee-jerk reflex that tunes people out as background noise. He's too busy thinking of what to say next and too busy admiring how he sounds to hear them. This means that what Narcissus doesn't know about the significant others in his life is both amazing and diagnostic.

And so, narcissism is a mental dis-ease that can run its course to bizarre extremes of **self absorption**.

Now let's pause a moment and reflect on what that **mirror of attention** is. Consider what "attentions" come packaged in it:

regard	fidelity	admiration	encouragement
honor	affection	moral support	understanding
acceptance	courtesy	apologies	help
appreciation	gratitude	trust	compassion
consideration	credit	praise	empathy
comfort	deference	cheer	love
respect	sympathy	cooperation	goodwill

This is the stuff of human relations, isn't it? All people hunger for these things, especially from those they love. These things are a human being's principle source of **gratification** and one nobody can thrive without. They are just forms of attention. And Narcissus' life is a game of monopoly for it all.

So he begrudges any to anyone but himself and competes with others for these things.

For example, he compulsively does his best to make sure that others get no attention in the form of consideration. He must get it all, and others must be treated inconsiderately.

You can run right down the list: Narcissus does likewise with everything on it, every form of attention. All regard must be for his rights and feelings; others' rights and feelings must be disregarded. He must get all appreciation; others must be taken for granted. Everyone must be faithful to him and betray all others. He must get all the credit for everything, others none. He must get all sympathy, others none.

He acts as though every ounce of this stuff were the last loaf of bread in a starving world that he has just gotta out-compete you for.

This is the essence of narcissistic abuse. And when you take a second look at what he's doing, you see that he is denying others their right to be treated as human beings.

Ask any addict: He doesn't care how bad *you* need a fix. He has no regard for the fact that you will die in withdrawal because he's gotta be a pig that has just gotta have it all. Narcissus is like that with *his* drug, attention. He deprives his own children of it.

Doubtless you're aware of how retrograde into childishness this behavior is. Indeed, like a three-year-old, Narcissus is the center of the universe and absolutely certain that he has a right to whatever he wants.

Individuals with NPD assume that other people will submerge their desires in favor of the comfort and welfare of those with NPD. They believe that just because they want something — that is reason enough for them to have it. They assume that others are as consumed by concern for those with NPD as the individuals themselves are; they believe they deserve special consideration from others (DSM IV™, 1994, p. 659) (Millon & Davis, 1996, p. 394).

— Sharon C. Ekleberry,
[Dual Diagnosis and the Narcissistic Personality Disorder](#)

This "I-want-it-and-I-want-it-now" mentality is normal for three-year-olds, because they have not yet developed a proper relationship with themselves and have not yet come to see others as persons in their own right, with rights and feelings and needs that count.

But your narcissist is willfully forever three. All attention/gratification should go to him because he is dying for it and can't get enough, and everyone therefore just *has* to let him have it. Indeed, he feels that others are depriving him and stealing from him if they try to get any of it.

This attitude reminds one of the scriptural verse that proclaims that all glory, laud, honor, credit, and gratification belong to God alone. Whom Narcissus obviously has himself confused with.

Think what it means to demand no end of attention/gratification and refuse to let anyone else have any. Showing our regard for others in these ways is the **essence of relating to others humanly**, not as one would relate to some insignificant bug.

Even if he is fifty years old, inside is a child so immature it would kill him to share this stuff: He's just gotta have it all.

No matter what. No matter how desperately someone needs it, he can't let them have any. Praise someone before Narcissus, and he *must* tear that person down to deny them any praise. Do Narcissus a favor, and he *must* deny you gratitude. Need comfort, and he *must* find you contemptible and therefore unworthy of it. And so on. All to deny others one bit of regard.

Why?

Attention is a value judgment. We pay it only to things we deem worthy of it. So, by treating others as unworthy of any regard, Narcissus is **acting** as though they are beneath notice, insignificant and infinitely less important than all-important him. He pays no more regard to them in what he does than you pay to bug you step on while crossing the street. They are nothing; he is everything.

This is how he compensates for that demeaning value judgment his narcissistic parent imprinted on his soul. This is how he edits the shameful image of himself he saw reflected in that parent's contemptuous eye. In other words, he does to

others what that parent did to him. Since that's what made that parent a god, that's what makes him a god.

How does he enact this fiction? By treating you like dirt. And by maligning you behind your back. **You could define a narcissist as someone who likes to treat others like dirt and ruin their reputations.**

This is the game a narcissist plays, in a nutshell. Because he is an emotional imbecile (i.e., mentally of pre-school-age maturity).

The only people he doesn't abuse this way are those he doesn't dare abuse. Or those he can aggrandize himself by association with. Or those he can con and is setting up for a con job. Like psychopaths, narcissists view others as but objects, material to exploit for their own aggrandizement.

1.4 A House of Mirrors

The other problem with Narcissus is that he doesn't necessarily want to make a *good* impression: he wants to make a *grandiose* impression. You know — like Superman, "more powerful than a locomotive, faster than a speeding bullet, able to leap tall buildings in a single bound."



Superman (or Superwoman) is just generally "the greatest," as the (truly) great [Mohammed Ali](#) so hilariously spoofed the type. So, moral superiority is but one type of [grandiosity](#)⁷⁰ the narcissist creates the illusion of. But he's also gotta be smarter than you and prettier than you and stronger than you and . . . well, you get the idea.

So, he craves many types reflected **grandiosity**. Remember that, in doing this, he is editing the deeply embedded impression of himself stamped on his impressionable mind at an early age by a cold and disapproving parent. The importance of self concept cannot be overstated. No one can bear a shameful self-concept. A narcissist spends his or her entire life trying to expunge it. Can't

be done. The wax has hardened. The impression is indelible.

But that never stops a narcissist from hectically conducting this lifelong exercise in futility. In seeking to get from others the esteem denied him by his parent, he is trying to overturn that parent's judgment, debating the issue of his worth, trying to prove Mother wrong by the looks on all the other faces/mirrors he meets.

Nothing else matters to him but this "unresolved issue." Everyone he meets is like a flower that a bee visits. Bee investigates Flower for one purpose always and only — to assess what type of nectar, if any, can be got from it. Bee has no interest in any flower he can't exploit. Of those he can exploit, he exploits each a little differently.

To see what I mean, look at the mirrors — I mean, "faces" below. Do you like the image of YOU each is reflecting? That's right, the face doesn't matter: the **expression** on it does. That reflects on you. Are there any of these expressions a narcissist would like his reflection in and play for? Are there any he would dislike his reflection in?





A narcissist is someone who goes through life fixated on getting the right kinds of looks on other people's faces. A narcissist will love his reflection in the fourth mirror, because it reflects on him as being so grand he puts this fellow to shame. A narcissist will love his reflection in fourteenth mirror too, because it reflects on him as wonderful. And his reflection in the twelfth mirror will cut the legs out from under a narcissist. See how the game works?

For example, he'll exploit his boss for pleased and appreciative looks that reflect on him as the greatest employee. He'll exploit his fellow workers for other kinds of looks. He'll play mind games to get bounced-back looks that reflect on him as psychologically dominant over them. He'll train some to become his hunting hounds, wagging their tails at him for approval of how well they're serving as his ventriloquist's dummies with their baying all over the place about whomever he sickens them on. The whole time, at the same time, he'll be exploiting his minister for looks that reflect on him as the congregation's most saintly member.

The headiest nectar, the nectar of the gods, is **power**. Nothing makes Narcissus feel grander. What does power look like in one of his mirrors? It's the wretched look of someone begging him for mercy. Someone he's being powerful on = someone he's viciously abusing.

Narcissists and psychopaths prefer this "seeming-powerful" nectar over all other flavors. It's what your rapist, pedophile, and serial killer are playing to the mirror of the victim's face for. Yes, they love that wretched, devastated look on the victim's face. They get high on it, because it makes them inwardly thump their chest and give a Tarzan yell. For, vaunting themselves on others is pretending that they aren't weak and wretched after all — no, they are awesome instead. "See Ma?"



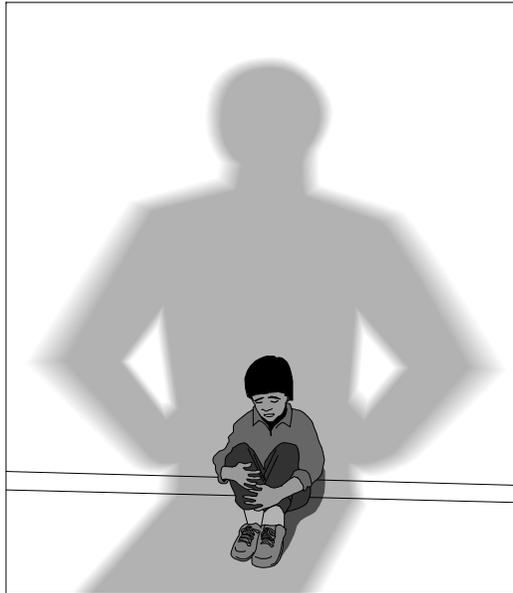
Awesomely sick in the head, that is, but Narcissus conveniently unknows that part. He unknows it simply by having the mental maturity of a three-year-old, at which age everyone thinks that way.

This flavor of nectar is precious, because a narcissist can't get it from many of his mirrors. For example, he usually doesn't dare vaunt himself on his boss, his minister, a V.I.P. or that cop writing him a traffic ticket. So, not all his mirrors are at risk to overt abuse.

This nectar of "seeming powerful" is so precious to him that Narcissus will go to great expense to "keep" someone just to abuse that person. Like a drug addict who will pay any price to support an expensive habit.

In seeking a mate, that's what he's after. He methodically isolates his mate from her family and the rest of the world (often partly by slandering her behind her back), burning her bridges of former employment behind her, and getting her pregnant immediately to make her utterly dependent on him. Then the honeymoon is suddenly over.

And children are readily exploitable for this nectar of the gods, too. Because it is very easy to hurt their feelings. One nasty remark can eviscerate a little child, making Narcissus feel very powerful indeed.



Whereas he'd have to work at hurting his wife that deeply.

This shows why most psychopaths and narcissists don't get to the point of committing physically violent crimes like rape, pedophilia, or serial torture and murder. They don't get to the point that such extreme physical violence is required to stimulate them anymore. For, they can feel good about themselves by inflicting horrendous pain and suffering without leaving a mark, simply through the occult violence of mental cruelty.

Because there's more than one way to use someone up and then just toss them in a dumpster along the way. Even in those physically violent crimes I mentioned, the worst part is the wanton mental cruelty, not the physical violence.

1.5 The Darkness Within

And so, like three-year-olds, narcissists think that putting others beneath them aggrandizes themselves. They do this exactly like three-years-olds do, with extravagant acting jobs, as if pretending it's so makes it so. They must have all the toys: you can't have any. They pout. They fold their arms, stamp their feet, and stick their noses imperiously way up in the air.



To show that they're better than you, they must treat you like dirt and like you're beneath their notice, denying you regard, sympathy, affection, praise, and all other forms of positive attention.

Often people get side-tracked in the details of narcissistic behavior and fail to grasp the overall significance of it. What *is* the significance?

Well, if you think you must have all attention — all regard, credit, appreciation, respect, sympathy, gratitude, and so forth — you think others must get none. Which means that you compete with others over every scrap of attention in the room, because you want it all = you want keep others from getting any of these good things they need and deserve, the things that make people feel good about themselves. Get a whiff of something in that?

Anyone with a nose knows the **nature of a spirit hostile to others getting what makes people feel good about themselves.**

Let's just say it isn't the spirit of goodwill. No, let's be forthright and call it what it is, **malevolence**. That's the very essence of malevolence.

And, in an adult, who has much power to act on it plus the ability to brood, malevolence is a serious matter. It's the worst character flaw a person could have.



Many convicted criminals are better. For example, some steal to pay a bill. There's no malice in that. Even violent crimes can be void of malice. As when a frightened robber kills someone who tries to fight him off. Or as when someone commits murder in anger for revenge. He is no threat to anyone else because he isn't even tempted to hurt anyone else, and he doesn't go around wishing to see harm or privation befall anyone else. So, bad as these actions are, they're morally superior to those of a narcissist or psychopath.

It just ain't natural to have ill will toward people who aren't harming you, have never harmed you, and have never threatened to harm you. It just ain't natural to be made unhappy by good things happening to others. It just ain't natural to want to deprive people of things they need to be happy.

And pure malice's choice of victim thunders its warning about these people. *It just ain't natural to want to hurt children, people who love you, strangers, and the innocent.* That's hostility to the rest of the human race.

It's malignant. And it's spooky.

Imagine if you were like that inside. We all know the bitterness of being robbed or cheated. Imagine feeling that way whenever you see anyone else praised — feeling deprived of this praise as though YOU should have gotten it instead. Imagine feeling bitter about other people's success, popularity, or good fortune. Imagine feeling gratified by others' disgrace or failure. Could you stand yourself if you were that sick inside?

I could be wrong about this, but a narcissist I knew convinced me that the thing a narcissist fears most is a knowing look. The knowing look of someone looking right in through their eyes to see the malignance lurking inside. I think it puts them into a panic.

After all, it's their Big Secret, isn't it? Narcissists spend every waking moment concealing it with an elaborate facade. And who wouldn't? Could you stand yourself if you were that sick inside?

I sure couldn't! If there was ever a good reason to kill yourself, that would be it. That must be why Narcissus can't bear to look within and know his true self.

He must be as horrified as anyone would be at the thought of confronting such darkness within. Malignance *within* that wants to keep people from getting what makes them happy. That's the Big Chill, man — you know, like the Devil. No one, not even Narcissus, can bear the thought of having a malignant nature.

He doesn't dare face that about himself. For, if he ever did, as one narcissist put it to me, he'd have to kill himself "without even leaving a note."

What's more, the narcissist's false image but veils — it does not erase — the truth about him. The truth still lies underneath in the subconscious, **threatening to surface to consciousness in a moment of self-awareness** if the veil falls.

So he must avoid those occasions when we normally reflect, looking inward, to commune with ourselves. In other words, he must avoid being alone with himself.

Indeed, he lives an inner life of nervous desperation in terror of being alone with himself. Every waking moment is a hectic endeavor to continuously busy his mind with distractions (which may include an inordinate amount of sleep) and busy himself in trivial pursuits. I have a hunch that a study of narcissists would reveal a high rate of unexplained extreme hypertension and heart failure.

1.6 Keeping Up Appearances

In identifying with a false image of himself — a work of art he's carved out — Narcissus isn't just telling and believing a lie, he is *becoming* a lie.

His life is a hectic exercise in keeping up **appearances**. He must seem greater than you. He must seem smarter than you. He must seem prettier than you. He must seem holier than you. He must always win. All glory, honor, praise, and thanksgiving belong to him forever and ever amen.

Therefore, he aggrandizes himself and everything he says and does. But that isn't all. When others shine, they diminish the glow of his glory. So Narcissus has the mentality of a rapist, who goes around tearing people "down off that pedestal." In other words, he devalues others and everything they say and do.

That's pathological envy.

Individuals with NPD are often envious of others and believe others to be envious of them. They begrudge others their possessions or successes. They believe that they are so important that others should defer to them; their sense of entitlement is apparent in their lack of sensitivity toward and arrogant exploitation of others (DSM-IV™, 1994, pp. 658-659).

— Sharon C. Ekleberry,
[Dual Diagnosis and the Narcissistic Personality Disorder](#)

The narcissist is constantly envious of people. He begrudges others their success, or brilliance, or happiness, or good fortune. ...From scratching the paint of new cars and flattening their tyres, to spreading vicious gossip, to media-hyped arrests of successful and rich businessmen, to wars against advantaged neighbours.

The stifling, condensed vapours of envy cannot be dispersed. They invade their victims, their rageful eyes, their calculating souls, they guide their hands in evil doings and dip their tongues in vitriol... (The envious narcissist's existence is) a constant hiss, a tangible malice, the piercing of a thousand eyes. The imminence and immanence of violence. The poisoned joy of depriving the other of that which you don't or cannot have."

— [Sam Vaknin](#)

 This envy is most evident in the workplace. And it's amazing how blind people can be to it. They never notice that the day after someone gets praise or recognition before the group, or gets into the local news through great success with, say, a program or an athletic team, Narcissus starts in on that person. It's as predictable as sunrise and sunset.

So Narcissus hates excellence like a rapist hates women and purity. He wants to trample and destroy it to play "Let's Pretend They're Not So Great After All."

Those who've had experience with narcissists nearly always warn that a narcissist will say *anything* about someone to bring that person down. ANYTHING. With absolutely no regard for the pain and suffering it will cause that person and those near and dear. Narcissus destroys lives and careers and marriages and families as lightly as you'd brush a crumb from your sleeve.

Narcissus is just behaving like anyone at his maturity level behaves: when he doesn't like one of his toys anymore, when it displeases him, he busts it. That's all there is to it. And that's all other human beings are to this mental child.

Anthony Fremont is a six-year-old with extraordinary powers to control the little town where he lives by simply wishing away people and things that anger or bore him.... Other than his powerful wishing, Anthony has the mind and imagination of a typical little boy. He amuses himself with his special ability by giving a gopher three heads and then wishing the animal dead when the game becomes boring. The people in Peaksville have to smile all the time, think happy thoughts, and say happy things, because that's what Anthony commands and, if they disobey, he can wish them into a cornfield or change them into grotesque versions of themselves....

— from "It's a Good Life," a story by Jerome Bixby dramatized by Rod Serling for *The Twilight Zone*, as [quoted here](#).

But Narcissus doesn't need supernatural powers to exile people from society and

change them into grotesque versions of themselves: he does it all with nothing but his assault-weapon mouth. His slandering, calumniating, assault-weapon mouth.

The people he destroys are of no account, mere extras on stage in a story that's all about him.

We disregard the agony of a half-squashed bug we pass on the sidewalk, but we immediately run to the aid and comfort of an injured human being. Why? Because the suffering of a human being matters to us. We *relate* to human beings. Because we are human beings. We recognize our image and likeness in others and identify with our common humanity in them. We must respect it, show regard for it, and appreciate its value, or we commit an indignity against our own kind.

Even the heat of battle doesn't extinguish the light of [humanity](#)^[144] in human eyes. One minute soldiers can be ferociously fighting and the next minute tending the defeated enemy's wounds. In fact, it goes further than humanity. If the injured were a dog instead of a bug, we'd run to its aid. Because we recognize and identify with the living soul in this sentient animal.

But narcissists (and psychopaths) just don't do that. They don't relate.

They don't treat people like human beings because they don't relate to people *as* human beings. They don't even relate to themselves as human beings. They identify with their image — smoke and mirrors — instead of the real person inside.

They don't consider themselves as of our kind. They consider themselves special. Inherently superior to the rest of us. As far above us as we are above that bug. In fact, NPD was first described in the literature as the God Complex.

Here are couple analogies to how narcissists and psychopaths relate to you — no matter who you are:



We don't care about all the worms we kill and maim when we break ground for a new building. Their lives and suffering are insignificant in our eyes. Your life is just as insignificant in a narcissist's eyes.



Again, you may take a perfectly good screw driver and abuse it to pry

something open, knowing full well that you're probably going to break it. So what? It's just an object. It exists for *your* sake, not its own. It's there for you to exploit, to use and abuse in whatever way makes you happy. There are plenty more screw drivers where that one came from.

If you live or work with a narcissist, get used to being treated like that screw driver. That's what you are to him, nothing. That's what your pain and suffering mean to him, nothing. If his stomach growls and there will be no groceries till tomorrow, he'll cook and eat you without a second thought.

Because it's all about **attention to his needs**, his needs, his needs. *I...I...I...I...I*. *I* is his favorite word, and he hates to hear you use it. He is a god, so his merest breath of a desire is infinitely more important than whatever fulfilling it at your expense costs you.

And with childish Magical Thinking, he makes it so simply by acting as though it is. By playing 'Pretend.'

Understanding that it's all about **attention/regard** and the inherent **value judgment** in it explains the perplexing aspects of narcissistic behavior.

More important, it reconciles seeming incongruities. For example, narcissists want positive attention, but if they can't get it, they pursue negative attention with just as much vigor. They will annoy, abuse, and even commit crimes for attention (e.g., [Lee Harvey Oswald](#)^[179]). Understanding that their need for attention is avaricious explains why they prefer being **alone** to being with others in a setting where they can't control or hijack all the attention.



Which brings us to the question: *What transfixes Narcissus? The beauty of his image? or the fact that it is looking at him?*

PART II

The Danger of Narcissism

The Danger of Narcissism

The previous chapter highlighted some things about narcissists that have earth-shaking ramifications, chiefly:

- their need to "have it all"
- the nature of their interaction with others.

Both these things about narcissists fly beneath people's radar but are extremely serious matters. That's because these things bear fruit in two serious threats to others:

- predation
- manipulation/mind control

Let's look closer to see just how the need to have it all bears fruit in predation and the peculiar kind of interaction bears fruit in manipulation and mind control.

2.1 Predation

First, the need to have it all. An analogy illustrates the threat to others in this attitude. Let's say that you feel a compelling need to have all the dollars in the world.

Then, no matter how many you get, you compete with others for every single one. That's unbridled, avaricious greed, and it makes you an **adversary** of everyone else in the world.

What's more, if you see a dollar in someone else's hand, you will want to take it away. Just because he has it. That's the desire to plunder others. In other words, you will view the possessor of that dollar as a **predator** views prey.



Therein lies the "malignance" in malignant narcissism.

Narcissists are predators, but many people fail appreciate the meaning of that term, letting it in one ear and out the other. The word *predator* seems to mean nothing to them unless you put the word *sexual* in front of it. As if sexual predators are the only kind. Thinking that makes you easy prey for other kinds of predators, like street con artists, wolves and gold diggers ("love thieves"), false messiahs, wanna be dictators, and crusaders like Osama bin Wanton.

Being predators puts narcissists in a special class with psychopaths, that class of people who **don't wish you well**, no matter how friendly their facade — that class from which sexual predators and all other kinds of predators come.

In anticipation of those who will attack me for putting narcissists and psychopaths in this special class, I point out that I am not the one who does so: they do. They do this by identifying with their image instead of their true (human) self inside. They despise it. Precisely because it is human. And they consequently despise humanity itself, and all us merely human beings. They view themselves as gods relative to us, who look down on us the way we look down on cockroaches.



There is no changing this about them. At least not now or in the foreseeable future.

2.2 Manipulation

Second, the way they interact with others makes them extremely potent **manipulators**. How potent? So potent that their powers of manipulation are spooky and seem downright magical.

How does the way they interact with others make them such expert manipulators? Because practice makes perfect, and they have been practicing the art of manipulation in every interaction since birth.

Indeed, in [playing to the mirror of your face](#)²⁸, that's what they're doing, isn't it? Manipulating you. Everything they say and do is entirely *for effect*, to get the reaction they want from you. That *IS* manipulation.



They're regulating, manipulating your reactions. But you aren't like them. Your reactions come from within. So, what are they ultimately regulating and manipulating? Your thoughts. Manipulation is **mind control**.

Manipulation is a subtle thing. So subtle that we are usually unaware of being manipulated, unless the manipulator blows it and breaks the spell. So, manipulators are putting thoughts into our heads that we think are ours. A very dangerous thing.

Since a narcissist isn't acting on normal human premises^[168], since all he is doing is playing you for the reaction he wants, truth is irrelevant. Truth or lies — it's all the same to him. Whichever works. Usually that's lies.

It would be more correct to say that there is no such thing as truth to a narcissist. Because there is no such thing as truth when playing Pretend. That's why narcissists and psychopaths beat lie detector tests. (In fact, so do many people from "shame" cultures where lying to save face of oneself, one's family, one's tribe, and one's religion is considered morally necessary and expected.)

Psychopaths are known to get so good at manipulating people that, by the time they're teenagers, they routinely **fool** and manipulate mental healthcare professionals, judges, prison officials, parole boards, and social workers who know they are psychopaths, are on the lookout for attempts to manipulate them, and should be immune to manipulation.

It isn't a matter of intelligence: it's a matter of **practice, experience**. This is because most of what transpires in interaction happens too quickly to think it through.

In playing to the mirror of your face, the narcissist receives a steady stream of your feedback^[16] to the steady stream of words and body language he sends. He continuously reacts to every nuance of it in "real time," if you will. A sideways glance from you might make him alter his choice for the next word in the sentence he is saying. Or his facial expression or tone of voice. Or it might make him take a step closer to you.

So, no matter how cunning a manipulator is, he isn't **consciously** analyzing your every slight reaction and fine-tuning his act to it. I say that because he can't be. That would be impossible.

Therefore, manipulation must be rather like the act of hitting a forehand in tennis. You cannot consciously think your way through the stroke. Too many

things are happening too fast. In fact, you will botch your stroke and be lucky to even connect with the ball if you try to consciously think your way through with "Watch the ball ... bend your knees ... keep your arm straight ... keep your head still ... step into the shot...*et ad infinitum*." Well, that's exaggerating a bit, because there are only about 100 instructions I could list for hitting a forehand ;-)
)

You can't think that fast. No one can. So, you must practice that stroke enough under varying conditions to **program** the unconscious centers of the brain to execute it virtually automatically. When you net your shot or hit it out (provided you note how far off the shot was), your "program" is revised to get the bug out.

This phenomenon is called **Natural Learning**. It's how we learn to walk and talk.

That "program" isn't just a fixed set of muscle commands from the brain. It's an interactive program like a computer program. Because no two forehands are the same. The incoming shot is different. The court conditions are different. Your position on the court is different. Your tactical aims are different. And so on.

Yet the more you practice, the better your forehand program, and the more effectively it faithfully produces a good forehand by taking care of all the minute details involved in hitting one. You have only to make the major decisions, such as where and how to hit the ball: speed, spin, and placement.

Natural Learning is so powerful that even tactical decisions become virtually automatic in advanced players. Through experience they learn to spot and recognize strategic features of the play situation and intuitively, instinctively play the tactically smart shot without thinking.

Certain features jump out of the background and grab their attention as targets. Others jump out of the background and grab their attention as threats...of, say, a dangerously sharp Angle of Return they are vulnerable to. Whatever. They don't *think* what to do: they just *see* what to do and do it, rather like a conditioned reflex.

But it isn't a reflex. It is voluntary behavior. It's learned behavior, practiced to become a habit. So, like any habit, since it's voluntary behavior, you can unlearn it to break it.

Hence the best players in the world do very little conscious thinking while the ball's in play.

The power of Natural Learning is illustrated by comparing experienced drivers

with young drivers. Young drivers have no experience, so they must think their way through problems. Result? Crash.

But with the same problem an experienced driver has no problem. He or she spontaneously makes an intuitive, instinctive move faster than the speed of thought. Result? No crash.

When playing to the mirror of your face, that must be what a narcissist is mostly doing — instinctively reacting to every bit of feedback he gets from you so as to fine-tune it into the feedback he wants. This is manipulation. And it's occurring faster than the speed of thought, because a narcissist has had so much constant practice at drawing the look he wants that most of his "moves" are virtually automatic

This is why, I think, we tend to overestimate the intelligence of narcissists, psychopaths, con artists, and other manipulators like dictators who con their way to power. We think they must be brilliant to be so manipulative. But even a stupid narcissist I knew was extremely manipulative. Their skill is the fruit of constant practice in every human interaction.

But it doesn't pay to underestimate them, either. That same practice makes them extremely observant and perceptive. Over time that will improve their intelligence, at least some aspects of it.

In fact, they are much more observant and perceptive than they seem. That's because all they're interested in is what they can use. They are interested in your reactions, not you. The only information about you they're interested in is what that can use to exploit you. The rest they filter out of consciousness = forget.

So, never think that you are too smart to be manipulated by a narcissist, psychopath, or con artist. You aren't. And you surely can never beat one at his own game.

That's nothing to be ashamed of. It just means that you are an innocent who hasn't spent his or her whole life practicing the black art. So, you won't win that game.

2.3 Protecting Ourselves

I suppose professionals fear that a well informed public would rise up and call for a witch hunt to discover everyone suffering from NPD or APD and lock them

up. In fact, there is already a move afoot in [Great Britain](#) for Dr. Robert Hare's Psychopathy Checklist to be used to identify and lock up psychopaths. In the [United States](#), some want it to be used as grounds to impose the death penalty on criminal offenders eligible for it.

The movement afoot in Great Britain is based on the assumption that the government is responsible for taking care of us, cleansing our environment of anything dangerous, and thus making our world a utopia for us. The movement afoot in the United States stems from outrage at psychopaths being set free to do to it again, and again, and again by professionals and parole boards who just won't face facts.

But, though the threat predators like narcissists and psychopaths pose is serious, though they do a tremendous amount of harm in the world that must be addressed, it seems to me that this threat is easy to deal with and that doing so requires no Draconian measures of dubious morality and fairness that violate individual rights.

The reason I say that is because, as in the wild, predators kept at a safe distance are no threat. In the vast majority of cases, the prey has simply let a wolf in sheep's clothing get too close.

Even in those cases where a narcissist is abusing his or her own children, to get into a position to do that, he or she first had to fool the other parent into marriage.

This doesn't have to happen, at least not nearly as frequently as it does. A wolf in sheep's clothing can be recognized. The problem is that many people don't spot the signs of bad faith and mental illness. Or, if they do notice something that sets off their red alert, they blow it off.

This indicates that we need two things:

- a well informed public
- a change in attitude.

First, no more Big Secret. Everyone needs to know the truth, that there are predators among us. They seem just like the rest of us, so appearances and reputation mean nothing. It could be your grandmother, a bishop, the CEO of a major corporation, a senator, a psychiatrist, a social worker. They are everywhere, and we all encounter them.

Second, we each must measure out the trust we place in others with that truth in

mind.

Why don't many do that? I think it's because of a seismic shift in attitude during the last few decades. As individuals, we have ceded the primary responsibility for our welfare to others.



For example, teachers complain that parents have shifted much responsibility for raising their children to the schools. Doctors complain that patients seem unwilling to accept any responsibility for their own health, doing nothing to take care of it themselves and expecting the doctor to keep them healthy.

Unfortunately, even though they complain, that's quite a head-trip for teachers and doctors. They are quick to take charge of *your* health and of raising *your* children, as if these things are none of *your* business. You should leave it to them, the experts, you know, because they know what's best for you.

But it's *your* children and *your* health, so what's it to them if they screw up? Their main motivations come through their income and remaining politically correct in their establishment, according to the groupthink of their peers, no matter what the consequences to you.

In public safety, this others-take-care-of-me attitude has gone so far that many people think an individual has no right to defend himself. That's for the police to do. The individual is treated like a child whose judgment can't be trusted. So he or she mustn't ever hit back. Even in rural areas where the nearest police officer is many miles away, they insist that people have no right to own firearms. If the police can't or don't protect them, well, that's just tough: they must just die because they can't be trusted with the right to use force, even in their own self defense.

Till not long ago, if you tried to patronize someone, he or she was liable to remind you that they were an adult with the reply, "I can take care of myself, thank you." But you almost never hear anyone say that anymore.

I once heard former Congressman Lee Hamilton (a Democrat and co-chairman of the 9/11 Commission) say that during the 1960's the constituents who contacted him for services were almost all essentially saying, "Get the government off my back!" But by the time he left Congress in the 1990s, the attitude had completely reversed so that his

constituents were saying, "Make the government take care of me!"

Note that this is a Democrat, not a Republican, voicing concern over this change of attitude in the Land of the Self Reliant. One wonders what Democratic President John F. Kennedy would say about it, since he is famous for saying, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country."

So, here we live, in a society in which 15–20% of people meet the diagnostic criteria for at least one personality disorder and 20–25% meet the diagnostic criteria for a mental disorder at some point in their lives. We are not Babes in Toyland.

Therefore, some of the crazy chatter we hear is just that, crazy. And among the personality disordered are narcissists and psychopaths, predators.

We feel sorry for people in the Third World who live in wild areas with, say, man-eating tigers to worry about. But we can't assume that since lions and tigers and bears (oh, my!) don't roam our streets we live in a safe environment and needn't be on the lookout for predators.

The good news is great news: most predators are easily discouraged. If they see that the moment they take one step too close, you are wary of them, they head off in search of easier prey.



One Step Too Close

Predators are quite ready to do this, because *they* are wary of *you*. Like sharks, on their first run, they usually aren't serious yet: they're just testing you. So, if you show them that you aren't naive, they're gone.

In bold, imposing closer encounters, you can just whack them on the snout. Divers swim safely among packs of great white sharks using this simple tactic as necessary. What do I mean?

When someone imposes to violate your privacy with a personal question, don't

cave an inch: confront it. For example, you might say something like, "Boy, you ask a lot of questions" or "I'm afraid that's none of your business" or "I'm going to keep that to myself" or even the simple "Why are you asking?"

When someone imposes to violate your privacy by presuming to be the judge of your personal, private choices, thoughts, or feelings, don't succumb to that flattering carrot or dodge that unflattering stick: confront it. You can say something like, "That's up to me, not you" or "Who do you think you are?" or "You're not my judge."

Like I said, you can just whack them on the snout like this. By doing so you are keeping their nose out of your business. In the blink of an eye they're gone ... in search of easier prey. Just like that shark.

 Really. recently, an abalone diver off the coast of New Zealand fought off a great white shark that had him half-swallowed head first!

Why? Because predators can't afford the injuries their prey may do them: those injuries might prevent them from successfully making future kills. It's the same with human predators. When they see that you aren't naive, they fear that you might sound the alarm to warn others about them. So they leave *you* alone, long before doing anything that you could accuse them of.

They are the ones who have crossed the line (of your [personal boundaries](#)^[402]), so they are the ones being rude, not you.

Moreover, caving in to impositions like this is dangerous, because predators view that as a sign of weakness. Now you're really on the menu, because they aren't just testing you anymore: now they're after you.

2.3.1 Meting Out Trust

Not everyone deserves the same amount of trust. Those nearest you (and in the same boat with you) have earned and deserve the most.

Never assume that people not in the same boat with you really have your best interest at heart. They have nothing at stake in the matter, so they may have nasty ulterior motives behind what they say. More often, of course, they are just somewhat careless and are merely trying to sound or look good, without really considering the consequences to you of their advice.

In meting out the trust you give others, you have to go by their **track record**.

If you know a person lied yesterday, he or she is a liar today. I don't care if they are a canonized saint: they lack credibility.

Yet most people judge by the appearances that status or reputation create instead of track record. The result is that a certain person or institution can lie and lie and cheat and cheat and rape and rape and loot and loot till the end of time. Because no matter how many times he or it proves they can't be trusted, the whole world acts as though the past is irrelevant and keeps on trusting them.

When someone has lost your trust, they need to *earn* it back. That takes time. It takes time to establish a trustworthy track record to become worthy of your trust again.

But when someone has lost your trust through treachery, which is cruel, I think you should never forget that. For, it is the sign of a predatory nature, not a mere stumble from the straight and narrow, such as anyone might have.

Common sense dictates that we should be careful of strangers, because they have no track record with us. Ironically, most people trust strangers more than people they know! (This is what keeps [street con artists](#)²⁶⁵ in business.)

If you know someone for a long time, you are bound to learn things about them that you don't like. You will know what kind of things they are likely to be dishonest about. You will know in what ways you can trust them and to what extent you can trust them. I am happy to trust them that much, whether or not I really like them.

But strangers you know nothing about. This doesn't mean you should be suspicious of strangers. In other words, I wouldn't *mistrust* them without reason. But I think you should invest only a baseline level of safe trust in them till you know they are worthy of more.

When you see a sign of bad faith, mental illness, manipulation, or predation in someone's behavior, please don't blow it off. Make note of it. If you never see another, great: it was an anomaly or perhaps a misunderstanding. But if you do see it again, or see another, take the warning signs seriously.

The signs are self evident to anyone who really pays attention to the people around him or her. I suspect that the only people who totally miss them are the self-absorbed (i.e., those who are somewhat narcissistic themselves).

The rest of *What Makes Narcissists Tick* highlights some of these signs. But here are gathered a generalized list of behaviors that bear negatively on a person's trustworthiness:

- Blowing up today and acting like it happen tomorrow.
- Weird lies.
- Betraying anyone or anything.
- A broken (or changed) promise.
- Reactions that are bizarre, perplexing, and make you have to pinch yourself.
- Attempting to come between you anyone else.
- Attempting to come between you and your word.
- Attempting to come between you and your money.
- Attempting to come between you and yourself.
- Being glib.
- Asking personal questions, prying.
- Not minding one's own business.
- Relating to you inappropriately —
 - getting too close for the nature of your relationship
 - relating to you from above, as your judge.
- Judging your personal private choices, such as what you think or wear.
- Judging your feelings as though you can change them.
- Sketchy talk that leaves but a mysterious impression without concrete meaning.
- Arguments that are mere lines and slogans.
- Speaking badly of others.
- Impugning the motives and intents of others.
- Overreacting to things.
- Minimizing and catastrophizing.
- A track record of dishonesty.
- Asking you to secretly inform against your peers (unless, of course, they have broken the law and you have verified that you are giving this information to legitimate law enforcement authorities).

2.3.2 Narcissism in High Places

You know — in celestial places, where the celebrated celebrities are. Beware the impression that you "know" these people. You don't. That isn't them on the TV screen or in the magazine photo: that's their **image**. Stars and politicians' images are the product of professional "image makers," who present them to us as

performers in staged settings.

Don't trust an institution or organization to filter out the personality disordered on the road to the top. Indeed, narcissists have great climbing skills!



Narcissists are expert at tearing down whoever is above them on the ladder of success. That's what narcissists do, nonstop, all their lives, because that's what narcissism is. They get very good at it, because it's an aspect of the disease, an aspect that is more a benefit than a curse in society. In fact, they get so good at climbing over those they throw down that they come out smelling like a rose, because nobody even knows who instigated the talk that destroyed that person.

For this reason, many say that narcissism is an adaptation, not a mental illness — a character disorder, not a personality disorder — because it helps rather than hinders their functioning in society.

What's more, narcissists have no compunctions about exploiting and tearing down their betters, because they have no empathy, no conscience. Another big advantage over normal people.

Nor do they have any compunctions about "getting tough" with their subordinates and firing people. They love doing that, because that's what narcissists do — vaunt themselves on others by bullying whomever they can. It's an aspect of the disease. And it's an asset, because it makes them look like good "tough" managers of personnel.

Narcissists are shameless but subtle self-promoters, expert at carving out the perfect (false) image for themselves. Yet another big advantage.

In fact, **being for looks only, they see no reason to work for credit or credentials, so they just fake it whenever possible.** They may cheat their way through college or buy a degree from a diploma mill or fake their credentials altogether. On the job they steal the credit that belongs to others. In fact, I suspect that behind every charlatan who commits surgery without a degree in medicine or a license to practice it, you'll find someone with NPD.

Being expert in faking excellence is another social advantage.

In fact, you can view NPD as a trade-off the narcissist makes. He or she adopts a way of life (a personality) made-to-order for achieving success in society. What they give up is happiness in close interpersonal relations. In fact, they give up ever having real human relations with anyone else, because they dare not let anyone access their soul. In effect they have sold it. So they must be content with getting what they want from intimates by pushing them around.

NPD doesn't prevent people from occupying positions of power, wealth, and prestige. Many people with NPD, as Kernberg's classification makes clear, are sufficiently talented to secure the credentials of success. In addition, narcissists' preoccupation with a well-packaged exterior means that they often develop an attractive and persuasive social manner. Many high-functioning narcissists are well liked by casual acquaintances and business associates who never get close enough to notice the emptiness or anger underneath the polished surface.

— [Encyclopedia of Mental Disorders](#)

Now, I can almost hear those wheels grinding. You're picturing the typical corporate executive officer ambitiously climbing the ladder of success. Think again. This arena is not the favorite haunt of narcissists, I think. We hear of many in boardrooms and in stock brokerages, but boardrooms and stock brokerages aren't the same thing as corporate executive offices.

I should think that a narcissist would not be at home in a smart and sophisticated big business with competent personnel managers, one that measures job performance accurately by objective metrics. Most of the narcissists I have known were in the "helping professions," particularly education. Little real accountability and abundant means to fake it.

Among those who were teachers that I have known or heard about, I noticed a peculiar similarity. They avoided accepting any position that would set them up as the responsible party and a target for criticism. For example, they would come up with excuses for why they could not fill a vacant head-coaching position. They preferred to call the shots from behind the scenes as a "humble" assistant coach, who manipulated the head coach.

I know of two in particular who were amazingly manipulative puppet masters. They managed to get themselves adored as THE coaches emeritus at a school, though only one had dared to ever accept a head-coaching position and quit after

just a few years. Yet they had all the coaches coming to them for advice and for an evaluation of how well they had coached the last contest. One of these gurus even somehow got himself elected conference football Coach of the Year!

An exception to this avoidance of the top position is in private schools, which are allowed to operate in **secrecy** and where the principal has so much power that, like a dictator, he or she can game the system to get away with anything. Anything — denial of civil rights, slander, threats, extortion, you name it — without fear of exposure and prosecution. This is why narcissistic bullies in the workplace are a particular problem in [private nonprofit institutions](#).

It is also a serious problem in the [public sector](#), not because civil rights are easily trampled there, but rather because of a do-gooder culture or a moral elitist culture (which is also present in private nonprofit institutions). This culture creates an unwholesome environment, because many aren't there to *do* good; they're to be *seen* as doing good. They are self-righteous and love to show how good they are by pointing at someone else and telling you how bad they are.

Such people might as well have remote-control panels, because a narcissistic boss can aim and shoot off their mouths at anyone wants, just as you'd aim and fire a gun. This enables a narcissist to [manipulate the whole group](#)^[368] to morally persecute anyone marked as having the wrong politics or attitude. Examples would be in academia and social work.

In fact, the "helping professions" in general attract more than their share of narcissists: little real accountability and plenty of ways to fake it. All you have to do is fool people: you never have to prove that you are doing a good job.

Unfortunately, narcissists in positions of high visibility or power—particularly in the so-called helping professions (medicine, education, and the ministry)—often do great harm to others. In recent years a number of books and articles have been published within the religious, medical, and business communities regarding the problems caused by professionals with NPD. One psychiatrist noted in a lecture on substance abuse among physicians that NPD is one of the three most common psychiatric diagnoses among physicians in court-mandated substance abuse programs. A psychologist who serves as a consultant in the evaluation of seminary students and ordained clergy has remarked that the proportion of narcissists in the clergy has risen dramatically since the 1960s. Researchers in the field of business organization and management styles have compiled data on the human and economic costs of executives with undiagnosed NPD.

— [Encyclopedia of Mental Disorders](#)

Another thing about the helping professions that attracts narcissists is the abundance of vulnerable prey they supply. Think not only of vulnerable children in the case of teachers, but also of the vulnerable children and grieving or hurt adults in the case of priests and ministers. Think of the vulnerable patients supplied to psychiatrists. And so forth.

The same thing can happen in business, but it's usually a small business in which the owner doesn't realize how bad for business a narcissistic bully manager is and doesn't closely supervise managers to make sure they're tough but fair and treating the employees right.

Politics is the ideal arena for narcissists, because it's all about image. The list of those who have conned whole nations to become dictators is breathtaking. When will the human race ever learn?

In a western democracy nowadays, a narcissist would prefer the legislature to seeking the top position as a **conservative** head-of-state, because of the target he or she would become for the liberal media. In a dictatorial regime, however, none of that matters. Narcissistic politicians tend to be political chameleons who espouse whichever ideology is advantageous to them at the moment, or they practice policies inconsistent with the ideology they profess. Their understanding of socialism, conservatism, or whatever is shallow and runs only skin deep, because it is just part of their act.

PART III

What is NPD?

What is NPD?

"NPD" stands for Narcissistic Personality Disorder. It is not mere "narcissism" in the usual sense of the word. To distinguish it from that, the term "malignant narcissism" has been coined for NPD.

It's legally classified as a **character disorder**^[62], and many authorities agree — disputing its classification as a **personality disorder**. But the (American) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR, a handbook mental health professionals use to diagnose mental disorders) lists it as a personality disorder.

The difference between a narcissistic personality and a narcissistically disordered personality may not be evident to the casual observer, but a chasm lies between narcissism and malignant narcissism, because the difference is the difference between good will and ill will.

This is because malignant narcissism is a psychological **complex**. *Complex* comes from the Latin word that means "folded back upon itself" or "played backwards." Like an inferiority complex, which is an ingrained sense of inferiority "played backwards" to come off as a superiority act. The superiority act is just "playing Pretend." It's put on to compensate for the sense of inferiority, to remain in denial of it.

Malignant narcissists have an inferiority complex. So, their narcissism is a COMPENSATORY egomania. It is caused by **shame** and is **low esteem** in disguise. Quite the opposite of someone who just has a big head.



Is a narcissist aware of his true feelings about himself? That's a moot point. The mind can repress knowledge and feelings to the subconscious level. But those subconscious thoughts and feelings drive behavior nonetheless. What's more, the experiences of daily life constantly call them to consciousness on us by "reminding" us of them.

So, when a person wants to remain in denial about something, he or she must (a) act out a contrary fantasy and (b) keep distracted with trivia that couldn't possibly remind them of how wretched they are inside. The more forcefully they act out their contrary fantasy (the more ridiculously it flies in the face of reality), the harder they're trying to keep the repressed truth

buried in the subconscious by these exertions.

So, is a narcissist aware of his true feelings about himself? At some unwanted moments of self awareness yes, but most of the time no. Nonetheless, at all times, those true feelings about himself are what's driving his behavior. And that superficial act he hides them behind is just that — nothing but an act, a hollow act.

That underlying shame and self loathing is what makes a **malignant** narcissist malignant. Whereas narcissistic-but-normal people have big heads, malignant narcissists *actually* think little of themselves. They have no self confidence. They don't think they can win fair and square. They don't think they can achieve anything or live up to moral standards. They have no self respect, despite their elaborate play-acting to the contrary. In fact, the thicker they put it on, the less they think of themselves.

Consider the consequences of these attitudes.

 Form birth, the malignant narcissist has had indelibly stamped into his brain the impression that he is somehow defective, a reject, a kind of Quasimodo. So, throughout his life he finds himself surrounded in a world of people who aren't.

 Since narcissists don't think they can measure-up the legitimate way — through effort and excellence — they must cheat. That is, to be greater than others, they don't strive to be: they must tear their betters down.

 Their lack of self respect is even more damning. Because of it, nothing is beneath them. No lie is too mean to tell. No trick is too lowdown, dirty and rotten to play. Things you or I couldn't stoop to, because sinking to that level would make us feel like we are wallowing naked on our bellies in sewage, narcissists glory in like mud-wallowing hogs. Ironic, isn't it? that such deep, unbearable shame makes one shameless? But it does.

 So, your malignant narcissist has the mentality of a rapist. Quasimodo fixes his world, one in which everyone puts him to shame, by tearing them down off their pedestals . . . to make them less than him. The bizarre preferred choice of victim highlights the motive. The quickest way to draw the evil eye of a narcissist is to shine in any way. He will hate you for that like a rapist hates a twelve-year-old girl for being pure. Like a pedophile hates a child for being innocent. I knew of a narcissist ordered to remain

flat on his back before surgery for an aneurysm: he gave nothing but bloodcurdling looks of hatred to everyone who came to see him, simply for being well and able to stand on their feet!

 This is why every malignant narcissist has two middle names: one is "Abuser" and the other is "Slanderer."

A mere (non-malignant) narcissist isn't like *that*. He is just someone with a big head. Fame and fortune have probably gone to his head. So, he may be arrogant and haughty, but he doesn't go around tearing people down off pedestals by slandering and calumniating others to make himself look better than them. Or by raping them for being purer than him. A mere narcissist may be obnoxious and disappointing, but he is not a **predator** hostile to the happiness, well being, and success of others. Hurting people doesn't make him feel good. He *has* human feelings and can form human relationships. He loves his own children at least and wouldn't dream of hurting them. A *malignant* narcissist is a far different animal.

So, don't confuse NPD (malignant narcissism) with what people usually mean when they say someone is "narcissistic." Despite the superficial similarities, there's a world of difference! One is benign; the other is malignant.

3.1 Classification & Diagnosis

Mental illnesses are classed in a scheme that is more useful to psychiatrists than to us. We tend to view them as distinct diseases. We assume that they are organized by severity or by shared characteristics that progress. For example, we class animals as mammals, amphibians, or reptiles by shared characteristics that organize them into an evolutionary progression.

But mental illnesses are not best viewed as discreet diseases. They are clinically observed behaviors that analysts have discerned groups and patterns in. Psychology has far to go in sorting them out, and the nature of mental illness makes that hard, if not impossible.

Also, mental illness is viewed as occurring on different levels: that of a **mental disorder** and that of a **personality disorder**.

A mental disorder is simply being in a state of mental disorder = having a disordered mind. It needn't be a permanent state of mind and may run its course to healing. This is the most common disease, by far, in the world.

Just as we can contribute to our own illness in other diseases, we can contribute to our own mental disorder. We can do this by willfully believing lies. For example, denial of reality, projection, make-believe, phoniness, unknowing, calling things what they ain't, wishful thinking, anti-logic, whistling in the dark, acting out charades, and all the mental tricks people play, and all the little games people play are lies. When a person lies to himself (friends don't lie to friends), he is being his own worst enemy and sabotaging his own mind.

Now don't go counting that as an excuse to blame the victim. It's just a fact we can use to resist falling prey to mental disease, like the facts we use to resist falling prey to heart disease.

But we must never jump to the conclusion that the patient is to blame. The great majority of people lie to themselves every day, so no one is fit to cast the first stone. And, people lie to themselves for a reason. They do it as a defense mechanism. Usually in reaction to some form of mental abuse, either by individuals or by society as a whole. The pressure exerted on a mind is often so great that we can't blame a person at all for succumbing to it. Especially as a child.

So, just as people get other diseases through no fault of their own, they often acquire mental disorder through no fault of their own. In fact, mental illness can be purely biological and therefore nobody's fault. So, if you're looking for excuses to congratulate yourself on being better than "these people," look somewhere else.

Types of Mental Disorders:

- Childhood Disorders
- Eating Disorders
- Anxiety Disorders
- Cognitive Disorders
- Mood Disorders
- Sleep Disorders
- Substance-Related Disorders
- Psychotic Disorders

[Examples](#)⁶¹

The Personality Disorders:

- Antisocial Personality Disorder
- Avoidant Personality Disorder
- Borderline Personality Disorder

- Dependent Personality Disorder
- Histrionic Personality Disorder
- Narcissistic Personality Disorder
- Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder
- Paranoid Personality Disorder
- Schizoid Personality Disorder
- Schizotypal Personality Disorder

A personality disorder runs deeper than a mental disorder. So, to the doctor, personality disorders are more severe, because they are harder to treat. To us, psychosis (a mental disorder) is the most severe, because of the trail of death and destruction it leaves in its wake. From yet another perspective, the patient's, mental illnesses that impair the mind most are the most severe (such as dementia, autism, schizophrenia).

Since personality disorders run deep, they can be the root of a mental disorder. In fact, people suffering from personality disorders usually have one or more mental disorders. When they present for treatment, it is usually for a mental disorder. So, doctors are supposed to check for an underlying personality disorder.

Unfortunately, with NPD, doctors usually treat only for the mental disorder, which is often substance abuse and/or depression. That's partly because the very nature of NPD is to make itself as impregnable to "head shrinking" as the gates of Nether Hell were to Dante and Virgil. It's also partly because the substance abuse and depression are viewed as more immediate threats.

Moreover (and perhaps more telling), many therapists complain that the way their narcissistic patients treat them makes them really mad. So, when the narcissist is dried out and feels grand again, he's gone, before his doctor has begun dealing with the underlying personality disorder.

Good riddance?

If therapists dislike an hour with a narcissist so much, how would they like to live or work with one? What about the Hypocratic Oath? Does this "no harm?" I dare say that giving no treatment at all would do less harm. Only a Narcissistic Crisis (signaled by severe substance abuse and depression) can make a narcissist get real. Wasting this precious opportunity by ending the crisis without addressing the disorder just enables a narcissist to continue his Magical Thinking.

And what about the narcissist's victims? many of whom will need therapy themselves, as well as other social services, because of *his* disorder? What about those narcissists drive all the way to suicide? Have psychiatrists no regard for the innocent? Do government and health insurance companies have any idea how much this "collateral damage" costs them?

3.1.1 Examples of Mental Disorders

Anxiety Disorders

- Acute Stress Disorder
- Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
- Panic Disorder (panic attacks)
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Separation Anxiety Disorder
- Social Phobia (irrational fear of embarrassment)
- Specific Phobia (other specific irrational fears)
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

Cognitive Disorders

- Delirium
- Dementia
- Amnestic Disorder (amnesia)
- Autistic Disorder

Psychotic Disorders

- Brief Psychotic Disorder
- Delusional Disorder
- Schizophrenia

Mood Disorders

- Bipolar Disorder
- Major Depressive Disorder

Childhood Disorders

- Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
- Conduct Disorder (the Antisocial Personality Disorder of Childhood)
- Oppositional Defiant Disorder (not just in children)

Eating Disorders

- Anorexia Nervosa
- Bulimia Nervosa

3.1.2 Legal Classification

The picture is further clouded by legal issues. Usually a defendant with a personality disorder can use that as a defense. But not in the case of NPD (in the United States). This is because a narcissist's behavior is **premeditated** and **volitional**.

How do we know this? Because she is the proverbial wolf in sheep's clothing. She often goes to much trouble to pick out and set up a victim first. She attacks only the vulnerable and only on the sly. Then she steps out the door, mocking the world with an ironic angel-face that portrays her as the very opposite of what she is.

That's the damning evidence: covering up something proves that you know it's wrong. And you don't get off on a mental plea when you know that what you're doing is wrong.

Furthermore, a narcissist's calculated, predatory behavior is often diabolical. For example, he behaves anti-narcissistically when courting a woman, idealizing her and showering attentions on her. Then, when the honeymoon is over and he has cunningly distanced her from her family, he immediately begins treating her like dirt.

He is not responsible for the feelings inside that drive him to such conduct. But that conduct itself shows that he can control it: if he could control it before the honeymoon was over, he can control it afterward too. This proof that he can control his conduct is proof that he is absolutely responsible for it.

So US law classes NPD as a **character disorder**, which is no defense.

You may hear some narcissists defending themselves by saying that NPD is just a personality disorder, not a character disorder. They are mistaken. One cannot confuse the doctor's office with the courtroom and just pick which label he or she prefers.

3.1.3 Personality Disorders

Personality disorders are extreme and rigid extensions of personality traits. For example, NPD is an extreme and rigid extension of narcissism. It's due to a consistently distorted fundamental pattern of thinking.

Previously, I gave an [example](#)⁵⁶ of how a distorted fundamental pattern of thinking extends into widely different situations: the rapist hates the twelve-year-old girl for being purer than him; the pedophile priest hates the altar boy for being more innocent than him; and the man flat on his back in the hospital hates his visitors for being well and on their feet. It's the same warped thinking pattern underlying each perversion.

Due to this consistently distorted way of thinking, a personality disorder not only affects the patient's **behavior**, it also affects his **experiences**. For example, a narcissist experiences pleading for his affection or compassion as an attack.

Yes! as an attack. By pleading for his affection or compassion you are attacking his grandiose image, you see. Because a bug like you insults God Almighty by expecting him to treat you as worthy of his regard. So, you must stop attacking = you must act like a bug, beneath God Almighty's notice.

If you drill deeper into the psyche, you can see that a personality disorder affects:

- **Cognition** (knowing) — ways of perceiving and interpreting oneself, other people, and events (fidelity to the truth and reality).
- **Affectivity** (emotion) — the range, intensity, lability, and appropriateness of emotional response to things.
- **Interpersonal Relations**
- **Impulsivity** (self-control)

The experiences and behaviors of a personality disorder also form a pattern. An extremely inflexible pattern that originates in adolescence or childhood. So, unlike the symptoms of mental disorders, which may come and go and vary in intensity over time, the symptoms of a personality disorder form an enduring pattern. A pervasive one too, one that impacts a broad range of personal and social situations through a consistently distorted way of thinking, expressing emotions, controlling behavior, and interacting with others.

This is not to say that all people with a personality disorder are severely affected by it. A narcissist, for example, may be as mildly (and hilariously) affected as Hyacinth in the British comedy *Keeping Up Appearances* or as severely affected

as [Ted Bundy](#).

My own experience leads me to believe that narcissists get worse with age and opportunity. In other words, the more they get away with, the farther they push the envelope. The worst I personally know of was a school administrator with unlimited/unsupervised power who left a vast trail of human wreckage in his wake. One therefore wonders about men like Josef Stalin, Adolf Hitler, and Saddam Hussein: They did such openly horrendous things *because* they weren't just businessmen or factory workers, *because* people raised them to positions of absolute power = because they could get away with anything and had to prove it.



[Abnormal Psychology: Chapter 12 - Personality Disorders](#) by Nietzel, Speltz, McCauly, and Bernstein (PDF, 595 KB).

3.2 Characteristics of NPD

NPD belongs to a class of personality disorders known as Cluster B, the "dramatic/emotional/erratic" personality disorders. This class includes Histrionic, Borderline, and Antisocial personality disorders.

The most heavily researched personality disorders are two in this group, Borderline and Antisocial personality disorder. That's because people with these disorders appear for treatment in large numbers. Borderlines are often forced into treatment because of socially disruptive behavior. Antisocials commit 40% of the violent crimes people are imprisoned for, and these people are evaluated by court order, then forced into treatment.

Current epidemiological research permits no reliable estimate of how prevalent NPD is in society.

Officially, the principal characteristics of NPD are:

- inflated self-esteem (i.e., puffed-up self-esteem, actually [compensatory](#)⁵⁶ for low esteem)
- lack of empathy for others
- feeling entitled to special treatment and privileges
- disagreeableness

That says nothing about the **all-consuming need for ALL available attention**²³ that bears fruit in these character traits.

Since the real world conflicts with their view of themselves, narcissists **live in a fantasy world of their own creation**. This is like the fantasy world little children live in. If you think way back to your earliest memories, you can barely remember what this fantasy world was like. Imagine it persisting into adulthood! Little children are the stars of their fantasies and are preoccupied with them. Imagine an adult with that going on in her or his head!



Like the fantasies of little children, these fantasies aggrandize the narcissist's importance, service, and accomplishments. (This is a child's way of coping with being so small and faulty and insignificant in a world of giants.) Their version of their participation in any endeavor leaves everyone else out of the picture. In fact, they may even drive another out of a picture to have the spotlight all to themselves.

*The NPD illusion of superiority is a facet of a generalized disdain for reality. These individuals feel unconstrained by rules, customs, limits, and discipline. Their world is filled with self-fiction in which conflicts are dismissed, failures redeemed, and self-pride is effortlessly maintained. They easily devise plausible reasons to justify self-centered and inconsiderate behavior. Their memories of past relationships are often illusory and changing. If rationalizations and self-deception fail, individuals with NPD are vulnerable to dejection, shame, and a sense of emptiness. Then they have little recourse other than fantasy. They have an uninhibited imagination and engage in self-glorifying fantasies. What is unmanageable through fantasy is repressed and kept from awareness. As they consistently devalue others, they do not question the correctness of their own beliefs; they assume that others are wrong. **The characteristic difficulties of individuals with NPD almost all stem from their lack of solid contact with reality.** If the false image of self becomes substantive enough, their thinking will become peculiar and deviant. Then their defensive maneuvers become increasingly transparent to others (Millon & Davis, 1996, pp. 405-423).*

— Sharon C. Ekleberry,
[Dual Diagnosis and the Narcissistic Personality Disorder](#)

A fantasy, of course, is a lie. One must constantly lie to oneself to maintain a

fantasy.

A preference for fantasy over Truth is natural in little children. What magic thinking a lie and then believing it does!

Magical Thinking is natural in little children, too. But children choose to leave Never Never Land at the proverbial Age of Reason. Narcissists never do. Since they lie to themselves constantly, malignant narcissists are **pathological liars** who lie to everyone else too.

Their **sense of entitlement** proceeds from these fantasies, these **delusions of importance and grandeur**. It exempts narcissists from rules that apply to others. Just as a baby is exempt from the rules that apply to others. This sense of entitlement is common among the high and mighty who view themselves as superior: because they are superior they need an *inferior* set of standards to live up to. (Their upside-down logic, not mine.)

 But notice that a sense of self importance and grandeur is also a characteristic of little children. In fact, it's common behavior in the young of all higher animals. It's adaptive. Nature has made the young of every species cute and lovable = attractive to their parents. Nature has programmed the young of every species to clamor for attention and to behave as though their needs are the most important thing in the world. It's easy to see why Nature has done this.

Hence the parents of every species later must unspoil and ween their young, giving them an unceremonious shove out of the nest. In human development, this is likely to be countered by the child with temper tantrums. But eventually the child's concept of personhood takes shape and he sees advantages in leaving Never Never Land. The child likes having more control concerning himself and getting to make some of his own choices like a big boy. So, he will accept a commensurate amount of responsibility and will respect others as persons in their own right, with needs and rights of their own that he must respect.

This is what psychiatrists are talking about when they say that every child goes through a narcissistic stage of development. Unfortunately, narcissists never get through it.

Narcissists are prone to **rage** when others don't behave in a way that [echoes or reflects](#)¹⁶ their grand specialness. In other words, at the drop of a hat.

Sometimes this is a seething rage, sometimes a violent one. Rage is a primitive emotion, common in little children during a temper tantrum but rare in adults. Adults normally experience rage only in extreme situations like combat or when under attack by the severe abuse of some willful and wanton outrage. Even then, adults rarely let 'er rip. Like absolute dictators, narcissists feel no need to restrain themselves — unless the coast isn't clear and they might get a bad reputation or land in jail.

In other words, they are as irresponsible as children, too: the only reign on their behavior is what they think they can get away with.



Nothing is so aggrandizing as power. Hence narcissists are **control freaks**. In fact, being a control freak is so at-the-heart of malignant narcissism that it is a [red flag of NPD](#)⁹⁴.

It takes much less power to exert negative control than positive control, so narcissists flatter themselves about how powerful they are by being infuriatingly negative. Figures, they don't control themselves and need to control everyone else.

So, like Katharina (the shrew) in Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, narcissists cross people and disagree at every turn to exert control through gratuitous obstructionism. They play [Keep Away](#)³³⁶ with things others want. In short, they deal in power plays.

👁️ Notice how much this too is like the behavior of little children. Adults constantly have to keep them from controlling and bossing around littler children, often treating a littler child like an object (e.g., like a doll to dress up and play with). Children also frequently show no interest in a toy till they see that another child wants to play with it. Then suddenly that toy is the most important thing in the world, something to fight over, to keep away from that other child who wanted it.

To feel their power, they domineer. Whenever they can get away with it, they boss people around to a ridiculous degree by issuing arbitrary and pointless orders, such as to sit in a different chair or to clean a different room first.

Always testing boundaries, they learn at a young age the art of "shock and awe" in using a sudden temper tantrum to blind-side and run over a playmate.

Since power used to bash and destroy is spectacular, and power used to defend or build isn't so much fun, they bash and destroy. They get a big charge — almost erotic pleasure it seems — out of bashing and destroying, because of the power rush they get.



Besides, it takes much less power to destroy something than it did to make it. So, like terrorists, they pretend that if they knock down something someone else made, they are as mighty as the builders.

Not.

The bad news is that narcissists view other people as [objects](#)^[144] to be powerful on. So, they have as much regard for others' feelings as we do for a nail we are hitting with a hammer. Which is why they have no compunctions about exploiting people.

Narcissists are not the only people who have [no empathy/humanity](#)^[144] though. Neither do psychopaths. And neither do infants or toddlers, who will abuse smaller children and animals on a whim with nothing but keen interest in the victim's suffering. In fact, all people can revert to this mental state by turning off their human sensibilities like a light switch.

The resulting mental state is known as brutality.

It isn't always a bad thing, so this ability to turn off our human sensibilities is adaptive. It enables us to function in ordeals such as combat or natural disaster. How could a doctor commit surgery, a dentist an extraction, or anyone mouth-to-mouth resuscitation without a little brutality? What about people who have had to do terrible things, such as amputate a limb, to rescue someone from a heap of rubble? Unfortunately, however, this mental state of brutality also enables us to watch a lynching or a burning at the stake or the Holocaust in a brutish state of mind.

Narcissists and psychopaths are unique in that they have that light switch *permanently* turned off for *everyone* but themselves. And I mean "everyone," even their own children.

In fact, they don't know what humanity is. They think it's having *hurt* feelings. Since their feelings are easily hurt, they think they have humanity. Which would be funny if it wasn't so pathetic.

It's beyond them to realize that an animal has hurttable feelings and humanity is having human feeling for *other* beings, especially other human beings.

They do try to [pass for normal](#)^[147]. It is well documented that they often (badly) imitate the normal human feelings they see in others by putting on melodramatic shows of "concern" and "sympathy" that are so overdone one sometimes wonders if it is parody. For example, at a funeral they don't know how they should feel, so they watch other people, trying to mimic their expressions of emotion.

That said, I am not convinced that narcissists *can* have no empathy. I think that they won't have empathy.

I say that because I have known some shockingly brutal narcissists for a long time and have observed a couple things that could have been expressions of true feeling and, in one case, a search for feeling that the narcissist wanted to believe she had. Not that I think it was genuine: I just don't know what to think about these events. It could have been mockery. A narcissist's lines are characteristically vague, duplicitous and can have double meaning.

My best guess is that narcissists view feelings as weakness and vulnerability. They think everyone is a predator like they are, so they armor themselves by repressing their feelings (and conscience) and refusing to empathize — throwing the switch into Brutal Mode. They must do this with the same willful and obdurate stubbornness they do everything else, compulsively.

How long can one do this before it becomes a habit? perhaps even a conditioned reflex? In any case, it's like Brutal Mode is their default setting. They must be so used to it that they wonder why the rest of us feel and emote the way we do.

Anything repressed can surface to consciousness, however. But if it does, you can bet that your narcissist won't tolerate it there: he or she will bury it in the subconscious again immediately.

Since no one but the narcissist is worthy of any attention/regard in his version of the world, the narcissist hates it when reality intrudes on this delusion. He is typified by the wicked queen on the fairy tale of [Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs](#): "Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?" Like her, the narcissist is consumed with pathological envy. He projects this distressing emotion off onto the one he envies. That is, he fantasizes that the *victim* envies *him*. That gives the narcissist all the excuse he needs to "protect" himself by attacking.

We normally think of little children as sweet and innocent. But, when you think twice, you realize that it's a good thing they're so small, inexperienced, and controllable. (See [Now We Are Six](#) by Joanna Ashmun.) Indeed, it is often (and truly) said that the most terrible thing in the world is a grown up child. Take Adolf Hitler, for example. Nero. Saddam Hussein. Josef Stalin. Power without conscience or accountability.

So, if you are dealing with a malignant narcissist, never forget for a moment that you are dealing with a mind that works exactly like a little child's. It is as impulsive as a little child's. As irresponsible as a little child's. And reason and morality will have no more influence on it than they have on a little child's.

3.2.1 Diagnostic Criteria

The official diagnostic criteria are of limited value to the lay person, because they but encapsulate reams of medical doctrine.

"[NPD is] a pervasive pattern of grandiosity (in fantasy or behavior), need for admiration, and lack of empathy, beginning by early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts, as indicated by five (or more) of the following:

- has a grandiose sense of self-importance (e.g., exaggerates achievements and talents, expects to be recognized as superior without commensurate achievements)
- is preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love
- believes that he or she is "special" and unique and can only be understood by, or should associate with, other special or high-status people (or institutions)
- requires excessive admiration
- has a sense of entitlement, i.e., unreasonable expectations of especially favorable treatment or automatic compliance with his or her expectations
- is interpersonally exploitative, i.e., takes advantage of others to achieve his

or her own ends

- lacks empathy: is unwilling to recognize or identify with the feelings and needs of others
- is often envious of others or believes that others are envious of him or her
- shows arrogant, haughty behaviors or attitudes."

Features associated with NPD are:

- Depressed Mood
- Dramatic/Erratic/Antisocial Personality

See also: [Narcissistic personality disorder](#) in [The Encyclopedia of Mental Disorders](#), from which I quote:

Most observers regard grandiosity as the most important single trait of a narcissistic personality. It is important to note that grandiosity implies more than boasting or prideful display as such—it signifies self-aggrandizement that is not borne out by reality. For example, a person who claims that he or she was the most valuable player on a college athletic team may be telling the truth about their undergraduate sports record. Their claim may be bad manners but is not grandiosity. On the other hand, someone who makes the same claim but had an undistinguished record or never even made the team is being grandiose. Grandiosity in NPD is related to some of the diagnostic criteria listed by DSM-IV-TR, such as demanding special favors from others or choosing friends and associates on the basis of prestige and high status rather than personal qualities. In addition, grandiosity complicates diagnostic assessment of narcissists because it frequently leads to lying and misrepresentation of one's past history and present accomplishments.

Other symptoms of NPD include:

- *a history of intense but short-term relationships with others; inability to make or sustain genuinely intimate relationships*
- *a tendency to be attracted to leadership or high-profile positions or occupations*
- *a pattern of alternating between unrealistic idealization of others and equally unrealistic devaluation of them*
- *assessment of others in terms of usefulness*
- *a need to be the center of attention or admiration in a working group or social situation*
- *hypersensitivity to criticism, however mild, or rejection from others*
- *an unstable view of the self that fluctuates between extremes of self-praise and self-contempt*
- *preoccupation with outward appearance, "image," or public opinion rather than inner reality*
- *painful emotions based on shame (dislike of who one is) rather than guilt*

(regret for what one has done)

The [European description of NPD](#) differs in some particulars from the [American one](#).

It is a small step from malignantly narcissistic behavior to the aggressive-sadistic behavior of a psychopath. In fact, many authorities on the subject view Narcissistic Personality Disorder as a "milder" form of Antisocial Personality Disorder. Perhaps the root of it. They also believe that those severely affected are prone to psychotic breaks.

Yet even those mildly affected are not harmless. Consider what hilarious Hyacinth on the British comedy *Keeping Up Appearances* does to the lives of those around her. She makes her husband dreary, her son pathetic, and her next-door neighbor a nervous wreck. Not really so funny.

3.2.2 Are NPD and Psychopathy the Same?

There's debate about whether Narcissistic Personality Disorder and Antisocial Personality Disorder (psychopathy) are the same thing. Though I don't know enough to be sure, the more I learn about psychopathy, the more I find it indistinguishable from NPD.

I think you may find one or more continuums of pathology among those with these disorders.

For example, some say that psychopaths have no feelings, whereas narcissists merely lack the full range of normal human feelings. First, that's wrong. Second, it's just a difference in how successfully feelings are repressed; it isn't a different character trait.

In fact, psychopaths *are* capable of feeling. They *are* capable of putting themselves in someone's else's skin. They prove that in their sadistic acts of mental cruelty, which show that they do have the kind of empathy that enables them to know just how to morally demolish their victims. No unfeeling robot would think to reduce the victim to a slave who, in spite of himself, offers himself to be tortured for his killer's pleasure. It takes knowing how that will make the victim feel to dream up such a sick way to be cruel. No robot thinks of making a statement by tossing a victim in a trash bin after he's done with them. Only someone who knows how that would make the dying victim feel would do that.

But it's more complicated than that. For one thing, not all defined personality disorders fit in that model, like borderline, schizotypal, and obsessive-compulsive personality disorders.

Moreover, things besides the disease itself affect its fruit. Things like opportunity, power, status, and environment are other factors that affect how far into criminal behavior a particular individual may go. For example, a factory worker can't get away with as much as a President-for life like Saddam Hussein. So, though he may be sicker, that factory worker probably won't attempt as much. Doubtless, Hussein's pathological narcissism was worsened by his own acts, blurring cause and effect. Also, someone who can prop up his ego on mental cruelty to his family won't be as tempted to become a serial killer as someone who has no family. He may be just as sick in the head though.

So, I question whether the people on either end of this continuum are actually suffering from a different disease. It's hard to see where you draw the line between narcissism and psychopathy, though much more research is needed to be sure either way.

Those who say there's a difference often seem to be grasping at straws, making out mere individual differences in style as representative of the whole group and then finding that there are only two kinds, narcissists and psychopaths. For example, they will say that psychopaths are violent criminals like Ted Bundy, and that narcissists look down on evildoers like killers because narcissists are pharisaical.

Baloney. The vast majority of psychopaths [never commit a physically violent crime](#), and many narcissists aren't pharisaical. In fact, since all psychopaths are known to be narcissists as well, it doesn't even make sense to describe them as contrasting in any way. That's an egregious error in logic.

There are as many styles of narcissist and psychopath as there are narcissists and psychopaths. They aren't clones. In fact, I have that from a narcissist herself. She assessed another narcissist as not a murder threat, not because he'd have any inhibitions about murdering the particular person who felt at risk, but simply because "that isn't his style."

Indeed, many narcissists find it safer and more fulfilling to murder by driving the victim to suicide. That's absolute power. Much grander than just plain, old-fashioned murder.

Similarly, Lee Harvey Oswald wrote in his diary that his persona was created to adapt to his particular environment. And since every narcissist lives in a different environment, every narcissist adapts differently to it. In fact, narcissists don't just have two faces: they have many faces, each a face prepared to meet a certain type of face they meet. Sometimes they want to stand out for attention, and sometimes they want to blend in for approval. So, the same narcissist may have a wildly different persona in a tavern than in church than at home than at work. He's a he-man, a pious and devout church-goer, a bully, and a regular guy all rolled into one.

In this [report in the Journal of Abnormal Psychology](#), Doctors Hare, Hart, and Harpur of the University of British Columbia address criticisms of the current diagnostic criteria for psychopathy, which have wheedled their way into people's heads as a *definition* of it. The approach focuses on "antisocial behaviors rather than personality traits central to traditional conceptions of psychopathy." Okay, these **behaviors** are supposed to **indicate** the underlying **personality traits**. But sloppy thinking has made people view the behaviors themselves as the disease.

Hence "Psychopaths are those who commit violent crimes." Right, so up to the day he assassinated President Kennedy, Lee Harvey Oswald was a narcissist. Then he suddenly became a psychopath. Absurd.

Others cling to assumptions about narcissists made by therapists and researchers taking these pathological liars at their word about themselves. In fact, till recently, they did that about psychopaths too. They believed that psychopaths have a conscience, love their families, don't mean to do evil, and yadda yadda yadda.

In the same *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* article, doctors Hare, Hart, and Harpur cite the same problem:

...clinicians are generally forced to rely to a large extent on patients' memories and self-reports of their past conduct (Widiger et al., 1989) – a state of affairs that is particularly problematic, given that untruthfulness is one of the disorder's symptoms....

Thanks in large part to Dr. Hare himself, studying all those convicted axe murderers in prisons during the past few decades has helped most folks see the light about psychopaths: they lie their heads off about themselves. Yet why haven't many social workers and other professionals learned that lesson? They prove they haven't by not applying it to anyone not convicted of a violent crime that *proves* them lying about themselves.

Another egregious error in logic: "If we can't prove they're lying, they're telling the truth."

They make the same mistake with narcissists. They get no information about narcissists' behavior from people who live and work with narcissists. They receive information only from the already diagnosed narcissist in treatment. Of course he says he has a conscience, loves his family, doesn't mean to do evil, and yadda yadda yadda.

When you know someone is a pathological liar, don't assume that he is telling you the truth. What can we expect him to say? — "I like hurting people and just prey on them. I have no conscience. No feelings. No love. No humanity in me at all."

He ain't gonna say that. Nobody would. He only knows it himself in an unwanted moment of self awareness that he quickly re-buries. And, frankly, I actually don't blame narcissists for lying about that. That amounts to saying "I'm evil." Everyone has the human right to pursue happiness and therefore to *not* incriminate themselves.

Therapists and researchers have to get out there and find additional information from other sources to compare these self reports with. And something besides prison time only.

Narcissists *are* sadistic. The famous narcissist Sam Vaknin admits that (though he seems to contradict himself on the subject). In the absence of experience, pure logic should make anyone realize that narcissists are sadistic. If you need to vaunt yourself on others to feel good about yourself, the more you hurt them, the better you'll feel. So, you're gonna wanna hurt them as much as you can.

The narcissist's choice of victim is another fact that gives their sadism away: they target the most vulnerable, those they can wound most deeply.

Since long before I knew anything about psychopathy or heard about this debate, I became convinced that narcissists have no conscience. There is not one iota of doubt in my mind about that, because I have seen them do many things, abhorrent or sadistic things, that no one with a conscience could possibly do. And such things do not always leave blood and body parts lying around.

In fact, many normal people have an unconscience about some things. So, a conscience deficit isn't a trait of the personality disordered exclusively.

Most of what weighs on a conscience is loaded there by the moral norms of religion and society. Some of these things aren't even moral. When religion and society are removed, conscience is stripped down to its pure form and we are left with the core human values that people of all religions and cultures embrace. Things like *personal honor and integrity and uprightness. Don't lie, cheat, or steal. Don't kill just to kill.* And so on. And all these moral walls that form our innate and natural conscience are built of empathy.

No empathy? Then you have a narcissist or psychopath. No conscience at all. Someone capable of doing anything to anyone as lightly as you'd brush a crumb from your sleeve.

Another fallacy you hear is imagining distinctions where there are none. Here's a guy at [FAQ Farm](#) *trying* to distinguish between narcissism and psychopathy. I love it when people do this...

NPD specifically manifests as a pathological craving for attention. Socio/psychopathy manifests as a pathological disregard for anything but self gratification. To compare the two would be rather like comparing a goal with a methodology.

Took the words right out of my mouth. So, why did he torpedo his own assertion by pointing this out? Craving attention is craving self gratification, which is what we get out of attention. What? The criminal psychopath gets no attention out of the person he torturing? or out of the homicide detectives? or out of the press? And, craving something is just the flip-side of having total disregard for anything but. There's no distinction there.

What *does* change on a continuum through these indistinguishable disorders is the risk taking. Like any drug, or anything that affects us like a drug, we develop a tolerance to it. It takes ever increasing doses to get that high. To "stimulate," if you will. For example, history shows that the ancient Roman arena spectacles steadily increased in barbarity. The torture needed to keep increasing the stimulus it delivered to create the mass sexual orgy that took place in the stands. (Good for business.)

The same thing happens with abusers. The more they get away with, the more they need to get away with. The further they have to push the envelope to get that exhilarating high from having gotten away with something bold and risky. One narcissist I know of, while trying to drive her sister to suicide, said to her, "I'm to the point of robbing a bank." The pretty school teacher didn't have so much as a traffic ticket on her record. But here she was, attempting murder. For,

doing it left-handedly doesn't transubstantiate attempted murder into anything but attempted murder.

It's the same with the brutality and violence (either physical or moral) of the abuse. That too must escalate to give the narcissist satisfaction.

So, some narcissists/psychopaths get to the point of taking greater risks than others. But that isn't a function of how sick they are. It's a function of how addicted they are.

It's also largely a function of how much power they have or what environment they're operating in. Some narcissists get to the point of being more brutal than others. Some get better at repressing their feelings. Some succeed in distancing themselves from themselves better, some getting to the point that they don't even feel bodily sensations. That happens to some extent in all narcissists/psychopaths.

But this may be just natural variation within the group. The **underlying personality traits** seem to be universal among narcissists/psychopaths.

It doesn't even make much sense to say that one is more severe than the other. A powerful person who can't be held to account (e.g., Saddam Hussein) will always go farther than someone whose brother is an FBI agent.

Besides, if you say that those who commit a physically violent crime are the sickest, we're then lead to deduce that the severity of mental illness is a function of the criminal penalty imposed on its expression. Therefore, those who drive others to suicide are mentally healthy! Absurd. They are just sneakier, that's all.

In fact, I see nothing in the profile of a psychopath (as explained in [Predators](#) for *Psychology Today* by Hare) that isn't in a narcissist, though a narcissist's need for excitement seems to depend on the circumstances and not be constant. I sure see excitability, hypertension, and an almost drunken giddiness with risk taking, though. They seem to be "on" or "off" and are suddenly really dopey when off. But again, this difference could well be just variation of the same personality trait along that continuum though.

3.2.3 The Dissimulation Factor

Any description of malignant narcissism must cope with an apparent contradiction: ordinarily, most people acquainted with a malignant narcissist

don't see the narcissistic character traits in him or her. Sometimes this blindness can be well-nigh amazing. How does it happen?

The answer is that narcissists are magicians. Magic is the art of creating illusions. In this case, the illusion is their false image.



In other words, in this case the magical art is the art of con artistry. Every narcissist is a [con artist](#)²⁶². He has been learning and practicing the art since he was six or seven years old. So, by the time he's grown, even if he isn't particularly intelligent, sheer trial-and-error will have made him very good at fooling people.

In other words, a narcissist is a **performer** who **manipulates perceptions**, an **actor** who wears a **mask**.



Why? To know why, just put yourself in his shoes for a moment. You have to tear others down to feel good about yourself. So, you are their enemy. You will hurt them if you can. It's best if they don't know that.

The vast majority of narcissists cannot afford to have people know them as they really are. Even the likes of Adolf Hitler must con people with a Mr-Nice-Guy act to gain absolute power. Only then does the mask come off.

There is an interesting point of religious doctrine on this that has been largely forgotten since the Middle Ages. It is that evil lurks beneath a beautiful exterior. In the vernacular today, we say that *Beauty runs skin deep*. We see this principle

reflected in the following medieval painting of the fall of the bad angels. They aren't depicted as ugly demons: they are depicted as beautiful spirits indistinguishable outwardly from the good angels. In other words, malevolence disguises itself with sanctimony.



It's easy to see why. No one wants others to see them as bad. Moreover, that's the kiss of death to a predator, because it's like a repellent that warns potential prey to mistrust and stay away from him. Indeed, if you were a malignant narcissist, what would be your biggest fear?

Exposure^[32], right? You're like a vampire to whom the light of day is lethal. Your greatest fear would be the same as that of any hungry, stalking predator — exposure.

You'd live in constant fear of people finding out that you're a wolf beneath your sheep's clothing, that you just use people, that you want to take away anything they have that you don't have, and that you will vandalize their image to improve your own. You'd live in constant fear of them learning the shocking truth about your past exploits, about the many you've used and trashed in your wake. You'd live in constant fear of people discovering, not just what you do for a moral living, but whom you do it to.

Because you're a destroyer. And you can't resist a chance to vaunt yourself on others by making someone bend over for it or kicking someone when they're down.

Nothing can cover the smell of the spirit in which such things are done. A whiff of that spirit gives people the Big Chill. They abhor it. Even most hardened criminals are above doing things as sickening as the things you do. As Jesus of Nazareth said, they don't hand their child a poisonous snake when that child hungers. But a narcissist does.

So, though there is such a thing as an out-of-the-closet narcissist (one who needn't and doesn't hide how bad he is and may even show it off to terrorize those at his mercy), far more often than not, people with NPD take great pains to make sure they have an angel-face and a reputation to match. (Exceptions are those narcissists seeking negative attention in lieu of the other kind.)

Their image is precisely the **negative** of their true selves. In other words, the false image they create dis-simulates their true self. What do I mean by that? Follows a typical case that shows how narcissists operate.

3.2.3.1 Case Study in Dissimulation

A narcissist began telling her family the following story about her best friend: This other young woman's mother was dying of cancer. The narcissist said that her friend was astonishingly cold-hearted — crass even — that she had no feelings for her mother, that she even ignored her mother when they went to visit, nosing through her jewelry instead of joining in the conversation, as if she couldn't wait to have her mother's things.

Truth? No, the future proved it to be [projection](#)^[300]. It was the narcissist who wished her mother dead, presumably for two reasons: because her mother was the only family member who had a reign on her and because she wanted her mother's things. A few years later, she was the one who showed that she had no feelings for her mother.



This illustrates how a narcissist deals with unwanted awareness of their moral turpitude whenever they fail to keep themselves sufficiently distracted and it surfaces to consciousness on them: they just tell themselves, "No, I'm not like that...SHE is!" projecting that fault or failing off onto the nearest target.

A few years later, this narcissist's mother got leukemia and was already in great pain and unable to walk, awaiting the horrible end when only massive doses of morphine have any effect. The narcissist behaved normally while other people

were around, talking endlessly about every detail of what she did in caring for her mother.

She bought this pill case for her mother and that storage caddy. You got a demonstrated lecture on how she prepared the chemotherapy syringes. She showed you where she stored them in the refrigerator and why she prepared them at the precise times of the day she chose. You got the complete rundown on the list of medications, the times, and dosages of each. And she told you that the visiting nurses said her efforts "to save" her mother were "heroic." Nonetheless, they didn't know some stuff she knew from college biology so she doubted their competence and didn't trust them to administer chemotherapy right because they had made a huge mistake in loading the syringe once, one that could have killed her mother. You had to butt-in on this saga to ask her to tell you how her mother was. That took about ten seconds, and then it was back to the adventures of the star of the show. You learned that some people don't dispose of used hypodermic needles properly. But she had managed to figure out a complicated way to do it just right — make a nurse she knew dispose of them at the hospital. *Et ad infinitum.*

By having nothing else to talk about (not even her mother's condition or prognosis) and not letting you get a word in edgewise, she was energetically painting a picture of herself as devoted to the exceptional care of her sick mother. But it was just, as the poet T.S. Eliot would say, 'a face you prepare to meet the faces that you meet.' The doctors, friends and family, visiting nurses, and so forth.

And it was infernally ironic.

For, in private with her mother the narcissist underwent a shocking transfiguration. I myself wouldn't believe what I'm about to say if I hadn't later seen this narcissist do much the same thing to someone else and if I didn't have enough of the story from her own lips to know that it's true.

I can't imagine thinking of such a thing at a moment like that, but she must have instantly realized that her mother's illness turned the tables. Suddenly her mother was dying and *needed her* and therefore couldn't kick her out of the nest to go pay rent somewhere and buy her own groceries and cook her own meals and do her own laundry from now on. No need for the loving-daughter act anymore.

The rein was off.

From everything I've seen and heard about narcissists, I can't help but believe

that her mother's **emotional vulnerability** at this time was all it took to trigger an attack.

If they are able to recognize the needs of others, they tend to view these factors as signs of weakness and vulnerability (DSM-IV™, 1994, p. 659) (Oldham, 1990, p. 96). When able to perceive this vulnerability, individuals with NPD behave in a dominant and coercive manner (Birtchnell, Costello, ed., 1996, p. 186).

— Sharon C. Ekleberry,
[Dual Diagnosis and the Narcissistic Personality Disorder](#)

I'll say. From what I've seen, that's an understatement. The coercion is just the preface (to establish a pretext) for the attack. **I am convinced that the sight of vulnerability affects a narcissist like the smell of blood affects a shark.** I think they see vulnerability as an opportunity to vaunt themselves on someone and get high on the feeling.

She responded to her mother's need and vulnerability with (of all things) rejection and contempt. Yes, narcissists view even their loving mothers, fathers, children, and siblings as nothing but objects to get a step up on. Like psychopaths, they have no empathy, no human feeling whatsoever for any other living thing. In doing this, she was just doing behind closed doors what every narcissist does in secret to anyone dependent and defenseless — [withholding attention](#)^[23] in the form of greatly needed love and affection.

Presumably in shock at this bizarre reaction, her mother asked why the narcissist was treating her this way. "Please! Why are you mad at me? Why won't you even just come sit beside me?" There, immobilized on her deathbed, her mother was obviously afraid to be left alone in the dark. But her daughter refused to even be in the same room with her.

Within weeks of mother's death, she mentioned this to me for the first of several times, over drinks. Not with anything like her usual detail though. Just a few well-chosen lines about some mysterious goings on between her and her mother near the end, one night in particular. She said it had been bothering her. It was like she was trying to confide in me and NOT at the same time. We went way back, and I'd been there before, so I just shut up and listened.

She was so vague and sketchy you couldn't even tell what she was trying to say. In fact, opposite interpretations were sometimes possible. She prefaced it with how big an ordeal her mother's death was for *her* and then tried to get me to agree that, in spending yourself for others, it just gets to be too much. I knew

how that was didn't I? Then she complained about her mother expecting too much, bothering her by needing something constantly. I knew her mother was like that, didn't I?

I got the impression that she was puzzled by her own behavior. In fact, I've often gotten that impression from her — that she's puzzled by the things she does, doesn't know why she does them, knows there's something wrong with her, and wants me to pronounce her behavior — what, I don't really know. Okay? Normal? Justified? Whatever.

What did I think? About what? She hadn't yet told me anything to think anything about. She must have really needed absolution, because she returned to the subject on several occasions. But it was like going into a confessional and saying, "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. I stole two sticks of gum from the candy store" and failing to mention the bank you robbed. If you're under the age of seven you think that swindled "absolution" counts, but that's why they don't let kids under the Age of Reason go to confession.

Piecing it all together, the narcissist's full account amounts to this: Her mother's need for all this attention was "tapping her out." The narcissist said that as if it's a perfectly normal and appropriate thing to say. She said her mother was "expecting too much" and that she felt like her mother was thus "sucking her life blood." Yes, that's right: her mother has leukemia and the narcissist thinks she's the one whose blood is getting devoured. So, her flawed mother just had to stop preying on her by "needing" so much. She whined at me that her mother had whined at her. That's when she told me that her mother had asked her why she was treating her the way she was. And that's when, for the first time, she let slip a detail that divulged the true nature of what she'd done.

Her mother's last night at home. The sudden onset of the terrible pain of the end. The daughter decides it's time to go upstairs to bed. She said she could hear her mother keep crying, "Help me! Help me! Why won't you help me?"

Woops. I suppose the look on my face let her know she'd said too much.

"Well," I asked, "why wouldn't you help her? What did she want you to do?"

"Well, I had already given her all the pain medication the doctor's prescription allowed, and I couldn't call him at 2 AM."

If it hadn't been too late to help her mother, I do think I would have flown across the table at her throat. But it was too late. Everything just went all black inside

me, and I didn't say another word.

I felt like F. Scott Fitzgerald described Nick at the end of *The Great Gatsby* in the same kind of moment, after having refused to shake hands with someone like this woman.

I couldn't forgive him or like him but I saw that what he had done was, to him, entirely justified. It was all very careless and confused. They were careless people, Tom and Daisy—they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made

I shook hands with him; it seemed silly not to, for I felt suddenly as though I were talking to a child. Then he went into the jewelry store to buy a pearl necklace—or perhaps only a pair of cuff buttons—rid of my provincial squeamishness forever.

She continued, saying that it's too bad she had to get "pretty nasty" with her mother to make her be quiet.

I've seen "nasty." Since then I've seen what she does when someone she can really hurt lets their soft underbelly show. One would swear she's retaliating against some offense. She gets just vicious. Sadistic. In fact, years earlier, in telling me how she had broken up with a man who wanted to marry her, she told me that she doesn't know what comes over her at such moments when she "loses her temper" at someone, but that she just tears into them and doesn't stop when she sees she's hurting them, not till she's "ripped to them shreds" and "there is just nothing left of them at all."

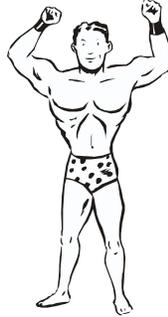
 Which pretty well states her intent. That isn't self defense. Normal people stop when they see the other party is hurt and backing off, because that's all they want. The narcissist has an entirely different goal, to cause pain.

That is sadism. I've seen it in other narcissists too. In fact, it's the most shocking thing about them, the thing that seeing isn't quite believing. When they see they've drawn blood, they don't let up, they go wild, kicking into high gear and savagely heaping abuse on you.



And it stands to reason that with this mental disease, that's what

you're going to get, because the more damage they inflict, the more powerful they are, the grander they are. The more they stomp you down, the greater-than-you they are.



Since self aggrandizement is all they care about, they are going to want to glorify themselves to the max by hurting you as much as they can. And that's sadism.

I suppose this woman thinks such opportunities are a chance to redeem herself for having a soft underbelly herself when she was a little girl and her narcissistic Daddy eviscerated her for it. He'd be satisfied with her now if he could see her being just like him.

I've compared notes with that man who loved her and, one night after making love to her, asked her to marry him and got ripped to pieces and reduced to tears for it.

All you see is her wide open maw when the dragon inside roars out, because it seems to fill the whole room. So I know that the heartrending pleas of a dying mother that would draw pity from a stone turned this narcissist TO stone. They touched nothing human in her. They touched off a Narcissistic Rage — the first one she had ever dared unleash at her mother.

Then this narcissist got her only sibling disowned and threatened with the police for trying to see their father. Within six months she had sole possession of the house and property. During this time she started gobbing make-up on her image a mile thick: she suddenly became very religious, started going to daily mass, started teaching Sunday School, started taking Communion to elderly shut-ins, and carved out for herself a widespread reputation as a devoted caretaker of her helpless, aged father. And she devotedly tended to her mother's grave.

👁️ And so, **appearances can be deceiving**. Narcissists are a Mr. Hyde hiding behind a Dr. Jekyll facade. How they behave behind closed doors in the dark, is radically different from how they behave in the light of day. It

took no great intelligence for this woman to construct her facade. Narcissists are con artists who go to extraordinary lengths to portray themselves as the very antithesis of what they really are. In every detail.

 That's how they "block the kick," as one narcissist I know of puts it. It's how they make sure nobody will believe their victims' complaints. They cover every dirty deed with a grand display that makes them seem like the kind of person who would never do *precisely that kind of thing*. Moreover, since they identify with their image instead of their true selves, they think that by doctoring this particular aspect of their image they expunge that particular sin. And when you consider that they've been at this game since they were six or seven years old, they've had a lot of training and experience and are very good at it.

 This diabolical behavior is so characteristic of narcissists that, if you know a person is a narcissist, you can tell what she's done in the dark from she does in the light of day. Her true image will be the exact negative of her projected image in every respect. If she acts like she's on someone's side, her knife is in their back. If she acts like she's tenderly caring for someone, she's abusing them. If she says she's afraid of someone, she's contemplating murdering them. And so on.

3.3 Red Flags of Narcissism

Since narcissists are such expert con artists, how do you spot them? By not judging by appearances. Or reputation.

A specific behavior, such as being haughty, inconsiderate, or ignoring somebody, can occur in widely varying contexts. So, it can be done for many reasons, not just narcissistic reasons. Nonetheless, there are few behaviors so unique to persons suffering from NPD that they should serve as red flags.

Here are eight red flags:

- puts on a conspicuous display of goodness and kindness
- damages the images of most others
- has a history of past upheavals
- is hated for mysterious reasons by people close to them
- exhibits unnatural and perplexing behavior — backwards reactions to things
- is a control freak, trampling privacy/boundaries
- is extremely self-absorbed

- has a hostile reaction to attention and credit given others

3.3.1 Shows Off Goodness and Kindness

I used to give people who made a show of religiousness, kindness, caring, or any other goodness the benefit of the doubt. I am really sorry I didn't listen to my common sense that doing things *to be seen doing them* is fraud, not just adultery. I don't expect you to take my word for it, but this is what my life has taught me: Anybody putting on the goody-two-shoes act a little too thick I get away from, because I know they're just using it as make-up to cover a zit.

In other words, they're dis-simulating their true selves. The aim is to carve out a false image that is the antithesis — negative — of their true selves. It's a work of art, not the real thing.

The truly good, kind, and caring do good to do it, not to be seen doing it. And the difference between them and show-offs is obvious.

3.3.2 Vandalizes Others' Images

Then there is the other side of the coin, which is an even more menacing sign of bad faith — what narcissists do to the images of others. Consumed with [pathological envy](#)^[35], they make themselves look good the bogus way, by making others look bad.

They [speak well of very few others](#)^[240]. Only their narcissistic parent (when no longer vulnerable to that parent) and anyone they can aggrandize themselves by association with at others' expense.

For example, if you don't get along with someone, the narcissist will say, "I get along with him fine." He will have nothing but praise for that person. Likewise, if you got bad service at a restaurant, the narcissist will say, "They gave *me* excellent service." The narcissist praises the other because it reflects badly on you and well on him.

Similarly, the narcissist with a trophy wife goes around praising her beauty. He's aggrandizing himself by association with her. And at the expense of everyone not good enough to win a trophy wife like his. He'll likewise aggrandize himself by association with some important person he knows, praising that person everywhere he goes to name-drop.

But such special cases are the only ones you hear a good word about from a

narcissist. In fact, a narcissist will stubbornly refuse to admit any fault in them at all. They are ideal, perfect in his or her eyes.

But the rest of humanity gets the opposite. Often, narcissists glibly sneak bad ideas about others into your head. They do this by chipping away at that person's image subtly and relentlessly every time they mention him or her. Often perfuming the bad offering to cover up its smell.

An example is the man who never spoke of his wife except when talking about something else and laughing that, "Yeah, and the wife got pretty shook up about it."

That doesn't sound so bad, does it? But often this was pure fiction. More important, is that the way you'd like to hear yourself spoken of? Is that the way you'd talk about someone you want others to like? What type of picture does that paint of her? Is his talk of her tending to make people think well of her and respect her? Does it endear her to them?

That narcissist would have blown a gasket if anyone had ever described him as easily shook up. Yet for forty years he relentlessly chipped away at his wife's image with little vandalizing remarks like that, never saying anything about her that made you tend to like and admire her. Always characterizing her in a way that diminished her.

In fact, this "shook up" thing is almost cultural, used by many men on women. So, ladies, here's a bazooka: Beat him to the punch in saying it — tell *him* not to get "shook up," and watch the stunned look on his face. He suddenly will see offense in that remark.

However subtle the vandalism may be, you never hear a narcissist say anything about anyone that you would like to hear said about you.

Worse, narcissists are gossips. They eagerly listen to and spread slander. They are self-righteous finger-pointers, pulling the same stunt Lucifer did in the old gnostic myth about Lucifer coming before God everyday and accusing other angels of being bad. The result was "war in high places" till the good angels, lead by St. Michael the Archangel, cast down Lucifer (now called "Satan," that is, "the slanderer") to the status they deserve.

Narcissists can make it sound like a virtue, but giving others a bad name isn't a *good* deed. Even if the report is true, it cannot possibly be done in the spirit of goodwill unless it is done in true witness — that is, responsible witness, on the

record, not behind the back. Just because the badmouth perfumes his speech with words like *love* and *Christian* and *concern* and *for the sake of our children* (always the justification when there is no justification) and sports a halo does not change the spirit in which slander is done.

Shakespeare gives us a marvelous example of sugaring o'er slander with false concern or pity in a speech the usurper King Claudius makes to Hamlet before the whole court:

'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet,
 To give these mourning duties to your father;
 But you must know, your father lost a father;
 That father lost, lost his, and the survivor bound
 In filial obligation for some term
 To do obsequious sorrow. But to persever
 In obstinate condolment is a course
 Of impious stubbornness. 'Tis unmanly grief;
 It shows a will most incorrect to heaven,
 A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,
 An understanding simple and unschool'd;
 For what we know must be, and is as common
 As any the most vulgar thing to sense,
 Why should we in our peevish opposition
 Take it to heart? Fie! 'tis a fault to heaven,
 A fault against the dead, a fault to nature,
 To reason most absurd, whose common theme
 Is death of fathers, and who still hath cried,
 From the first corse till he that died to-day,
 'This must be so.' We pray you throw to earth
 This unprevailing woe, and think of us
 As of a father; for let the world take note
 You are the most immediate to our throne,
 And with no less nobility of love
 Than that which dearest father bears his son
 Do I impart toward you. For your intent
 In going back to school in Wittenberg,
 It is most retrograde to our desire;
 And we beseech you, bend you to remain
 Here in the cheer and comfort of our eye,
 Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.

Such kind and pious words, eh? Yet, how would you like that said to *you* in front of a hundred people? Notice how sweetly and left-handedly Claudius calls Hamlet obsequious, obstinate, impious, stubborn, unmanly, willful, weak,

impatient, a simpleton, ignorant, senseless, peevish, a sinner against God and the dead and nature, irrational, impotent, and intent on doing things retrograde to the king's desire. Talk about "betrayal with a kiss."

The whole court immediately starts treating Hamlet as though he's radioactive. His girlfriend's father and brother immediately order her to dump him. He's a marked man.

And for doing what? For not forgetting the dead king, his father, and cutting short the customary mourning period to celebrate the remarriage of the queen to the usurper. Typical narcissist — can make even a virtuous act sound heinous.

If you know that narcissists are inveterate character assassins, it's easy to spot them. A narcissist has a trail of trashed good names and careers in his wake. He will even have told you strange and terrible lies about the people in his own immediate family.

If you know the person he is telling you something strange about, compare the accusation with your own observations. A narcissist will have ignored that person's real faults and smeared one of his or her *virtues* as a vice! And, if you know the narcissist, you'll find the narcissist himself is guilty of the very thing he's accusing this other person of.

3.3.3 History of Past Upheavals

If you know a narcissist's history, you will usually see a track record of mysterious upheavals in his life. He suddenly up and moves to a different school or job in a different town every few years. That is, every time the good angels in his Pathological Space start comparing notes, get his number, and become enraged. In one narcissist I know of, these upheavals began with one in the eighth grade.

3.3.4 Hated for Mysterious Reasons by People Close to Them

In fact, another red flag is being hated — I mean *really* hated — for mysterious reasons. And by people that hating is uncharacteristic of. If, say, a person's adult son or daughter doesn't even visit him in the hospital or go to his funeral,* there is a heavy-duty reason for that. Fortunately, it's not our responsibility to judge. But we do need to appreciate the weight of such a startling fact. People do things for reasons. They are not always good reasons or just reasons, but people do things for reasons.

* Good examples: Abraham Lincoln did not go to his father's funeral, and Barbara Bush did not go to

her mother's funeral.

3.3.5 Perplexing Behavior - Backward Reactions to Things

The reddest red flag is perverted behavior. Leave out the sexual connotation: I use that word *perverted* because it means "thoroughly twisted" or "turned backwards." Any act can be perverted. Perverted behavior is the extreme opposite of what is called for. This is behavior that goes against nature, **behavior that makes you want to pinch yourself.**

In other words, it's a surprise, a shock, the *last* thing you expected.

Like maybe everyone in that classroom was sitting up straight with all eyes riveted upon Teacher and you could have heard a pin drop. Ka-BOOM! He flies into snarling rage at some kid he won't identify as though that kid just flipped him the bird or something.

Or maybe you've been dating him for six months, and he has been saying from day one that he wanted you marry him. You finally tell him you love him. Ka-BOOM! He gets mad and tells you that you don't love him. And demands that you wear your hair a different way. If you really love him, you will, you know.

Perplexing.

In my experience, afterwards you are unable to say what the blow-up was even *about*. That isn't normal. When you have an argument with a normal person, afterwards you *can* say what it was about.

Though such off-the-wall flights into rage are the most memorable instances of perverted behavior, they aren't the only kind. In fact, other kinds are more telling.

For example, take a situation that has a nearly irresistible pull on the heartstrings. Imagine that some person in the room is suffering great grief and sorrow and breaks down into tears. Seeing that affects normal people like gravity, attracting them to that person to comfort her or him. But what does a narcissist do? The exact opposite. Remember, she must deny [attention](#)^[23] to that person, and she can't stand to see anyone else give attention to that person. So, you'd think anti-gravity was impelling her out the door on the far end of that room as she hurries out jabbering cheerily about everything BUT what is going on.

That's what I mean by "perverted" reactions to things — weird, backwards reactions to things. Behaviors that make you feel like you just stepped into [The Twilight Zone](#) and need to pinch yourself.

It's always a sign that a person is dangerous in some way. People not suffering from Antisocial Personality Disorder or Narcissistic Personality Disorder rarely exhibit perverted behavior unless under extreme pressure to do so.

Inappropriate laughter is an example. I'm not talking about the inappropriate laughter that sometimes comes from a nervous or self-conscious person, or from people under a great weight of fear, pressure, or sorrow. That's a release, and we understand it. I'm talking about inappropriate laughter that makes you wonder where it came from.

For instance, when the Challenger (space shuttle) exploded on take-off, we saw it live on television. As with the 9/11 Attack, the networks replayed the spectacular footage every two minutes while shocked America got the news and gathered around television sets. One narcissist I know of was so in need of getting his stunned co-workers' attention off the TV and onto himself that he put on a comedy act, parodying what the victims were saying to each other as the rocket plummeted into the sea. Though his fellow workers were scared to death of becoming the object of one of his persecutions, they were shocked at this chilling display of inhumanity and could manage only nervous laughter at the creep's attention-getting jokes.

That happens only when the victims aren't regarded as human beings. Either because they have been demonized by dehumanizing caricatures in propaganda or because the laugher is a psychopath or narcissist.

Other examples of perverted behavior are:

- reacting with contempt to what should evoke sympathy
- reacting with aversion to what should attract
- reacting with anger to what should please (such as finding some mysterious offense in an attempt to suck up)
- getting angrier in reaction to what should appease (Narcissistic Rage)

In short, whenever you see a backwards reaction to something, **believe your eyes and ears**. Accept this behavior's perplexity and know what you know — that there is something seriously wrong with that person. And don't forget about it tomorrow when he's Dr. Jekyll again.

3.3.6 Tramples Privacy/Boundaries as a Control-Freak

Yet another red flag is a universal disrespect for other people's privacy, [boundaries](#)^[402]. This is a result of the narcissist viewing people as mere objects there for her sake to serve *her* needs and desires.

I gave an example in the previous section, in the boyfriend who disrespects your right to decide how you wear your hair. It's your body, not his. You're the one who lives with the consequences of the decision, not him. You aren't his car, something he owns and therefore can paint a different color if he wishes. *You* own you.

Here's another, more literal, example. Your property line affects him like waving a red flag affects a bull. He must violate it and make what's your territory his territory. So, he parks on your lawn, ties his big mean dog out at the edge of his property to use yours (and menace you with Rover). He reacts to your claim of ownership as though you are stealing from him. Nothing short of a big fence will stop him from making your property his. And then he'll probably ram it with his truck if he thinks you'll be intimidated by that.

In other words, he is incapable of "distinguishing between mine and thine."



Which is why a narcissist sticks his nose into everything, for he considers your business his business. He feels it incumbent on him to bestow judgment every single thing people think, say, do, wear, or even feel. His disapproval (or the threat of it) is a stick this control freak with a [God Complex](#)^[126] herds people with.

He is possessing you.

Individuals with NPD are likely to attempt to get their needs met in relationships without acknowledging the independent existence of those from which they "expect to feed."

— Sharon C. Ekleberry,
[Dual Diagnosis and the Narcissistic Personality Disorder](#)

So, he presumptuously makes other people's choices for them. Often to ridiculous extremes, such as telling people how to wear their hair, what clothes

to wear, where to buy things and what brands to buy, what chair to sit in, what end to start on, which route to take, and so on. You can tell he's doing it just to do it, because he makes people change their choice to comply with his wishes. In fact, if the same person is doing what he said to do the last time, the narcissist tells her to do it differently this time.

In short, a narcissist views others as [objects](#)^[144] on a chess board, or tools, robots, the executioners of *his* will. One I know of, a private school principal, demonstrates the desperate compulsion narcissists have to control people. He is said to have nearly driven almost a thousand people to justifiable homicide by blasting over an hour's worth of nonstop orders over a blaring squawk box about what to do in an annual Christmas celebration that everybody had carried off without instructions for decades. Nobody could walk into a room and sit down without this clown telling them to sit somewhere else.

3.3.7 Extreme Self-Absorption

Extreme self-absorption is another red flag. Unless a narcissist is a "doting" narcissist who keeps a "star" child he's exploiting under a microscope, just ask him about his family. You will be astounded at what he *doesn't* know about them.

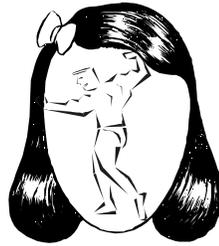
That's the dead give-away.

To test a person, write a basic character description of each member of his immediate family. Note things like whether this person is religious, excitable, highly motivated — that's all, just basic stuff that anyone who sees them regularly should know about them. If you ask a narcissist to match each character description with the family member it belongs to, he will gape at you as though you just asked him to show the derivation of $E = mc^2$.

It will astound him that you would expect him to know such things about his wife and children.

Because you know more about cartoon characters than a narcissist knows about the members of his immediate family. For, he can learn nothing about what he willfully, relentlessly, and reflexively pays no attention to.

Narcissists are notorious for being unable to remember people's names or to even recognize their faces outside the usual setting. That's because people all look the same to you when they all look like this.



In your encounters with them, you make sure you get 100% of their attention while giving them zero of yours. So, what did they say? Anything? Did they even get a word in edgewise? If they did, you didn't hear it.

A narcissist may, for example, recognize her son in the home but not when she runs into him in the grocery store — giving him a stupid stare as he approaches, till he clues her by saying, "Hi, Mom."

Here are some other illustrative examples from narcissists I have known or heard about:

- Does not know how to spell his daughter's name.
- Never had any idea what kind of grades his kids got.
- Does not know his wife or children's birthdays.
- Has never visited the major Website his/her child/sibling published.
- Does not know how old his children are.
- Does not know that his daughter was a National Merit Finalist.
- Has no idea how good his kids are at any sport or other activity.
- Does not know what perfume his wife wears.
- Has never read the book his child wrote.
- Never does learn the names of the students in his/her classes.
- Cannot get the names of people "with two first names" straight. (viz., Jean Paul, Howard Dean, John Kerry, or even John Edwards)
- Does not know the names of his children's spouses, let alone his grandchildren.
- Has never shown up to watch his son play varsity sports.
- Does not know what his children majored in at college or what degrees they earned.
- Does not know whether his teen-age son/daughter is dating.
- Has never met the boy his teen-age daughter has been dating for three years.

One could hardly be less interested in a fly on the wall.

3.3.8 Hostile Reaction to Attention or Credit Given Others

And then, of course, we get to the heart of malignant narcissism, Narcissistic Envy.

You will notice that, invariably, when anyone is given recognition before the group, a narcissist immediately starts showing dislike for, or animosity toward, that person.

Envy is bitter, an extremely unpleasant emotion. It's normal only when some other party really has robbed us of our due.

A narcissist's unnatural envy is so universal and so strong that he cannot even stand being *in* a place where someone else gets attention. If he cannot keep that from happening, he will find some way to absent himself from the situation — if only by turning away from others and staring at a corner of the ceiling.

3.4 Seriousness of NPD

Just because narcissists seldom get arrested doesn't mean they are harmless. It doesn't even mean that a narcissist has committed no crime.

What's more, people in general, and many healthcare professionals (who have no excuse for such ignorance), seem to think along the lines of that old childish chant *Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me*. Hence, toward even the most sadistic mental cruelty, they seem to take the referee's stance: *No harm, no foul*.

No harm, eh? I agree with Sam Vaknin (see below): I think this is because virtually everyone has been a [bystander](#)^[389] to bullying. In the school yard, the family, the workplace, and the public forum. That is, virtually everyone has been a participant in it by consent to it; virtually everyone has blamed and alienated the victim, for fear of the bully's wrath. So, I too think this marvelous collective obtuseness is an outward sign of suppressed collective guilt.

For whatever reason, most people, including many mental healthcare professionals, think mental cruelty is nothing compared to a physical blow, which they duly abhor, even if in self defense by a victim. That notion is deplorably simplistic.

Recently, advocates of the sexually abused have won some consideration of its victims, but society's marvelous obtuseness has somehow managed to unsee that

sexual abuse is just a form of psychological abuse. Result? They still make nothing of psychological abuse, unless the abuser touches you sexually.

I know of a high school counselor who blamed the victim for it. Whenever a teacher came to him about a student being picked on and alienated from the rest of a class, his reply was that he would "have a talk with" the ringleaders but that we had to understand that there wasn't much he could do about it because the victim was . . . you know . . . "vulnerable."

That attitude is all too common in schools. The moral fault found is in the victim's vulnerability, not the abuser's conduct.

Because hard evidence and witnesses are lacking, making prosecution impossible, people conveniently act as though psychological abuse is just something people have a right to do to you. Wrong, denying you human treatment is denying you a human right.

Whether it can be prosecuted or not, it should be punished with opprobrium, not winked at, by those who know it's going on

Anyone who has been the victim of both physical and psychological abuse (emotional and verbal abuse) will tell you that the psychological abuse is worse. *It does* damage. Psychological injuries are real, and they often require treatment. Much more treatment than a broken nose.

If insurance companies had to pay for that treatment, and pay for quality treatment (= treatment by practitioners as highly qualified as those who treat the body must be), psychological abuse would stop being nothing, and bullies would lose their de facto right to psychologically abuse others, even to the point of driving their prey to suicide.

Let's hear what a narcissist himself has to say on the subject:

Is sexual abuse worse than emotional abuse? Is verbal abuse less deleterious than physical abuse (beatings)? Somehow, the professional literature implies that there is a hierarchy with sexual mistreatment at its nadir. ...Yet, these distinctions are spurious. One's mental space is as important to one's healthy development and proper adult functioning as one's body. Indeed, the damage in sexual abuse is hardly corporeal. It is the psychological intrusion, coercion, and the demolition of nascent boundaries of the self that inflict the most damage. Abuse is a form of long-term torture usually inflicted by one's nearest and dearest. It is a grievous violation of trust and it leads to disorientation, fear,

depression, and suicidal ideation. ...The abused are deformed by the abuser both overtly - many develop mental health disorders and dysfunctional behaviors - and, more perniciously, covertly. The abuser, like some kind of alien life form, invades and colonizes the victim's mind and becomes a permanent presence. In a way, psychological abuse - emotional and verbal - is harder to "erase" and "deprogram". ...Social attitudes don't help. While sexual and physical abuse are slowly coming to the open and being recognized as the scourges that they are - psychological abuse is still largely ignored. ...Abusers find refuge in the general disdain for the weak and the vulnerable which is the result of suppressed collective guilt. ...The professional community is no less to blame. Emotional and verbal abuse are perceived and analyzed in "relative" terms - not as the absolute evils that they are.

— Sam Vaknin, [The Gradations of Abuse](#)

So, it's time to start appreciating the seriousness of NPD.

Besides, many, if not most, narcissists *are* physically violent. But physical abuse in the home, or by siblings, seldom gets reported.

Furthermore, NPD makes those who have it predators who bully, slander, calumniate, and otherwise use others to feed on, like the mythical character of a vampire does. Not harmless. NPD is a serious threat to the health and well being of others, especially any children or employees at the narcissist's mercy.

Narcissists and psychopaths leave a trail of human wreckage in their wake.

First let's notice what they do to their own children. The way they treat their children passes the curse of this disease to the next generation, often making one or more their children malignant narcissists. In addition, they leave deep psychological scars on all their [children](#)^[445], scars that do real damage to their whole lives.

They also abuse their spouses and friends. They are love thieves. They con people, parasitize people, get siblings disinherited, and commit all kinds of theft and extortion, inflicting psychological injury that others end up needing treatment for.

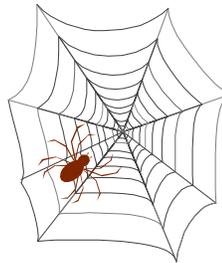
They vaunt themselves on others for the same reason a drunk drinks: to feel better. And like a drunk, they develop a tolerance for their drug. The more powerful they are on you, the better they feel. So they are wanton. They go hog wild and ruin whole lives and careers. They make people social outcasts by

spreading vicious lies^[88] about them. In positions of power they don't just bully and fire, they blackball. Their bullying or slander in the school or workplace are often crimes and seldom reported.

Your pedophile and child molester are usually a malignant narcissist. And, like all narcissists, they are con artists who get away with it.

For, these spiders commit the perfect crime^[332] — the one so incredible nobody believes it. Because it's wanton, bizarrely evil, and targets the last people you'd think the narcissist would want to hurt. So, nobody believes Angelface would do such a thing.

Thus people with NPD enmesh their prey in a web that is a Catch-22: Nobody will believe the victim. In fact, a narcissist often taunts the victim by daring him or her to try to get anyone to believe their complaint.



Indeed, when a victim does report the bizarre brand of unprovoked abuse narcissists dish out, she is sorry. Minds and ears slam shut in her face, because, as she feared, *she* is assumed to be the crazy one. Unless there is a dead body, rape kit, or X-ray evidence that cannot be ignored, even police dismiss the complaint with a "Now why would anyone do that?"

Unknowing they've ever heard of a motive called "malice."

But they know very well that many people need no reason to commit a crime, that they just do it to do it and even do it for anti-reasons, such as to "punish" the good deed of loving them or being their benefactor.

We all know that there are many twisted people in this world and that twisted people have twisted motives that make no sense to the rest of us. Indeed, the judicial system would get nowhere with the most serious crimes if it didn't acknowledge that malice/predation alone is sufficient motive, an ancient principle of jurisprudence.

In fact, malice is the only motive authorities can ever propose for many purely

predatory acts, such as rape or serial murder. When they discover a *corpus delicti* or a raped woman walks in the door they don't ask, "Now why would anyone do that?" They wouldn't dare. So why don't they stop acting too stupid to know that some people need no real reason to hurt others?

Narcissists can and do control themselves when someone's good opinion is sought — in front of a judge, for instance — and are skilled at presenting a respectable, even admirable, public face; some are actually meek and mild in public. Most of us who've lived with narcissists have had the experience of being disbelieved when we dared to tell what goes on in private; in some ways, we can hardly believe it ourselves. Life with a narcissist is like a bad dream that you can't wake up from. As a child, I used to be dazed by my narcissistic parent's public demeanor — I wanted to take that person home with me or else live our entire family life in the protection of the public eye — so attractive, modest, and sweet that even I could hardly believe that this same person could be the raging fiend I knew at home and had seriously thought, for a while when I was about ten, might be a werewolf. But truthful reports about narcissists' private behavior are often treated as symptoms of psychological problems in the person telling the tale — by naming the problem, you become the person with the problem (and, let's face it, it's more gratifying to work on changing someone responsive than it is to tackle a narcissist). And I'm talking about the experience many of us have had with "the helping professions," including doctors, teachers, clergy, counselors, and therapists. This stuff is hard to talk about in the first place because it's weird, shameful, and horrifying, and then insult is added to injury when we're dismissed as overreacting (how many times have we heard "You're just too sensitive"?), deluded or malicious, as inventing stories, exaggerating, imagining things, misinterpreting — it goes on and on.

— Joanna Ashmun, [*Narcissistic Personality Disorder: Aftermath*](#)

Psychiatrists are in a position to rectify this deplorable state of affairs. First, by treating NPD whenever it walks in their door and, second, by educating law enforcement and the professionals of other 'helping' agencies.

People within the mental health profession are finally speaking out against the failure to take malignant narcissism (NPD) seriously, conveniently con-fusing it with mere (benign) narcissism that is acquired and cultural or situational.

How serious is NPD?

 A person with NPD driving an old beater may run a stoplight and blame the victim. How? Because the victim didn't yield the right of way to

God Almighty just because of who he is or how old he is or what sex he is or whatever. Why did he bash the victim's car? Because it is a luxury car, not worse than the narcissist's old beater. Next, the big child flees the scene to escape responsibility, heedless of the likely consequences. For, like any child, he cannot think past lunch.

 A person with NPD may abuse his wife till she leaves him and then murder her for doing so.

 A surgeon with NPD may walk out of surgery to do some banking.

 A person with NPD may burn down her house to kill one of her children for insurance money, framing the other for her crime, without a twinge of empathy or conscience.

 A 19-year-old may murder his parents when they discover he has gotten 13 credit cards in his father's name and plans to go on a spending spree abroad with them.

Those examples are not fiction: they all have happened. NPD is no minor matter.

I get the impression that psychiatry is stumbling in the dark with NPD. That is understandable with such a mysterious disorder that puts anyone who tries to deal with a narcissist in Catch-22. Also, there has been very little research on NPD to guide mental health workers. But I do not understand how authorities can know that narcissists are two-faced pathological liars and yet be unaware that their self-reports are unreliable.

Consequently, different psychiatrists often diagnose the same patient differently. Also, they tend to look for and find attention-getting behavior in women and diagnose them as histrionic rather than narcissistic, because they do not notice the **abusive denial of attention** that distinguishes Narcissistic Personality Disorder from Histrionic Personality Disorder. On the other hand, in men they tend to miss the attention-getting behavior altogether unless it's overtly childish. Moreover, they sometimes attribute several personality disorders to the same patient. All this clouds the picture. And, I'm sorry I can't demystify it. Let's hope that someday somebody does.

3.5 Prevalence of NPD

How prevalent is NPD in society?

The "official" estimate (under 1% of the population) by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) in its [Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders](#) (DSM) is unreliable. In fact, it isn't even scientifically legitimate. Only in psychology would such an unscientific estimate be given a pass.

This estimate is arrived at by statistics on the diagnoses of **people undergoing clinical treatment**. One might as well think to estimate the prevalence of mental illness by hanging out a shingle that says, "Wanted, people who think they're sick in the head."

Does anyone seriously think *narcissists* will answer the call?

That's no way to estimate the prevalence of *any* psychiatric disorder, least of all the one whose fixed premise is denial of the disease. The very nature of NPD militates against a narcissist ever seeking help. A narcissist firmly believes that she is perfect and that there's nothing wrong with her at all — no matter what. She would rather die than know the truth. No exaggeration.

So, it's no wonder that the APA's estimate of NPD prevalence is so low: only a tiny fraction of narcissists get treatment, and the APA aren't sampling the general population: they're sampling clinical patients only.

Generally, patients end up in treatment one of two ways:

- They seek it.
- They are forced into it by the courts (as a consequence of trial for a crime).

Most narcissists convicted of violent crimes also meet the diagnostic criteria for psychopathy (Antisocial Personality Disorder), so they are not included in these statistics. Child molesters may be somewhat of an exception, because some are diagnosed as narcissists only. Hence it is mainly only this fraction of narcissistic criminal offenders that gets *forced* into treatment and appears in the statistics.

As for the vast majority of other narcissists? They almost never seek treatment.

And when narcissists do present for help, it's almost always for some other disorder, like depression or alcohol or drug dependence. If they get the right doctor, he or she *may* notice and diagnose the NPD. So, those few that come to

light this way are the only unimprisoned narcissists showing up in these statistics. They are those who incidentally get noticed when they suffer a major life crisis (i.e., a Narcissistic Crisis, usually brought on by the death of the narcissistic parent, the loss of a job, or abandonment by a spouse) that forces them into treatment for access to drugs like Prozac or to save their job by drying them out.

 In that case, however, they may present themselves for treatment, not because they're willing to admit there's something seriously wrong with them, but only because they are so desperate for attention that they will take it the only place they can get it. In fact, I know of one narcissist who became so desperate for attention after his second woman (read "momma") abandoned him that he kept calling an ambulance, thus forcing the County to keep taking him in and drying him out.

But if a therapist had told him that the root of his problem is NPD, he'd have walked out the door, deciding that the therapist was the crazy one.

In other words, these statistics are catching but a tiny subset of narcissists, and mainly only at the one or two windows of opportunity in their lives to show up in the statistics.

In fact, all psychopaths are narcissists and (according to the APA's own estimates) psychopaths alone comprise far more than 1% of the population. Boom, that fact alone blows the 1% estimate right out of the water. So, where is it coming from?

They must be counting only those diagnosed as narcissists only, ignoring cases of co-morbidity, which are the majority since they themselves instruct clinicians to diagnose more than one personality disorder if at all possible. (Which raises the question of why they do this. To muddy the picture?) That's how you fiddle with statistics to make the prevalence of NPD seem as low as fiddling with statistics can make it.

What's more, how can the APA pretend to estimate the prevalence of any personality disorder when the most commonly diagnosed one is 301.9, "Personality Disorder not Otherwise Specified"?

So, this official "estimate" smells fishy, because no first-year college math or science student would dare try to pass off statistics like that as the basis for a legitimate estimate of a mental illness' prevalence in the general population.

HUH?

So, what's up? Is this outfit that shoddy? Or is the mental-healthcare establishment a patronizing big brother that doesn't want us to know how prevalent NPD is? Are they afraid that "people would panic if they knew" and start pointing the finger all around, suspecting every other person of having NPD and stigmatizing those with the disease? Do they fear people would call for change in the law to allow forcing those suspected of having NPD to undergo evaluation and possibly be locked up? I don't know. But I can think of no plausible explanation except these two, and the first one (that this outfit is just that shoddy) seems less likely.

Such [diagnostic sampling bias](#) is a well-documented problem with prevalence estimates.

In 2004 the first actual population [survey](#) was conducted by one of the National Institutes of Health, giving us the first legitimate estimate of the prevalence of personality disorders in the United States. It doubled the [DSM estimate of 6–9%](#), estimating that 15% of Americans meet the diagnostic criteria for at least one of seven personality disorders — *not counting* borderline, schizotypal, and narcissistic disorders.

In addition, this survey showed how misleading clinical statistics can be.

Since Grant conducted the study among a randomly selected population-based sample, the prevalence rates from her study diverged from those presented in the DSM-IV-TR in some cases.

For instance, according to the DSM-IV-TR, dependent personality disorder is "among the most frequently reported personality disorders encountered in mental health clinics," the study report pointed out. However, Grant's study found it to be the least common in the population.

In addition, the DSM-IV-TR estimates that the prevalence of avoidant personality disorder in the general population is between 0.5 percent and 1 percent, yet Grant found it to be 2.36 percent.

Grant explained that prevalence estimates of various personality disorders in the DSM are based on relatively small, clinical studies of patients who are receiving mental health services on an inpatient or outpatient basis.

"You can run into problems if you rely solely on clinical samples," she said. "If you want to know the true prevalence of a certain disorder, you

have to get out of the clinic."

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That was a diplomatic way of putting it.



But, the APA's DSM estimates are still gospel.

As one might expect, these estimates are much higher (ten-to-fifteen times higher) for disorders that get many patients *forced* into treatment (like psychopathy). That means something. And it does NOT mean what it is so often represented as meaning = that disorders like NPD are far less common. To the contrary, it means the opposite = that the real prevalence of other disorders like NPD is probably much higher than treatment statistics would indicate.

3.5.1 A False Picture

In the 1960's, what had been common knowledge and was often the subject of public service announcements suddenly became one of the best-kept secrets in the world = that mental illness is, by far, the number-one health risk, the most prevalent disease in the world, and of epidemic proportions, affecting from 20-to-40% of the population!

Look around you. That's 2–4 out of every 10 people in your world.

Keeping this fact a secret paints a false picture. Because of it we assume that almost everyone we deal with is mentally healthy.

Okay, yet we observe a lot of craziness.

How do those two perceived facts add together?

NEARLY EVERYONE IS MENTALLY HEALTHY

+ WE SEE A LOT OF CRAZINESS

CRAZINESS IS NORMAL

We wrongly conclude then that this craziness is in mentally healthy people. So, we don't take it seriously; we regard it as normal. Nothing more than just, perhaps, a bit "offbeat."

As a result, much irrationality, delusion, and craziness passes for normal.

For example, there's this well-known assault on reality: *If a tree falls in the forest and nobody hears it, did it make a sound?* Yes, of course it did, duh. But many people, to whom truth is a relative quantity instead of an absolute, prefer to think "on a higher plane" and will argue with you about that. After all, why not? Nobody will question their mental health for doing so.

So, they fear not to insist that the moon is made of green cheese "for you" if you choose to believe it is.

When thinking like that passes for normal we are in trouble.

Consequently, we have people going around seriously talking about "your reality" and "my reality," "your truth" and "my truth."

None seem to *stop and think* what they are doing to their minds by distorting their thinking and perceptions this way. Indeed, they seem to think they can sabotage the proper functioning of the mind to create a delusion they call "their truth" without any ill effects — without forcing logical errors in the processing of any related matter, without programming their minds with brain-fogging contradictions that stop thinking dead in its tracks on any related matter. No matter how remotely related it is. One wonders how they think they can abuse their mind with lies and not damage its ability to think straight.

Because of the general perception that mental illness is rare, people can think this way and be judged perfectly sane.

Consider the wing-nuts on either end of the political spectrum. True, many say they're crazy, but few mean that literally. Consider also the mobs of wild people all over the planet blasphemously crying out in God's name for the annihilation of all westerners and Jews over a few silly cartoons. Such people *are* crazy but

are regarded as simply misguided.

The narcissists I have known all capitalized on this false picture that makes their prey blow off the warning signs as nothing to be concerned about.

For example:

- If a man has but two children and can't tell you what their college majors are, should you regard him as normal?
- If he laughs at something everybody else is shocked and sickened by, should you regard him as normal?
- If he lives in the basement to avoid all contact with his family outside of mealtime, should you regard him as normal?
- If he is a teacher the kids wouldn't dream of misbehaving on but has often said that teaching is really hard because a teacher is under a tremendous amount of pressure because kids just make you so mad that you really, really want to just pop off and whack them, should you regard him as normal?
- If he never misses the daily accident reports and, just to disgust everybody, says, "Good enough for 'em" because those killed and injured deserved to be killed or injured for "driving like hell," should you blow it off and regard him as normal?
- If he can't say "I love you" or "Thank you," should you regard him as normal?
- If he surprises you by lashing out in anger at you for no reason you can discern, and then just gets more angry, instead of less angry, when you try to back down or appease him, should you blow that off and regard him as normal?
- If he can't ever give you a reason for what he wants or does, should you regard him as normal?
- If he uses irrationality as a debating tactic, should you regard him as normal?
- If his behavior sometimes strikes you as so bizarre you have to pinch yourself, should you keep blowing it off and regarding him as normal?

No. He's mentally ill. (Stay away from people like that.)

So, all we can say about that official estimate of NPD is that it's definitely way below the mark. Not only do most narcissists manage to stay hired and out from behind bars, they *never* admit there's something wrong with them.

To arrive at a legitimate estimate, you must administer a test to a large representative sample of the population, chosen at random. Pollsters know how to do this so that the results are scientifically valid and reliable. But, as far as I

know, there is no reliable test for NPD.

What's more, even the diagnoses that current estimates are based on are unreliable.

*One issue in the diagnostic assessment bias literature is errors in applying the diagnostic criteria (Rabinowitz & Efron, 1997). In one demonstration of this bias, Morey and Ochoa (1989) asked 291 psychiatrists and psychologists to complete a symptom checklist for a client whom they had diagnosed with a personality disorder. When the checklists were later correlated with the DSM criteria, **nearly three of four clinicians had made mistakes** in applying the diagnostic criteria. Kappa coefficients of agreement between clinicians' checklists and the DSM criteria varied from 0.09 to .59, indicating a poor-to-modest level of agreement (Babbe, 1998). These results demonstrate the pervasiveness of errors in applying diagnostic criteria.*

*Errors in applying the DSM criteria were also reported by Davis, Blashfield, and McElroy (1993). They asked 42 psychologists and 17 psychiatrists to read and diagnose case reports containing different combinations of the DSM-III-R criteria for Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD; APA, 1987). They found that **94% of the clinicians made mistakes** applying the diagnostic criteria, and nearly one out of four clinicians made a diagnosis of NPD even if fewer than half the DSM criteria were met.*

Rubinson, Asnis, Harkavy, and Freidman (1988) found clinicians making more mistakes of omission than of commission in applying the DSM criteria. Researchers sent 113 questionnaires to a random sample of clinicians asking them what criteria they used to make a diagnosis of Major Depression. The 54 questionnaires returned indicated that clinicians' most often erred by failing to use all the diagnostic criteria in their diagnostic decision making.

— Jerry McLaughlin, "[Reducing diagnostic bias](#)," 01-07-02, *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*

Also, co-morbidity (with [mental disorders](#)^[58] like substance abuse and depression) muddy the picture of underlying [personality disorder](#)^[63]. In addition, diagnostic statistics vary over time, as one disorder after another becomes the current fad in diagnosis. For example, diagnoses of Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD) dramatically [increased in the 1970's](#), when it became popularized and even became the subject of a television miniseries.

And so, there is no reliable estimate of how prevalent NPD is in society

3.6 NPD - A Male Disease? An Adult Disease?

Another thing that warps our picture of NPD is double standards that are the fruit of stereotypes and sloppy thinking:

- *Women are nicer than men and therefore less likely to be narcissists.*
- *What's okay for men to do is wrong for women to do.*
- *All old people are nice and deserve a pass to treat young people without respect if they want.*
- *Physically hitting someone is worse than verbally abusing them or destroying their life through slander and calumny.*
- *Children are all innocent and, by nature, good.*

Rubbish. So, another thing that invalidates current statistics is mental-healthcare workers applying double standards of both age and sex.

An example of such a double-standard is this: if we see an action photo of an angry male coach with his mouth wide open and his face contorted, we see no ugliness. But if we see a photo of a female coach with but an intense look on her face, she is ugly. Right? So, we think nothing of this behavior in our male hero, but she strikes us as a bitch. We can hardly help that, because it's a cultural thing.

Again for example, personality traits regarded as distinguishing a man as worthy of admiration as a good, tough businessman are regarded as distinguishing a woman as a bitch. That's just a fact, and mental healthcare workers are taking few (if any) precautions to avoid applying such sexual double-standards in diagnosis.

Broverman, Broverman, Clarkson, Rosendrantz, and Vogel (1970), in probably the most publicized study of criterion bias, demonstrated how clinicians viewed typical male traits (i. e., independent, forceful, domineering) as more closely associated with a healthy adult than they did typical female traits (i. e., nurturing, deferential, reserved). This study demonstrated diagnostic criterion bias by showing how a prejudice towards typical male traits over female traits can cause misdiagnosis.

— Jerry McLaughlin, "[Reducing diagnostic bias](#)," 01-07-02, *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*

In [Abnormal Psychology, Chapter 12](#), Nietzel discusses this very issue in noting that women get diagnosed with Antisocial Personality Disorder far less frequently than men and with Histrionic Personality Disorder far more frequently than men. He cautions that the reason may be cultural factors affecting the mere *expression* of a personality trait so that it manifests itself differently in men than women but is due to the same underlying personality disorder in both. He also cites evidence of a sexual bias in clinicians diagnosing the disorder. Finally, he notes that the overall rate of diagnosis for any personality disorder may be faddish, following trends of popular interest in one personality disorder or another over time:

Histrionic personality disorder occurs in about 2 to 4 percent of the U.S. population (Weissman, 1993), and it appears to be diagnosed more often in females than in males. The reasons for this gender difference remain controversial. It may reflect cultural influences that lead females, especially, to believe that physical beauty is necessary for a satisfying life, or it may be due to the diagnostic biases described in Chapter 2. Recall the study by Maureen Ford and Tom Widiger in which clinicians were asked to diagnose fictitious cases. One case involved a typical description of antisocial personality disorder for which the person was said to be either a man or a woman; the other described a histrionic personality disorder, again presented as either a man or woman. The results showed that clinicians were more likely to diagnose a female with histrionic personality disorder even when she met the criteria for antisocial personality disorder. Likewise, histrionic behavior attributed to a female increased clinicians' use of the histrionic diagnosis. On the other hand, being identified as a male had a smaller effect on the differential use of the two diagnoses. Researchers' interest in histrionic personality disorder appears to have declined recently; it may be diagnosed less frequently in the future since it overlaps considerably with other personality disorders in the dramatic/emotional/erratic cluster.

Which cuts the legs out from under the widespread belief that NPD is far more prevalent in men than women.

The high preponderance of male patients in studies of narcissism has prompted researchers to explore the effects of gender roles on this particular personality disorder. Some have speculated that the gender imbalance in NPD results from society's disapproval of self-centered and exploitative behavior in women, who are typically socialized to nurture, please, and generally focus their attention on others. Others have remarked that the imbalance is more apparent than real, and that it reflects a basically sexist definition of narcissism. These researchers

suggest that definitions of the disorder should be rewritten in future editions of DSM to account for ways in which narcissistic personality traits manifest differently in men and in women.

— [Encyclopedia of Mental Disorders](#)

Indeed, aggression, for example, will tend to express itself differently in women than in men. For cultural and perhaps even biological reasons. But aggression is aggression. It should not go unnoticed in women just because it acts-out in a different, perhaps more subtle, way. For example, what's worse? Shooting someone or destroying their career, calumniating them to make a social outcast of them, and driving them to suicide? There's no flip answer to that question.

In my own slice of the world, the ratio is 50-50. And in my own understanding of the disease I see no reason why men should be any more prone to it than women.

But I do see many reasons why male narcissists are *exposed* as narcissists more frequently than female narcissists are. Put another way, I see many reasons why female narcissists get away with it more often. You can't just chalk this up to the fact that men are more likely to use their fists than their mouths. For, the only narcissist I have observed physical violence in is an extremely violent woman — who has everyone but those who've seen her with her mask off thinking she's a regular Mother Theresa.

And anyone who thinks male narcissists are worse because they're more prone to physical violence is dead wrong. If anything, that makes them less dangerous than female narcissists. The law deals with physical attacks. It does almost nothing to protect us from non-physical attack. Indeed, the non-physical violence the woman I referred to above has done is by far more damaging and more sadistic than any beating she ever gave someone. Any of her victims would prefer her beatings to her life-ruining slanders and vicious psychological abuse.

The professional literature on NPD and other personality disorders candidly admits that mental-healthcare workers tend to diagnose by sex, viewing certain behaviors in women as histrionic and in men as narcissistic. They readily spot attention-getting behaviors in women and diagnose them as histrionic, while being blind to attention-getting behaviors in men and diagnosing them as narcissistic.

In other words, they don't realize that **narcissists are attention getters**. Attention-getting is characteristic of *both* disorders. The difference is that in NPD this need for attention becomes so rapacious that it can't tolerate anyone

else getting any attention.

That's the key. That's what distinguishes Narcissistic Personality Disorder from other attention-getting disorders: the malignant narcissist doesn't just seek attention — he or she is hostile toward *anyone else* getting any attention. He or she must have it all. It would kill him or her to just be in a place where anyone else is getting attention.

Mental-healthcare workers also don't seem to realize that women must grab attention in different ways than men, and they seem oblivious to a man's way if it is at all subtle instead of overtly childish. Consequently, many attention-getting behaviors in men go right over their heads, unrecognized as such. A narcissistic man often passes himself off as a modest, no nonsense sort of regular guy — while screaming at the top of his lungs (between the lines) for attention nonstop. Just because he doesn't hit you over the head with his attention-getting behaviors, just because he dissembles to camouflage them, doesn't mean they aren't there.

Similar double-standards are applied between adults and youths or children. In other words, a behavior that is perceived as malignant in an adult is regarded as innocent in a youth or child. Yet we know that children can possess the will to evil. That is, they can want to harm others just to harm them = they may like hurting people. We see children do this in everyday life and read shocking instances of it in the daily news. Yet, because it rattles our cage, we stubbornly keep forgetting it.

Every narcissistic adult was a narcissistic youth, and before that, a narcissistic child. He or she abused their siblings and classmates and animals, never learning to empathize. He or she was as big a bully as they could be in their world. These behaviors, whenever found in children of six or older, should be taken seriously as a warning sign. It doesn't get any better. They don't outgrow it. They just gain experience to make them ever more cunning, more manipulative, more sure that they can get away with *anything*, and more dangerous.

Who hasn't had to leap up and protect some small animal from a little child who, on a whim, just starts pounding it? And with no feeling whatsoever — nothing but machinelike and fascinated interest in its agony?

When this happens, it's a startling reminder to us that a very little child lives in a mind that's much different from ours. We would understand psychopathy a lot better if we realized that this mental state, which is perfectly normal in the developing personality of the three-year-old, is abnormal and extremely

dangerous when it persists in the older child, the youth or the adult.

NPD begins in childhood. If it were diagnosed in childhood or youth, there might be a chance to save that narcissist and everyone he or she would otherwise someday destroy.

By the same token, though conventional wisdom says that most malignant narcissists are men, the double-standards mentioned above make that not necessarily so. If NPD truly does originate in infancy, toddlerhood, and the very early years of childhood, it is hard to see why boys should be more frequently damaged than girls, unless NPD is tied to some sex-linked genetic trait. And there is no evidence of that.

There are probably other reasons, too, why most cases of NPD that come to light are in men.

One might be that, on average, men acquire power more easily than women. Since the only reign on a narcissist's behavior is what he thinks he can get away with, on average, male narcissists probably go farther than female narcissists feel it safe to go. For example, male narcissists are likely to hold higher positions of authority than female narcissists. So, on average, they have more power. They are therefore more able to get away with illegal acts. They are bolder, daring to commit more illegal acts and to commit them with less cautious cunning than female narcissists do. So, they are bound to get caught more often and show up in greater numbers in the statistics.

Nonetheless, power goes to a woman's head as easily as to a man's. Consider Madam Mao, for example. If women were as likely to become dictators as men we probably would find the names of more women on this list of famous N's: Stalin, Hitler, Saddam Hussein, etc. So, we must view these statistics as the tip of an iceberg and not necessarily representative of the sexual prevalence of the disease.

Also, society raises men differently than women. It puts fewer reins on men than women. It's more acceptable for men to get physical. It's more acceptable for men to be rude. And so forth. So, male narcissists avoid censure more easily and get away with more, on average. They therefore push the envelope farther on their runaway freight-train ride, becoming more physically violent and abusive . . . just because they can.

But that just gets them over-represented in the extant statistics: we cannot assume it means that female narcissists don't exist in equal numbers and don't do

just as much harm.

Moreover, their upbringing makes men tend to express themselves physically, as the "manly" way to behave. For the most part, the subtle, manipulative men are the ones who can't get away with that approach. In contrast, their upbringing makes women tend to express themselves morally, subtly. Consequently most arrestable offenses are committed by men. **But anyone afflicted with both physical and psychological abuse will tell you that the psychological abuse is far worse.**

And that says nothing of employee-abuse, libel and slander that affects the status of employment, which are easy to get away with, especially in private, nonprofit institutions that can operate in secret. (Visit BullyOnLine.org for more information.) In fact, the extant statistics indicate that this class of narcissists are mostly women, probably because these secretive, nonprofit, private institutions tend to hire women as administrators. These people are harmless? How many suicides do they drive people to annually? Not harmless at all: it would be kinder and less wicked for them kill with a gun.

So, most female narcissists probably remain below society's radar, committing fewer arrestable offenses. But we can't assume that means they're doing less damage to people, or even that they are not busting the law to smithereens. In fact, neither I, nor those I know who have had experience with narcissists, regard the female as one bit less dangerous or malignant than the male.

Indeed, every narcissist is a bully, and bullies pick an unfair fight. If a narcissistic man hits on his wife, he may go to jail. If she turns around and hits on her child, she is very unlikely to go to jail. If the child then goes outside and kicks the puppy, he always gets away with it. And so you have three narcissists, but only the adult male is recognized as one.

PART IV

Nature or Nurture?

Nature or Nurture?

Narcissism has recently become so popularized that the amount of pure guessing going on does a disservice to the ordinary person trying to understand this disorder.

4.1 Is NPD Genetically Inherited?

Just because Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) tracks through families does not mean that it is genetically inherited. Narcissistic abuse tracks through those same families. That is TWO variables, either or both of which could be responsible. Good science can draw no conclusions from data with more than one variable.

In fact, since narcissists have two faces and behave like angels when they want, narcissistic behaviors are obviously volitional and are treated as such under the [law](#)⁶². Also, most children of narcissists do not become narcissists. So the genetic hypothesis needs much stronger support, including tests of the normal children of narcissists, to be worthy of serious consideration.

Because there is more than one way to foul up a system, diseases often can have more than one cause. The odds are that the conclusion of good science will be that certain genes do make some people more susceptible than others to Narcissistic Injury and therefore more likely to make the choices that make them narcissists themselves.

Also, it is conceivable that some genes responsible for hard-wired circuitry in the newborn infant could impair normal child development and thereby cause some cases of NPD. We see something like this with autism: apparently children born blind are much more likely to become autistic and need to be actively parented to help the infant connect with an outside world he cannot see. Still, blindness is not the usual cause of autism. And we will probably find that genes are not the usual cause of NPD.

Nonetheless, we shall just have to wait for good science to let us know for sure.

4.2 Is It Caused by Chemical Imbalance?

The relative amounts of certain neurotransmitters (chemicals that transmit, or block the transmission of, electrochemical currents in the brain) are often

associated with psychological problems. But that doesn't mean that an imbalance *caused* the problem. The imbalance may well be the *result* of the problem.

For example, after the death of someone near and dear, we are normally depressed for a while. The sad feelings and thoughts of grief cause the brain cells involved to produce certain neurotransmitters in the transmission of these currents through the circuits they belong to. As the concentration of these neurotransmitters builds, it takes less and less stimulus to cause that sinking feeling we get in grief. So, the increased level of the "depressing" neurotransmitters makes us think more depressed thoughts, releasing more of these neurotransmitters that make us feel depressed and You can see where this is going. Runaway feedback into a vicious cycle.

The brain, however, is a marvelous organ with many built-in controls. For example, high levels of these "depressing" neurotransmitters also feeds back to lower the threshold for stimulation in the circuitry that makes us laugh. In other words, Nature endows us with a chemistry that enhances our sense of humor at such times. Things seem funnier. Not only during times of grief, but during times of trauma and great stress. This is what's responsible for the phenomenon known as "foxhole humor."

This counterbalancing mechanism is an excellent example of how the body protects and heals itself. So, normally, after our loss we get back into the rhythm of life and its distractions. We laugh again. Over time our happier thoughts and our natural desire to be happy gradually bring the concentrations of those "depressing" neurotransmitters down to normal again. This is why the depression caused by such events is viewed as normal (and perhaps beneficial in some ways) unless it lasts too long and runs too deep. Temporary medication with drugs that restore the balance quicker can help.

But, of course, a person disposed to depression by habitual thinking patterns or some ongoing cause will soon become depressed again when drug therapy is stopped.

Hopefully, drugs will be found that can help narcissists through the pain of facing their true selves in talk therapy. This would make them less resistant to talk therapy and thus give treatment a decent chance to succeed.

4.3 Psychological Causes

Many believe that the curse of malignant narcissism is transmitted from generation to generation through narcissistic abuse of a child, especially before the age of reason. Though my own observations suggest an element of free will in the equation, no little child should be expected to deal with that and choose the right path.

A word of caution in jumping to the conclusion that parents are to blame, however. Narcissistic Personality Disorder hasn't been studied nearly as thoroughly as its near neighbor, Antisocial Personality Disorder (psychopathy). In fact, recent study has brought into question whether they are distinct. Of course only a small subset of all psychopaths have been studied — mainly those in the prison population = those who have committed violent crimes and gotten caught. But leading researchers in psychopathy say that they sometimes come from fine homes.

So, what do we make of this? Anyone who has grown up in a home with a narcissistic parent knows that, to all outward appearances and as far as anyone on earth knows, it's an idyllic home. But inside it's Hell.

So, these researchers could be wrong: psychopaths/narcissists could all be coming from abusive homes. But not all the children from those homes turn out abnormal. So, there definitely is an element of choice in the matter.

What's more, strange things do occasionally happen. Take the case of [Ted Bundy](#), for example. He was born of a young unwed mother and raised as her brother, believing that his grandparents were his parents. This was because it was a great shame to have an illegitimate child back then. And doubtless that showed in his grandparent-parents' and sister-mother's faces. They probably didn't look at this infant as a bundle of joy bestowed on their lives. Moreover, what does this deception do to him when he finds out the truth? His real father rejected him. And so did his mother, didn't she? Yes, if she denied being his mother, she rejected him as her child. Ouch!

What Bundy says of his grandfather-father sounds like the description of a malignant narcissist, but you can't take Bundy's word for any of that. So, even if he wasn't abused, he was bound to have a narcissistic identity crisis.

In any case, two roads diverge in a wood when the time for choosing how to deal with it comes: some children choose one path, and some choose the other. Obviously, the more narcissistic the parents are, the more tempted down the

wrong path a child will be.

It leads to Never Never Land (the land of a child's Magical Thinking), where he goes to lick his wounds. He never leaves.



His own guilt keeps him imprisoned there. It's the "demon at the door" that won't let him turn his life around and escape this runaway freight-train ride.

Why? Stop and think for a moment what kinds of things the budding little narcissist does to prop up his ego, to make himself feel grand and strong and important. He does what his narcissistic parent taught him to do: hit on and disregard someone smaller. So, he does things like kick the puppy aside, right?

Here comes Puppy, running up to him with its eyes bright and tail wagging — only to get kicked.

That's wicked. I don't care how young you are, that's sick. Does anyone ever accept the shame they deserve for doing something as malignant as that?

No.

No one can face the fact that they've done such a thing. Instead, they just revise history. They go into denial.

That's the neat thing a child discovers about the mind: it's omnipotent; it can create the world. You can unknow anything you want. You can imagine anything you want. The mind — the ideal child's playground. To escape reality by playing "Pretend" in.

Who needs a conscience? Without one, he has a carte blanche to do anything he thinks he can get away with.

Imagine what he'll do to a toddler if no one is looking. That toddler gets too much attention, and your budding little narcissist resents it for that.

Imagine what he does to his brother or sister. Narcissism carries sibling rivalry to the heights. So, imagine the lies he goes around telling about them. Imagine how he even works to make Mommy and Daddy like him better than them.

Imagine how he gets them into trouble for things they didn't do.

Imagine what he does to his little friends. Imagine how he sidles up to some kid everybody picks on and then takes advantage of the situation to abuse him. And if he's bigger than the other kids, imagine what a bully he is in the school yard.

All too soon, like Macbeth, he passes the point of no return. **For, there are some things a person can do that you just do not repent.** These bottomless acts are treacherous betrayals and predatory acts that have done permanent damage to brothers, sisters, playmates or pets and other animals **who had every reason to trust him** — that class of offenses so sickening that Dante found the guilty parties' souls in hell from the moment they chose to do the deed, though their bodies still wandered the earth as living persons.

He passes the point of no return when he does one of them. And I suspect that it's at a shockingly young age.

Consequently, at a young age a narcissist not only has done such unrepentable things, **he also already has mortal enemies as a consequence.** These are people he's victimized who want nothing more than to expose him for what he is.

And not just for revenge: since much of the damage he does is by lying about others, these are people who can undo the damage he has done to them *only* by exposing him for what he is.

What's more, there's always the danger that people he has lied to will compare notes and discover what he is.

So, from an early age, a narcissist has a past. His whole life is a race to keep one step ahead of his past. So, he is paranoid and with good reason.



If his victims succeed in saving themselves from the degrading reputation he has laid on them — which they can do only by exposing him for what he is — everyone will abhor him. Therefore, he must "block the kick" by making sure those people never are viewed as having any credibility. Everyone must view

them as liars and crazy.

Hey, even a kid of only seven or eight years old will figure this out. Which is one big reason why *malignant narcissist* is practically synonymous with *professional character assassin*.

What he does to "protect" himself from his "enemies" (i.e., those he's victimized and no fears retribution from) increases the danger he's in. Now he has to become a little con artist who gets between people to break lines of communication so Person A won't compare notes with Person B revealing what he says to each about the other.

In fact, eventually people do get suspicious and start comparing notes. This results in periodic upheavals in his life, during which virtually everyone in his class or workplace rises up in outraged hatred and drives him away with all the vehemence of a town riding someone out on a rail. Unfortunately, no real good comes of it, because nobody will clue in his family on what he is.

And so **guilt/shame** and the **vicious cycle of increasing it by trying to ditch it** through **projection** rides herd on him all the way through the tragedy that is his whole life.

He can never admit, even to himself, what he has done and how malignant he has become. If he did, he'd have to kill himself, "without even leaving a note" as one narcissist told me while she was in college.

Indeed, who would leave a note that said, "I am killing myself because I abhor myself and can't bear being evil." Therefore, like Macbeth, he is so "deep in blood already" that to save himself by admitting the truth so he might turn his life around is a more horrible proposition than riding that runaway freight train to its calamitous end.

And so he rides, coping by doing to others what his abuser did to him. And he must unknow that, so he is a Peter Pan, clinging to childish Magical Thinking and never attaining the Age of Reason. The temptation to do this is tremendous, because what he does to repair his vandalized false image uglifies his true image.

And he must unknow that. By refusing to live in the real world and see his actions for what they are — by refusing to have a conscience — he not only gives himself a *carte blanche*, he also gives himself a license to do anything he can get away with. Hence, by youth he has already done things that you just do not repent.

All to take away his pain. By passing it onto others. Only a child could think that doing this gets rid of pain, but a malignant narcissist never thinks any straighter than a child. He doesn't dare.

PART V

Meet the Narcissist: A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

Meet the Narcissist: A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

A narcissist's need to "have it all" invests him or her with a spirit hostile to the needs and well being of others^[32].

Recall the analogy in The Danger of Narcissism^[40]: If you feel a compelling need to have all the dollars in the world, no matter how many you get, you will compete with others for every single one; and if you see a dollar in someone else's hand, you will want to take it away. Just because he has it. That makes you an **adversary** of everyone else in the world. It makes you view the possessor of a dollar as a **predator** views prey.



Therein lies the "malignance" in malignant narcissism. So narcissists are desperate to keep its presence in them a secret^[32]. That is why they invest so much energy in the false image of themselves they carve out with everything they do and say.

Indeed, every predator must find some way to stalk its prey without arousing suspicion. The narcissist is a wolf in sheep's clothing.

Yet every narcissist has his or her own style.

5.1 The Narcissist's Style

Every narcissist thinks he or she is unique. But it would be true to say that (a) they are all alike and (b) they are all different.

At bottom they are all alike. They all have the same goal. And they all achieve it by playing for the right reaction from their environment. But since they each inhabit a different environment, they each have their own personal playing style. One adapted to best exploit their environment.

So, beware of stereotypes based on outward appearances.

For example, most consider grandiosity^[70] the chief character trait of a narcissistic personality. All malignant narcissists are grandiose. They are vain, conceited, boastful, and haughty. Their haughtiness shows a block away in their

imperious mien and posture. They are breathtakingly arrogant, presumptuous, and full of hubris. Yet I didn't list this as a red flag of NPD, because it often isn't evident to the casual observer.

In fact, I have known narcissists who would strike you as anything but grandiose, vain, and haughty. They kept their immodesty well hidden beneath a cloak of false modesty. As [Joanna Ashmun writes](#):

Some narcissists are flamboyantly boastful and self-aggrandizing, but many are inconspicuous in public, saving their conceit and autocratic opinions for their nearest and dearest.

So, for example, grandiosity and haughtiness may show in the narcissistic college professor among his colleagues at the grand opening of a museum, but it will be hidden in the farmer among his neighbors at the local gas pump.

Similarly, haughtily flouncing down the street in New York City, or much better yet, Paris, is *oo-la-la* fashionable. But don't try that in Chicago: you'll get attention all right; you'll be a crowd stopper all right; you'll become public laughing stock on the spot.

In short, narcissists adapt to their environment, their milieu.

In certain milieu, such as a ladder or a pedestal of any sort, the shameless self-promotion of grandiosity is an asset, or at least certain aspects of it are. It creates the illusion of superiority and gets attention. When we see it in a public figure, we view it as different, interesting, not as silly and a pain in the neck.

In most milieu though, grandiosity would be viewed as a character flaw and reflect badly on the narcissist, so he or she camouflages and hides it beneath a veneer of false modesty.

A narcissist's overt grandiosity then is part of the Mr. Hyde act and comes out only behind closed doors.

You can still detect it though if you're observant, because covert and subtle grandiosity is there all the time. It shows in the inappropriate way narcissists relate to others, always from above as their judge. It shows in narcissists' presumptuous expectations, however subtly expressed and sugared over with feigned humility. It shows in narcissists' bragging, however subtle and left-handed.

So, narcissists aren't all snobby debutantes or Hollywood types, flashy dressers who act out. Narcissists adapt to their environment, and a Hollywood-type narcissist would be viewed as a silly weirdo in other environments. Some, both men and women, are fancy dressers and spend a great deal of time and money on their appearance. But others are not. Some portray themselves as a regular guy, a man's man, a common man, a simple dresser without the slightest trace of vanity, a man of few words, a regular Clint Eastwood.

Some are loud-mouthed show-offs or jabberboxes. Some are clergy, preachers, or portray themselves as devoutly religious and upright, self-sacrificing, overflowing with the milk of human kindness. Some are dictators. Some are successful CEO's and politicians, universally admired.

They all have the same goal, but each tailors their strategy to their particular battlefield. So, every snobby debutant you run into isn't a narcissist. And the guy who out Pope-John-Pauls Pope John Paul II as the picture of humility in church may be one. Beneath a cloak of false modesty he may be screaming for, and getting, tons of attention.

A narcissist *identifies* with his image. So, he is all image — for looks only. And he adapts his appearance to his environment as perfectly as a chameleon does. In some ways to stand out (for attention) and some ways to blend in (for approval).

The universal complaint of those who see a narcissist with his mask off is that he is Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. But he can have more than two faces. He is a different person at work than at home, a different person in church than in a tavern, a different person during the courtship than after the honeymoon is over.

Multiple personalities? I don't know. I have only seldom observed a narcissist in a setting other than the one in which I was commonly part of his or her environment there. But when I have, I have been stunned by the person I saw. A completely different person than the one I knew.

So, it seems that if a narcissist haunts a number of very different environments, Mr. Hyde might not be just Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde: he may be Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Green Jeans and Santa Claus and Juan Quixote *and* Mr. Hyde.

I have no idea whether these constitute distinct personalities, but they sure are different personas.

The face he has on at any moment depends on whether the coast is clear and on whether the other party is someone he fears or someone defenseless who can't

just get and stay away from him. The [transfiguration](#)^[208] can be instantaneous.

Just as a woman puts make-up on thickest over a zit, people put their act on thick to cover the blemishes in their character. The image narcissists paint of themselves is the very antithesis of the truth.

Every narcissist's style is tailored to his rank, the situation, and the setting. For example, he may be a man who barges into his haunts talking loudly to butt in on the conversation and make himself the center of attention.

Another may accomplish the same thing by putting on a certain *terribilitas* that accompanies him like an aura and upsets people's poise in his presence. A hush seems to surround him like a nimbus wherever he goes. It's as though people see him coming and think, "Here comes the judge." His entrances, then, fall upon those present like the grand entrances of the former tennis great, Bill Tilden. Here is a description of them by another tennis great, George Lott:

Immediately there was a feeling of awe, as though you were in the presence of royalty. The atmosphere became charged and there was almost a sensation of lightness when he left. You felt completely dominated and you heaved a sigh of relief for not having ventured an opinion of any sort.

Whether brilliant or stupid, narcissists are keen observers of human behavior and group dynamics. They notice that people divine what will win acceptance and readily supply it. So, astute narcissists exploit this behavior by being changeable, unpredictable, and arbitrary to keep everybody around them off-balance and unsure of themselves. In Tilden's presence, even other famous people felt insecure, fearing to commit some *faux pas* by saying the wrong thing. Which was liable to be anything they said about anything.

Nonetheless, no matter what their style, all narcissists behave peculiarly. That's because they have a peculiar need — the need for *all available attention*. Whatever attention they can't draw or hijack they block. And they avoid paying any.

Home is the last place people fuss over a narcissist's arrival. So there, if he can't get enough positive attention, he commands negative attention by annoying, shooting off his mouth, or picking fights.

5.2 The God Complex

Narcissism was first described in psychiatric literature as "the God Complex." On the face of it, that's pretty self explanatory. In fact, everyone who's had anything to do with a narcissist will say, "Yup, s/he thinks s/he's God."

But since that's a cliché so overworn that it hardly sinks in with any exact meaning, it's well worth a pause to ask ourselves exactly what that means. Just what *is* a god? What can we say about our relationship with one?

God is very important — all important. We exist for *his* sake, not our own. That is, we are to fulfill *his* desires, not our own. Our conduct is to glorify *him*, not ourselves. We are here to serve *him*, not our own interests. He doesn't pay us for our services: we owe him everything, including any sacrifice.

Notice that, in any other context, his rights with respect to us amount to **property rights**. They are rights of **ownership**. We would describe the relationship between a master and a slave in exactly the same terms. A slave is to be a selfless executioner of *someone else's* will. In fact, the ancient word for *servant* was synonymous with "slave," a fact that has fallen into obscurity over the past few centuries of religious teaching.

His ownership of us is what gives a god the right to **judge** us. For, the owner of property is also the judge of its worth. He has a right to take a sledge hammer to it if he wants. By virtue of his ownership of others, a god is therefore the judge of their worth. He too has a right to destroy his property if he wants. In fact the ancient words for "god" and "idol" were synonymous with "king" and "master" and meant "judge." He is to ultimately judge us as worthy of keeping (saving, preserving) or not. If not, he condemns us like a worthless building and fires us = throws us away (into Hell).

But he himself is never to be judged. To fault him in any way is unthinkable. **He is righteous by virtue of who he is, not what he does.** To question the righteousness of what he does to his property would be akin to cattle arguing that their owner does evil in slaughtering them. Simply because he owns them, he has the right to do with them as he pleases.

Here are some examples that show this — examples of things God has done that would be viewed as wrong if any human being had done them:

- It would be wrong for anyone to order the extermination of all the original inhabitants of a conquered land. Yet God ordered the Israelites to exterminate all the original inhabitants of Palestine. In fact, he became so

angry when they left a few alive that he made the earth swallow up a whole tribe.

- It would be wrong for us to stand by and do nothing while our innocent child was tortured and killed. In fact, people go to prison for "failure to protect" their children. But God handed over his only begotten son for that purpose and then forgave the guilty parties on the grounds that the falsely accused victim paid their debt of punishment for them.
- It would be wrong for us to stand by and do nothing about pain and suffering that we could alleviate. Yet people buried alive in an earthquake beg God to at least let them die quickly but are denied their petition and suffer a protracted death for no conceivable purpose except maybe to punish them for something.
- If the President's subordinates do something bad on his authority that he knew about before they did it, we impeach him. But God is not faulted for allowing the episcopal and monastic Inquisitions to curse, loot, and burn in his name and claiming his authority for 900 years.

In other words, a god is infallible, has the right to do anything. Whatever he does is right by definition, because *he* did it. Even if the same thing would be very wrong for anyone else to do.

This is, of course, a double standard. So, a god needn't abide by the standards he sets for others. Because he is superior, he is entitled to a lower set of moral standards. In fact, he is entitled to an infinitely lower set of moral standards, because a god can do anything he wants and not be faulted for it. Nobody holds a god answerable for anything.

Narcissists are no fools. They like that arrangement. They view themselves as special and impose the same relationship on us mere mortals by playing the role of a god with respect to us.

And so, it's no wonder that a narcissist acts out the same story and gets really obnoxious the moment you depart from the script: He is very important — all important. Others exist for *his* sake, not their own. They are to fulfill *his* desires, not their own. Their conduct is to glorify *him*, not themselves. They are here to serve *his* needs, not their own. He doesn't pay them for their services: they owe *him* everything, including any sacrifice.

Notice that, in any other context, his rights with respect to them amount to property rights. He is the judge of his property's worth and has the right to abuse or trash us if he wants. He himself is never to be judged. To fault him in any way is unthinkable. **He is righteous by virtue of who he is, not what he does.** So, he

need not live up to the standards he sets for us or even the standards of common decency. He is answerable for nothing. Nothing he does, no matter what, is wrong, though the same things would be very wrong for us to do.

Once you notice all these parallels in godhead and narcissism, it is no wonder that the victims of narcissists always complain that she thinks she's God.

But wait — there's a flip side, a lighter side to the God Complex. There is another relationship described by the same set of rules. Can you think of it? Go on, keep searching your brain for the answer. Give up?

Just what is an infant? What can we say about one?



An infant is very important — all important. Others exist for *its* sake, not their own. They are to fulfill *its* desires. They are here to serve *its* needs, at the expense of their own. Their eyes are mirrors to see itself glow in 24-7. It doesn't pay them for their services: they owe it everything, including any sacrifice. Notice that, in any other context, its rights with respect to them amount to property rights. It judges their performance and hits them and kicks them and screams at them for not knowing and providing whatever it wants at the moment.

Yet it is never to be judged. To fault it in any way is unthinkable. **It is righteous by virtue of being an infant, not by virtue of what it does.** So, it need not live up to the standards of common decency. It is answerable for nothing. Nothing it does, no matter what, is wrong, though the same things would be very wrong for grownups to do.



I *thought* you'd like that.

5.3 Attention: I Gotta Have It All

Almost everything narcissists do centers upon their all consuming need for all available attention. Just as you can't get a heroin addict in withdrawal to know

the difference between *mine* and *thine* with respect to any heroin in the house, you can't get a narcissist to let anyone else have any attention. He or she has gotta have all.

Why? What's going on in this little game? You already know the answer to that. I know that you know it, because you know what the following custom means.

At all times, everyone must face the king. The foot servant is beneath the king's notice. So, the king never dignifies him with any attention at all, does not even look at or speak to him. Now, this might seem a bit inconvenient, for what good is a servant you can't speak to? But the foot servant's duty was to watch over the king and see to all his needs without the king having to suffer the indignity of having to ask him for anything. So, the most he got from the king was an offhanded grunt or a hand signal while the king was talking to somebody else, which was to be interpreted as "Bring me my footstool." To obey the command, the foot servant approaches the king in a groveling manner to indicate that he asks for the favor of being allowed to approach the king and bring him his footstool. The foot servant takes care to avoid notice so that he distracts nobody's attention, even for a moment, from the king. The king is to tolerate the foot servant's vulgar presence no longer than necessary and, without looking at him, "spurns" him (kicks him aside) when the task is done. Then the foot servant shows his gratitude by humbly bowing-and-scaping away.

There you have it — a real-world example illustrating the relationship between one who deserves all attention and one who deserves no attention.

Nah, treating people like this doesn't really mean anything, does it?

To the contrary. The actions of both parties to that "relationship" speak louder than words. They mean something. There's a message in them. A message louder than if it were encoded in words. A psychologically abusive message. I scare-quoted the word *relationship* above because this is an un-relationship. The king is dis-relating to his foot servant.

Nobody bothered to know that the king must have zero integrity if merely looking at another person would degrade him, but the farce in the myth of nobility is beside the point. Nobody noticed that they were treating the king like an infant, either. I mean, only an infant normally gets its needs taken care of without having to ask for anything. But, come on, that's because an infant *can't* ask for what it needs.

Well, just like the king, I guess: he's such a big baby it would be an insufferable affront to his dignity if he ever had to ask for anything.

Does any of this ring a bell? If you live with a narcissist it does.

What about *Please* and *Thank you*? Though he is unworthy to be heard by the king, the foot servant is the one who must say "please" and "thank you," by literally groveling and then bowing-and-scraping away. How perverted can human behavior get?

So perverted that the foot servant was deemed so unworthy of attention that he deserved no acknowledgement of his service, let alone thanks. For, in acknowledging what someone has done for you, or in expressing gratitude for it, you're paying them attention, aren't you? Majestic beings mustn't degrade themselves by doing that. To emphasize this, the custom was for the foot servant to receive anti-gratitude with a gratuitous kick. That is why kings responded to whatever their foot servant did for them by "spurning" them, literally kicking them away. How perverted can human behavior get?

Answer: The foot servant had no right to even resent such treatment. Therefore, he was subjected to the extreme perversity of having to bend over for it (the Sin of Sodom). And with a smile. For, he then had to bow-and-scrape some more in gratitude for the minuscule attention of a kick. Can't get perverser than that.

There are only three places I know of where one person must be the focus of all attention: a theater, a church, and a royal court. The way-up-high-in-the-sky there thing — the so-called "star." Or God. Or the king.



Being entitled to all attention and being entitled to no attention are appraisals of a person's value, or worth. In a society that regards all human beings as created equal, to give all attention to the narcissist is to worth-ship him as a false god, and to give no attention to others is to dehumanize people and treat them like dirt.

Being disregarded has a profound effect on the human psyche. It is very psychologically abusive. This is because the meaning of attention is hard-wired

into our brains at birth.

Nature has genetically programmed the offspring of all higher animals to clamor for attention at birth. This is how Nature pressures the parents to forget their own needs and run themselves ragged caring for their offspring. It's amazing how much noise a nest full a baby birdies can make. And it's amazing how much noise a human baby can make. No parent can stand it! The lungs and vocal chords are magnificent already at this stage!

Why do offspring clamor so for attention? Why do babies sometimes cry for no discernible reason? Because Nature has programmed into them a desperate need for attention. In fact, even if their physical needs are taken care of, human babies can die from never being otherwise held and cuddled and played with.

This great need for attention that results in clamoring for it improves offspring's chances of survival, but it also creates a problem that later development must resolve. For, it's a good life — being the center of the universe and having others anticipate and cater to your every need, there to make you happy.

The decision whether to grow up and strike out on your own or not can be a close call. Hence, some of those baby birdies need to get unceremoniously shoved out of the nest. When human babies hit their "terrible twos," they too can be a pain. They must be gently weaned from "king" status, or they will start using temper tantrums to control you and become a spoiled brat.

Like a narcissist.

She is like a three-year-old who stamps her foot and yells, "I want Mamma's attention, and I want it NOW!"

"It's all mine. Because I am the one who's important."

5.3.1 Getting It All

Now let's look at some of the sneaky ways narcissists hijack attention.

Normal people politely face someone talking to them, to show attention. The narcissist finds ways to make the most of the ego gratification he gets from this. He makes others go out of their way to afford him this courtesy. For example, he might avoid facing whomever he is talking at. In a pinch, he may stare intently at a wall or ceiling (as if studying it) to avoid looking at you. He may maneuver

around the room like a sidewinder to speak to people from behind their back. Doing so actually kills two birds with one stone. It not only makes people turn way around to politely face him while he's speaking, it avoids showing them the polite attention of facing *them*. I think this behavior is also a bit Freudian, having to do with a narcissist's main mission in life: talking behind people's back.

One old narcissist I know of would arise right in the middle of something his visiting daughter was saying and leave the room. As if unaware that she was even talking to him, unaware that his guests were even there. Thus it wasn't enough that she and her children had come hundreds of miles to see him. He made them chase him from room to room to talk to him.



He also made his daughter "talk Cesky," which she hadn't heard or spoken in forty years. When she protested, he lied that he had forgotten English. Thus he (a) excluded his little grandchildren as though they were not present, (b) made it hard for his daughter to understand more than the gist of what he said, and (c) made it practically impossible for *her* to talk to *him* at all. Thus he sucked all attention to himself alone.

Though the tactics are different, the strategy is the same in the local "old man" of the community in a workplace. He ignores colleagues as though they are not there when he meets them. Though the tactics are different, the strategy is the same in a person who can't shut up in a theater. He or she is upstaging the play. Though the tactics are different, the strategy is the same in the woman who can't let anyone get a word in edgewise during a conversation. She is monopolizing the conversation to monopolize attention.

One slick technique I have observed is what I call the Drive-By: The narcissist barges into a room loudly talking to drown out and stifle the extant conversation. Thus he butts in on it to take attention away from whoever is talking and suck it to himself. But he is only passing through, so he doesn't risk return fire. That is, he needn't be there for a reply to his announcement or remark. Nobody can get him to pause long enough to hear one short sentence. He just accelerates to exit the other end of the room faster if someone draws a breath and opens their mouth to speak to him.

We see variations of the Drive-By technique in administrators who find innumerable ways to always have their unanswered say.

The narcissist avoids situations he can't maneuver in and control with such devices. So, most of the time he's a ghost. At home, for example, he prefers seclusion in the basement, in bed, behind the wheel, or anywhere to presence in a room where anyone is getting any attention. There is no way, short of demanding it at gun point, to get him to pay one bit of attention to his wife or children.

Correction: He pays intense attention to anyone busy doing anything, literally breathing down their neck and telling them that every move they make is wrong.

The lengths to which narcissists go to avoid paying attention to those near and dear is perhaps most telling, because it is most mysterious and weird. I knew one, for example, who would be with his family only in four places: in church, where it looked good, at the table while there was food on his plate, in an automobile, and in the living room while football was on TV. Why was he able to stand being with them in these four places? In these four places he could be with them and still ignore them. By focusing on the altar, his food, the road, or the TV. It was a bit tricky in restaurants though, because he had to arrive before his food. So there he sat with his chair angled away from them and became fascinated with some fixture in a far corner of the ceiling.

Even more telling is what he did to prevent others present from paying attention to each other. Narcissists know that this is easy to do. You just stifle any conversation people try to have. He brought a radio to the kitchen table. When that didn't suffice, he broke up conversation by hijacking it with some obnoxious statement he butted in with — something too obnoxious to pass over or ignore, something that sucked all attention to himself. His favorite bombs were (a) something outrageously malignant, like reacting to the deaths and injuries cited in the radio's accident reports by saying that the victims "deserved it" for "going like hell," (b) something outrageously racist, or (c) something outrageously stupid, like incoherent bitching that always ended in boasting that he had told his boss off. The moment his food was gone, so was he. His family couldn't beg him to stay in the same room with them one minute longer.

All narcissists have their favorite conversation-busting bombs. One I know of liked to bomb a conversation by attacking the character of his younger son, whom he had disfigured by leaving a loaded shotgun buried among sacks of apples in a wagon where his seven-to-ten-year-old children played, and whom he had then targeted to take the brunt of his abuse. He constantly outraged his other

son and daughters by changing the subject with the boldfaced lie that Emil had never paid him for the farm. Old narcissists know that society gives the elderly a *carte blanche* to say and do anything they want.

As mentioned above, an automobile is one place a narcissist can abide those near and dear, because they can't come between him and the only thing he will pay attention to, the road. To keep his passengers from paying attention to each other, he can bust any conversation they try to have by flying into a road rage. He is so compelled to make them stop talking to each other that he can seldom tolerate their talking long enough to find some ostensible excuse. Hence, they usually can't even tell which other driver he is supposed to be mad at, though it probably goes without saying that it's for the usual offense of "cutting him off." To get their attention off each other, he yanks the vehicle around, making reckless moves. Naturally, his passengers fall silent and shift their attention to him and everything he could crash them into.

Of course, a person so stingy and avaricious about attention is going to play *Keep Away* with all forms of it. A narcissist cannot even give you an example of what would constitute praise for someone else. The closest he ever comes is a formal toast to a child for "making HIM proud." Nobody can pry a compliment or thank-you out of him with a crowbar. He acts like that is sticking him with a hot poker or something. He doesn't touch his children except to hit them.

Unless he is a "doting" narcissist who inundates his children with critical attention to improve them, he pays none to them at all. He never plays with them. He is disinterested in their grades, activities, aspirations, social lives, majors, degrees, professions, and problems. As often as anyone tries to inform him about these things, he forgets them. He never sends anyone on this planet a card or a letter. He never gets anyone on this planet a gift. (When absolutely necessary, he has his wife, his sister, his daughter, or his secretary get it for him.) He never comforts a grieving person. He sheds no tear for any other human person, though he readily sheds tears for the flickers of light on a television or movie screen.

His children never see their parents kiss or embrace or even sit close to each other. His daughters see nothing really desirable in marriage and nothing in themselves that any man should love. Their dreams about marriage are not sweet. They arise from deep fear of a life like their mother's.

I know of one narcissist who went so far to withhold affection that, while his children were little and their mother made them kiss him good night, he wouldn't even lean forward. He leaned his head a little back to make it even harder to

reach him. He wouldn't even pucker his lips.

One way to pay no attention to others is to be asleep.

One narcissist I know jabbers your ear off for hours talking about herself and every trivial thing she does. However, within fifteen seconds of the moment you start to tell her something about yourself, no matter how important or out-of-the-ordinary, she rudely acts bored. If that doesn't shut you up, she hits a brick wall of testy sleepiness, like a grumpy child past her bed time. This example illustrates that boredom is a classic way people express aggression when they wish to maintain deniability.

Another narcissist I know of became nocturnal upon retirement. He slept most of the day and got up in the middle of the night. How's that for making sure you never have to pay any attention to anyone?

Actually, this weird behavior started before retirement. After an aneurysm left him unable to use her, his wife's getting into bed drove him out. Being thus treated as abhorrent was bad enough, but having to submit herself to him for this moral kick in the gut every night affected her like rape. It *was* moral rape. She couldn't fall asleep in her bed and seemed to have an irrational fear that she'd die in it.

Eventually, this narcissist was up and about the house only in the night, while everyone else slept. The normal waking hours he wasn't in bed, he spent in the dark, damp, unfinished basement, where he had made a nest for himself of a desk, an easy chair, a portable TV, and a stack of magazines. He had all sorts of diversions to keep his mind aimlessly occupied while awake in that nest.

Yet they were not enough. So, his dread of being alone with himself for a moment of self awareness gave him a compelling, even frantic, need for a drink and drive four or five times a day. A creature of his habits, he made the same rounds every time. To the same bar (till something mysterious would happen and he'd have to start haunting another), to the same place by the river to watch "his" geese. And to the same place in a park, where he watched "his" squirrels and gathered nuts to feed those back home.

He paid no end of attention to those geese and squirrels. He was fascinated by those geese and squirrels. Such a kind old man, he worried constantly about those geese and squirrels.

5.3.2 Denying Any

It stands to reason that, to rationalize the belief that you must have it all, you must regard *your* needs as all important. The needs of others are no consideration. This is the attitude little children have, which is why they must be taught to share. Narcissists never grow out of this childishness.

Implicit in that idea is the belief that *you* are all important and that others are of no account. You are noble, inherently superior to them, a superior being. To make (believe) it so, a narcissist just acts as though it is.

Simple, eh? Narcissism is nothing but an acting job. That's how narcissists delude themselves. Rather like children at play, pretending to be police officers or fire fighters or doctors.



But children check back into the real world when it's time to come home for lunch; narcissists never do. They are lost in the Land of Pretending that they are grand.

The flip-side of that coin is that you are vastly inferior to them, nothing compared to them.

I'm convinced that this is why your narcissist treats you like dirt — she's just "pretending" that she is majestic. Her highness' merest wish is of infinitely more importance than your direst need. For, she is such a god that you are an insignificant bug compared to her.

And she mustn't ever fail to make it so by pretending that it is.

The narcissists I have known jump at chances to deny any form of attention to others with **maximum impact** by an extravagant display of its opposite instead.

I mean that exactly. A narcissist doesn't show just disregard; she acts out anti-regard. At every opportunity, whether great or small.

For example, let's say she's your sister and has known all her life that you cannot eat garden peas. They make you sick. To show off her (mediocre) cooking she gives a casserole she made — loaded with, guess what? Your look shows that you know she must have done this on purpose, and that's her chance to tell you that she never considered what you like when making it.

How's that for being anti-considerate? That let's you know that she didn't bake this for *you*. She baked it to show off.

It's just a game this emotional five-year-old plays.

Here's another example: Say that you're a brother of hers and are far from home on Thanksgiving. You naturally expect her to invite you dinner, but that invitation never comes. You're already deeply hurt when, late in the day, she calls and asks if you'd like some of her great turkey and dressing and pumpkin pie. Then she meets you at the back door and hands it to you in a brown paper bag.

How's that for affection? I'm not kidding: narcissists inflict mental cruelty like this every chance they get and as off-handedly as you'd swat a mosquito. They must do it because hurting you, treating you like a bum, makes them feel good. They must be drunk on the high they get by getting a step up on you. And, like any drunk, I suppose they feel miserable except when they're drinking.

When someone is down and out, she'll callously become Miss Bliss, laughing and chirping about this wonderful day like a male wren in May, jabbering excitedly about every tidbit of trivia she can think of — everything but the crucified or devastated friend or family member in the middle of the room. One can't get more brutal than that. It makes you go all black inside, because it strikes you as her dancing on that person's grave.

Warning: there's no bottom to how low narcissists will go in playing this game. Here's how the same narcissist might play it in a big way: Let's say your husband just left you for another woman and you are devastated, can't stop crying, so you turn to her, thinking she's your friend. You just want somebody to talk to. She doesn't respond to the usual signals that should call a friend to your side. In fact, she heads away from you so abruptly and fast that you'd think you had suddenly emitted a blast of antigravity. So, you come right out and say you desperately need someone to talk to and ask her to come spend a few hours with you today or tomorrow. She takes advantage of this opportunity to vaunt herself on you by lightly saying that she's too busy washing her Venetian blinds this week.

That's her way of telling you how unimportant you are. How's that for a kick when you're down? Don't make the mistake of trying to tug at her heartstrings or asking her why she's treating you this way. If you do she'll [fly into a rage at rage](#)^[225] at you.

You're **insulting** her, you see. A bug like you insults God Almighty by acting like her equal, by acting like someone important enough for her to show regard for. You are **attacking** her grandiose image by acting like her equal instead of acting like you're beneath her notice, so look out: you have a tiger by the tail.

Yes, that's why narcissists are such perverts: their behavior is perverted because their thinking is perverted. Hence your asking for their compassion is viewed by them as (of all things) an attack.

 And don't think that anything you've done for her in the past will make her feel obligated to pay you back in kind now. It's quite the other way around. A narcissist's middle name is Ingrate. In fact, she will punish every good deed you do for her, because helping her when she's in need challenges her delusion of being an omnipotent god who never needs anything from anyone. In other words, helping her is just another kind of attack in her eyes. So, look out: by helping her you attacked her image, which she identifies with, so you are going to get it. An example of this phenomenon is how France has never forgiven America for coming to its rescue twice.

Narcissists react to others' need this way like machines. What do you need? Affection? Then she'll respond with anti-affection = contempt and repulsion. Comfort? She'll respond with anti-comfort = the troublesome "comfort" of Job's "comforters" (= the anti-comfort of vultures fault-finding to blame the victim).

 Exception: When there is something to be gained by showing regard, a narcissist will show it. For example, a narcissist wouldn't treat her boss or anyone with power over her this way. In fact, like men swoop down on a woman in distress, I personally know of several narcissists who instantly swoop down as rescuer on someone they barely know, whom they thus win grateful friendship from, which they then exploit to parasitize that person. Also, when a narcissist can dissemble by flying to your rescue so as *to be seen doing so*, she'll put on a Mother Teresa Academy-Award act of selfless and tender loving kindness and concern. And she'll tell the whole world about it. That's how she carves out her saintly image. But, when there are no witnesses, and she has already defamed you so that nobody would believe you about it, look out. Your need is nothing but a

trigger for Mr. Hyde to come out. See an example [here](#)⁸¹.

There is but one possible reason for doing that. And it's malignant.

I have seen every narcissist I knew do it. In fact, the impression I got is that it's a knee-jerk reflex in narcissists to do it. When there is nothing to be gained by putting on a big show in which they play the part of someone's heroic rescuer, you can count on narcissists missing no opportunity to kick a person when they're down. They do it by acting out the most callous and outrageous disregard for that person in a time of time of need.

I think they really get off on it. I think that morally trampling someone like this makes narcissists feel like they're goose-stepping the mountaintops. Because it puts you here with respect to them . . .



And they aren't *least* likely to do it to those near and dear: they're *most* likely to do it to those near and dear. In a family, they target the most sensitive child to take the brunt of their abuse. Think what that means. In general, they target those with every good reason to expect love and compassion from them, those close to them in daily life (especially if that person is somebody who has been a friend in need). The narcissist will actually spurn such person with an extravagant display of haughty contempt.

In short, they're predators simply targeting the easiest and most vulnerable (deeply woundable) prey.

Narcissists treat people like dirt on the premise that treating others like dirt makes you God Almighty. That's the way a three-year-old thinks. The message is, "Get away from me, you scum. You are beneath my notice."

And when I said that narcissists do this for maximum impact, I meant exactly that. They obviously get so high on the pain they cause that they take pains to be as abusive as possible about it — forcing that child or woman to their knees and rubbing their face in filth or telling that person that for all the narcissist cares they can just go kill themselves or take a dive into the bottom of a bottle.

Now who would believe that? Who would believe that people who pass for as normal as you or I, people who go to church, coach Little League, give to charity, volunteer, and are viewed as pillars of their community — who would believe that this is how they behave to their loved ones in a time of need behind closed doors? It's the [perfect crime](#)³³² — the one nobody would believe.

5.4 You Are an Object

An infant in a crib is unaware of the fundamental difference between people and the other objects that revolve around it in its world. Both its mother and the mobile overhead are just objects to it. It quickly learns that when it cries, the mother-object appears and fulfills all its needs. Ooh, power!

So, it uses its vocal chords as a remote control for the mother-object.

It assumes that the mother-object exists for its sake. It quickly learns how to operate the mother-object. It pushes the buttons on her control panel largely through big demonstrations of displeasure whenever she does not anticipate and fulfill its needs in advance. She is just one object in a world that revolves around it, *for* it. Mark Twain delightfully reminds us of what we are at this stage of human development:

I do not remember my first lie, it is too far back; but I remember my second one very well. I was nine days old at the time, and had noticed that if a pin was sticking in me and I advertised it in the usual fashion, I was lovingly petted and coddled and pitied in a most agreeable way and got a ration between meals besides. It was human nature to want to get these riches, and I fell. I lied about the pin — advertising one when there wasn't any. You would have done it; George Washington did it, anybody would have done it. During the first half of my life I never knew a child that was able to rise above that temptation and keep from telling that lie.

— Mark Twain



A narcissist remains forever such an infant. His world revolves around him. The people in it are but objects for him to use and control — existing for his sake,

not their own. Like levers on a control panel or tools to be damaged through heavy use or livestock to be consumed. There to fulfill *his* needs and enhance *his* image. Beyond that, they have no importance. **It never occurs to him** that he owes them anything in return or that he should consider the effects of his actions on them.

An object has no feelings. It is not a person. It is not even a *being* in the usual sense of the word. You might grab an object like a screwdriver and abuse it by using it to pry something open, knowing that by using it this way you might break it. But you think nothing of breaking a screwdriver. Damaging that screw driver is nothing. There are plenty more where that one came from.

The only thing that matters is what you want = getting open that thing you're trying to pry open.

That screw driver is of no account. It would be absurd to regard it as a having a right to better treatment. In fact, it has no right to *be*: it exists for *your* sake, for you to use and abuse as you please. It's basically just an extension of yourself, a tool, an executioner of *your* will, not its own.

That's what YOU are to a narcissist.

Narcissists (and psychopaths) just *use* other people, all other people. Any way they please. In other words, they don't relate to other people. Which is an abbreviated way of saying that they don't relate to other human beings as a human being.

To relate to other human beings as a human being (i.e., humanly), you have to *be* a human being. You must experience your own humanity and know it. Only then can you recognise the image and likeness of humanity in others and relate to it in them as ***our common humanity*** — something we share with all other human beings, even mortal enemies. We relate to it.

Relating to it **IS** humanity. Otherwise known as empathy. It's what prompts soldiers who were fighting ferociously a minute ago to kneel down and tenderly care for the enemy's wounds. In fact, because the extremity of battle often makes it hard to switch gears the moment the fighting stops, humanity toward the fallen foe was regarded as the Christian soldier's highest virtue. In Italian it is called *pietà*, which sublimely shows that piety and pity (empathy) are two sides of the same coin.

But ours isn't the only species that relates in a special manner to its own kind.

Many species of higher animals do. And it's easy to see why: that's how Nature keeps them from preying on their own kind (as sometimes happens, especially among lower species of animals). Even when they do fight, once one contestant for what they're fighting over backs off, the fight is instantly over and all hostility vanishes.

So, though remembering our humanity in extreme and unnatural situations like combat may be a virtue, normally it's no virtue at all. It's just natural.

But it's a learned behavior.

To illustrate: You've certainly seen a toddler delighted with some chick or puppy or bunny or other cute little animal you place before her. Then, on a whim, she shocks you by grabbing a stick and pounding the poor thing. The look in her eyes is the most shocking part — nothing there but fascination with the effect she's having on it = fascination with its agony.

Picture an adult instead, and you are watching a psychopath or narcissist.

A little child does this because her person-ality isn't fully developed. Her sense of person-hood isn't differentiated so that she distinguishes between your personhood and hers. Between that puppy's living soul and hers. She's so brutal because while pounding Puppy *she* feels no pain. All she feels is powerful. So Puppy might as well be a nail she's hitting with a hammer.

This is why parents must closely supervise that little child, especially when vulnerable animals or other small children are around, and teach her that other living beings have feelings of their own and feel like she would if someone did that to her. She must be taught to respect other living beings as beings in their own right and to empathize with them.

For whatever reason, psychopaths and narcissists never learn.

How could they? They identify with their image — a work of fiction — not their true selves. So, they don't relate to themselves as human beings. They don't know the human being within. They don't know human *being*. So, how can they recognise humanity in others? How can they relate humanly to human beings?

The narcissist doesn't conceive herself as *of* our kind: What god with nothing but contempt for mere mortals does? So, expect no more regard for your feelings from her alien mentality than you should expect from an extra-terrestrial who abducts you to use as a specimen for an experiment. No more than a lamb should

expect from a wolf, a mouse from a cat, a baby seal from a killer whale, or a cockroach from you.

In other words, narcissists relate to us as **predators** do.

And so perhaps they are right: they are NOT of our kind, humankind. For, except in primitive species, predators don't prey on their own kind. Because they identify with their own kind. They like their own kind. That affinity makes predation unthinkable. What use of force we observe among the members of a species is limited to what's necessary to protect individual interests and goes not one step further.

True, narcissists and psychopaths are not the only people who can turn off their humanity. All people can turn it off like a light-switch, thus becoming guilty of inhumanity. In fact, *Man's inhumanity to Man* is an age-old theme of literature, and history is full of examples of people turning off their human sensibilities en-masse, as during the Holocaust or the Inquisition. What makes people suffering from Narcissistic Personality Disorder (and psychopathy) different is that they have theirs **turned off permanently for everyone but themselves**.

And *everyone* means even their own children. Narcissists are as unfeeling toward whomever they abuse as you or I are toward a spike we are pounding with a sledgehammer. This is a hard truth to accept.

The good thing about accepting it is that there is no hating such a person. You can't hate what you can't relate to. You can no more hate a narcissist for being a narcissist than you can hate a snake for being a snake. You don't take it personally when a snake bites you. Don't take it personally when a narcissist does, either. It wasn't you. It wasn't anything you did. You were just there, that's all. Handy

5.5 Passing for Normal

Narcissists and psychopaths know there's something wrong with them.

A leading expert on psychopathy, Dr. Robert Hare, as a consultant for Nicole Kidman, who had asked him how she could show the audience there was something fundamentally wrong with her character in *Malice*, said:

Here's a scene that you can use. You're walking down a street and there's an accident. A car has hit a child in the crosswalk. A crowd of people gather round. You walk up, the child's lying on the ground and

there's blood running all over the place. You get a little blood on your shoes and you look down and say, "Oh shit." You look over at the child, kind of interested, but you're not repelled or horrified. You're just interested. Then you look at the mother, and you're really fascinated by the mother, who's emoting, crying out, doing all these different things. After a few minutes you turn away and go back to your house. You go into the bathroom and practice mimicking the facial expressions of the mother. That's the psychopath: somebody who doesn't understand what's going on emotionally, but understands that something important has happened.

— [as quoted by Robert Herz](#)

To pass for normal, sociopaths and narcissists fake feelings for others. Usually their act comes off badly because it's just mimicry of the normal human reactions they see in those around them: *Monkey see, monkey do*. So, for example, they mimic the behavior of others at a funeral. Usually their acting job isn't true-to-life, because it's just a hollow outward show of feeling they do not really have. And it's often so overdone that it makes you do a double-take, wondering if it's parody. It's not; it's just the best facsimile of human feeling they can produce.

In fact, narcissists I knew long before I'd even heard of NPD left me with a strong suspicion that they actually do practice facial expressions in a mirror — both tender feely ones and scary intimidating ones.

I know one who goes on and on in an Academy-Award act about how much she loves her cat. The lady doth protest way too much. I know of another whose eyes welled up in tears at any poignant moment for the flickers of light on a TV screen, whether it was a movie, a football game, or the singing of the national anthem. But he never gave up one bit of feeling for a real human being: regarding them as worth it would have killed him. Also, if you distract a narcissist during an acting job of faked feeling, he or she undergoes an instantaneous face change like an actor who drops character when the director says, "Cut!"

So, unless you're just a passing acquaintance of a narcissist, his or her total lack of empathy *will* show, despite their efforts to conceal it. And when it shows, it's unmistakable. It's chilling. And it's a warning sign to stay away from that person.

This is not to say that narcissists have no feelings. They do have feelings, but only for themselves. Even those feelings are strange, however. Presumably because they so reflexively repress their feelings, they don't experience the full range of normal human emotions and are limited to experiencing vague primitive

emotions such as rage.

As for others though — to a narcissist, others aren't worthy of any feeling. They are but objects to exploit and plunder for ego gratification. It is impossible to overstate the significance of that.

5.6 In the Looking Glass

Recall that another person's attention is a kind of **mirror** reflecting the image of ourselves we're portraying in the interaction. We all notice when we are making a good impression on somebody. We see it reflected in that person's response to what we're doing and saying. We often adjust our words and behavior to tune that response. People do this in a job interview, for example. They also do this when meeting a potential mate or anyone they wish to favorably impress, such as the traffic cop who just stopped them for speeding or some V.I.P. they're being introduced to.

Playing to the mirror of another person's eye is perfectly normal — under certain circumstances. In fact, it's adaptive. Like scorpions approaching each other as potential mates, or ships at sea or in space, people play this game to smooth the interaction and establish a safe connection.

But we don't like doing this. It's a bit nerve-wracking. And we know it's a game. (See the excellent book *The Games People Play* by Dr. Eric Berne.) Playing it makes us uncomfortable. And there are limits to how far we will go. We don't mind being civil and friendly or even humble and overly agreeable to avoid topics of conflict and smooth our interaction with a person. But we immediately sense the prostitution in our actions when our hypocrisy sensor goes off. Then our self-respect kicks in. In fact, we prefer the company of intimates and friends — people we can be ourselves with.

Narcissists are different in that they are never themselves. They identify with their image instead. So, they are in game-playing mode 100 percent of the time. And they are not trying to make a safe connection. Or a *good* impression. The reflection they're playing for is **grandiose** — not necessarily pleasing, friendly, or good.

For example, if someone looks at you in fear, that reflects an image of you as powerful. Being powerful is grandiose, so a narcissist really likes to see people looking at him in fear. In fact, he'd rather see people looking at him in fear and trepidation than in admiration, because it's grander to be powerful than to be

merely admirable.

This is why a narcissist who becomes a dictator becomes a Nero, Stalin, Hitler, or Saddam Hussein. These men were just narcissists capitalizing on the fact that no one could hold them to account for anything they did. So, when they gained absolute power, the angel-faced mask came off, and they concentrated on making everyone just plain terrified of them.

Because that's the biggest ego boost, all narcissists bully and intimidate whomever they can whenever they can. Some don't dare bully and intimidate anyone outside their immediate family. Others go around with a *terribilitas* in their mien that creates an aura upsetting the poise of everyone in their presence. A hush falls around them wherever they go, because when people see them coming they think, "Here comes the judge" and fear to say anything — ANYTHING — he might overhear. (See [George Lott's account of this happening whenever former tennis great Bill Tilden entered a room](#)^[126].)

It's amazing how charged the atmosphere around such a person is. The cliché that "the tension is so thick you could cut it with a knife" is no overstatement. You'd swear that any moment somebody is going to crack and scream, "This is crazy! What are we all so afraid of this guy for?" But nobody ever does. I know of two who did that daily for decades to everyone in their workplace, even their superiors. A normal person would feel terrible if people reacted to his approach that way. But to a narcissist, it's nirvana. Because that's the way people act when God walks into a room.

Notice how abnormal this behavior is. Normal people don't like to see others looking at them in fear. That would hurt and deeply disturb a normal person. So, we almost never behave in a manner to evoke fear. We do that only (a) while engaged in a fight, to persuade the other party that he might as well give up or (b) when we feel threatened and are posturing to avoid a fight by making that other party think twice about attacking. In other words, we use fear evoking behaviors for an essentially peaceful purpose — to discourage fighting. That's why the moment the other party backs off, the steam stops coming out of our nose and ears.

In fact we see the same thing throughout the animal kingdom: animals are ferocious one second and acting like nothing happened the next.

But narcissists use fear-evoking behavior out of the blue to threaten and thus initiate strife. That's because they have a completely different purpose — to

make themselves feel grand by intimidating whomever they can whenever they can (and get away with it).

So, the reflection a narcissist plays you for varies greatly. The common denominator is that it always reflects an image of him or her that is **grandiose**.

Narcissists want you to look at them in admiration, adulation. They want you to look at them approvingly, gratefully. They want you to look at them in awe. Oooh, that's a good one — very grandiose. They want to see a reflection of themselves as magnificent in your eyes. They want you to hang on their every word. They want you to never remove your eyes from them. They want you to reflect their grand importance by carefully discerning and attending to their every need, without them even having to ask for what they want. For, when you wait on them hand and foot, you reflect an image of his highness that is majestic.

Therefore, grandiosity need not be reflected in the mirror of someone's pleased or admiring face. In fact, as every chest-thumping rapist knows, it is best reflected in the outraged, desolate and wretched face of someone who can do nothing to stop him from demolishing her for maximum impact.



That's the victim, but the rapist's reflection in it is that of one who is powerful and not wretched like her. He is like the Pharisee in the parable about the Pharisee who proudly goes to the front of the Temple and addresses God, thanking Him that he is not like that wretched and humbly repenting sinner striking his breast in the back.

Some call this putrid attitude spiritual pride, but it's just plain narcissism. Narcissists are so low they need to elevate themselves by getting a step up on others.

It's a rare narcissist who can vaunt himself on just anyone though. So, a narcissist plays different people/mirrors for different kinds of grandiose

reflections. He'll play a priest for one kind of reflection, his buddy in a bar for another kind, his boss for yet another kind, and so on. As the narcissist Sam Vaknin explains it, each person in his world is like a different kind of flower that the narcissist (a bee) visits to exploit for a different type of nectar. That's as good an analogy as any.

I knew one narcissist that I wish people could see on a split screen, with his persona in a church compared with his persona in a tavern. The difference was so extreme that the show would be hilarious! If his bar buddy saw him in church and his priest saw him in a bar, neither would believe it could be the same person.

5.7 A Work of Art

When we are playing to the mirror of another person's face, the broadest strokes of the image we're carving are portrayed by how we and the other party relate to one another. For example, if we relate to another person condescendingly or patronizingly, we portray an image of ourselves as superior. Of course, on the other side of that coin we are portraying an image of the other person as inferior. Both appear in the shadow that comes over that other person's face. Narcissists need to see it, because the flip side of your hurt look is their grandiose reflection.

Again, for example, if another person lets us relate to him as his judge, we succeed in portraying ourselves as his God. Most people don't realize this until they ask themselves what a God is and what is the essence of a person's relationship to a God. Narcissists need to see you look shamed and put down by their judgments, because the flip side of that coin is their grandiose image.



Therefore, though narcissists do aggrandize themselves in positive ways by inventing or exaggerating their qualities and achievements, since opportunities for camouflaged boasting are seldom available, they do the lion's share of their self-aggrandizement in negative ways — by diminishing you. Hence, they play the Teeter Totter Game. At the heart of their Pathological Space, the home, they play it virtually 100% of the time.

So, every day in every way they tell you that you mean nothing to them. It isn't only you personally that fail to measure up: it's your kind. You children or "women" or "men" or whatever are an annoying lower life form that persons of their kind shouldn't have to have anything to do with. They never look upon you with delight or admiration; they look upon you with disapproval and contempt. They never notice your needs; they go out of their way to act out insulting disregard for them. They never treat you like you are important; they go so far out of their way to treat you as insignificant that they act like you don't even exist. They need to see the hurt look on your face when you feel the rejection in their treatment of you, because the flip side is their grandiose reflection.

They are addicted to it. they get high on it. It's a narcotic that kills their pain by substituting this grandiose false image for that wretched true self inside them..

And so, the narcissist's children and spouse get no attention, no gratification of any sort, and no regard at all. Ever. No matter what. The narcissist acts like it would kill him or her to spare any.

In the home, the narcissist can get away with that. The children are dead meat. But a spouse *can* draw red lines. That's because these people are actually extremely valuable to him, despite all his play-acting to the contrary. They are as indispensable as the host any parasite feeds on. So, if a spouse threatens to abandon him, and if he thinks she can and means it, and if he's unlikely to be able to con a new one into his clutches very easily, he will keep back of that red line. One-inch back of that red line.

While dating a woman, a narcissist will play her for an admiring reflection. But, the moment the honeymoon is over, look out. Now he wants an even grander reflection, one that makes him seem powerful. That's the sweetest nectar of all. He acts on the premise that the more powerful the effect he has on you, the more powerful he is. So, he cheats by stomping an ant to smithereens to make himself God Almighty.

By that I mean that he targets those he can hurt the most and does as much damage as possible. It's all about maximum impact. This is why when he sees that he has hurt someone's feelings, he doesn't let up like a normal person would: he does the opposite. Smelling blood just trips his trigger to jump on that person and pile on the abuse till, as one narcissist put it to me, "there's nothing left of that person at all." She said she didn't know why, but once she got started on someone, she couldn't stop.

Of course stomping someone doesn't really mean you're powerful. Narcissists conveniently make themselves too stupid to consider an important variable in the equation: the size of the stomped one. For, even a weak little toddler or a puppy can stomp an ant to smithereens.

So, stomping a woman, a child, a puppy, or an ant to smithereens is nothing to thump your chest and give a Tarzan yell about. But all bullies are imbeciles who cheat this way, picking on someone smaller or someone who can't fight back, as though this contemptible conduct makes them mighty grand. (And something tells me they think it's smart to be so stupid.)

Whom can we hurt the most? Those with tender feelings. The meek. Those with fragile egos. Those who love us. Those who admire us. Those who have sacrificed for us and therefore expect our goodwill. Those who have every reason trust us and make the mistake of doing so, thus letting us at their soft underbelly.

This is why narcissists always abuse their children and as wantonly as they dare in that home. It's all about maximum impact for maximum self aggrandizement. Their own children serve as the ideal victims. For, whom can a narcissist wound more deeply? Ooh, what a power rush that must be. I dare say that a narcissist gets off on the looks on his kids' faces after he's just ripped their guts out more than he gets off on violent sex. For a hard-on any time he wants, he can be powerful on his child by eviscerating her and shattering her spirit with nothing but a word.

It is child abuse to:

- show your children that they are so unworthy of your attention that you don't even know they're there.
- scream viciously at your children for trying to get your attention.
- refuse to even look at your children.
- refuse to ever even let your children talk in your presence.
- refuse to ever tell your children you love them.
- refuse to visit your children when they are sick and in the hospital
- refuse to ever sit still and listen to anything your children want to say.
- refuse to ever touch your children except to hit them.
- refuse to ever talk to your children except to criticize them.
- refuse to ever buy your children a present
- refuse to ever play with your children.
- absolutely refuse to ever praise or compliment your children.
- absolutely refuse to ever even be in the same room with your children.

- intimidate your children by flying into rages at them.
- call your children names.
- call upon God by name to damn your children.
- tell your children everyday in a hundred ways that they are nothing.

That ain't normal. It ain't acceptable. I don't care if "that's just the way he is," it ain't good enough. And, no, I don't care who God Almighty is, the shit-ass must live up to higher standards than that. If he can't treat human beings like human beings, then he ain't a human being — let alone any god.

5.8 The Self Absorbed

As mentioned above, a malignant narcissist is fixated 100% of the time on his image. To the exclusion of virtually all other sensation — sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and feelings. In other words, he is absorbed in/by his image.

Our brains are programmed to "learn" what we pay little or no attention to. They adapt over time to filtering this type of information. A good example is background noise. There is probably plenty of background noise in the room you're in right now, but you were unaware of hearing it till I called it to consciousness by mentioning it.

Aren't you glad your brain has learned to filter it out? Otherwise you'd be distracted by every fly that buzzed. You'd never be able to focus on anything, because every passing car on the street outside would distract you.

So, what happens when a person with Narcissistic Personality Disorder willfully remains in a world of Pretend, trying to pay attention only to what he wants to see = his reflected image in others interacting with him? He is fixated on that reflection of his. Preoccupied with it. He deliberately pays little or no attention to anything else — no attention to those other annoying sights and sounds that distract him from his image = false self.

He goes through life trying to put all other things out of his mind as much as possible. Especially things he must pretend are beneath his notice, like you. So, though he doesn't mind watching geese and squirrels when there are no mirrors around, he *always* willfully blocks out things like the sound of your voice and the sight of your face (all he wants to see is his reflection there, not your face).

Can you see how such a person actually trains their brain to malfunction! He trains his brain to "tune out" that sort of sensory information right along with the

sensory information it's *supposed* to tune out, like the background noise, the picture on the wall behind you, the pressure of his chair on his butt.

The result is that a narcissist is permanently in an almost autistic state of self absorption. He misses an astonishing amount of what's right before his eyes.

For example, a narcissist often fails to notice even a drastic change in the weather outside. My most memorable observation of this occurred while I was getting hectically blabbed at by a narcissistic woman who thought I should be interested in every mundane thing she had to do that day. A few errands and a trip to the grocery store. Oh, she was so busy, busy, busy and these household chores were so demanding. Especially on this gloomy day in the rain. My jaw dropped, because we were standing next to a bank of huge windows, showing that the sky had cleared a couple hours ago and that the sun was brilliantly shining.

Over time, it becomes truly hard for a narcissist to focus on some *kind* of information he normally blocks out, even when he wants to keep it from getting blocked out with the rest of the background "noise" in the environment. He may go to a drug store, for example, and be unable to focus well enough to find the product he wants among the others on the shelf.

And as for things he really wants to block out, like what other people are saying to him, forget it. Try as he may, he can't tune in that signal well enough to focus on whether he is to get red wine or white for supper.

Tip: Don't say, "Don't get red wine." Don't even say the word *red* if red wine is what you DON'T want. Just write him a note like you would for a little child, and be done with it.

[Joanna Ashmun](#) has noticed the same phenomenon:

I have observed very closely some narcissists I've loved, and their inability to pay attention when someone else is talking is so striking that it has often seemed to me that they have neurological problems that affect their cognitive functioning.

Since the narcissist identifies with his image, his absorption in it is **self absorption**. It's like absorption in a book or a computer or television screen. People with good power of concentration can become absorbed in thought. In fact, to some degree, we are always absorbed in whatever we are paying attention to.

Our ability to become absorbed enables us to focus, or concentrate. Great tennis players, for example, report being so absorbed in the approaching ball, that it actually seems to grow larger, filling their field of view. The result is — whack — a beautifully heavy shot right off dead-center on the strings.

Our brains accomplish this focus by filtering out 99% of the information they receive and diverting it to areas in unconscious zones. There, it does not distract us. For example, that's what your brain is doing right now with the sensation of your butt pressing down on the chair you're sitting in. Right? You were unaware of that sensation, till I mentioned it. Then it instantly leapt to consciousness. That's because the brain is a relational database that immediately retrieved that information, calling it to consciousness when it was referenced.

5.8.1 Tuning You Out

The brain is marvelously adept at choosing what information to filter out and what to let in. It does not filter out all extraneous information. It lets certain things in to distract us and grab our attention. For example, while absorbed in a book, you may not hear, "Honey, would you take out the trash?" or "Honey, would you get me a beer?" But you certainly will hear "Fire!"

Nature programs the brain to bring certain things, like loud noises, to our attention. Yet we can train the brain to filter certain loud noises out. This enables people living near airports or railroad tracks to sleep through the noise. Indeed, they are unaware of a passing plane or train unless it drives the dog nuts or they are trying to carry on a conversation. Similarly, we can prime or train the brain to bring certain special things to our attention. For example we can prime the brain to scan a written page for a word or phrase. We can train the brain to "notice" things others would not. For example, three or four good open-water lifeguards can guard a thousand swimmers (not that I recommend so few!). They have trained their brains to remain alert while focusing on no one, allowing certain types of movement to grab their attention.

Note that the brain does not block out filtered information. It just "represses" it to the level of the subconscious. There, it is processed without distracting us. This ability to collect and subconsciously process information is responsible for Natural Learning. Without it we couldn't do the simplest things like walking or talking. Remember how inept you were the first time you got behind the wheel of an automobile? You'd still be that inept if it weren't for Natural Learning.

Unfortunately, people often abuse their minds by repressing information they

shouldn't. Like guilt, unwanted facts, conflicting beliefs, and feelings. Doing this puts them in a trance, a self-induced hypnotic state. It is thought that many people do this twenty times a day. To a slight degree, of course.

But, when they want to, people can practically knock themselves out. This is a phenomenon that must be seen to be believed. It reminds one of the newsreels showing the crowds gazing up at Hitler during one of his fist-pounding rants against Jews. All eyes glazed.

I saw it happen in a room of people scared of a hatchet man, who was orchestrating a back-stabbing melee in the mud to divide and conquer. Sitting in a circle, their (repressed) guilt made them so unwilling to know what was going on that none noticed the one picking her nose and eating it right in front of them. Incredulous, I had to pinch myself. I elbowed the one on my left, then on my right, asking whether they noticed. Both gave a little start as if awakened. Then their eyes widened at the sight, and they groggily replied that they hadn't noticed. Then — boom — they went right back under again so suddenly it was as if you'd clubbed them on the head.

Ever since, it has been no mystery to me how people downwind of Hitler's death camps could unsee, unhear, and even unsmell in order to unknow what was going on. Amazing experiments have been done to show that some people can go under so deep they feel no pain from minor surgery without an anesthetic. I don't think this is a mental skill that people should develop.

It is, after all, intellectual dishonesty. Friends don't lie to friends, and if you lie to yourself you are your own worst enemy.

All that repressed information is still there. Whether it's guilt, hatred, knowledge, or whatever. The subconscious mind still processes it. So, it still motivates behavior. For example, a narcissist's repressed feelings of inferiority and guilt motivate his behavior like an unseen puppet master.

It's better to be conscious of what's motivating your behavior. Then you can apply reason, good judgment, and measure to your decisions. Also, at the slightest reference, repressed guilt, knowledge, or feelings can surface to consciousness like a flashback. Narcissists live in constant dread of this. It's like some *corpus delicti* that just won't stay buried. No matter how frantically they keep shoveling.

Malignant narcissists are masters of this skill. At an early age they begin training their brains to filter out everything but what they want to see and hear and know.

Everything but the reflection of their false image in the mirrors around them. In other words, like Narcissus, they are totally absorbed in it 100% of the time. Why? Because, unlike us, they **identify** with it. They have thus substituted it for their true, inner selves.

5.8.2 To be, or not to be...

Now, logic dictates that if you identify with an apparition, you have an existential problem when it disappears. I cannot imagine being in such a state, and I doubt any normal person can. But it is well documented that narcissists say they feel "empty inside" and that they feel they "do not exist" when alone — that is, when they have no mirror.

This belief reminds one of the stupid question *If nobody hears a scream in the dark, did it happen?* Or, *If nobody sees a planet, does it exist?* Many "complex" people answer no. But if that were correct, you couldn't even ask the stupid question.

This comes close to the stupid question *Is the moon made of green cheese (instead of moon rock) if you choose to believe that it is?* Many "complex" people answer yes. I ask, how can they believe in anything if they do not even believe in Truth? Since the vast majority of them say they believe in God, I ask how they can, since they can create and discreate him at will?

So such beliefs conflict with other things they must believe. But you can't believe two contradictory things at once. Just as in a computer, conflicting information crashes your brain if you don't keep it segregated into different partitions, at least one of which is shut down. Doing that is called **compartmentalizing**.

To believe known falsehoods and irrational things, many people compartmentalize, but they usually compartmentalize just the stuff they need only on Sundays. A narcissist believes something irrational about his very essence! That fouls up the very foundation and logical structure of the mind. This malfunction must have myriad ramifications in his thought processes.

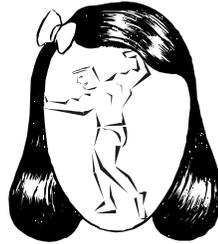
This is the predicament narcissists are in. Since they identify with their image reflected in mirrors, if their mirrors abandon them, they feel that their very existence is snuffed out. The fate worse than death. Now, a normal person may feel buried alive by total abandonment. But even in that hell, he will say, "I think, therefore I am."

Not a narcissist. Hence, narcissists fear abandonment so much that they are terribly insecure. Also, since they invest nothing but bad-faith in their end of a relationship, they think everybody is as untrustworthy as they. All this makes them so insecure that they have a frenetic compulsion to constantly reassure themselves of your attachment to them by testing its strength.

The only way to test that is by treating you badly to gauge how much abuse you will take. Stupid? or what? What the narcissist thus does to reassure himself of your attachment to him destroys it, causing what he dreads — abandonment. And he knows that. But he just can't stop it. Because he is a mental four-year-old who lives in terror of abandonment and can't control himself.

5.8.3 Mirrors

And so, everything a narcissist says or does in interacting with others is **for effect**. He is just posing before a mirror to admire his reflected image in your expression. Your face he doesn't see.



That is no exaggeration! You are but an object. You have no face. As one narcissist (ironically) put it to me, in bitterly describing her narcissistic father, "People are all the same to him."

I know of one narcissist who was unable to recognize his own daughter. Although he had always come into a room looking at whoever was there stupidly, as if he didn't know them, his family never dreamed that this was actually so. They knew he was off in his own little world, and they assumed he just had a habit of putting on an ape as he came to.

But when his 40-year-old daughter moved back into town and occasionally ran into him outside the usual setting of his home, such as on the street or in the grocery store, she realized the stupid look meant exactly what it said: he would look at her stupidly as if thinking, "Who is that woman? Why is she coming toward me as though she knows me?" She said he behaved the way anyone would if you saw a total stranger looking at you as though they know you and approaching to talk with you. Only after she spoke, addressing him as "Dad" did

a look of recognition come over his face.

You must work hard at paying anti-attention to people to accomplish that.

So, unless he is a "doting" narcissist¹⁶⁷ who breathes down his children's necks with critical attention and advice to improve or fix them, he knows less about his immediate family than their merest acquaintances do.

You could ask this parent any question about his wife's or children's characters, and he wouldn't know the answer. Is his wife religious? He doesn't know. Is his daughter loyal? He doesn't know. Is his son excitable? He doesn't know. You couldn't even give him three character descriptions, one of each, and have him match these three people to them. He would therefore not know better than to believe any preposterous lie someone told him about one of them.



All but him have bit parts in his world. They are one-dimensional (cartoon) characters without depth or significance in his eyes. They are of no more interest to him than extras in a crowd scene — mere **objects** there to shine attention on him.

So, people *are* all the same to him. One narcissist I knew never did get his daughters' names straight in over 80 years. Half the time he called Terry "Ka-terry" and Kathy "Te-kathy." Often, it was worse than that. He'd sometimes get halfway through a rant at, say, "Terry," before he'd use the name and Kathy would have to tell him what her name was. Over the phone he'd keep forgetting which one he was talking to.

Though they were diametrical opposites in every respect, they were both the same to him.

In [Extreme Self Absorption: A Red Flag of NPD](#)^[95], I already gave some of the following examples, but it's worth another look at what a narcissist can manage to unknow about others:

- Does not recognize people.
- Does not know how to spell his daughter's name.
- Never had any idea what kind of grades his kids got.
- Does not know his wife or children's birthdays.
- Has never visited the major Website his/her child/sibling published.
- Does not know how old his children are.
- Does not know that his daughter was a National Merit Finalist.
- Has no idea how good his kids are at any sport or other activity.
- Does not know what perfume his wife wears.
- Has never read the book his child wrote.
- Never does learn the names of the students in his/her classes.
- Cannot get the names of people "with two first names" straight. (viz., Jean Paul, Howard Dean, John Kerry, or even John Edwards)
- Does not know the names of his children's spouses, let alone his grandchildren.
- Has never shown up to watch his son play varsity tennis.
- Does not know what his children majored in at college or what degrees they earned.
- Does not know whether his teen-age son/daughter is dating.
- Has never met the boy his teen-age daughter has been dating for three years.

I know of one narcissist whose name was a byword in his hometown for never recognizing anyone he knew. Whenever he returned and was seen in a restaurant or bar, people formed an audience to make laughingstock of him. They knew an audience put him into a state of (narcissistic) bliss.

Like a drunken performer who loses his head in the glow of an audience, he would really try to show off how clever and grand he was. One by one, people would take turns coming up to talk with him. "Do you remember me, Jack?" Jack assured him that he did. After a minute of the requisite small talk about job and family, that person would ask Jack if he remembered some shared experience in their past. Jack assured him that he did.

Then the person would start reminiscing about it. "Do you remember old man Peterson then . . . ?" Yes, Jack remembered and roared with laughter about this supposedly funny detail. His audience went wild, laughing at, not with, him because old man Peterson had nothing to do with the event. But Jack was

oblivious to everything but the attention he was getting.

"Do you remember me then going to . . . ?"

Ditto.

After a few minutes of thus suckering Jack into hanging himself by trying to fake it came the denouement. "Hmm. Do you really know who I am, Jack?" Jack assured him that he did.

A minute later, the coup de grace. "I don't think you know who I am, Jack. You sure? What's my name?"

Jack's mouth would open wide and begin to form various words, intently studying the other man's mouth. It didn't work. So then he would mouth the first syllables of names in long, drawn out strains, slurring from to the next while his contorted facial expression and bodily pose desperately begged that man to help him. He sounded like a baby experimenting with his mouth before he can talk.

Needless to say, the roof raised with laughter, people laughing so hard they were in tears and had to bend over and hold their stomachs.

But there was no way to make Jack know that he was being laughed at! He just laughed along, pretending he had (intentionally) said something funny. So, he never learned. He never recognized any of these people, and he never quit coming back for more of all that sweet, sweet, sweet attention.

These are examples of moderately-to-severely affected malignant narcissists. They give you a good idea how much a narcissist filters in his total self-absorption. Neither excluding others from the picture nor acting out to extremes prevails over his total fixation on himself and makes you stand out of the background enough to make an impression on him. Almost anybody who knows you knows you better than your narcissist does. The names and faces in that infant's world are all a blur because he isn't interested in anyone around him. All he's interested in is the attention they are paying to him.

What he thinks of you amounts to little more than raw emotion and depends solely on what it's to his ego's magnification to think at the moment. It can resonate from pole to pole with dizzying speed.

5.8.4 Mirroring

To see his image, a malignant narcissist must pose before a mirror directly facing him, a mirror "paying attention" to him, as it were. A mirror reflecting anybody else's image is not doing what he wants. So, he jockeyes for position to make himself the center of the mirror's attention. Or, he simply eliminates others from the scene.

So, just remember that when you are interacting with a narcissist, you are nothing but a mirror.



He is filtering everything but what reflects (on) his image. Are you discussing a business proposal? It's not about that: it's about his image. Are you telling him something about his kids? It's not about them: it's about his image. That's what he's focused on.



For example, let's say that you're somebody he wants to impress. He is pleasant, divining what wins your approval. Taking no chances, he hems and haws enough to probe for the right approach. He detects it in your responses, through your changing posture, facial expression, tone, diction, and so forth. When he sees the gratifying reflection he wants in your eyes, he goes there and puts it on thick.

But afterwards he won't know half of what you said. He won't have learned anything about you. He may not even remember your name. If you later meet him outside the usual setting, he won't even recognize you. That's because, throughout the interaction, this information about *you* has been filtered out with background information, like the picture on the wall behind you and the sounds of the traffic on the street outside. Though he may have flattered you till you're standing hip-deep in it, *you* are that insignificant to him.

If you do not know a narcissist, that last paragraph seems beyond belief. This cognitive dysfunction gives the term "tuning people out" new meaning. It is one of the most bizarre characteristics of NPD.

Still, it makes perfect sense when you consider the narcissist's attitude. He simply hasn't noticed you any more than you notice a mirror while gazing upon your reflection in it.



Throughout your interaction with him, that's all he was doing — posing for, and gazing at, the reflection of his image in the mirror of your eyes. He was totally absorbed in it. You were nothing but a tool he used to see it.

Warning: when people are deeply disturbed by their reflection in a mirror, they think nothing of breaking it.

Narcissists project different images on different mirrors.

This is partly because any particular acting job may draw a favorable response from one mirror and an unfavorable response from another. For example, liberal-bashing produces a gratifying reflection in a right-wing mirror, while conservative-bashing produces a gratifying reflection in a left-wing mirror. A goody-two-shoes act looks holy in the eyes of religious hypocrites and the pharisaic, while it looks disgusting in the eyes of true believers and atheists.

Another reason why the narcissist projects different images on different mirrors is because he doesn't dare project the most gratifying image of all — the one his ego gets the biggest boost from — on most mirrors. Moreover, like any set of tools, the different people in his world are useful for different purposes.

A well-known narcissist, Sam Vaknin, explains it this way: he says that a narcissist assesses everyone in his world as a source of what he calls Narcissistic Supply (ego gratification, self-aggrandizement, psychic income — what a narcissistic woman I knew refers to as "sugar," as in "Gimme me some sugar."). It comes in different flavors. Like a bee in search of nectar, he has nothing to do with any "flower" he can't get any from. As for the rest, he determines the most

profitable way to tap each one.

So, for example, he exploits a powerful, wealthy, sophisticated, or famous person as a source of Narcissistic Supply in a much different way than he exploits the poor or down-and-out. This is only partly because he doesn't dare treat the former as he treats the latter. It's also partly because the flavor of Narcissistic Supply he can extract from the former is the rare and precious "nectar of the gods." So, he drops their names; he brown-noses and sucks-up to them; he shamelessly, even obsequiously, flatters them and courts their favor. No matter what they do, he finds no fault in them, considering them infallible and above reproach. All to aggrandize himself by association with them.

And so, a narcissist doesn't have just two faces, he has multiple faces. Faces he can change as suddenly as a mask. Faces so different they seem like multiple personalities. Each is but his way of exploiting a particular source of Narcissistic Supply. So he projects a different image of himself in a church than in a bar. The reflection he wants from his co-workers is radically different than the reflection he wants from his spouse and children.

For example, let's say you're his little girl. As a source of Narcissistic Supply, you are rare and precious, for you are a potential source of the sweetest nectar of all. No, it's not the nectar of love, it's the nectar of absolute power. One drop of it kills his pain and makes him drunk.

So, you are best exploited to mirror his high and mighty status. He does this by playing the [Teeter-Totter Game](#) ³⁴⁰ in his interactions with you.

He won't have time to listen to whatever insignificant thing you have to say. He won't even look at you. He does this for effect, to make you feel unworthy and insignificant before him. Your feelings show, reflecting an image of him that towers in importance above you.



If you show him a picture you drew at school, he finds fault with it. He does so for effect, to make you feel inept and inadequate. Your shot-down feelings show, reflecting an image of him that is the judge of your worth = God.

To get a pleasant word from him, you must "Ooh!" and "Ah!" over something he is doing. For example, the only decent word I ever heard one narcissist say to his stepchildren was on a 4th of July when they exclaimed "Ooh! Ah!" at the fireworks he was playing with. That was narcissistic overdose. "So, you liked that?" he said. Then he really put on a show to hear some more *ooh's* and *ahh's*.

But, if you are so starved for his attention that you try to hijack it, he breaks his naughty mirror. He does this by lashing out at you instantly, as if he had been waiting for an excuse. Using shock tactics practiced since childhood, he lashes out at you as savagely as if you'd attacked him with a fiery torch. His face turns into a Bogey-Man face. His tone is so vicious he doesn't even sound human, and you can hardly make out the words. He does this for powerful effect, to eviscerate you. Your shock and your feelings show, reflecting an image of him that is awesome. Yup, you guessed it, "shock and awe."

If he reacts at all to the sight of your guts hanging out all over the floor, it is with contempt. He does this for powerful effect, to make you feel like dirt. Your feelings show, reflecting an image of him as a colossus trampling a bug.

This is the narcissist's most extreme high. He acts like he gets an erection out of it, so it must be top-quality stuff. If he had the power, like Saddam Hussein, he'd use anyone and everyone this way.

That's why abuse is an integral part of Narcissistic Personality Disorder and why narcissists are bullies. All bullies stoop to such utterly despicable behavior. There is no bottom to how low they can go. Because, in their upside-down brains, the lower they go, the more they feel like they're goose-stepping the mountain tops.

5.8.5 The Doting Narcissist

Because the mentally ill are so complex, opposite behaviors often stem from the same root cause. We see this often in narcissists. For example, to the same self-aggrandizing end, a "doting" narcissist does the opposite of the ignore-ant narcissist I just described. That is, he seems to shower attention on his child.

But he should not be called a doting narcissist, because he is not fond of his child and takes no interest in the inner person of his child. He should be called a "scrutinizing narcissist," because all this attention is critical attention. Critical attention is the only kind a narcissist gives, because it plays the Teeter Totter Game.



So, if possible, he attends every tennis tournament or meet, no matter how far away. Every concert. Every play. He even shows up at practices and at the prom. And he delivers his detailed critique after every performance. He lives vicariously through his child, because that child's success improves his image and wins him attention. So he invests an inordinate amount of time and effort and money in his child's talent. And a truckload of critical attention, because he is never satisfied. Which makes that child, no matter how successful, feel inadequate and inept. As one poor young rich kid put it to me: it torments him with the haunting fear that he's "a loser."

If he is a she, she may not be satisfied with her daughter's face and want plastic surgery to fix it. She may color her little child's hair. She may dress the girl like a Hollywood movie star. With the same result.

The children of any narcissist are just objects to exploit for his own aggrandizement, whether he is an ignore-ant narcissist or a scrutinizing one.

5.9 Narcissists Are from Pluto

Those who must deal with narcissists find it impossible. That's because, to deal with anyone, you must know what to expect from him. For example, if you say "Good morning" to any normal person, you can expect him to say "Good morning" back. But what if he just gives you the stink-eye, acting as though he perceives some hostile intent behind your seemingly friendly overture?

That throws you into confusion, doesn't it?

The victims of narcissists often report such bizarre reactions to things. But note the **exact relationship** between the stimulus (your saying "Good morning") and the response (him giving you the stink-eye).

You said "Good morning."

He didn't burst out crying.

He didn't jump for joy.

He didn't say "you're welcome."

He didn't react in any of a thousand possible off-the-wall ways. He reacted in the off-the-wall way that is the **exact opposite of what was called for**. Greeting someone with "Good morning" is an acknowledgement of their presence and an **expression of goodwill**.

It calls for the same in return.

But he responded instead with a rude and rather audacious refusal to be civil and give the customary return, hurling at you an expression of the opposite — ill will — instead.

This is a pattern of narcissistic behavior: it is perverted = exactly backwards. And supercharged to an extreme. What is going on in the narcissist's head to make him or her behave this way?

First, to make sure we're all on the same page, let's recount some examples:

- hostility toward friendly overtures
- anger at what should please
- increased anger then at what should appease
- inappropriate laughter
- contemptuous callousness toward what evokes warmth and pity
- hatred of what should evoke gratitude

Such perverted reactions are the antithesis of a normal human being's reactions to those things. So, it's like the narcissist is an anti-human being, the negative image of one. Which is why their behavior is so perplexing and counterintuitive.

The question is *Why?* The answer is *Because in a way they **are** anti-human beings: they are predators = they are behaving as members of another species toward human beings. They are wolves who view human beings as sheep.*

Hence, there is never an actual "meeting of the minds" between normal people and narcissists. For, in a human being's interaction with a narcissist, you have the natural human mentality clashing with the alien mentality of a predator on humankind.

When you meet Dave, a co-worker, in the hall, you say hello on the **premise** that *a show of friendliness and goodwill will elicit the same in return*. If Dave were a normal human being it would. But your premise doesn't apply to this interaction, because you are interacting with a predator, not a normal human being. Dave feeds on your kind. Morally, that is. Think of him as a vampire. So, he gives you the stink-eye and reacts hostilely to your friendly overture on the **premise** that *a hostile reaction to a friendly overture will shock, disarm, and deeply wound you*.



See the clash of conflicting premises here? You walk blindly right into that surprise attack, because Dave is a wolf in sheep's clothing, so you expected a human reaction from the antithesis of a human being = a predator on human beings. You are like a sheep that walks up to a wolf and says, "Hi. How are you to-" and never finishes the sentence before its jugular is cut.

And notice also how this perverted reaction perverts the whole event. Your friendly gesture is made out to be the malicious act, not Dave's attack in response. Enter The Twilight Zone.

Every human action is based on a **premise**. It is a path you take to reach a chosen destination. For example, you drink a glass of water on the premise that drinking water will quench your thirst. You say "hello" to a co-worker on the premise that acknowledging his presence with this expression of goodwill will elicit goodwill from him in return.

What if he's a narcissist from another planet? Then he ignores you on the premise that acting like you're beneath his notice makes you dirt, and he makes you dirt on the premise that making you dirt makes him God.

So, he is living in another world, his own little Wonderland, and your premises don't work in that world. This is why his reactions are often off-the-wall.

Moreover, we are nearly always acting on some premise about the matter at hand. For example, if you are discussing a business proposal with Dave, you will be acting on premises aimed at business success. Narcissists are nearly always acting some narcissistic premise. So, while supposedly discussing that business proposal, Dave is actually just posing in a mirror to improve his image. He would thoughtlessly damage the business to improve his image. So, in your eyes it's about the business proposal; in his eyes it's all about him. Even when he's

flattering you, it's on some narcissistic premise. In other words, you are like actors on a stage reading lines from different scripts.

The narcissist never tires of this imbecile game. But you will run out of patience with it fast. There are three things never to forget while interacting with him:

- The person inside this adult is a damaged three-year-old.
- He views you as an object to exploit for his self-aggrandizement without regard for your feelings and welfare
- He is acting on alien premises.

With this goes the narcissist's choice of victim. It is so counterintuitive that many people just won't even believe it. As Jesus of Nazareth said, "What criminal hands his child a venomous snake when that child asks for something to eat?"

Answer: Dave and his fellow narcissists.

5.9.1 Alien Mentality

The science-fictional characters of aliens from other planets make a good analogy for the narcissist's predatory mentality. They likewise view us as *prey*.

Truth is stranger than fiction, so artists deal with the predatory mentality almost exclusively with characters represented as "alien" beings. Fiction writers must portray them as intelligent alien species, not human. Otherwise readers wouldn't buy it.

In some movies these beings come to eat us. One memorable episode of [*The Twilight Zone*](#) tells of aliens coming to eradicate all human disease and hunger. While they were busy fattening us up and ridding us of disease, their leader absent-mindedly mislaid a book that the CIA grabbed and studied. The President had code-breakers and linguists try to translate it. Finally they got the title translated: "How to Serve Man." That put the President's mind at ease about people accepting the invitation to visit the aliens' home planet.

As the first group departed Earth, waving goodbye, the translators urgently came to the President's office, saying, "Wait! Stop that rocket ship! It's a cookbook!"

Not funny, eh? Like clueless domestic livestock, we humans let them rid us of disease, fatten us up, and herd us onto this interplanetary cattle truck, never suspecting what they had in store for us.

The President played right into the aliens' hands because he made **the error of assuming a human mentality in an alien species**, so it never dawned on him that this manual of theirs could be talking about cooking human flesh.

Don't we do likewise to the domestic livestock we raise and slaughter? These aliens just viewed us the way we view them — without *pi eta*. *Humanity*.

In other stories, aliens experiment on humans like Hitler's doctors experimented on Jews in the Death Camps — with nothing but curiosity about the agony they inflict on a specimen. This absence of humanity horrifies us. Yet why should we expect humanity in an alien species? Don't we ourselves experiment on other species? When was the last time you felt sorry for a cockroach writhing in poisoned agony? We view it as unworth our regard. So, these advanced species of aliens from other planets are no worse than us.

Narcissists view us the same way, as some lower life form than themselves, as unworthy of their regard. They must. Otherwise they could not bring themselves to prey on us. And so, their need to aggrandize themselves and their way of doing it — by diminishing somebody else — makes them predatory and prone to acts of shocking inhumanity.

The law recognizes the special case of **predation**. The criminal predator is much worse than those who murder in revenge or anger or fear (as in a robbery). They kill for reasons; he kills just to kill, because he likes to. The difference is as the difference between night and day.

It is not natural for people to view human beings as prey. We cannot even imagine it. This is so ingrained in us that, even in disasters where survival depends on eating the flesh of the dead and there is no moral reason not to, a normal person can hardly force himself to. And he bears psychological scars from the experience for the rest of his life. So, what is it with narcissists?

What Wordsworth calls "That primal human sympathy, which, having been once must ever be" just is not in them. They have no more regard for anybody else's feelings than we have for those of a half-squashed bug. They don't relate to us. They don't view us as being of their kind. This is how a wolf views sheep.

The narcissist chooses to not relate to human beings. He chooses to view human beings as prey who exist to supply him with food. He chooses to disdain membership in humanity and chooses to show no humanity toward humanity. His choice. His doing.

I suspect that if there ever is a cure for NPD, it will lie in somehow persuading the narcissist to deny his image and identify with the hurt little child in the dungeon within. The real self. A **human being**. In doing so, he would become human and rejoin the human race.

But till that day, if ever it comes, the narcissist is always acting on a different premise than a normal human being would.

5.10 I Am a Machine

Narcissists are often described as "machines" because their signal behaviors (such as devaluing, communication blocking, raging, and so forth) occur like knee-jerk reactions. No normal person could imitate a narcissist. No matter how well-versed in narcissistic behavior you are, you cannot deduce the narcissistic reaction to a given stimulus fast enough.

For example, if you say "hello" to a normal person under normal circumstances, he will say "hello" back. What will a narcissist do? To play the narcissist, you first have think, "How do I react so as to aggrandize my image?" Then you figure out that the best way is to treat that person as beneath your notice, even as contemptible.

It takes too long to figure that out, doesn't it? By then you've already said "hello" back.

Try these interactions . . .



"Excuse me, may I borrow your pen for a moment?"

Quick, how do you play this to aggrandize yourself?



"How do you like the turkey and dressing?"

Quick, how do you play this to aggrandize yourself?



"Which of these two business models do you think is best?"

Quick, how do you play this to aggrandize yourself?



"I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to offend you."

Quick, how do you play this to aggrandize yourself (some more)?

You can't possibly think fast enough to figure out how to react narcissistically to everything. You wouldn't get five minutes into this game without realizing that

nobody can possibly think fast enough to come up with all the stunts a narcissist pulls in his everyday interactions with people.

Obviously, narcissists can't be thinking up the moves they make in the game they play. Their reactions to things are like conditioned reflexes. This wouldn't happen in normal people because most behavior is a complex issue in normal people, one that requires thought to weigh several considerations.

For example, when someone asks to borrow your pen, you weigh several considerations. You'll consider whether you can spare it for a moment. You'll consider the fact that she'll think you a jerk if you don't hand it over. And you'll consider the future trouble an unfriendly relationship with her could cause you. You may consider why this person never has a pen with her and why she never returns one she borrows. Or you may be delighted that you can do her this favor because she has done you favors and you like her. In any case, the last thing on your mind is the opportunity to play this interaction as a power play.

But not for a narcissist. That's the *only* thing on his mind. He doesn't like anyone. He doesn't care about being liked (just admired, feared, favored). He doesn't care about getting along with people. He is no more capable of considering the future consequences of his actions than any other three-year-old. Even the business at hand is no consideration to him — not that pen, not that turkey, not that business model, and not that relationship. It isn't about that stuff: it's always all about his ego instead, period.

A narcissist is amoral and relates to others as mere [objects](#)^[14] (as though to robots of his). So, he chooses his behavior solely on the basis of whether it works — that is, **whether it gets him what he wants**. The only other thing he considers is whether there will be any witnesses. Nothing else matters to him because his mind is permanently stuck on "How do I play this to aggrandize myself?" That vastly simplifies the issue.

Over time, from the age of six or seven on, he learns by trial-and-error what works = what kills his pain and makes him feel good for awhile. So, for example, experience has taught him that he gets what he wants when he flies into a rage in response to any effort to appease. Therefore, he doesn't have to think, flying into a rage at such a moment is just a habit of his.

Here is an interesting article that speaks to that, entitled [Conceptual Clarity: The difference between moral and strategic behavior in understanding the perpetrator of domestic violence](#) (a 4-page PDF document) by David J.H. Garvin, the Program Director of Alternatives to Domestic

Aggression, a program of Catholic Relief Services in Michigan. It isn't about NPD per se, but the points he makes apply to abusers suffering from Narcissistic Personality Disorder.

Garvin points out that abusers do what they do for RESULTS, period. They disregard the morality of what they do. In fact, they disregard every other aspect and consequence of what they do. Gavin puts their attitude this way: "**I want what I want, and I want it now.**" The epitome of childishness, eh? No other consideration is worthy of weight in their choices. To hell with whether getting it is right or wrong. To hell with the consequences to you.

*For example, one may believe the answer is an anger control problem. Saying that a batterer has an anger control problem is like saying Lucciano Pavorotti needs vocal lessons. Batterers use their anger **instrumentally and strategically**. If a situation calls for the effective use of anger, the batter will summon his anger to do the job. The batterer may, just as effectively use his sorrow, sadness or shame to also be an effective and coercive means to establish maintain or regain control. Simply stated, battering is purposeful, instrumental and strategic behavior designed to bring about a result.*

Yes!

*It is my opinion that battering is 100% **premeditated**. Consider that there are two "types" of premeditation. One that would meet the legal definition of premeditation and the other, a logical and cognitive and behavioral understanding. In the case of the former one could posit that your reading of this article was to gain a better understanding into the dynamics of the batterer and that you are reading this article, not "by accident". The second understanding of premeditation entails an understanding of "patterned behavior." Patterned behavior is that which we have done with enough frequency, that we have now become proficient at it and no longer necessitates the focus and attention, which it once did. An example of this could be as simple as tying ones shoes.*

From early childhood, narcissists learn that certain behaviors get them what they want. It takes no Einstein: a two-year-old learns that throwing a fit will get him what he wants. Narcissists and other bullies *choose* to never grow beyond that and consider other aspects of the choices they make — like...

Will it hurt that person for me to do this?

Will it be moral for me to do this?

What might the future consequences be if I anger this person by doing this?

*Will it be good for the company's business?
Will it be good for my child's mental health?*

None of that matters to Narcissus, because the controlling fact about him is that he's busy doing this . . .



He's totally self absorbed. Nothing else gets through. The possible future consequences mean no more to him than they mean to any child his mental age. All he cares about is getting the reflection he wants.

So, his choices are as simple as can be: *Will doing this get me what I want right now? If so, then I'll do it. No matter what.*

In other words, narcissists' choices are **binary decisions**, like a computer's. It takes no thinking at all for them to make such a simple Option A or B decision. That's why they are so impulsive and machinelike. That's why their behaviors are such quick knee-jerk reactions.

In everything you or I do, we consider maybe three or four or even more things before making the decision of how to react to a stimulus — even in the space of the few seconds we have to respond to another person in conversation. But narcissists have only one thing to consider: **Will it get me what I want right now? or not?**

So, they aren't as smart as they seem: they're just experienced manipulators making binary decisions like a computer does.

And most of their behaviors are pure habit or conditioned reflex, like tying your shoes. Which means they have practiced a certain type of reaction so much that they automatically react that way to a certain type of thing, without needing to think about it anymore. For example, tell them to stop treating you like dirt. They long ago learned that to get you to shut up they should whine, "WAAH!"

Get off my back!" So, when you tell them to quit treating you like dirt, it's automatic, like pulling the string on a Chatty Cathy doll: (Click) "WAAH! Get off my back!" every single time.

But that's only because this blowback-in-your-face reaction works: it crams your words back down your throat. So, it has become a **habit** for the narcissist to do that, like tying his shoes. Not an accident. **Not something he can't control.** Just a damned habit.

So, as Garvin says, it IS premeditated, even though habit has him doing it thoughtlessly now.

He therefore has no excuse. He is perfectly capable of controlling his behavior, and he does whenever the coast ain't clear. That's why the American judicial system considers NPD no defense. It is legally classed as a [Character Disorder](#)^[62], not a Personality Disorder. Narcissists are not insane, just twisted. They can't help how they feel, but they know right from wrong (or they wouldn't sneak around to do wrong), they know what they're doing, and they *can* control how they behave.

5.11 Who? Me? Responsibility? What Responsibility?

*Verbum sonat, exemplum tonat.
(Actions speak louder than words.)*

A Case Study

Time: shortly after World War II.

Place: the United States

Though he was of prime age, Frank hadn't served. He said he flunked the physical, because of his rotten teeth, a shoulder injury, and a hernia that had never been fixed.

He showed no interest in marriage till he was thirty years old and his cold and distant mother was found to have cancer. Then he immediately began courting.

One day, he met an easily chagrined woman named Adeline. She confronted him over something he had said about her to others and over a loud joke he was fond of making in bars about her family name. Apparently it was supposed to be both funny and derogatory that the name either rhymes with "red squirrel" in Czech

or means "red squirrel" in English. His response was to ask her for a date.

He moved fast. He told everyone that his dying mother wanted him not to postpone the wedding, so it took place during the customary mourning period immediately after her death.

It was a grand wedding, which Frank paid for, being the owner of a poultry house. The business was failing though. In fact, it had failed already, though he was still digging himself deeper in debt and denial. He had kept his mushrooming financial disaster a secret.

Nine months after the wedding his first child was born. Eighteen months after that, his second. Two weeks later, Frank bugged out to go fishing so he wouldn't be home when they came to repossess the furniture and evict his family. He had never told Adeline that there were any financial problems, that he couldn't make payroll, and that they were going to lose the business and be evicted from their home. She found all this out when the landlord arrived.

The former owner of the poultry house thought Adeline was crazy to marry Frank and immediately have two children. But on discovering that the whole thing was a surprise to her and that Frank had not even made living arrangements for her and the babies, he was stricken with grief. He had been set up for ignominy in that town. His name would be mud for evicting a mother with two babies and nowhere to go. He called off the eviction, pleading with Adeline to accept some of the furniture as a gift and begging her to stay till they found a place for her and her babies. But Frank was mad at him and would not allow it. He made them move in with his cold and critical sister.

Frank's debtors had been set up too. He had borrowed from individuals, including Adeline's uncle, whose wife was like a mother to her. He thus borrowed as much as possible from people who could hardly say no. And he borrowed it all from people who did not know how deep in debt he already was and how unlikely they were to be repaid. Not one of them had money to burn. When he tried to borrow from his father's second wife, a nurse who owned the local hospital, she not only said no, she started asking questions and lowered the boom. She sent him to her bank, insisting that her husband put up the farm, which a younger son was working, as collateral for a loan to pay everyone back.

Those who came clamoring for it got their money, but not those for whom it would have been a breach of decency, like Adeline's uncle. For decades, she had to send them a monthly check, and that of course damaged their precious relationship.

Frank moved his family far away for a fresh start in a town where he'd found work in a factory. Within weeks, he got sent home and nearly lost the job. He had to learn something new: how to show respect for superiors. Also, he'd had no idea they could tell he hadn't done his job even if they weren't looking when he skipped it. He then adapted well enough, and the strong labor union protected him, though he did get demoted once. Yet hardly a day passed without him telling his family a made-up story about other workers not doing their job right and him telling his foreman to go to hell.

Frank got the credit for paying his huge debts, and people in his new town admired him for it when they found out about it. But the truth was that half was a windfall in a settlement from an automobile accident and that the credit belonged to Adeline. She had given Frank a choice between divorce and giving her full control of the finances. She curtailed his wasteful spending and wrote the checks to make sure his bills and debts got paid and that his family did not lose the farm.

Ever after, Frank spoke bitterly of the farmers around his home town. He accused them of being two-faced, of being seeming friends while stabbing him in the back by selling their eggs to a Chicago outfit that paid more. Thus, they had failed to carry him, so his business failure was their fault. He suffered an acute sense of betrayal over this that made him dream bitterly about them and that poultry house for the rest of his life.

5.12 Lee Harvey Oswald

[Lee Harvey Oswald](#) was the man who assassinated President Kennedy in 1963. The conspiracy theories about this event haunted me till I saw a documentary program a few years ago. I think it was this [Frontline program](#), but I'm not sure. A short way into the program, bits and pieces of information about Oswald gradually added up till it hit me like a ton of bricks: the official story DOES make sense and is dead on, because Oswald was almost certainly a malignant narcissist suffering from NPD, and he murdered the President just to get attention, to make a big name for himself.

That explained his own assassination days later by Jack Ruby, who was in with the police and the press (and some unsavory crime figures as well) and had Oswald's type pegged. He killed Oswald to deny him what he wanted — to bask in the glow of all that sweet, sweet, sweet worldwide attention.

Unbelievable, isn't it? that one malignant narcissist can bring down anyone with nothing but a pot shot. We don't want to believe that. We don't want to believe that one, lone piss ant can throw the greatest nation in the world into confusion. We'd rather think our president was martyred for a cause. But he wasn't. He was just there. In a narcissist's cross hairs.

As the facts (see below) show, if the situation had been a bit different, and if Soviet Premier Khrushchev or the Pope had been driving by in a town where Oswald had a gun and a vantage point, he would just as soon have murdered them to get attention. He was that desperate for it at this point in his life.

He had recently failed to get attention by attempting to assassinate a general who crossed his gun sights. Before that, he had failed to achieve notoriety by a Pro-Castro propoganda campaign he made as much noise as possible with. Before that he had failed to get attention by defecting to the Soviet Union. (The Soviets put him under psychiatric observation and had his number, so they wanted nothing to do with him.) And all along the way he tried to get attention with bizarre acting out, such as preaching Marxism to his fellow US Marines serving in Japan at the height of the Cold War in the late 1950's, a couple faked suicide attempts, making bombs and showing them to his friends, and so forth. All of these actions have a common denominator: they all cry out for ATTENTION.

Just like an acting-out child does. Which, of course, is the hallmark of NPD.

In addition, notice all the red flags of NPD in [his story](#):

- His father died before his birth in Louisiana. His mother "doted on him to excess."
- His mother was nonetheless characterized as "domineering and quarrelsome."
- As a child he was "withdrawn and temperamental"
- He once threatened his sister-in-law with a knife and frequently punched his mother in the face
- At 13 he was diagnosed as having s "personality pattern disturbance with schizoid features and passive-aggressive tendencies." (NPD wasn't yet a diagnosis for sociopaths of this type and still isn't a diagnosis for children.)

Let's pause at this point in Oswald's life for more on his [psychiatric examination at 13 in 1953](#):

The reporting psychiatrist writes that it made Oswald "too unhappy" to "express his needs and wants" to other people. Ding. That's a red flag of pathological narcissism. Especially when you find it in a child. A narcissist thinks you are

here for his sake, to anticipate his every need and fulfill it without God Almighty having to ask for anything.

Continuing, the report says that it makes him "too unhappy" to "compete with other children" in any way. Ding. Typical, narcissists must never lose.

He denies that he needs any help whatsoever.... Ding. A narcissist is God Almighty, you know — perfect, flawless in every respect. He would rather die than admit he needs help. What supreme being needs any help from mere mortals?

...with one exception. He needs "remedial" help with his schoolwork. Huh? Yet the report says that he is of "superior" intelligence and gets grades only slightly below the level you'd expect for his IQ, despite constant truancy.

So, his ego can't take not being smarter than everybody else, not getting straight A's? Therefore, he must skip school to pretend it's because he isn't trying? Typical narcissist playing "Pretend" to delude himself. He needs no "help" (read: *attention*) he just needs to attend class.

"He feels that his mother rejects him and really has never cared very much for him." Ding.

"Lee claims that he can get very angry at his mother and occasionally has hit her, particularly when she returns home without having bought food for supper."

At this point, you can tell that he was asked why he thought his mother should *buy* food for supper on the way home every day. For, the report goes on to say...

"On such occasions she leaves it to Lee to prepare some food with what he can find in the kitchen."

I have often heard narcissists do this. When some statement of theirs betrays that their grievance against someone is unjustifiable, and you say, "What? What's wrong with that?" they slickly metamorphose that statement of their grievance into one that seems to have merit.

But always mysteriously like this, by subliminally suggesting that the kitchen cupboards are bare. Are they bare? If so, where's the evidence collected by a social worker to that effect?

The point here isn't whether or not Lee was neglected: the point is why they are

buying his story. All it says is that this poor young male has no woman to prepare and serve him his every meal. That's "woman's work" you know. Back in 1953, even though Oswald's mother was the sole breadwinner and worked full-time as an insurance broker, this complaint apparently won his poor, offended male ego sympathy.

Oh, so every day he must get a TV dinner, right? This teenager must never be humiliated with "woman's work" by being asked to fix something for himself. Right? Wow. Child abuse by his full-time working mother.

Whether she was a narcissist or not (and she probably was) this complaint is bogus.

Now, notice how the reporting psychiatrist and social worker assume that this 13-year-old crackpot is telling the truth when he claims to be neglected...

"His mother was interviewed by the Youth House social worker and is described by her as a 'defensive, rigid, self-involved and intellectually alert' woman who finds it exceedingly difficult to understand Lee's personality and his withdrawing behavior. She does not understand that Lee's withdrawal is a form of violent but silent protest against his neglect by her--and represents his reaction to a complete absence of any real family life. She seemed to be interested enough in the welfare of this boy to be willing to seek guidance and help as regards her own difficulties and her management of Lee,"

Why the above ends in the middle of a sentence with a comma, I don't know. Something has obviously been deleted here. What? Didn't it square with their assumptions?

What's more, where is the "neglect" in this report? The only "neglect" mentioned is that she doesn't always buy food for his supper on her way home from work and that on these few occasions she expects Lee to fix something for himself.

Now, even though Oswald's mother probably is a narcissist and neglecting him in various ways, how can this psychiatrist conclude that she is neglecting him from the evidence he has? Why do psychiatrists believe known pathological liars? That's stupid. This one is just being suckered by this kid.

That's a 13-year-old kid snowing and manipulating a psychiatrist! This would be unbelievable if it weren't common knowledge that narcissists and psychopaths can do this at a such young age. Why? Because they've been [practicing on people since birth](#)^[202]. They needn't even be that smart to be good at

it by this age.

What we have here about his mother is a jumble. She dotes and domineers and neglects. Okay, if she's a narcissist herself, all that could very well be true. But the doting and neglecting parts contradict each other. A doting narcissistic parent cruelly neglects in emotional ways while spending lavishly on that child in material ways (i.e., time and money). So, I'm skeptical that she would fail to feed her son properly.

The narcissists I have known all hated their narcissistic parent until that parent was dead or something else happened to make the narcissist no longer vulnerable to abuse by that parent. (Then suddenly, the narcissist revises history to make a saint of that parent.)

"Lee has vivid fantasy life, turning around the topics of omnipotence and power, through which he tries to compensate for his present shortcomings and frustrations."

BINGO! Ladies and gentlemen, [we have a narcissist](#)^[70], at the ripe old age of 13.

"Lee has to be seen as an emotionally, quite disturbed youngster who suffers under the impact of really existing emotional isolation and deprivation; lack of affection, absence of family life and rejection by a self-involved and conflicted mother."

Within 10 years he will assassinate President Kennedy. I know that by the age of 13, a narcissist is already dangerous, like any psychopath. And we see this in the headline murders committed by children every day.

At 15, he decided to become a Marxist. At 15? Give me a break. At 15, boys care only about sex. If he decided to become at Marxist at 15, it was only to get attention, to stand out by making himself different.

Indeed, he later wrote in his diary that he became a Marxist because he viewed it "as the key to my environment." His environment? It was at the height of the Cold War, in the United States, during the Red Scare. People were building bomb shelters, and schools ran "duck and cover" drills, and the nuclear arsenals of the two superpowers mushroomed. The Democrats were "tougher on Communism" than the Republicans. And, in that environment, this 15-year-old decides to become a Marxist. So, he certainly wasn't trying to blend into his environment, was he?

Frankly, I think it's hilarious that most historians and his biographers just

swallow that one whole, believing that Oswald was a true-believing Communist. As we shall see, the evidence to the contrary is overwhelming.

Then at 17 he quits high school and joins the Marines. Right, a sincere Marxist joins the United States Marines. Give me a break. In the mid-1950's, at the height of the Cold War. If you buy that, I have a bridge in Brooklyn to sell you. No, together these facts indicate that the Marxism thing was just a way to be different, to get attention at school. It evidently didn't work, so Oswald did an about-face and joined the Marines.

Not too smart, because the last place for a narcissist is the United States Marines. We can imagine what his fellow marines thought of this [grandiose](#)⁶⁴ fart. He got nicknamed "Ozzie the Rabbit" after a cartoon character.

Oooh, don't do that to a malignant narcissist.

His reaction? To start professing Marxism. A sure way to get attention in the US Marines serving in Japan at the time. So then his fellow marines nicknamed him "Oswaldskovich."

See how his attention-getting professions of Marxism got him just what he wanted — attention. This is a perfect example of a narcissist seeking negative attention when positive attention isn't available to him.

He also got attention by shooting himself in the elbow.

He couldn't get busted far enough to be satisfied. He had started as a radar operator at the base for the U-2 spy flights over the USSR, which means that the Marines saw great potential in him. After shooting himself and then attacking the sergeant who made sure his court martial didn't let him get away with a self-inflicted wound, he was standing sentry duty in the Philippines.

Hmmm. How does one all alone get attention in the middle of nowhere like this in the middle of the night? Easy. He inexplicably opened fire on the surrounding jungle.

I bet *that* got everybody's attention. Soon he was doing menial labor.

Hmmm. Time to change strategy. So, he claimed a "hardship" case to get discharged and go home to care for his beloved mother.

But he went to Moscow instead. There he showed up at the American Embassy

and tried to get attention by renouncing his American citizenship. (But since it was just for attention, he never bothered to follow through.)

His defection to the Soviet Union got him the attention he craved, and he became a hit in the press. But leave it to the cynical Soviets to recognize one of their kind. They soon wanted nothing to do with him. Here he had been a Marine radar operator and they didn't even question him!

They denied his request for residency.

In response, Oswald made a bloody but minor cut to his left wrist in his hotel room bathtub. After bandaging his superficial injury, the cautious Russians kept him under psychiatric observation at the Botkin Hospital. Although this attempt may have been no more than an attention-getting ruse, the Soviet government feared an international incident if he attempted something similar again.

They just filed him away from the press in Minsk. There he charmed everybody, dating like crazy all of a sudden — the snobby daughters of big-time Soviets. He certainly wasn't looking for an "inferior" as a wife: he wanted favoritism.

He told tall tales to those women. For example, he said he was hiding from the CIA in Minsk and that if he ever returned to the US he'd be shot (executed). Wow, what a hero, eh? What an important man. But he was already writing the US Embassy seeking permission to return. Ding. Such tall tales are *de rigeur* for a courting narcissist.

All those girlfriends have testified that Oswald was niggardly and wouldn't share any candy or sweets with them. Ding. A narcissist playing "Keep Away." He probably had sweets mailed from the US, since they weren't available in the USSR back then. Then the ass eats them in front of his girlfriends and won't share. Just to withhold what people want.

In fact, the one he did marry, Marina, was a snob who used to tease him and make fun of him. So, much for the theory that the narcissist seeks inferior types. If another consideration is more advantageous, the narcissist will marry someone he hates. (But he'll get even with her later.)

The whole time he was in Minsk he was under Soviet surveillance. He lied about how he had come to the USSR, making it sound as though he was welcomed. The ordinary Russians who knew him there say that he didn't speak badly of the United States. Yes, you read right. Then why was he acting like he hated it so much when he made a show of renouncing his citizenship at the US Embassy in

Moscow? I don't know about you, but I smell hypocrisy again.

What's more, the ordinary Russians who knew him in Minsk say that this supposedly avid Marxist refrained from talking about politics. Huh? There is no such thing as a Marxist who won't talk your head off about politics. When asked by ordinary Russians if life was better in the USA or USSR, Oswald would reply that in his opinion there were pros and cons to both places and then try to steer the conversation elsewhere.

Now, this may seem surprising, but again it's typical of a narcissist. By refusing to tell Russians that the Soviet Union was better than the United States, Oswald was withholding something they wanted very much. He was denying his Russian friends the gratification of hearing him say they had it better there in socialist utopia. It would kill a narcissist to give others any gratification (he's gotta have it all). So he just tormented his audience this way, coyly giving them no answer at all really, except a nagging suspicion that life was better here and he was refraining from telling them so. Thus he left them disappointed and dying of thirst. Whatever a narcissist knows you want, he tantalizes you with and denies you.

He had a grand display of books on Marxism but obviously knew little of what was in them. Ding. All show, no substance = typical narcissist.

Despite his intelligence, the rudimentary Russian he arrived with never improved. All witnesses describe it as borderline incoherent and permanently stuck at the level of basic phrases like "I want a fork." Ding. To learn a people's language, you have to *listen* to them, and you can't do that if you try to do all the talking and pay no attention to them when they try to talk, tuning them out because they're just a bunch of mirrors to you.

Once the thrill of meeting an American wore off, he wasn't getting enough attention anymore. In fact, the Russians who knew him said that he was a real bore, so we can imagine that he was running low on Narcissistic Supply. In fact all Russian witnesses describe him as charming and friendly but childish and silly. And a goldbrick (a slacker at work who won't do his job when no one is looking). So now he started saying that he had wanted only to experience life in the USSR and write a book about it when he came back to the US.

That got one of those Party Bosses' snobby daughters to marry him! He suckered Marina into a quick marriage — in less than a month after meeting him — with promises of bringing her to America. Typical narcissist.

There's no way to know if Oswald was yet really intending to return to the US.

Neighbors who lived directly above him, with windows looking onto his balcony below, were critical in their 1991-92 recollections, describing him as a rude lout who was frequently heard berating Marina for her apparent lack of cooking and cleaning skills, saying Marina complained to them that Oswald had struck her on occasion.

Typical narcissist.

Desperate for attention, or for quick permission to exit the USSR, or both, he made a pipe bomb and showed it to friends. But, like the typical narcissist, he starved them for an explanation of what it was for or why he had made it. Every narcissist I have known does this. Always mysterious. Never a straight answer. Always handing you some meaningless vagary (or one that could mean many different things) as if it says something significant.

Now, making a pipe bomb in Big-Brotherland is bad enough. But a few weeks later there was an assassination attempt on Soviet Premier Khrushchev while visiting Minsk. (The details are still a state secret, so we don't know what the Soviets found out about this attempt.) That got the KGB's attention on the little pipe-bomb maker!

He had permission to leave the USSR within weeks. But now the United States was just as suspicious of him and took a long time to decide to let him return.

When he arrived in the US, he refused to teach his wife English. Typical narcissist (keep her isolated and dependent on him). Then he started regularly beating her. Typical narcissist. He soon abandoned her and their daughter. Typical narcissist.

He was busy bestowing his memoir on us. We were so anxious to hear all about him, you see. Ding-ding-ding!

But his little memoir and commentary on Soviet life must not have been too pro Soviet, for it got him into the Dallas area's tight-knit anti-Communist community of Russian immigrants. Ding.

In other words, it was no longer useful to seem pro-communist.

In *other* other words, Oswald is just a chameleon, like every narcissist. Narcissists can go from being a Nazi to a Communist and back again so fast it

isn't funny. From an atheist to a Roman Catholic. Whatever. They put on the right trappings for their environment — sometimes to stand out and get attention, sometimes to look good and win praise.

It should be no surprise that narcissists are chameleons, because with them it's about your [image](#)^[28], not what you are.

These anti-Communist Russian immigrants describe him as belligerent and arrogant. They merely tolerated him for his wife's sake till they realized she would never leave him.

When the world wasn't interested in his memoir, Oswald tried to work but somehow just couldn't get along with people well enough to hold down a job for long. Typical narcissist. (Back then, unions didn't protect people like him.)

He was fired from his last job for not doing it and for treating people so abusively that fist fights were about to break out. Ding. And ding. Narcissists are total fakes and always fake doing their job. They are always abusive.

Ten days later, he tried to assassinate General Edwin Walker. An unsavory character (segregationist), to be sure, and relieved of his command by President Kennedy for distributing right-wing literature to his troops in Europe.

Note: that was a right-wing general. A few weeks later he's after a left-wing president. Obviously he was just out to get attention by killing someone — anybody — important.

Failing to kill the general, Oswald wrote the Soviet Embassy for permission to go back. Yes! You can see that he was desperate by now and lunging at possibilities. He almost immediately changed his mind and tried a new way to get attention. He became a Pro-Castro advocate! You know, at the moment when the whole world was nearly destroyed in a confrontation engineered by another narcissist, Fidel Castro, to get some attention.

Back then everyone remembered how Castro had come power. So, Oswald was disregarded as a nut case and got little attention. Even Castro wasn't impressed and didn't invite him to Cuba.

His next big attention-getting idea was to hijack an airliner to Cuba. (That wasn't a novel idea at the time, so Oswald was running out of them.) We have this from his wife, who says he even boasted that he'd become Premier of Cuba.

Need I say it?

He then tried to get into Cuba through Mexico but couldn't, because the Soviets wouldn't allow it for a long time, till just a few days before the assassination. He basically answered that it was too late now.

He had never said word one against President Kennedy. In his book on Oswald, [Norman Mailer writes](#):

There is whole consensus that he saw JFK as, relatively speaking, a good President, and he liked him.

What does Mailer conclude?

Instead of questioning his assumptions in the light of this contradiction, Mailer twists logic to arrive at the conclusion that Oswald's motivation nonetheless was political.

Try the obvious and likely explanation, please!

Sorry. Oswald's politics were fake. Why do people believe a pathological liar like Oswald? This pathological liar claims to believe in Marxism. Since liars lie and pathological liars lie about everything, it is far more reasonable to doubt that than to believe it.

Oswald was no Marxist, he was no capitalist, he was nothing — just a piss ant narcissist putting on a show, pretending to be whatever would grab attention. His conduct is loaded with proof of hypocrisy that shows he didn't really believe in the things he professed to believe. No narcissist does. They all are shallow as a puddle because they care about nothing but their image.

A 15-year-old becomes a Marxist? And at 17 this Marxist joins the US Marines in 1956? Then he gets out on the excuse that he wants to go home to take care of the beloved mother he hates? But goes to the USSR instead? But comes back to the US? But tries to get into Cuba?

What does Oswald have to do to show Norman Mailer that his politics are insincere? That he's a phony? That his act is just for show. All show, no substance. Yikes, some folks can be dense.

And so, that's how far narcissists will go for a hit of what they're addicted to. It's a matter of

- how desperate frustrated efforts have made them
- what they think they can get away with.

Oswald was like a Hitler or a Stalin or a Saddam Hussein who failed: his *Mein Kampf* diaries never became a best-seller. He was never able to master the art of demagoguery to stir up a mob against an imaginary threat and then ride that seven-headed Beast to power. He was just a piss ant.

He was captured almost immediately after murdering the President. The Dallas police received so many death threats against Oswald, that detective Jim Leavelle tried to convince the police captain to break his promise to reporters that they could photograph Oswald as he was transferred to a nearby jail. Well, you know what happened. The press must have its way. They must have their photo op.

As Oswald was about to face all that sweet, sweet, sweet worldwide attention on the way to the armored car waiting to transport him, the fearful police officer at his side asked him if he knew what to do, should anyone in the crowd of reporters have a gun and start shooting.

Oswald's famous last words were:

Awh, you're being melodramatic. Nobody's going to shoot me.

Apparently the thought had never crossed his mind. It had never occurred to him that anyone might frustrate him yet again and keep him from basking in the glow of his glory. He was to become the star of the show at the Trial of Century. A hero. A martyr. A political prisoner. Bigger than [Che Guerva](#). The first canonized Leftist saint.

And a minute later, he was just a dying piss ant.

5.13 The Best Teacher in the School

There was a teacher in a private school who insisted on teaching freshmen only. That way he could whip each new class into shape for the school, he said. The truth is that freshmen are the easiest to intimidate. Even his principal and colleagues were so afraid of his ability to sick the whole faculty and half the town on anybody he didn't like that he could boast about looking over every new class to "pick out some dirtball to yell at." During a moment of perfect silence and order, he would suddenly fly into a rage at this kid.

From the way he acted, people thought the kid had done something shockingly outrageous (such as flipping him the bird). Dozens of accounts of these performances over the years are amazingly consistent: he behaved like a man in a murderous rage and seemed a hairsbreadth away from physically flying at the kid. Witnesses (including other teachers) say that his looks and behavior were shocking and that they had never seen anything like it before.

He made faces and antic gestures that would have been as comic in any other context as they were frightening in this one. They are described as seeming put on and exaggerated — like macabre mockery. Yet his tone was so vicious that it frightened all who witnessed one of his wild acts.

He was incoherent and muttered what they took for threats, though all say they could never make out any exact words to hold him accountable for. He would not even let on which kid he was abusing (thus maintaining deniability that he did this *to* any kid), but he kept his eyes fixed on the victim. Those next to that kid wondered whether they were the target of his rage and what he thought they did to provoke it.

He would keep this up for about five minutes and then teach for awhile. But every few minutes — as if he couldn't get that mystery offense off his mind — start raging again.

Why did nobody report this abuse? It seems incredible that nobody ever did...till we walk a mile in their shoes. Would you report it? If you saw someone acting that crazy that brazenly, you'd know he was thus *daring* you to report it. It's kinda like bluffing in poker, bluffing that he has an ace up his sleeve.

His chosen scapegoat remained his scapegoat for the year. Whenever things weren't going according to his script or anybody did anything this teacher didn't like, he'd go off and start screaming at the scapegoat for some fictitious offense.

Scapegoat Discipline works the same way all terrorism and bullying does. By making a terrorizing example of his scapegoat, he controlled the other students and made them suck up to him. So, the other kids didn't blame him for having to put up with all his screaming, they blamed the victim for it and made that kid an outcast.

One of his "dirtballs" committed suicide the following year.

This narcissistic teacher needed all eyes always on him. One thing sure to set

him off was anybody so much as glancing out the window or at the clock. He was such a control freak that the kids had to memorize his word-for-word dictations for how they were to answer the questions he asked. The result was that hardly a word was ever spoken that wasn't scripted by him.

This teacher had himself touted as "the best teacher in that school" for decades. By parents, teachers, and students alike. He was their God, simply because all knew he could doom anyone he wanted to Hell.

5.14 How to Make a Narcissist

Mary was a second child. Her older sister was not yet 2 years old when she was born. At her birth, financial catastrophe struck. Her narcissistic father had conned her mother into thinking he was a successful businessman. She had no clue till the day he went fishing rather than be home when his family was evicted. He moved them in with his narcissistic sister, another victim of his narcissistic mother. Both needed a step up on somebody, and that somebody was Mary's mother. When Mary's father finally found a job and they moved, they were so poor that they could not afford another crib and, at one point, Mary's mother was out of baby formula and money. It would be several years before she saw a doctor who noticed her emotional instability and prescribed tranquilizers. Mary's mother screamed bloody murder over spilled milk. And then soon over Mary's wet bed too.

Mary's father paid no attention to any of them. He worked nights and was gone most of the day. When with them, he did not even acknowledge Mary's existence. He did not let his children talk in his presence. If they tried, he either made them be quiet so he could hear the TV or radio, or he talked over them to his wife, as if they were not there. When Mary tried to get his attention by hijacking it, he lashed out at her in anger so extreme and sudden it startled and nonplused everyone who saw it. Typically, this happened whenever she could get between him and what he was paying attention to. Once a week an opportunity came, during the Sunday football game.

Mary didn't understand the game, so she would watch for something to happen that looked like something to cheer about. Then she'd leap out into the middle of the room, between Daddy and the TV, jumping up and down in circles, clapping her hands, and yelling with excitement. Now, a normal Daddy might be a little irritated, but he would have to respond positively to this appeal for attention from his child. But narcissistic Daddy shocked everyone by reacting as though she'd burned him with a hot poker or something. His face contorted into an

exaggerated grimace. The tone he took in telling Mary to be quiet and get out of the way didn't sound human. It affected those present like the teeth-baring snarl of a vicious dog.

This reaction to a child's innocent appeal for attention, blew a hole a foot in diameter through little Mary. She looked at her father as if at a nice cuddly tiger that had shocked her by eviscerating her with one lightning quick swipe of its paw. Seeing this evoked a cross between rage and abhorrence in everyone but him. He just turned up his nose at the sight of her betrayed and savaged feelings, looking away as if in disgust.

Mary's mother would tell him not to treat her like that and that there was no reason to get so mad. He acted as though she hadn't said anything. When she pressed the point, he bawled "WAAAAH!" as if imitating her. "Get off my back!"

This began when Mary was only about three years old. Mary's mother had already considered divorce. Her family had told her she had to make the marriage work and sent her back to her husband. Now, some of her sister's kids boarded with them. These young people reported the child abuse to family elders. When they saw that Mary's mother could not get her father to stop abusing his children, they intervened. That did no good, but it did put an end to boarding income.

Mary's mother considered divorce again. Divorce was still rare, and women could not make a decent living. They were Roman Catholic, and her pastor told her that she had to keep her wedding vow. Getting an annulment from Rome (a declaration that two people never really were wedded) was hard back then, and the Church denies good standing (i.e., the sacraments) to divorced people who remarry.

Mary never learned. She just kept trying the same attention-getting display and kept getting the same reaction. So, this ugly scene repeated itself Sunday after Sunday forever. The only thing that changed was that her attempts to hijack her father's attention became more and more exhibitionistic. And annoying.

At an early age (about 7), Mary began abusing her older sister, Sue. She treated Sue the way her father treated them all — as though flawed. No matter how high Sue climbed in a tree, Mary had to climb higher, even if that meant getting recklessly far out on a limb, "to prove she was greater than Sue." She scribbled the words *Sue is a dope* in many hidden places throughout their home. She picked fights by insulting Sue and then attacking her for not accepting the abuse.

Mary mounted these assaults by accosting her sister on the sly and pursuing her till Sue had no choice but to turn and face her. Then, in reaction to something Sue said that should have appeased her, Mary flew into a rage at Sue for "being the way she was."

In these sudden and willful rages, Mary rose up on her tiptoes to be taller than Sue. She also raised both fists high in the air. She flew at Sue with her fists raining a hail of blows at the face and shoulders. Sue described these attacks as Mary "using her arms like a wind mill" and as her fists "wind-milling down on her from above" so fast there was nothing she could do but raise both arms to protect her face and try to get away. But Mary would pursue her till she had Sue backed into a corner or up against something. She would force Sue up against a wall or down on her back. Usually she forced her down and knelt on her. If Sue said that hurt, Mary put even more weight on her knees and shifted it back and forth to increase the pain. "I'm stronger than you," she would say. She pinned Sue's arms at the wrists. With a crazed look in her cold, gray eyes, she'd move Sue's arms around to arrange them in different positions as if to reshape her somehow. Smiling, she dug her finger nails into the wrists, till she got her sister to cry out. Sooner or later, she thus got Sue to cry out in outraged tears. That's when this silent attack got loud.

Then they'd hear their mother stomping to the drawer in which she kept a wooden foot-long ruler for spanking them. Mary would say to Sue, "Now look what you did." Mary told her mother that Sue had "flown into one of her rages." Their mother didn't listen to Sue's protest, yelling her down with the verdict that "You raised your voice!"

Mary knew that Sue would not lie and told their mother that Sue had hit her. If Sue tried to defend herself by saying that she had hit back only two or three times in self defense against an attack of fifty blows, Mary's mother didn't listen, yelling her down with the verdict that she had hit.

Even if Sue had tried to avoid this sin by just pushing Mary off her to protect her face, it was "violence" and therefore a sin.

Sue's anger at Mary was a sin too.

And there must be something wrong with Sue if Mary just couldn't stand her.

They both got a few whacks with the ruler (Violence by big people against little people was not a sin), but their mother's main disciplinary tool was the Guilt Trip. She sent both away to "think about what they'd done." Sue took the Guilt

Trip, and Mary tallied the score: Mary 47, Sue 0. But the three whacks with the ruler didn't really count, because Sue got them too. So the score was Mary 50, Sue 0.

Twice Sue complained to their mother about these attacks, describing them. Her mother would not relinquish enough control to allow Sue any right to protect herself, but she did say that Sue couldn't have done anything to provoke such violence and that this was a serious matter. But all she did was "have a talk with Mary."

Mary abused Sue all the more in revenge.

Their mother would not face the fact that something was dreadfully wrong with Mary. Or her husband. Her frazzled nerves wanted peace and quiet and denial. Her children were never to distress her, and she made that clear to them. She herself was the youngest daughter of a narcissist, who got little abuse but saw much.

Mary never left home. She earned more than her father but never paid room and board. Never even paid for her toiletries and cigarettes. Her mother fixed her meals, ran her errands, and did her laundry. Mary complained if the cotton outfits she preferred were not ironed well enough. Mary hated her father, who gradually abused his mind to the point that he was mentally incompetent.

Yet, after her mother died, she and her father were attracted to each other as if smitten by Cupid. In fact, Mary didn't even wait for her mother to die before she started driving Sue out of the picture by making her dog unwelcome and resorting to her childhood method of assaulting Sue whenever the latter came home for a weekend. Now, at the end of an assault, she would order Sue out of her parents' home.

Sue complained to their mother about this, and she agreed that Mary had no right to do that. So, she had another talk with Mary. The next time Sue was home for a weekend, Mary ordered Sue out of their parents' home again, and their mother just allowed her to. By the time their mother died, Mary had assumed the parental role in that house.

Mary's mother had been the only reign on Mary's behavior, slight as it was. Now, her attacks dramatically increased in violence. She took advantage of a disaster in Sue's life to kick her when she was down. Mary manipulated the situation to destroy and calumniate Sue behind her back, while playing the part of a faithful rescuer to her face and to the outside world — yet mysteriously and

obstinately refusing to stand by her. Knowing that Sue had nowhere else to turn, Mary sadistically abused Sue almost daily. The abuse was both psychological and physical. Conning her with false sweetness, Mary kept drawing Sue just close enough to burn. During one assault, Mary thrust her hands down the front of Sue's blouse into her bosom. Sue, desperate for someone to at least care and unable to believe what was happening, made the Big Mistake. She pleaded with Mary to have a heart.

Mary flew into a rage. While beating Sue, Mary screamed at her to stop attacking. Yes, that's correct: In the act of pummeling Sue, Mary screamed for Sue to quit attacking HER. Dumbfounded, Sue thought Mary had lost her senses.

She tried to calm Mary and close the windows so the neighbors would not hear, but Mary opened them again and continued screaming diabolical accusations to frame Sue as the attacker. Thinking that Mary was out of her mind, Sue fell to her knees to show that she was not attacking. There she tearfully begged Mary to come to her senses, embracing her about the knees and telling Mary she loved her.

Mary's reaction was roundhouse punches with all her might, first to one shoulder, then the other. Then Sue saw that Mary knew exactly what she was doing. So, she stopped weeping and looked Mary in the eyes, doing nothing but occasionally raising an arm to protect her head. Mary kept swinging, becoming more and more enraged at being unable to have an effect on Sue. Probably due to extremely high blood pressure and an enlarged heart, Mary had to stop and catch her breath every few minutes. Mary was so frustrated she broke into raging tears, but she didn't stop punching Sue with all her might till she couldn't raise her arms any more — twenty minutes later. Then Sue just got up and walked out.

Mary found the way straight to her narcissistic father's heart — through his belly. He needed his third momma and sold Sue for one. Like Adam, he adopted a woman's fantasy to please her so that she would mother him. Thus, to make it their word against Sue's, both Magical Thinking Machines applied to Sue a perfect description of Mary, agreeing that she was "violent" and that they were afraid of her. But Mary also got her daddy's big stick — dependence — the one that had kept his wife married to him. Presumably he was sure that he was the center of everybody else's universe, too, because he believed Mary was doing him a "favor" by getting possession of his home and all his property.

Then, the first time he tried to treat her like dirt, Mary let him know that he could "lose his happy home." Then she let him know what unforgivable damage

he had prostituted himself to do to the only one who could help him, Sue. He immediately began treating Mary with respect = fear + flattery.

So, Mary and her daddy suddenly switched from devaluing to idealizing each other. They completely revised history.

Daddy would call for her to attend to him, to bring a glass of juice or water, to set a plate for him, to change his diaper, to tell him what time it was, to take him to the toilet, and so on. He never used the words *please* or *thank you*. He never asked for what he wanted by saying "Will you . . . ?" or "Would you . . . ?" He would just say, "I want . . ." or "I have to go to the toilet," or "When am I gonna eat?"

In other words, he was an infant who just says, "I want something," because the *What are you going to do about it?* part goes without saying. Unless the demand is for dinner, in which case it's the *I'm hungry* part that goes without saying and he need only say, "When are you going to do something about it?"

After Mary attended to his needs, he gave nothing in return. Not even eye contact. He would just let her know when he was satisfied by saying, "There" or "Okay" and go back to sleep.

He never asked her how things were at work. He fell asleep rather than listen to her talk about herself for a minute. The only attention she could get from him was critical attention. So, she would ask him to pay attention to her while she was putting in a light fixture or something, to tell her how to do it, and to make sure that she made no mistake.

If she were a few minutes late getting home, he got upset and called for her. If she paid a social visit, he called that household every half hour. But when she got home, he just settled down and went to sleep. She couldn't talk on the phone while he was awake, because he kept butting in, calling for this or that or asking when she was going to feed him.

When hospitalized, if he awoke to find no "woman" watching over him, or if the nurses were working with his roommate, he would throw such a temper tantrum that they had to let him call for Mary. When she arrived, he had nothing to say to her: he just went to sleep.

And Mary never learned. She carved out a Mother-Theresa reputation for herself, by telling every captive audience how well she cared for her father. She called him "Hon(ey)." She spoke of his hands as "widdle hands." Of his feet as

"widdle feet." She said she could tell when he wasn't feeling well by "his widdle knit brow." Instead of saying that she took him to the bathroom, she said "We went wee-wee."

Still she never learned. Still, when football was on TV, she'd leap out into the middle of the room, jumping up and down in circles, clapping her hands, and yelling with excitement. And still Daddy shocked her by snarling as though she'd burned him with a hot poker or something.

Beats the Stockholm syndrome, doesn't it? So, both narcissists were just objects to each other. Mary wasn't doing it for her doll baby's sake. She did it for the ultimate narcissistic fix to kill the pain of her daddy not wanting her around. And he didn't love his third mamma any more than any newborn infant does. All he loved was the mothering he got — the ultimate narcissistic fix to kill the pain of not being important enough for his first mother to care about.

Unfortunately, the victim still came out on the short end of the stick, because Daddy got to be the infant in this game, and Mary had to be the little girl with the doll baby.

PART VI

Faces of Narcissism

Faces of Narcissism

If you never read *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, you might like to. There are narcissists in it.

It's the story of some people from Wisconsin who end up in New York City after World War I. The change in milieu affects them differently. The one, the narrator, Nick, never loses his moral compass. He comes to see his origin in the Heartland as an advantage that most people he met in New York didn't have.

But that isn't the whole story. His advantage is what he made of it. For, the worst he met out there were also from the Heartland. People who went wild in a permissive environment. Typical of narcissists.

This is an American classic, as fine a piece of literature in our language as there is. But it wouldn't sell today, because it's so classic, without a plot point that grabs you by the entrails on page one. It's character driven rather than plot driven. But it's well worth the effort to plug away till it gets going.

The writing itself is as elegant as can be. And by that I mean pure, simple and unpretentious. Impeccable good taste.

But I was surprised to learn that it didn't sell well even in Fitzgerald's day. He died thinking himself a failure as a novelist! Frankly, I think that's because the characters he creates are little too real.

Right before the end, he sums up those devoid of empathy who just use others. This is an encounter with a woman named Daisy and then one with her husband, Tom.

"You said a bad driver was only safe till she met another bad driver? Well, I met another bad driver, didn't I? I mean it was careless of me to make such a wrong guess. I thought you were rather an honest, straightforward person. I thought it was your secret pride."

"I'm thirty," I said. "I'm five years too old to lie to myself and call it honor." She didn't answer. Angry, and half in love with her, and tremendously sorry, I turned away.

One afternoon late in October I saw Tom Buchanan. He was walking ahead of me along Fifth Avenue in his alert, aggressive way, his hands out a little from

his body as if to fight off interference, his head moving sharply here and there, adapting itself to his restless eyes. Just as I slowed up to avoid overtaking him he stopped and began frowning into the windows of a jewelry store. Suddenly he saw me and walked back holding out his hand.

"What's the matter, Nick? Do you object to shaking hands with me?"

"Yes. You know what I think of you."

"You're crazy, Nick," he said quickly. "Crazy as hell. I don't know what's the matter with you."

"Tom," I inquired, "what did you say to Wilson that afternoon?"

He stared at me without a word and I knew I had guessed right about those missing hours. I started to turn away but he took a step after me and grabbed my arm.

"I told him the truth," he said. "He came to the door while we were getting ready to leave and when I send down word that we weren't in he tried to force his way upstairs. He was crazy enough to kill me if I hadn't told him who owned the car. His hand was on the revolver in his pocket every minute he was in the house—" He broke off defiantly. "What if I did tell him? That fellow had it coming to him. He threw dust into your eyes just like he did in Daisy's but he was a tough one. **He ran over Myrtle like you'd run over a dog and never even stopped his car.**" [We and they know that Daisy ran over Myrtle. - KK]

There was nothing I could say, except the one unutterable fact that it wasn't true.

"And if you think I didn't have my share of suffering—look here, when I went to give up that flat and saw that damn box of dog biscuits sitting there on the sideboard I sat down and cried like a baby. By God it was awful—"

I couldn't forgive him or like him but I saw that what he had done was, to him, entirely justified. It was all very careless and confused. They were careless people, Tom and Daisy—they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made

I shook hands with him; it seemed silly not to, for I felt suddenly as though I were talking to a child. Then he went into the jewelry store to buy a pearl necklace—or perhaps only a pair of cuff buttons—rid of my provincial squeamishness forever.

Your typical successful, career con artist is a malignant narcissist doing his or her thing. Law enforcement officers who investigate these crimes describe them as just, plain evil. And when you learn about what these spiders do to their prey, you see why. It's about more than money: it's moral rape, and it's just sadistic.

Your typical sexual offender, like the rapist and the pedophile priest, is a malignant narcissist doing his thing.

As far as I know, no one argues against the widely held belief that Saddam Hussein was malignant narcissist and that most brutal dictators are, like Adolf Hitler of Germany and Josef Stalin of Russia's Soviet Union.

All psychopaths are malignant narcissists, like Charles Manson, Ed Gein, Jeffrey Dahmer, and Ted Bundy. In fact, it is quite likely that psychopathy (Antisocial Personality Disorder) and malignant narcissism (Narcissistic Personality Disorder) are one and the same thing. Only a fraction of psychopaths do their thing in the form of physically violent crimes, and only an even smaller fraction get caught and diagnosed.

The rest go through life doing their thing by laying waste to lives in other ways like malignant narcissists do, as "love thieves," parasites, gold diggers, climbers, slanderers, verbal abusers, child abusers, wife beaters, pied pipers (i.e., religious and political messiahs), and the like . . . leaving poverty, destroyed careers, ruined potential, lost nest eggs, psychological injury, and even suicide in their wake.



6.1 The Manipulator

'Let's pretend that you're the Red Queen, Kitty! Do you know, I think if you sat up and folded your arms, you'd look exactly like her. Now do try, there's a dear!' And Alice got the Red Queen off the table, and set it up before the kitten as a model for it to imitate: however, the thing didn't succeed, principally, Alice said, because the kitten wouldn't fold its arms properly. So, to punish it, she held it up to the Looking-glass, that it might see how sulky it was--'and if you're not good directly,' she added, 'I'll put you through into Looking-glass House. How would you like THAT?'

— Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*

To say that narcissists and psychopaths are manipulative is an understatement. They are frightfully manipulative.

How manipulative are they?



They are so manipulative that they even routinely con and manipulate mental healthcare clinicians — people trained to be on the lookout for attempts to manipulate them. For example, therapists evaluating violent offenders get it exactly backwards: though the psychopathic offenders misbehave much worse during the treatment program and after release than the non-psychopathic offenders, clinicians report just as high a rate of improvement among them, promote as many within the program, and recommend as many for release. In other words, these mental healthcare professionals are getting conned and in a way that even blinds them to the facts.

But, narcissists and psychopaths aren't necessarily all that smart. And manipulating others isn't just a hobby of theirs. It's part of the disease. It's inherent in the disease. It's an aspect of the way they interact with you.

As we've seen, they don't interact with *you*: they interact with their own reflection in the mirror of your face and actions. (See [The Essence of Narcissism](#)^[16], [A House of Mirrors](#)^[28], and [In the Looking Glass](#)^[149].) They "pose," in other words, adjusting their image in it. By doing so, they are carving out a work of art, shaping it by how they act.

So, narcissists say and do everything *for effect*. For example, when a narcissist is talking to you, she isn't saying what she thinks. She is saying what she thinks will draw the reaction she wants from you. She's playing you. So, while you are thinking about the subject at hand and many other things, she is focused on one thing only — your facial expressions and other reactions to her. Like Alice, she tries to control them, to shape them, to manipulate them.

For example, let's say that you're someone she wants to impress. She is pleasant, divining what wins your approval. Taking no chances, she hems and haws enough to probe for the right approach. She detects it in your responses, through your changing posture, facial expression, tone, diction, and so forth. When she sees the gratifying reflection she wants in your eyes, she goes there and puts it on thick.

Narcissists are so totally involved in this game that afterwards they won't remember half of what you said. They may not remember your name or recognise your face. The matter at hand is of no concern to them either. No matter what it's about, it's never about what it's about: it's always all about how they look and sound and seem in that mirror.

For example, if you're their boss, they want to carve out an image of themselves that is of the best worker in the joint. So, they adjust and fine-tune their act till the feedback they're getting from you reflects pleasure and appreciation on you, maybe something like this...



If you're their brother, however, they want to carve out an image of themselves that is greatly superior to you. So, they adjust and fine-tune their act till the feedback they're getting from you reflects your sense of inferiority and shame, maybe something like this...



Either way, in doing this, they're just **manipulating** you to give them what they want, aren't they? And narcissists don't just manipulate their mirrors some of the time; they do it all of the time. They view other people as objects, nothing but mirrors. They have eyes for nothing but their reflection in these mirrors, because they are as attached to it as we are attached to our inner selves. They **identify** with that thing.

Consequently, narcissists are extremely observant of people's reactions to things. That's an important point. For, we are beguiled into thinking the opposite, that they are oblivious to the effect they have on people. (The only thing they're oblivious to is that other people are human beings with thoughts and feelings, not objects.) We make that mistake only because we wrongly assume the effect they *want* to have on others. That ain't the effect they want to have. They are highly successful at having exactly the effect they want.

From birth they learn by trial and error what kinds of behaviors elicit the reactions they want from others. That's a lot of practice at manipulation. Anyone who practices manipulation with 100% focus 100% of the time for 20, 30, or 40 years is going to get awfully good at it.

Because they pay such close attention to people's reactions to them, they learn much more about typical human behavior than we do. I discovered this through the back door, by noticing some patterns of behavior in narcissists and wondering why they always did a certain kind of odd thing in a particular situation. Which led me to carefully observe how people responded. I was astounded that I'd never noticed that about typical human behavior myself. Yet I consider myself a fairly perceptive person. Go figure.

For example, I noticed a certain narcissist followed a pattern in reacting to anyone sucking up to him, especially someone he had yet to gain control over or one of his favorites who was getting too comfortable. The pattern? Instead of being flattered, he took offense. Somehow. In other words, he reacted to an act of sucking up as though it were the opposite, an insult or crossing him in some way. His anger would suddenly flash in a look that could kill.

When I saw the result, I mistook this narcissist for a genius. Such an off-the-wall reaction took everyone who witnessed it by surprise. Surprise attack. Shock tactics. It disarms the other person. It perplexes, like seeing an apple fall UP from a tree would perplex. Thus stunned, perplexed and disabled, the brown nose puts up no resistance when the narcissist then runs them over, viciously accusing them of having malicious intent and threatening that he would not "have" anyone like "that."

The brown nose just sits there with mouth hanging open, not uttering a word in defense. By the time Brown Nose recovers enough to, it's too late. Especially before an audience this humiliates and intimidates, establishing a domineering relationship with that brown nose.

Neat trick, eh? But it takes only a narcissist or psychopath to learn such tricks, not a genius. Why? Because they've been playing this game nonstop since birth.

An infant immediately learns how to manipulate the Mother-object to feed or change or hold it — simply by raising an intolerable racket. Recall what Mark Twain wrote about this: "I was nine days old at the time, and had noticed that if a pin was sticking in me and I advertised it in the usual fashion, I was lovingly petted and coddled and pitied in a most agreeable way and got a ration between meals besides." So, he lied, just acting like something was killing him, to get

lovingly petted and coddled and pitied in a most agreeable way.

By the age of three, children's manipulative powers have grown more sophisticated. Now our little Einstein points at a candy bar in the grocery store. Mother hasn't quite gotten the word *no* off her lips yet before "WAAAAAAAH!" With a quick look around Mother already has that candy bar and is handing it to him. Mid-WAAAAAAH!" he breaks off and undergoes an instantaneous transfiguration into an expression of pure joy.

He's just a cowboy, riding at, waving his big hat at, and yelling at a little doggy to steer it in the direction he wants it to go. He's training Mother, with positive and negative reinforcement, like you train a dog. Throwing a temper tantrum is his stick, and leaving you in peace is his carrot. It's called Behavior Modification. It ain't rocket science.

The problem with psychopaths and narcissists is that they never mature and outgrow this primitive manner of relating to others as mere objects to manipulate. So, by the time they're teenagers, they're amazingly good at it, better than any normal person could dream of being.

By trial and error, they learn rules. The rules go like this: To get a "y" kind of reaction, do an "x" kind of behavior or To get a "y" kind of reaction, say an "x" kind of thing.

They don't figure the formulas out, they simply discover them by noticing that a certain type of behavior always elicits a particular type of reaction from people. Then they acquire these stock behaviors as habits. Because they always want the same thing, aggrandizement.

Their life is that monotonous, nothing but a series of opportunities for self aggrandizement.

Normal people don't pay such close attention to every little nuance of everyone's every reaction to everything they say and do. And normal people are above behaving like an obnoxious brat to make others do what they want. So normal people never learn these formulas. What's more, normal people don't do everything solely for effect. They are considering the matter at hand. The morality of their behavior is usually a consideration. Future consequences are a consideration. The good of the other party is often a consideration. So, behavior is complicated in normal people, who weigh many factors in the choices they make.

Narcissists don't. All that matters is what they want to see reflected in your reaction right now. Nothing else is any consideration. So, narcissists are more like machines than geniuses.

6.2 The Predator

If you walk into a room and see a tiger, you know that she may regard you as lunch. Or, if you're swimming off the coast of California and see a great white shark, you hope she ain't hungry. Or, if you live in Canada and see a polar bear strolling down Main Street, you don't let your kids out. In fact, you're fed up with holier-than-thous — safe in their big cities and too obtuse to see that the right to protect yourself is the most basic human right there is — who deny you your rights by insisting that you must let the beast, who has become so bold, stalk prey even in your own back yard.

But when you walk into a room and see a narcissist, you see someone who looks and acts like the just rest of us. So, you have no idea that you're in the presence of a predator.

Many years ago, an old friend of mine approached me one day with a warning about "some of the people" in a school we were teaching at. I was flabbergasted by what he said, because, like me, he stood out as not being a gossip and had no interest in that kind of thing. He minded his own business and generally spoke well of others. The only exception was the holier-than-thous, whom he a choice word for on special occasions.

He said, "Kid, look out." He told me that there were "bad people" there, people so bad that I wouldn't believe how bad they are, and that they'd do anything they could get away with. That they would steal my money or anything they could from me the moment my back was turned.

And he said that such people are everywhere, all around us in this world, no matter where you go. He said that you can't tell which ones they by looking at them, because they look and act just like the rest of us but that they aren't even human beings.

He was a graduate of Notre Dame with a master's degree in biology, and he insisted that he was not speaking figuratively. I was naive and could not accept that.

But I could not forget his fatherly advice either. For, to back his statement that

they do things to people that no human being would do, after solemnly swearing me to secrecy, he tried to tell me what one had done to him as a young man growing up on the streets of Detroit.

I don't know what it was, because he didn't get halfway through the first sentence of the story. I was astonished at the pain and shame that suddenly appeared on this gruff old man's face, this former All-American football player, this former Golden Gloves Boxing Champ. It was fresh as the blush on a little girl's face, fresh as a daisy after five decades. All along it had lain just beneath the surface.

So I don't need to know precisely what that narcissist did to him. I know what matters — how evil it was.

Years later I finally got smart enough to rethink his assertion that these people aren't human and ask the necessary question: *What is a human being? What does it mean to be **human**?*

I see now that my friend was right. They are everywhere. Outwardly they are indistinguishable from the rest of us, because they act like they're like the rest of us. So, they look like members of our species, and you cannot tell who they are by looks. Or reputation. But inside they are different.

6.2.1 The Transfiguration

Professionals often say that narcissists overreact to the merest unintended slights and that they fly into a rage for the slightest reason. But this view seems anthropomorphic to me. I suspect it comes from forgetting that the narcissist on your couch is a pathological liar. I would hate to admit how long it took me to discover this, but in my experience, what triggers a Narcissist Attack is nothing but a vulnerable target of opportunity.

Rather like any wild predator, except that the others must be hungry at the time.

On second thought, I guess narcissists have to be hungry, too. But they always are. For, they have the kind of hunger that increases the more you feed it.

Indeed, *try* to provoke a narcissist. You can't. And, if you somehow manage to get yourself a raging narcissist (tempt it with bait when it thinks no one is watching), rise up and rage right back in its face.

Presto chango! Rage Off. In one split second you have before you a poor little meek and gentle angel who wouldn't hurt a fly and is heartbroken at your being

so nasty. Talk about "mood swings." Welcome to The Twilight Zone. I call this miraculous phenomenon "[The Transfiguration.](#)"



I may be kidding, but I am not exaggerating. You witness the instantaneous substitution of one persona for its very antithesis in the blink of an eye. You don't know whether to pinch yourself or start throwing holy water at it. Because an Academy Award winner couldn't do that that fast.

So it stuns you and gives you the creeps. Indeed, one facial expression doesn't melt into the other: the whole mask changes at once.

I call the faces "masks" because when you see this happen you know that's what they are.



Obviously, since you did something unexpected by raging right back in the raging narcissist's face, she thought, "Whoops, that didn't work. So, let's try this instead...."

As David J.H. Garvin points out in "Conceptual Clarity: The difference between moral and strategic behavior in understanding the perpetrator of domestic violence" (a 4-page [PDF document](#)):

Saying that a batterer has an anger control problem

is like saying Lucciano Pavorotti needs vocal lessons.

It's just one of those outrageous, in-your-face pathological lies a narcissist tells. She doesn't even try to make the instantaneous face-change believable. Presumably that's because she's just playing Pretend, as usual, and suddenly found it necessary to revise the script, because the plot wasn't going where she wanted it to.

And you're just a character, not a person, a character who's supposed to ad lib and play along in this new scenario in which you're the one who "flew into one of your rages."

So, the rage wasn't real. As Garvin continues:

Batterers use their anger instrumentally and strategically. If a situation calls for the effective use of anger, the batter will summon his anger to do the job.

And the current wouldn't-hurt-a-fly act isn't real either:

The batterer may, just as effectively use his sorrow, sadness or shame to also be an effective and coercive means to establish maintain or regain control.

So, when you witness The Transfiguration, you see the light. You suddenly see that what you see isn't real. That it's just a straw man, a misleading facade thrown up over what's inside, something sinister and calculating inside the narcissist.

And, yes, you feel very threatened by that. Because it means that you can't trust any of the information you're getting in her words, tone, diction, posture, gestures, and so forth. That all means nothing, so you are driving blind. What is she trying to hide? You might as well be blind and hearing footsteps in the attic, because you don't know what's going on.

But you do know that anyone doing this to you is up to no good. In your bones you sense the predation in it. Simply because it's treacherous and manipulative.

Garvin writes that, though the raging of a batterer becomes habitual, it is nonetheless *voluntary* and *premeditated* behavior, just like any other habit we have practiced so much that we now do it without thinking, as though automatically (e.g., tying your shoes or saying "hello" when you answer a telephone).

Simply stated, battering is purposeful, instrumental and

strategic behavior designed to bring about a result.

In other words, it's designed to manipulate you. By intimidation. Terrorism. If that rage were real, the narcissist couldn't turn it on and off like a light switch. Real anger warms up and cools down.

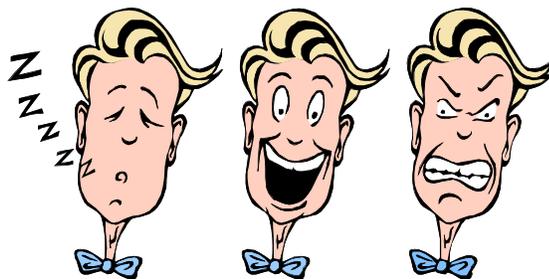
So, pardon my bluntness, but some healthcare professionals had better start knowing they know that the narcissist on their couch is a pathological liar and that they therefore should be skeptical about his statements that he has a conscience, doesn't want to hurt people, doesn't mean to hurt people, doesn't like hurting people, and is just too touchy. He ain't: he's a PREDATOR.



**He isn't fighting others.
He's EATING them.**

6.2.2 Mask Switching

Here are three of the faces a narcissist uses most.



You get the first when you're boring him because you're talking and about something besides him. He can get quite testy, like a cranky child up past his bedtime. In the second, you're a sight for sore eyes, his mirror, and he wants you to mirror this face so it reflects on him as someone it is wonderful to see. In the third, you're dead meat, because he is launching a surprise attack. He can switch between these masks virtually instantaneously.

The most bizarre example of mask-switching I know of took place between a middle-aged woman and her narcissistic father. They were in his garage and she was demanding decent treatment. He became enraged and extremely abusive. He raised his cane at her and, fearing that he would hit her with it, she moved out onto the driveway where neighbors might see and hear. At that, he underwent a transfiguration so dramatic and instantaneous she couldn't believe her eyes.

She says it was like the difference in Saddam Hussein before and after capture. Suddenly there was a different man before her, a meek, timid, rational, and harmless old man being harangued by his mean and nasty daughter.

To pinch herself, she then stepped back into the garage. Instantly, there was the Bogey Man again, shaking his cane at her, his face so contorted with rage that she said it looked like the face of somebody in a hundred-mile-an-hour wind tunnel. Since his age prevented him from physically overpowering her, he was probably trying to terrify her by his mere looks, as he did when she was a child. She says he trembled like a pressure cooker about to blow. Saliva drooled and sprayed from his mouth as he cursed her and blabbed an absurd play off some word in her every sentence as if blowing back her words at her to keep any from getting through and to drown out what she was saying.

Still incredulous that his faces were just masks and that she could change them by stepping in and out of the garage, she repeated the test a few times. All it took was moving three-to-five steps from inside, under the shadow of his garage roof, to outside, in the light of day. Moreover, whenever she stepped outside, he followed her right to door but would not step out into the light.

She says that, considering how stupid and unaware of his surroundings he is, she was dumbfounded at such cunning and acute awareness of whether others might see or hear him behaving badly. But this need not surprise us, no matter how unintelligent he is: this is exactly what you'd expect from a man with over seventy years of practice at letting Mr. Hyde out only when the coast is clear.

She says she thought, "My God, he's afraid of the light! Like a freakin' vampire!" She had never noticed that about him before.

She had to prove it to herself, so she tried everything she could think of to get him out in the daylight. Finally she asked him if he was afraid of the light. "Come out here on the driveway, where the neighbors might see and hear what you're doing. In there you act like a maniac and shake your cane at me. So, I want to talk to you out here, because you behave yourself better where there might be witnesses."

She says she was flabbergasted when he wasn't even ashamed of that. Still he refused to step outside so she could talk to him out there. It was boldfaced mockery now, and he didn't care that she knew it.

He was thus controlling the situation. Outside, the neighbors might see him acting like a maniac to block communication and keep her from saying her piece to him, so he refused to leave the shadows where he could huff and puff and blow his fog horn to keep her words out.

In fact, he increased the mockery by looking at her like *she* was dangerous one, the one threatening to attack. He seemed to think he was safer from attack *by her* in the garage than out on the driveway where others might see.

Proof that a narcissist's brain is crammed into his skull upside-down and backwards. Actually, he *was* safer in there. Because he is all smoke and mirrors — his image — and his image was safe from the truth in there.

This behavior is actually typical of narcissists. I know of many instances of narcissists even threatening to call the police over the victim refusing to just take abuse in silence. All narcissists insist on having their unanswered say. So, if you don't just take their abuse, but try to say, "No, I am not a bad person, I am not stupid, I am not crazy, and I want you treat me with respect," they go berserk.

When their usual temper tantrum doesn't cram it down your throat and shut you up, they escalate it. Soon beside themselves, they will beller at the top of their lungs to drown you out, covering their ears, shutting their eyes tight, and stamping their feet. Threatening to call the police if you don't shut up.

Compare this to the woman who asked her narcissistic sister, "Why do you try to control my speech?" According to the narcissist, that isn't what was happening. For, she yelled back the accusation, "You're trying to control my ears!"

You see, narcissists don't have to hear anything they don't want to hear there beyond the Looking Glass in their little game of Pretend. As far as I can tell from what I've seen and have heard from others with narcissistic family members, narcissists seem to really think they have the right to their unanswered say. They have the right to hit you without you even shoving them away so they can't land any more blows. They have the right to call you anything or accuse you of anything without you saying a word in your defense. To all outward appearances, they seem to think your doing that is a crime they should be able to have you thrown in jail or committed for.

So, those who think narcissistic abuse is mere annoyance should consider that everything a narcissist says is projection. This means that, at least subconsciously, they know that *they* belong in jail or a lock-up ward for behaving this way.

Back to the woman and her father in his garage. In an attempt to *shame* him into stopping it so she could get her message through the wall of flack he was throwing up, she told him that she was controlling him. She says he looked stunned by that. She told him that all she had to do was step in or out of the garage to change the face he had on. When he blew this off, she even demonstrated, pointing at his face when his mask changed from Dr. Jekyll to Mr. Hyde and back. "See! There you go again!"

He either couldn't or wouldn't stop it.

Still incredulous as his total shamelessness, she called him a snake and expressed utter contempt for this cowardly, lowdown sneaky behavior. Still no shame! He just acted as though he didn't hear that and kept right on changing faces.

She thinks that attacking any vulnerable prey the moment the coast becomes clear, and putting back on his angel-face again the moment it isn't, is such a lifelong habit in him that, like a machine, he's unaware he's doing it.

That makes sense. When nothing but predatory instincts figure into your behavior, it is nothing but a conditioned reflex.

6.2.3 Stalking Mode

And so, narcissists are "always on," as they say. That is, inside Dr. Jekyll, Mr. Hyde is ever on the lookout for a moment when the coast is clear and it's safe to come out.



So, the dulled perceptions of narcissists are *selectively* dulled. Their total self-

absorption tunes out only certain *kinds* of information that they're disinterested in. It doesn't tune out strategic information like how many people are around, whether they are within earshot, whether anybody can see what the narcissist is doing, and so forth.

The brain adapts. Over time, it becomes truly hard for a narcissist to focus on some *kind* of information he normally blocks out, even when he wants to keep it from getting blocked out with the rest of the background "noise" in the environment. Like the sound of your voice. Try as he may, he can't tune in that signal well enough to focus on whether he is to get red wine or white for supper.

But that cognitive dysfunction doesn't affect the reception of strategic information. *That* he is constantly acutely aware of so that he knows instantly when the coast is clear and a vulnerable target of opportunity is in sight.

Can you imagine what life would be like in a mind like that? That's like stalking mode. Even predatory animals aren't in that mode all the time. But a narcissist is.

6.2.4 Narc Attacks



Most people (including mental-healthcare professionals) think that narcissists attack for the same reasons real people do and are just exceptionally touchy.

My long experience indicates otherwise. In fact, it indicates that they attack for reasons antithetical to normal human impulses.

So, here I depart from conventional wisdom. I do understand why people misunderstand, because it took me forever to catch on. We make invalid assumptions about narcissists, assumptions you can't make about [people from Pluto](#)^[168] who are always acting an alien premise. So, my only criticism of the mental-healthcare professionals is that they go by the narcissist's self reports, the reports of pathological liars and fantasizers, and they fail to compare these self-reports with information from normal people who have had to live or work with a narcissist for a long time.

The narcissists I have known are triggered by nothing but the OPPORTUNITY to attack without fear of adverse consequences. In other words, they are predators — like wolves triggered by the mere scent of a lamb.

Predators attack for a fundamentally different reason than other animals do. In

fact, predators attack for no *reason*: they just target easy prey. They leave alone those who can injure them. They even back down from their usual prey if the intended victim puts up a big fight.

That's predators. And narcissists, like psychopaths, are predators. They don't attack people they're mad at: they attack easy prey when the coast is clear.

In fact, they are impossible to provoke. Yes! they aren't touchy — they're exceptionally thick-skinned when:

- there are potential witnesses
- they fear retaliation.

Improbable as this seems, seeing is believing. So, go ahead, just try to provoke a narcissist.

For example, confront one in the workplace. Though you are being perfectly civil and uttering no threats, merely facing him and calling him on the way he treats you and others will scare the socks off him. He will get so nervous his throat tightens. You will find yourself feeling sorry for the panicked look in his eyes. He will try to appease. And he will even be rational!

Afterwards you will walk away amazed thinking, "Wow, I must be the first person in the world to stand up to him and live to tell about it!" You'll probably be wrong, of course. Anybody can stand up to Little Big Man and live to tell about it.

It's like swimming with a great white shark. The first time he comes at you on his "tasting" run, whack him on the snout. Thereafter, he leaves you alone.

Is he a neighbor letting his big mean dogs run loose to terrorize the neighborhood and threaten other people's pets, infringing on your property and then destroying it to intimidate you if you won't let him? Okay, if that's the way he reacts to your being friendly, see how he reacts to your being an enemy.

Get in his face with a bigger dose of his own medicine. Turn his dirty tricks on him. Show him that you'll fight fire with fire. You'll find that, like any bully, what he needs is one punch — in the nose — to send him home crying to his mamma. It's the only language he understands. He will afterwards leave you alone and look for easy prey.

Is he a sibling or parent? Test his irascibility. The next time he treats you like dirt, blow up in his face. Treat him with utter contempt and use the most abusive

language you can think of. He won't explode. Yell him down and get right down to name-calling. Call him a jackass and tell the Bogey Man that's an ass hole in the middle of his face. He will shock you by meekly and docilely taking it.

He's only ferocious when he can sneak-attack.

This makes sense when you consider what is wrong with a malignant narcissist. He is a deeply wounded person, and he is just doing to **vulnerable** others what was done to **vulnerable** him when he was very young child. This is how he proves to himself that he is not that wretched little weakling. He can control his actions, but he cannot control his urges to trample people.

The narcissists I have known remind me of an abused dog one of my past neighbors had. That dog came up to you every time it saw you, but always from directly behind your back. Once you had convinced it that you had eyes in the back of your head, you were safe. But nobody else, except its abusive master, was.



I emphasize that I am only making a point — not advocating always getting in a narcissist's face. Though the only thing to fear is fear itself, it takes both courage and wisdom to deal with such people.

For example, if the narcissist is a neighbor, you often can make him leave you alone by showing him that you will play by the same rules he does. That's because a neighborhood is usually not a crucible. He can easily play Pretend to unknow it happened and forget you exist. The world is full of easier prey.

The workplace and the home are crucibles though. Does he have an out? If not, when Mr. Paranoid crawls off to lick his wounds, in his secret rage he may blow a gasket and decide to get back at you by attacking in a bigger way than ever before. It will be a sneak attack, of course, conducted with great and cowardly stealth from behind your back. And the only reign on a narcissist's conduct is what he thinks he can get away with, so he is as dangerous as a furious five-year-old with a gun.

This does not mean that you should keep turning the other cheek. As with terrorists, that is the worst thing to do! But it does mean that you must carefully analyze every aspect of the situation and devise a smart, goal-oriented plan, taking steps to protect yourself from anything he could possibly do.

Apparently, in the workplace the most successful strategy is for his fellow workers to just get together and compare notes. Once everybody has his number, he sees a different image of himself reflected in the mirrors around him and flees.

If he is a spouse or lover, it is vitally important not to let him become too attached and dependent on you as a source of ego gratification. This means that the first time he flies into a rage at you or lays a hand on you should be the last. Abandon him immediately. At that point you are still easy to forget, so he'll think, "Yikes, that little critter bites back!" and go off in search of easy prey.

What's more, if the narcissist's rage were provoked, the narcissist couldn't turn it on and off like a light switch. But he can. The unexpected arrival of witnesses quells a narcissist's rage in a split second. No exaggeration. Which proves it's just a Bogey-Man act. Terrorism.

For example, if you come round a corner and surprise Kitty sneaking up on a mouse, that scared cat arches its back and stands every fur on end to look at least three times its actual size — big enough to really hurt you. It bares its teeth and hisses staring right through your eyes with an evil look that horrifies you, standing *your* hair on end. That's terror tactics — victory through scaring the enemy to death. That's why, if you make yourself know that it's just a cat and step towards it saying, "Boo!" it runs away.



Just like a narcissist does.

So, a narc attack is usually a totally unprovoked attack and is always a surprise attack. The narcissist catches you off-guard with an off-the-wall and shocking reaction to something. Often, the narcissist attacks for an anti-reason. By that I mean, he or she is "provoked" to attack the other party by behavior that would gratify a normal person.

Shock tactics.

They disarm you, so that you can't really believe what's happening. They perplex

you. Before you know what's going on, he has run you over. He's an expert at doing this, because he began doing it to his playmates when he was four.

Whether lashing out in a small way at a neighbor, customer-service representative, or colleague or lashing out in a big way at a family member, narcissists give the impression that they had been laying in the weeds to strike unexpectedly. And when they strike, they let fly a remark or act so far beyond the bounds of decency that it stuns the victim, who wonders where the hell that came from.

It's as though, behind their angel-face, they have an attack dog at the end of his leash — one that, without warning, they loose at the unsuspecting.



Proof that the leviathan lies just beneath the surface can be seen in the fact that, if the narcissist is fatigued, half-wakened from sleep, or has his inhibitions lowered by alcohol, one might as well try to get along with Eddy Scissorhands. There is nothing you can say or do at such times that he won't attack you for as some sort of offense or intolerable imposition. The more you try to appease him, the madder he gets.

He is not bound by reason or the standards of common decency. So, he doesn't care how bizarre, irrational, and outrageous his behavior and assertions are. In short, acting crazy isn't beneath him as it is beneath you and I: To the contrary, acting crazy is his secret weapon.

The pathological space of one narcissist I know about was a school. He was a counselor. Over time, the women caught on that he was useless. Not only did he abuse students in his classes, but when teachers went to him with information about kids being bullied, picked on, or sexually harassed by their peers, his reply invariably was that he would have a talk with them but that there little anyone could do about it because the victim "was — you know — vulnerable." Intone the word *vulnerable* softly and dramatically so it resonates with an aura of great significance. According to him people just couldn't help but attack anyone "vulnerable."

Another narcissist was a woman I had known for decades. One day, not long after I discovered that she was dragon in disguise (the opposite of the good person she made a big show of being) she called, shaken and upset about a colleague who had lit into her calling her "the most distasteful person" he ever met. She was meek and hurt as a tender little child. Though I had seen this stunning [transfiguration](#)^[207] a few times before, it amazed me as much as it had the first time I saw this goose-stepping rager turn into a meek and hurt little child. So, fascinated, I listened.

From what she told me and from my knowledge of her track record, I could make out what happened to make this man so angry. She admitted that she had not been "nice" to him. Her excuse was that she couldn't stand his "looks." She said that he had a look, a certain look some people have, that just sets her off. She didn't know why.

She reminded me of a former boyfriend she had "gone off" at and "tore down" till she had reduced him to burning tears. Her story on that episode was that, once she let 'er rip and tore into a person, she couldn't stop herself till 'there was just nothing left of that person at all.'

She eventually described this "look" that set her off as a "dumb look." But I knew most of her victims, so afterwards I looked for a common denominator in them. They were not stupid: they were **vulnerable**. Every one was a person who had been sweet to her, someone her abuse would deeply hurt.

But, upon reflection, I saw that vulnerability isn't her only trigger. Opportunity is what arms her weapons — the opportunity to have one of these scenes in the dark and behind closed doors where there are no witnesses.

So, I take exception to the assumption that malignant narcissists act on normal human premises. Normal people attack when threatened. They do this on the premise that it will back off the aggressor. Narcissists attack the vulnerable whenever the coast is clear. They do this on the premise that stomping others makes them God Almighty. It conveniently slips their minds that stomping someone smaller or gentle or defenseless is no more Godlike than stomping an ant.

6.2.4.1 Rules of Engagement

Narcissists are often described as vampires, or emotional vampires, and it is highly likely that the mythological character of the vampire was originally intended to symbolize this type of person.

In art, literature, and sacred scriptures, blood is a symbol of **suffering** that drains some of the **life** out of us. Vampires feed on it.

Keep in mind that you can cause more suffering (draw more blood) by punching a child than by punching a grown man. It is the same with moral assaults. The same treatment will more deeply wound some people than others.

Through whom and when they attack, you can deduce the narcissist's rules of engagement. The opportunity to do damage to another comes in many forms.

Rules of Engagement:

- A narcissist who can be held to account for what he does won't attack in the light of day, only in the dark where there are no witnesses, so that afterwards it's just the victim's word against the narcissist's. Only narcissists who can abuse practically everyone around them with impunity make no effort to be careful — like Stalin, Hitler, Pol Pot, and Saddam Hussein. Narcissists who are administrators in private, nonprofit organizations are just as bold as that institution's impunity allows them to be — impunity gained by a Teflon reputation, by stonewalling justice, and by keeping their tax-exempt books and records closed.
- A narcissist prefers the most vulnerable prey available — people who will be most deeply wounded by abuse. So preferred prey include:
 - those with the most reason to trust them, such as immediate family members, good friends, and benefactors who have earned their gratitude
 - children, the younger and more vulnerable the better
 - people with low self-esteem and filled with self-doubt
 - meek or gentle people loath to fight back
 - the powerless and defenseless, such as employees, people already looked-down on, people smaller or of the weaker sex
- A narcissist will not attack someone who can just get and stay away from him. Instead he abuses someone trapped, who must just take it. That gives the narcissist the high of absolute power and control over the victim
- A narcissist will not attack someone he fears retaliation from.

All but one element in these rules is self-explanatory. So, before we look at illustrating examples, let's at see why the list of preferred prey includes benefactors. For, it isn't obvious why benefactors are so vulnerable.



Think of someone you've done great good for. Being repaid with hatred would go right through you like a knife, wouldn't it? That's because

giving to people, aiding them, or sacrificing for them in any way, makes us love them. That might sound like it's getting the cart before the horse, but it isn't.

As a lifeguard I discovered what a tremendous emotional experience saving someone is, even in a minor shallow-water rescue where you just jumped in and carried a panicking kid out. Boom — you don't know why, but you somehow connect with that frightened kid and suddenly love him as much as his mother does. Everyday, we see and hear of people giving to, aiding, and risking their lives for, and even sacrificing their lives for total strangers — often strangers in another country half a world away. So, we certainly don't have to love people to sacrifice for them. But, having cared for them, we care for them.

We value ourselves, so when we sacrifice for somebody, we like to think they're worth this spending of our valuable selves. This gives them value in our eyes, and we love them for it, even if we didn't love them before. In fact, self-sacrifice is a strong motivating force behind love, as in the love of a mother for her children. Nobody loves anyone more than his or her mother, and that's precisely because a mother sacrifices so much for her child.

And who can those children wound more deeply than their mother? So, the more we have given to others, the more deeply they can hurt us.

Here's another example: Shedding our blood for France twice made America love France. We greatly wanted the French to appreciate the precious sacrifice by loving us for it. Nobody who sends his son to die in war can bear to think his precious son died for ingrates who devalue that precious sacrifice through anti-gratitude. So, we *had* to love the land so many of us died to liberate, the land where so many of our sons are buried. It would kill us to think we wasted 50-to-60 years of half-a-million American lives on a hostile ingrate who hates his debtor. This is why paying us back with the anti-gratitude of French anti-American hatred wounds us so deeply.

What's more, a benefactor has every good reason to trust those he's aided, because they have anti-reason to wish him ill. This is why benefactors are so easily blind-sided by narcissists. France's treatment of America over the past 50 years bears a striking resemblance to malignant narcissism, and Americans have responded exactly like the abused victims of any narcissist do: we blame ourselves for *their* conduct, thinking there must be some

reason for it. And we walk on eggshells in a futile effort to make ourselves pleasing and acceptable to the French. Like all the victims of narcissists, we naively don't realize that doing this plays right into their hands.

Also, be sure to look at those Rules of Engagement carefully and notice that the victim isn't *always* small or defenseless. He's often just someone with too much integrity and self respect to get down to the narcissist's level. If such a person makes the mistake of letting the narcissist get away with being childish, he or she is teaching the narcissist that being childish gets what he wants.

The victim can, and often is, an altruist, a gentle person in whom patience is a virtue. If such a person doesn't sense the malignant threat in a narcissist, he or she may just put up with one.

 In fact, the victim can be someone strong and powerful, someone who can't bring himself to whack that "little guy." Similarly, in many families the husband is abused by a narcissistic wife who may even physically batter him. He doesn't dare hit back. He's in an impossible situation. Real men don't hit women, but they're not supposed to get battered by women either.

Similarly, most of the world thinks it's a crime for America to strike back against a small country harboring terrorists, as if the size difference takes away our right to defend ourselves. That puts us in an impossible situation.

In this case the victim is often like the elephant in a jungle. He has no natural enemies (only unnatural ones) and doesn't feel threatened by this piss-ant. A good example is the way the United States has always responded to anti-Americanism. Till 9/11 we felt it couldn't hurt us. We were wrong. That narcissist is *always* [attacking your character](#)^[235] to others — a kind of Voodoo assault on your image that *will* eventually bring down even the world's only superpower if he keeps allowing it by turning the other cheek.

Click [this link](#)^[211] for an example of a narcissist switching attack mode on and off like a knee-jerk reflex. It shows that the narcissist instinctively perceives when there may be witnesses and when it's safe to take his mask off.

Now here are two more examples. They show that narcissists like any form of vulnerability. So, they don't just attack people dependent on them (in their household); in any situation that keeps others trapped and unable to get away from them, they attack.

A narcissist ran a stoplight, hitting another vehicle broadside. The victim was unhurt and approached to see if the narcissist was injured. Seeing that he was a senior citizen made the victim feel sorry for him, so he was all set to be nice about it when — WHAM — the narcissist attacked *him*. Using egregiously foul and abusive language, he flew into a rage, lyingly and irrationally blaming the victim for the accident, threatening him, and treating him like dirt. The poor victim had no choice but to remain there and take it, for he didn't dare leave the scene of the accident. But the moment the cop arrived, the narcissist underwent an instantaneous face-change: he became a poor, meek little old man who wouldn't hurt a fly, someone people should cut a lot of slack.

One aged narcissist I know of had gotten away with so much for so long that he felt he could get away with anything, especially since he was old and people therefore felt they had to take whatever he dished out. So he screamed curses and obscenities at the top of his lungs at everybody who came near to take care of him in the hospital. He even tried to hit them by flailing at them with both arms. Like a colicky infant throwing an all-out temper tantrum. Or a sick animal who wants to bite the veterinarian. He would not tolerate anything, even a stethoscope. By pressing his button the minute the staff could get away from him, he kept forcing them to keep coming back for more abuse.

The moment the doctor or minister walked in, however, he underwent a startling, split-second transfiguration into "sweet little old Mr. Nice Guy."

The staff soon noticed that his fits were as predictable as clockwork. He threw one whenever the nurses had something to do besides care for him. He had a hole in his head for the fact that they were highly educated, highly paid health care professionals. To him they were just "women," there to watch over him like mothers and to perform menial services, such as telling him what time it was and holding the phone for him.

It took me a long time to notice that a narcissist's trigger is simply a chance to get away with attacking someone. They have the instincts of a predator. Like a wolf who gets a sniff of lamb in breeze, they sense a chance to get away with trampling someone.

When they get old they take advantage of their carte blanche to do anything, but before that they normally just make sure that afterwards it'll just be the victim's word against the narcissist's.

And the narcissist has behaved so outrageously that nobody believes the victim. Everybody thinks the one telling them this story is crazy one. Which is

irrational: all they really know is that either the plaintiff or defendant is crazy, and they shouldn't pretend to know which one.

6.3 The Abuser

Every weird thing about a narcissist proceeds from his avaricious and covetous need for attention. To justify needing it all, he regards himself as special, superior, more important than others. And to make it so, he acts as though he is. That is, he 'pretends,' as a little child "playing Pretend."

To justify his denial of any attention to others, he pretends that they are unworthy of it, even a bit of it. And to make it so, he acts as though they are. Because that's the way you do things in the Land of Pretend.

Of course, on that slippery slope he is impelled to infinite extremes: He is God, and others are dirt. In his world, where appearances are substituted for reality, this acting job is the basis for both his grandiosity and abuse. Yes that is a circular "logic," but that's his "logic," not mine.

Narcissistic abuse then is an expression of grandiosity. It is the narcissist's way of pretending that he is a god compared to you. The flip side is that you are contemptible vermin compared to him. And narcissistic abuse is simply his way of pretending that you are contemptible vermin.

He has a hundred ways to pretend that, to tell you that, in every interaction, every day of your life. That's his purpose in every interaction, self aggrandizement. I don't care if he's discussing the kids' grades or a business decision with you. It isn't really about the kids or the business as far as he's concerned: it's always all about his image. he is fixated on it, remember? Hypnotized by it.



He's preoccupied with it so that very little of his mind is engaged with the matter at hand. He may therefore take a stupid position on the matter just because it happens to be the one that puts you down and aggrandizes him at your expense. Because nothing — NOTHING — else matters to him. Correction: nothing else even gets considered by him. In every interaction, his goal is to play it so as to seem grand, so grand that you are contemptible vermin to someone as grand as he.

In the last section, I said that manipulating others isn't just a hobby of narcissists. Same here: abuse isn't just a narcissist's hobby; it's an aspect of the disease. (Whether you regard it as a psychological or spiritual illness makes no difference as far as I can tell.) The abuse of others is part of the pretending. And it appears to be the most rewarding part.

Narcissistic abuse is essentially a denial of attention. That doesn't sound so bad. But it is much worse than it sounds, especially when those who get the brunt of it are near and dear. They get nothing but criticism. They get no credit for anything. His every interaction with them is some sort of put-down. That's how he makes nothing of them. And that's how he shows that he thinks nothing of them. But the kicker is that he then shows less regard for their wounded and trampled feelings than normal people do for the anguish of some half-squashed bug.

In fact, the more narcissists see that they're hurting you, the more abusive they get. When they have morally bludgeoned someone to their knees, they seem to go wild. It's like they have to jump up and down in triumph on that person's back. At such moments the cruel and bizarre things they think of to say and do to that person . . . to rub their nose in it, to stomp them down even harder . . . just defy belief.

No narcissist I have known missed a chance to go further than passive denial of attention (a form of passive aggression). How do you actively deny attention? By actively demonstrating anti-regard for someone. Attention is regard. Demonstrations of disregard make nothing of the people they're directed at.

Any flagrant disregard for another's rights or feelings is abuse. Any affront to a person's human dignity is abuse. How do you pull one off? You just do something that demonstrates that this other person is contemptible dirt beneath your feet.



For example, there's the husband who throws food at his mouth at the dinner table. He pauses every now and then to look for a moment at the mess on the floor from everything that has missed his mouth. Then just continues throwing food at his mouth. If his wife calls him on this, he denies that he's doing it deliberately to show contempt for her and makes himself the victim by whining at her to get off his back. If she stays out of that trap by just telling him he's making a mess, he glances at it and contemptuously orders her to "Pick it up." Get the message?

She gets it in every single interaction every single day. It's the club he beats her down with.

And if she doesn't docilely submit to it, if she objects in any way, he throws a temper tantrum as obnoxious as any bratty three-year-old's, in which he pretends to be imitating *her* as "the big baby" by bawling "WAAAH!" to drown her out and block communication. "GET OFF MY BAAAACK!"

So, people who think you can have a talk with this guy, should try it. People who think his abuse is no big deal should be educated in a locked room with him for a week. Afterwards, they wouldn't object to the death penalty for his kind.

But that was only one example of narcissistic abuse. Narcissists know many ways to abuse you by an affront to your human dignity or by demonstrating flagrant disregard for your rights and feelings.

For example, there's the woman who hears that a colleague has just suffered a catastrophe — getting fired, sued, falsely accused of something terrible, or suddenly abandoned by their spouse. She rushes to virtually "dance on that person's grave." Instead of asking if there's anything she can do and offering comfort and support, she flits in like a chirpy little birdie in a state of plenitude of grace and prattles about herself, paying no more attention to that person than to a fly on the wall. She acts out her disregard by babbling on about how hunky dory everything is in her happy, happy, happy life. Get the message?

Then there's the teenage bully who yells "Cow" at a certain "vulnerable" girl every time he sees her in a crowded hall at school. Get the message?

Another example is from a long time ago. A Bohemian immigrant married a woman born here whose mother was a German-Czech. He was the worst bigot around, the only one who made a habit of going around saying that the only good German was a dead German. For some mysterious reason, he thought he needed a loaded double-barrelled shotgun standing in the corner of their bedroom. And whenever he was mad about something, the next thing you knew, he was the beating horse that was her dowry. He just hated that lousy, good-for-nothing horse. Get the message?

Yet another example is one law enforcement officers hear of quite often: an abusive husband or boyfriend forces his mate to her knees and presses her face into garbage or excrement. That sends a pretty clear message to her, doesn't it?

Narcissistic abuse is an assault on a person's human dignity. It's treating human beings like dirt. It's telling them every day in every way that they are nothing. It's mental cruelty.

6.3.1 Let's Play Pretend

When a narcissist is abusing you, he or she is playing Pretend. It's like a play. It has a script.

Some children try to control a game of Pretend with their little friends. They are always stage directing and bossing the others around, because they want everyone to follow *their* script. They are constantly stamping their foot and yelling, "No! You're not supposed to do that! You're supposed to do THIS!"

"THIS" is always something that aggrandizes that bossy child, probably at the other kid's expense, which is why he doesn't want to play along with her script.

When you are interacting with a narcissist, that is what's going on. He is that bossy child who insists that you play along with his script in this little game of make-believe.

You trigger the narcissist's rage by not playing along, by departing from his script.

This is how it usually plays out: The victim reacts naturally to the narcissist's devaluing treatment. She might insist on having his attention for a moment. Or

she may complain about some put-down. Or she may ask him to stop some obnoxious thing he's doing. In fact, she may do nothing more than just try to avoid the impending assault by leaving the room when he starts treating her like this to pick the usual fight. In doing any of these things, she is not following his script. So he attacks.

I think these attacks are just his way of herding you to behave the way he wants — making you follow his script. In other words, you're the steer, and he is a cowboy. He is really just a little child mad at you for not playing along with his little game of Pretend. He's stamping his foot and yelling at you, "No! You're not supposed to do THAT! You're supposed to do THIS!"

Of course a grown narcissist must be subtle about it, so he can't come right out and tell you what to do. Therefore, he herds you in the direction he wants, like a cowboy herds cattle — riding on a big horse at you, yelling and waving his hat..

Another way of looking at it is that he trains you like you train a dog. When doggy pees outside, you praise him. When doggy pees inside, you get mad at him. In other words, you train him with **positive and negative reinforcement**, by waving carrots and sticks at him till he just prefers to behave the way you happen to want him to.

In the narcissist's script, his wife is supposed to play Pretend-that-he-is-God-Almighty too. Which means that she is supposed to bend over for it from God Almighty with a smile. She is to NOT insult him by acting as though she is his equal. NOT to act as though she is here to serve her interests instead of his. NOT to act as though she deserves consideration or respect from him, let alone appreciation and gratitude for her services. According to his script, she is NOT to upstage him by getting any attention or regard. She is to act as though she is as insignificant and flawed and intolerable as he portrays her.

By not acting out his fantasy for him, she is making his delusions harder to believe, and he hates her for making his delusions harder to believe. He hates her for this with the sudden, hard-wired hatred that flares up in us all at anyone physically attacking us.

What do I mean? Here's an example. If you are driving and someone crashes their car into yours, what's your first reaction? Come on, be honest. It's instant rage, isn't it? Embarrassing, but true — BOOM — it's right there. It's caused by a perceived violent act against your life. It lasts but a second, because we instantly quell it, knowing that it is uncalled for in a mere accident.

This explosive raw emotion flares up so suddenly because it's involuntary, genetically hard-wired into the brain. It's a reflex originating in the animal brainstem as part of the instant fight-or-flight response that kicks in with a general firing of the sympathetic nervous system and an adrenaline rush. This primitive, instinctive reaction is adaptive in the wild world, where it fits an animal to deal with sudden attack.

In civil society, however, it is usually inappropriate. This is why we must sit still a moment, telling ourselves it was an accident, not an attack, and to behave civilly when we get out of the vehicle to talk to the other driver.

Narcissists are mental three-year-olds who don't exert this self control.

Your failing to divine and follow his script a narcissist views as an attack. And, though nothing could be further from this woman's mind than attacking him, she **IS** attacking him! **Make sure this part sinks in: by failing to divine and follow the narcissist's script, you are ATTACKING him.** And he will react like a man desperately fighting for his life. Count on it.

For, does the Pinnacle of Creation have any consideration for a relative ant? Does he have any regard or feelings for an ant? Does he think an ant is important? Is it not an insult for an ant to regard itself as worthy of his notice? That's how his wife behaving as though she deserves respect attacks him: it attacks that mirage he identifies with. His godlike fantasy image of himself.

Remember, he identifies with it. He thinks it's him. So, if you say or do anything inconsistent with it, you attack it = you attack him.

It takes little thought to see that interaction with a narcissist is a dance in a minefield. For, virtually any normal thing a normal person does can disrupt this mirage. For example, a customer service representative unwittingly disrupts it by not offering the narcissist special treatment. A co-worker unwittingly disrupts it by expecting the narcissist to listen and cooperate.

Ants, ants, ants...thus "provoking" God Almighty all the time.

6.3.2 Mental Cruelty

The way society tolerates it, you'd think mental cruelty was no big deal. It's even appearing in the media, especially in Europe, where it seems to be regarded as funny. But making light of something doesn't make it funny. It does, however,

destroy your sense of humor. People blow off bullying in schools with the line that the victim is "vulnerable" (= to blame) and that "every kid gets picked on." Making light of such weighty matters is what the parents of bullies do.

Mental cruelty. No big deal?

Purely psychological abuse like this is usually worse than violent physical abuse. In fact, people feel less degraded by physical abuse, except insofar as there's some psychologically abusive element in it. For example women feel much less abused by being beaten than by being raped. You can't make sweeping statements about this, because there often is a cruel psychological element in physical abuse. This is generally true of torture. And it was true of the Holocaust. The atrocious death sentences by slow torture imposed by both Church and State in the past are consummate examples of physical abuse designed as vicious assaults on a person's human dignity. The victims of the Church, especially, were often dressed (and/or stripped naked), exhibited for public ridicule and contempt for hours, and then executed in ways cunningly designed to make the crowd laugh at the victim's struggles and agony. What could be more psychologically sadistic?

So, when sick minds get into the act, it's hard to tell where the physical trauma ends and the psychological trauma begins. But victims invariably say the psychological trauma, often in the little things, is the worst. These are the things that crush a person's spirit, making him or her feel like dirt and long to just die.



Treating others subhumanly like this would make you or I ashamed of ourselves, because we would rightly see it as debasing ourselves. But these imbeciles think they're elevating themselves by behaving subhumanly, and they are extremely proud of themselves for it. So, apparently they can't get *anything* straight: they obviously can't tell their head from their ass because they can't tell thing's head from its tail. They get the subject and object of the deed reversed to think that the subhuman one is the one on the receiving end of a subhuman deed.

And yet they all think they're so intelligent.

My own observations make me think that narcissists are ever on the lookout for an opportunity to abuse someone and get away with it. I think they instantly notice whenever the coast is clear and — zap — do it almost reflexively, like machines. But let a potential witness appear and — zap — they are a sweet person who wouldn't hurt a fly. I think you probably have to have seen this transfiguration to believe it, but I tell you that they can switch from Dr. Jekyll to Mr. Hyde and back again in a split second. It's downright spooky.

And that makes sense, considering why narcissists abuse. They do it because it makes them feel good. They are like an alcoholic at work who notices the moment he's alone and goes for the bottle. He always wants it, but he can't have it when he would get in trouble for it.

So I think attack/abuse mode is a narcissist's normal state. All it takes is a vulnerable target of opportunity (a chance to get away with it) to trigger action. This is true of any predator, really. When they are hungry, the very sight of a vulnerable target of opportunity triggers an attack.

Unfortunately, many people assume that, like normal people, narcissists need some **reason** for hostility toward the person they target with abuse. Normal people attack for natural motives of retaliatory defense or revenge. But narcissists have no reason, and their motive is unnatural. They just pick **easy prey**, and attack whenever they see a chance to get away with it.

Hence they most often abuse their own children, brothers and sisters, lovers, best friends, and benefactors. In other settings they attack the meek and gentle and those whose virtue puts them to shame.

Just because that other person has a little of what the narcissist views as ALL belonging to him — worth, dignity, and self respect. He must have it ALL. And anyone else who gets any is depriving him of it. Narcissists are so hooked on their drug, so in need of getting it all, that they **fight off** temptations to show any regard for anybody else. This explains their most perplexing behavior.

The stronger the temptation to give a little of themselves, the harder they must fight to fight it off. I am as sure as I can be that this is why they react violently to moments that strongly call for attention/regard/humanity to others. The strongest calls are those heart-rending ones for love — those that compel sorrow, compassion, affection, sympathy, and what the Italians call *piéta*.

Just try to beg a narcissist to even just sit down and be someone for you to talk to at a moment like that. They react to such pleas like someone being burned at

the stake reacts to a flame! They fight it off as though it were an attack on them, as though it were a vampire's attempt to suck their life blood.

When you see a narcissist do this, you can't believe your eyes. Yet, calls for his affection and compassion *are*, in a way, an attack on him. He identifies with his image, which is supposed to be so godlike that you are an insignificant bug compared to him. Bugs don't even get noticed by a god, let alone loved and comforted by one.

You're supposed to play the part. When you don't, when a mere bug like you expects to matter to God Almighty, you *are* challenging his delusion. You are relating to him as an equal and not cooperating in his game of 'Pretend' that he is God Almighty compared to you.

Like any three-year-old, he gets mad at anyone who doesn't play along with his game of "let's pretend."

That challenge attacks his phony image. Since he thinks it's him, he views that as an attack on HIM. That's why any form of strong pull at his heartstrings triggers the Narcissistic Rage.

This is when narcissistic abuse goes ballistic, leaving the victim unable to report it because nobody on this planet will believe that anyone would do such a thing as he has done. It becomes the perfect crime — the one so outrageous, nobody believes it.

The victim herself can hardly believe it. This is why she makes the Big Mistake. She thinks that callousness is some kind of moral callous. That it can be penetrated. That if she pleads for his compassion, she can get through it to his heart. His reaction to that?

WHAM! He is likely to take a psychotic break.

Since this is the extreme opposite of what was called for, it has the same effect on the victim as shock treatment. It disarms her and puts her in the state one is in during a horrible nightmare. This is the cycle of Narcissistic Abuse that leaves the savaged victim a crumpled heap on her knees at his feet, in tears, and begging him to at least tell her he doesn't wish she were dead.

He doesn't wish she were dead, but it would kill him to say so. So, his reply is to spit on her and kick her away in utter contempt.

By trying to penetrate his callousness, the victim has unwittingly been risking her very life. He acts as though this was an attack on him because it *was*. The victims of narcissists must understand this.

 This narcissist could just as well be a woman. In fact, one of the two most physically violent narcissists I personally know of is a woman. Whereas male narcissists must be more careful, being a woman, she is probably so uninhibited because she feels that nobody would believe her victim's complaints — that a woman could be so physically violent. In any case, since about the age of nine, she has flown at the victim with her fists wind-milling at the face. She kneels on the victim digging her nails into the wrists and saying, "I'm stronger than you." She has beaten one of her victims for twenty minutes straight, literally punching herself out.

We can't relate to this mentality. We can't imagine being that way. But if you apply pure logic to the equation, you can see what is going on. He feels that this putrid bug is hurting him (degrading his lofty image) by acting as though it has the right to expect something besides supercilious disdain from God Almighty. His mirror is not shining attention on him like it should. It has been replaced with her face, wanting him to shine attention on her.

In fact, one narcissist I know of looked away from his pleading victim's tearful face as if in horror. When asked why, he pointed and bellowed, "Why should I have to look at that!" "That" meaning her face! So, this terrible narcissistic child throws a temper tantrum to break his naughty mirror.

In wanting blood from a turnip, the victim might as well have tried to steal heroin from an addict in withdrawal. Nobody in their right mind would try to steal heroin from an addict in withdrawal, because we instinctively know it would be grabbing a tiger by tail. It's the same with narcissists: don't try to pry from them what they would rather die than give. Besides, they haven't got any.

And so, what appeases normal people, enrages narcissists. What evokes empathy from normal people, evokes brutality from narcissists. It's as though their brains are crammed in their skulls upside-down and backwards. If there is one thing I wish everybody in the world knew, it would be this: **When someone's reaction to a thing is the opposite of what was called for, notice that red flag the first time it shows, and stay away.**

For more information, visit BullyOnline: [Bullying in the family](#)

It seems that you should regard a raging narcissist as you would a threatening

dog: Don't try to reason with it; don't look it in the eyes; and don't take one step backward, or it will run you over. Hopefully, after it has barked its head off enough to think it won, it will just go away without physically attacking you.

For, the only thing that seems to quell a Narcissistic Rage is (a) others suddenly appearing on the scene to see what is going on or (b) self defense as forceful as the attack. That means raging right back in the narcissist's face. And throwing punches if he or she has. Either produces an instantaneous transfiguration into the picture of "poor-little-me-wouldn't-hurt-a-fly" meekness. Seeing him switch personas in the blink of an eye like that will give you the creeps.

But no child can defend himself from an adult this way, and no woman can defend herself from a man this way. Even if the victim is physically capable of defending himself, the situation is explosive and dangerous. Also, if you are so threatened and/or outraged that you really are raging (instead of just *acting* as though you're raging), then both parties to the conflict are not in control of themselves. Extremely dangerous for both of you. So, it is far better to just get away from a malignant narcissist before the violence of his abuse escalates to the point that you are in physical danger.

You can't help him. Trained psychiatrists can hardly help him.

Children have fewer options. But they should know that public school teachers, counselors, and administrators are legally obligated to report any child's complaint (or any mere suspicion) of abuse.

Note: I said *public* because there is apparently some special dispensation for private school personnel in the United States: The employers of Catholic school personnel, the bishops, have not been required to report it and do not promise to report it.

6.4 The Slanderer

Character assassination is another aspect of malignant narcissism. In fact, every malignant narcissist is an inveterate slanderer, a good-name slayer.

For, the narcissist has the mentality of rapist: he or she must tear people "down off that pedestal." The rapist is filthy, you see. So, he must pretend he's dirtying others so he can pretend they're dirtier than him. That's how he makes himself feel clean.

Because his brain is crammed into his skull upside-down and backwards.

The narcissist does the same thing. He just has a different style. Both the rapist and the narcissist are just playing the [Teeter-Totter Game](#)^[340]: pretending to aggrandize themselves by diminishing someone else. So, show me a malignant narcissist, and I will show you someone who almost never says anything about anyone that you would like to hear said about you.

This aspect of malignant narcissism is one of the most evident. In other words, it should be one of the first warning signs you get. That's why I mentioned it as a [red flag](#)^[88]. A narcissist will give evidence against himself almost every time he opens his mouth with someone else's name on his tongue. So, it's a good idea to pay attention to the way people talk about others.

It reminds me of a hilarious line in the Book of Ecclesiastes: You should keep your distance from people who don't speak well of others, because they need to shake themselves off every so often. And, if you're too close to them at the moment, you're going to get mud on you.

Implicit in that advice is the warning that slander is projection, which it usually is. This is another thing that people who know a narcissist should be able to spot in him or her. If someone tells you something bad about a stranger, you don't know what to think. But if someone tells you something bad about someone you know, just vet that information by comparing it with what you know first hand about that person. If people did this, slander would be much harder to get away with. And narcissists would be out of business. That's because their accusations are almost always preposterous. For example, they will accuse the most manifestly honest person in the joint of being a liar.

That's because they aren't just shaking themselves off, they are out to smear a virtue in someone with that mud.



But they have other motives, too. The narcissist is a slanderer partly also to get attention. (Notice that the finger-pointer in the picture above has his other hand raised to get attention.) So, they come up with some pretty strange tales about people. They are like the press in knowing what kind of story will grab an audience's attention.

And so, your narcissist is a slanderer partly because she must be one to create her phony image. She makes herself look good mostly by making others look bad in comparison. She also slanders as a way to deal with her guilt/shame by projecting the semblance of it off on someone else (= a scapegoat). Note that much of this repressed guilt and shame is guilt and shame for — guess what? Slander.

So, it's a vicious cycle. She slanders the more to bury her shame for slandering before. Yes, that's crazy and self-destructive, but try to tell her that. Her Magical Thinking Machine obstinately refuses to know that.

She does have one reason for slander that makes sense though. As a slanderer, she is most vicious in slandering those she also abuses (e.g., spouse, children, siblings, friends). Against them she conducts a long term smear campaign that spreads false beliefs about that person far and wide. In most instances I know of, this campaign began long before any serious abuse did.

One narcissist I knew called this game "block the kick." That is, he slanders and calumniates those he abuses so that when they try to tell what he's done to them, nobody will believe them. They will just get re-victimized, and he will come out smelling like a rose. In other words, this kind of slander is calculated to discredit in advance the only people who get to see him with his mask off. Thus, just as through murder a careful criminal "leaves no witnesses," through character assassination a narcissist "leaves no witnesses."

In advance, he assassinates their character behind their back, so that they have the reputation he should have. Rumor has it that (among other things) his target is crazy, imagines things, and goes around telling strange lies about people, including poor, poor him. Then when the victim tries to complain about the abuse, he or she has just walked into a booby trap.

Is this the perfect crime, or what?

6.4.1 What Makes Narcissists Different

Narcissists aren't the only people who create a false image of themselves. If you want to call it close, virtually everyone does, even that paragon of honesty, Prince Hamlet. In a world that surrounds us with the prying eyes of fault-finders, we would be traitors to ourselves if we were not at least modest about the things we should be ashamed of. Especially insofar as they are none of anybody else's business. In fact, it's a virtue to keep what's private private. It is the moral

equivalent of wearing clothes.

But hypocrites are for looks only. They think a thing ain't wrong if they get away with it. In other words, they confuse appearances with reality. Consequently, they have no conscience — just an unconscience. That is, they repress their conscience. Hence, what they do in the dark is shockingly different than what they do in the light of day.

These are the people who put make-up on their image too thick in spots — right where the blemishes in their character are. Since it's all about their image, as Hamlet's mother said, they view sin as some kind of taint instead of as moral illness, or spiritual dis-ease. This is what gives them the notion that it can be "washed away" or smeared off. No wonder that, to get rid of it, they project instead of repent.

So, narcissists are by no means alone in accusing others so as to project their *own* flaws off onto a scapegoat. It's just that they invest so much energy in doing it. They are fixated on their image to the point that it is uppermost in their mind 100% of the time. It's impossible to overemphasize that.

In contrast, normal people project only when on the defensive. And then they're likely to shake themselves off on whoever happens to be near at the moment. So, their aim is poor, and sometimes they project a flaw off onto someone who actually has it. But a narcissist's aim is impeccable. For example, whom does he call a liar? The most honest person around. Who does he say is dangerous? The savior of the group. Every single time. His talent for farce is so great that you could mistake him for astute.

Also, normal people have normal, human and loving relationships. So they don't smear themselves off on just *anybody*. They wouldn't dream of harming those near and dear. And they stick to slander (which has at least some degree of truth in it), rarely engaging in calumny (lies). When they do calumniate someone, he or she is an enemy. Even then they don't go hog-wild and calumniate someone so badly and so widely as to destroy them and ruin their lives.

Not so with the narcissist. He is a mental child with no sense of measure or moderation. So, he is more dangerous with his mouth than an angry five-year-old is with an AK-47. He will say anything — ANYTHING — about you as lightly as one would brush a crumb from his sleeve. He loves only himself. He has no normal human relationships. He relates to people as [objects](#)^[144]. So he will smear himself off on his own children as thoughtlessly as we smear ourselves off on a towel.

In fact, he is most likely to smear off on someone he owes gratitude, because needing help damages his image. So he repays help as though it were an insult. He must devalue it by devaluing the giver of it, as if such a contemptible person is incapable of really helping someone as grand as he.

Since he is a mental little child, the only reign on a narcissist's behavior is what he feels he can get away with. So, the more he gets away with, the more repressed guilt he has to purge himself of. The bad thing about repressed guilt is that it is an unconscious but active motivator of our conduct. That's because it's only repressed, not gone.

A lot goes on in our subconscious. For example, a person under massive doses of morphine feels no cancer pain, but only the consciousness of pain is gone: the unconscious brain experiences and responds to the trauma just as it would if the patient were conscious of it. Again for example, we learn and do many things subconsciously, like how to walk and talk. This is much knowledge we have no consciousness of whatsoever. Yet it controls all our talking and walking.

In short, everything gets stored and processed, whether we're conscious of it or not. Subconscious guilt and shame does too. The act of repressing it kicks in unconscious defense mechanisms that rule your conduct like a puppet master, without you being aware of it. It's "the demon at the door." The door being the way out, the escape from the fix you've gotten yourself in.

This could be why narcissists get worse with age. The load of repressed guilt they keep trying to purge themselves of (in a way that only dirties them more) gets so heavy that the wild accusations they make get viciouser and viciouser. It's as though they get drunk on blood.

They become living, breathing Projection Machines. Projection becomes such a knee-jerk reflex that a narcissist accuses his victim of doing to him the very thing (or essentially the same thing) as he is in the very act of doing to the victim. This creates bizarre scenes that make you wonder whether the narcissist is hallucinating or tripping out on psychedelic drugs. You feel like Alice in Wonderland. You have to pinch yourself and wonder whether "it's me or him that is crazy."

If you've ever thought that, congratulations. It means you're not. The narcissist never thinks that: he just accuses whoever he abuses of being the crazy one. (I said "crazy," not "insane." There's a difference.)

Another big difference between narcissists and normal people when they're

projecting on you is that narcissists expect you to share their delusion. Yes! You cannot help but perceive this as gaslighting. Narcissists try to make you be what they say you are because, like a psychopath, they view you as an object, not as a human person with perceptions and a mind of your own. They view you as an extension of themselves (like a tool) to control. It is the moral equivalent of the control a rapist thinks he has over the body of another, whom he views as but an object, an extension of himself, an executioner of *his* will. Psychologists call this bizarre behavior **projective identification**, a defense mechanism. The narcissist wants you to identify with the image he projects on you. You are a mirror to reflect his fantasy, so he pressures you to behave as though it is real.

A narcissist's need to conform you to his or her specifications can go to bizarre extremes. For example, I know of one female narcissist who, during an assault on her sister, habitually forced her up against a wall and then spent a long time moving and twisting her sister's arms about to position them grotesquely — thus forcing her sister into different "shapes."

Behave is the key word. Narcissists do not connect with reality: appearances are all that matter in their world. So, you can lay out your grievances to a narcissist in a letter to let him know what you think, but if tomorrow you encounter him and **act** as though none of it happened, he is perfectly satisfied.

So, though the narcissist's projective identification seems like gaslighting and affects the victim like gaslighting, it is not gaslighting in the strictest sense of the word. For the narcissist only cares how you behave; he does not care what you think. He doesn't think at all about what you think. In fact, you can crash his brain by asking, "What do you think I think about you?" The question does not even compute.

Bottom Line: Anyone who outshines a narcissist diminishes the glow of his glory. So, that person had better be someone with power that he fears or had better lay low and get away.

6.4.2 Those a Narcissist Speaks Well Of

A great irony about narcissists is that often the only person they speak well of happens to be — guess who? The one person they should curse. Their narcissistic parent. The one who abused them. The one who bestowed the curse of malignant narcissism on them.

And the contrast couldn't be more stark, because, boy, do they speak *well* of that

person. Not that they tell you anything about him or her, but whenever they mention that parent it is with reverential awe.

For example, one narcissist I knew never referred to his narcissistic mother as "my mother," but as just "Mother" in a dramatic tone as if the name were holy. A melodramatic tone. So melodramatic that if it weren't a man speaking of his mother it would have struck you as parody. I got the distinct impression that he had her confused with the Blessed Virgin Mary, but forgive me for choosing not to go there and explore that freaky possibility. If that was what he thought, I didn't want to know. But one thing's for sure: he had her way up high on some shining white pedestal.

Yet I got a surprising admission from him once. After I had asked around to find out what his holy mother was really like, I gently but firmly confronted him with the truth. He always had a slight stutter, and I told him that I knew it had been much worse when he was young, that it only got better after he married. Then I mentioned a few other facts I had learned. I asked why he wasn't given medical treatment for some boyhood injuries — a hernia that later became strangulated and nearly killed him and a broken shoulder that caused him to lose partial control of his left arm for life. I got no answer of course, because his tongue seemed to lock.

Then I told him that his wife had blamed his stuttering on his father, thinking he must have been mean and hypercritical of his son. I said that people, especially women, always tend to jump to the conclusion that the father is to blame. But, I added, I had known his father and that the facts I knew firsthand just didn't square with that blame. In fact, they went against it. His father had faults, but he wasn't the kind of man who would be mean and hypercritical of his son and who would think his son unworth the expense of medical care. I added that his father's second wife was proof positive of his good character, because hers was rock solid, and she didn't need a husband, would never have tolerated a man like that, and would have thrown him out on his ear.

Then I told him that his wife had always avoided the subject of what his mother was like. All you could ever get out of her was "Well, I never met his mother till she was sick in the hospital and dying of cancer," as if that was some excuse for something. An excuse for what? "Well, she seemed cold and distant."

Yeah, right, dying of cancer makes you cold and distant. Not. I told him that this had made me suspicious and that I had asked around. I said that, on their deathbed, normal people aren't rude to others, refusing to look at or talk to their visitors — especially the woman their eldest child has just met and become

engaged to. I said I couldn't imagine a dying mother doing that. If that's the way his mother had behaved toward his fiancé, then that's just the way she was.

So, I said, "I think it was your mother. I think you are the way you are because she withheld love and affection from you, even as a little child."

I was already amazed that he had listened to me for two whole minutes. I expected rage at me for blaspheming his mother's holy name. So, I nearly dropped the phone when he softly replied, "Maybe you're right."

I had never been right about anything before. He had never admitted there was anything wrong with him before. Needless to say, that was a moment.

So, go figure. Though a narcissist's narcissistic parent is the only person he speaks well of, and to the point of beatification, there are cracks in that facade.

In fact, the narcissistic parent is a special and complex case. For, I have also heard narcissists speak bitterly of that parent. For example, I knew another narcissist who, while trying to justify his desire to kill something every day by fishing or hunting the bag limit of anything in season, excused his fishing excesses by saying that unlike his father, he didn't bring home the fish and throw them at his wife and kids to clean for him. He said that about his narcissistic parent with great bitterness.

In fact, I have seen a narcissist's version of this parent go upside-down overnight. And I think I know why. It squares with what I've heard from other narcissists about their narcissistic parent, depending on the situation at the time they commented to me about him or her.

So long as the narcissistic parent is in a position to put down, slander, or abuse the narcissistic child, he or she is a devil in the narcissistic child's eyes. In fact, the narcissistic child is the family member who resents the narcissistic parent most and has him or her best pegged. But the moment that parent dies, history gets revised, and he or she was a saint. In fact, if that parent is merely incapacitated and dependent on the narcissistic child's good graces, he or she is, and always was, a saint. (That is also the only situation in which the narcissistic child wins approval from the narcissistic parent: the moment an aging parent needs that child's help, history is revised, and the child instantly becomes the ideal child.) So, the moment they are no longer vulnerable to that parent, their opinion of him or her goes up-side down. Suddenly every bad thing he or she did never happened. With one fell swoop history is revised, and that parent is God.

There are few others that narcissists speak well of, only those they can aggrandize themselves by association with, if only at others' expense.

For example, if a narcissist has a trophy wife, he will go around saying, "Isn't she beautiful?" The message is that he is good enough to score such a bride but you aren't. (He won't tell *her* she's beautiful though.) Again for example, if you got lousy service at a restaurant, the narcissist will say, "They gave *me* excellent service." If you are on the outs with someone, the narcissist will say, "*I* get along with him fine" and have nothing but good things to say about him. Which is reminiscent of "God likes us Jews/Christians/Muslims best." All three claim to be the same God's prime stock. Which is reminiscent of "Daddy likes me best!" The message is that the narcissist is good enough to be acceptable to that restaurant, person, or God, but you aren't.

Being disagreeable, just to be disagreeable, narcissists will praise an opponent of yours. For example, if you're a Republican, they will praise to high heaven the Democratic candidate for president, so stubbornly refusing to admit *any* flaw in him that they will be irrational or deny known facts about him. On the other hand they won't admit that there's *anything* good about the Republican candidate or that he's right about anything, ever...because obviously everything he says and does is for some evil ulterior motive. The message is that you're an idiot for not being able to see that.

Such special cases are the only ones you hear a good word about from a narcissist. In fact, a narcissist will stubbornly refuse to admit any fault in them at all. They are ideal, perfect in his or her eyes.

And so, whether a narcissist raises or lowers a person, he does so for his own aggrandizement. He either idealizes or devalues a person to you: there is no in-between. If you know a narcissist well, you have probably noticed that he either sees nothing but good in a person or nothing but bad. And you have probably seen his appraisals of people go upside-down overnight, for little or no apparent reason.

6.4.3 The Unblemished Victim

Whom can you hurt the most with slander? A hardened criminal? Someone who appears to be the model citizen but cats around and cheats and does pretty much whatever he wants in the dark? Someone cheaply bought? Someone pretty ordinary who does good so long as he doesn't have to stick his neck out or blow against the wind? Someone whose work is mediocre? Someone who's going nowhere?

Or someone with a lot of potential, someone whose work is excellent, someone who has earned his good name and deserves it, someone who values his integrity and maintains it, someone exceptionally virtuous because he really tries to *be* good instead of just *look* good, someone who does good in quiet ways even when no one is looking instead of doing it for a reward, someone who will take a courageous stand and do the right thing even when it is unpopular and risky? In other words, someone with integrity. The honest person. The most innocent person.

Who has the most to lose? Who will suffer the most pain? Upon whom will the narcissist's slander have maximum impact?

Ignominy is terrible, the fate worse than death. But at least if a person deserves his bad name, his sense of justice isn't outraged on top of it all. If you've ever been accused of something you didn't do, you know what I mean: it goes right through you.

Imagine the situation: there's an ugly false image of you out there that the whole world thinks is you. They relate to it as you. The whole world treats you like you are *that*. So, it might as well BE you. If that isn't a descent into hell, I can't imagine what is. It's intolerable.

The precious image of yourself that you have inside, that of a good person, is under unrelenting attack from all sides. In effect, the whole world is gaslighting you. You have a problem very similar to a narcissist's, except that your false image sucks and you don't want it to replace your true self. So you cling to it for dear life. It's you against the world. Six billion people say *that* is you, and you alone say that the person you know inside is you. Something's gotta give.*

* Which is why the greatest dramatic stories of all time are built on this basic situation: some such threat to a person's self concept.

You can hurt only the best, the most innocent, and the virtuous that badly.

But a narcissist prefers to target the innocent, the excellent, and the virtuous for another reason as well. He can't let anyone outshine him in any way. He can't let even one shiny spot on your image diminish the glow of his glory. If it does, he acts like you're stealing it from him. Because, of course, he's gotta have it all.

6.4.4 Character Assassination

When a narcissist is playing [Block the Kick](#)²³⁵ to destroy the credibility of someone she has targeted for serious abuse or some other serious offense against, she conducts a vicious campaign of character assassination in advance. She spreads slander and calumny about that person far and wide.

Vandalizing someone's image is a kind of voodoo that works like magic to destroy people. When you destroy someone's image, their good name, you ruin a life. In fact, you *take* a life. For, that person's real life goes up in smoke. You replace it with a work of art.

And just as myth says in the symbolic form of voodoo, it causes that person unbearable pain.

When a narcissist is the character assassin, there's no excuse for people believing the lies. That's because narcissists pull an identity switch with the person they slander. They project their flaws off onto the shiny spots in the target's character. In fact, it's amazing how consistently they manage to do this and how carefully they word their accusations to do so.

Therefore, the accusations are always ironic, considering both the target and the source. People who know both the narcissist and the person she's smearing need only pause and think, "Could this be true?" and review that person's past conduct to see if it squares with such an allegation. If you do this, you'll always see that the accused is virtuous in that department and that the accusation rather fits the accuser herself. So, nobody should ever be fooled. People are fooled only because they're eager to swallow the Forbidden Fruit.

So, for example, if you believe a smear about someone being a liar, he wasted many years proving to you by his conduct that he is honest. You had to suddenly unknow all those years of facts testifying to his honesty in order to believe that he's a liar. Where did all those years of his past life go? Up in smoke. Because the lie looked good to eat.

The victim might as well have been as bad as the assassin made him out to be, for the truth doesn't matter. He must think, "Why did I live a good life and build a good reputation if some liar can come along and destroy it all in a day? What good is it to be good and do good when everybody unknows the past twenty years overnight to believe a fiction about you instead?" Why didn't he just be as bad as he wanted and then go steal someone else's good name like the narcissist stole his?

His fate is intolerable because the one who stole his reputation is also the one this bad reputation belongs to: that just cannot be accepted.

It cannot be forgiven either, not without restitution of what was stolen = his good name. The crime is in progress until he gets it back, because every day he suffers additional damages..

And anyone who claims to forgive it either doesn't know what forgiveness is or is lying. You can't forgive a crime in progress. Because then it ain't a crime: it's fornication between two consenting adults. Besides, if you just give up the pursuit of the restoration of your good name, that ain't forgiveness: that's extortion.

Only a fool plays by the rules in a game fixed for cheaters to win. And making rules you don't enforce fixes the game for cheaters to win. So, telling the victim that God will straighten it all out after he dies won't get you anywhere, because he will condemn God for not enforcing his rules like any president, teacher, parent, court, or police officer should enforce the rules. He will cite the adage *Justice delayed is justice denied*. He will be as skeptical of promises about justice in an afterlife as he is about great deals on property in Florida, sight unseen. This is where cynics come from.

Character assassination destroys careers, marriages, and relationships, isolating the victim "to the desert" of humankind. Except for the fortunate who have independent means, it's usually a trip down Skid Row, with one ramification after another barring every way out and relentlessly crushing and hammering the victim into — guess what? Exactly what their assassin says they are. This is where rag pickers and bag ladies and suicides come from. The victim will ask why he bothered to be a good person when what a person is isn't up to him — when it's up to whatever others choose to make of him.

There is no worse thing you can do to a person. It would be less cruel to kill him with a gun. This is the fate worse than death and everyone's deepest, darkest fear.

6.4.5 Breaking the Silence

Even the subject of child abuse was never as taboo to talk about as the subject of character assassination. Is that because so few have really clean hands?

Character assassination assails with asymmetrical attacks that deny the target any chance to defend himself. In other words, it's moral mayhem because the

victim is disabled somehow and therefore unable to defend himself.

Mayhem is the crime that denies people *the* most basic human right — the right to a defense. The character assassin pulls this off by attacking so as to have his unanswered say. The victim knows he's being destroyed but can do nothing about it because he is being prevented from confronting his accuser.

Character assassins get their unanswered say by accusing you behind your back. If you try to defend yourself by going to people and raising the subject, you risk spreading lies about yourself. It's a Catch-22.

Besides, nobody will admit they've heard these lies. It's a Catch-22.

And nobody will change their minds, no matter what you say and what proof you offer. Why? Because if they know you they shouldn't have believed it, and they don't want to admit they believed something that bad about you.

They don't want to hear you defend yourself by citing all the reasons why the accusations are preposterous, because they don't want to admit even to themselves that they believed accusations that are preposterous.

They don't want to admit that they believed a lie about you just because it was juicy. So they firmly dummy-up and view it as believable. No matter what. Reason gets nowhere with them. It's a Catch-22.

In fact, people will get mad at you for trying to talk to them about it. They will do whatever it takes to alienate you so you stay away. They will act like YOU are the vicious character assassin, condemning anything you do to try to defend yourself. It's a Catch-22.

Thus they revictimize you by denying you any chance to defend yourself. You're supposed to be a good boy and just bend over for it. And then they say, "Since he has kept silent about this, he must be guilty." Ah, perversity is endless, eh?

And so, on their way through life, narcissists leave a trail of trashed good names in their wake. This is a serious problem in the workplace, for narcissists often destroy the careers of their betters.

Character assassination is virtually allowed under our justice system. It needn't be though, because the worst offenders, malignant narcissists, will establish a **pattern** of destroying people. Patterns don't lie. Patterns prove malice of intent. A person with 20 trashed careers in his or wake obviously belongs in jail.

Patterns permit class action. Patterns are quite prosecutable if you write sensible laws and enforce them.

See also

BullyOnline.org

[Mobbing USA: Emotional Abuse in the American Workplace](#)
[The Mobbing Encyclopedia](#)

6.5 The Pathological Liar

Narcissists give new meaning to the term *boldfaced liar*. All who have seen the dark side of a narcissist will tell you that he or she is an outrageous liar. In fact, this is one of the top — if not *the* top — complaint about narcissists.

That should strike you as odd. Considering the seriousness of narcissistic [abuse](#)^[225], one should think mere lying wouldn't compete with it for top billing. Also, the world is full of liars. So why is a narcissist's lying so offensive and appalling to people? Partly because it's vastly different from normal lying. It's egregious, audacious, inveterate, and mind-boggling. Narcissistic lying is something you must see to believe.

Narcissists will say ANYTHING. They tell the wildest lies conceivable. Unless you know a narcissist well, you will never be able to divine a conceivable motive for most of their lies. Narcissists lie gratuitously, about matters great and small. **Their lies are an affront to your right to see what you see, hear what you hear, and know what you know.** They won't hesitate to say things every bit as absurd as it would be to say that black is white or that square is round.

In other words, their lies don't stop short of gaslighting.

They lie to you about facts they know you know. They lie to you about what *you* have said and done. Even if you said or did it only one second ago. They lie to you about what they have said and done in your presence. Even if they said or did it only one second ago. They lie about what you have done together. Even if it was only one second ago. In short, they lie like someone out of his mind or hallucinating.

They resonate between alternate and contradictory versions of an event with blinding speed. They lie so fast and furiously that they metamorphose a lie five or six times in the space of a minute — like someone on a psychedelic trip. They lie so fast and furiously that they lie absurdly and contradict themselves in the

same breath. And if you ask them which of their contradictory statements is the true one, or if you contradict them, they project their craziness off onto you by saying that *you* need your head examined, that *you* are making stuff up, that *you* are crazy.

The most telling thing that narcissists do is contradict themselves. They will do this virtually in the same sentence, without even stopping to take a breath. It can be trivial (e.g., about what they want for lunch) or it can be serious (e.g., about whether or not they love you). When you ask them which one they mean, they'll deny ever saying the first one, though it may literally have been only seconds since they said it — really, how could you think they'd ever have said that? You need to have your head examined! They will contradict FACTS. They will lie to you about things that you did together. They will misquote you to yourself. If you disagree with them, they'll say you're lying, making stuff up, or are crazy.

— [Joanna Ashmun](#)

When caught in a lie or challenged with the truth, they seldom appear perplexed or embarrassed—they simply change their stories or attempt to rework the facts so they appear to be consistent with the lie. The result is a series of contradictory statements and a thoroughly confused listener.

— Dr. Robert Hare, "[Predators](#)," *Psychology Today*, Jan/Feb 2004

So, now you know why a narcissist's lying is what people hate most. It is so in-your-face and bizarre that it makes you have to pinch yourself. It makes YOU feel crazy, because you wonder if you're seeing and hearing them correctly. The only thing more incredible than the lies is the lying itself. You cannot get your mind around it. You wonder how this could really be happening.

You question your own sanity. Ashmun continues:

At this point, if you're like me, you sort of panic and want to talk to anyone who will listen about what is going on: this is a healthy reaction; it's a reality check ("who's the crazy one here?"); that you're confused by the narcissist's contrariness, that you turn to another person to help you keep your bearings, that you know something is seriously wrong and worry that it might be you are all signs that you are not a narcissist.

Exactly. I suppose that weak minds can succumb (because they too betray Truth by thinking that believing a thing makes it so), but mentally healthy people know that events like this call for a reality check. So, they wonder who is the crazy

one, questioning their own sanity too.

When you realize what is going on, you cannot help but think that the narcissist is gaslighting you, deliberately trying to drive you insane.

Which is no less violent than trying to *physically* murder you.

So, the holier-than-thous who think the victims of narcissists should have warm, fuzzy "Christian" feelings toward the narcissist should go take a flying you-know-what at the moon. Trying to drive a person insane is just a way of murdering them. When you do that to a person, you kill that person just as surely as if you shot them dead. And you do it more cruelly than if you shot them dead.

When someone tries to kill you, the natural, sane, and appropriate reaction to this hostility is hostility. Indeed, what could be crazier than being nice to someone trying to kill you? This is why the pathological lying of narcissists is what evokes the most hostility from their victims.

Now let's look at why narcissists lie like this. For, understanding why they do it makes a big difference in how you react to it.

6.5.1 Why Narcissists Lie Like Crazy

Unlike normal people, a narcissist doesn't craft lies he thinks you will believe. His lies are willful delusions that he wants to impose on you (projective identification.) In other words, a normal liar recognizes that there is such a thing as reality. He is aware that it is what is and that you perceive it. He simply wants to deceive you about it.

Narcissists don't recognize the existence of any shared reality. They live behind the Looking Glass in the Land of Pretend. They are the authors of this work of fiction. So they can go back and edit Chapter Two any time they want. They can revise anyone's character description and bio anytime they want. For, other people aren't persons to them, just characters in this work of fiction. So, they expect you to behave as though the fiction is true.

And keep in mind that a narcissist has the mentality of a little child, so the fantasies they author can be just as far out in flights of the imagination as Alice's. Hence, a narcissist will say things every bit as absurd as it would be to declare the sky purple, believing it, and expecting you to believe it!

Well, not exactly. It only seems that she expects you to believe it. **All she really wants is for you to NOT contradict her fantasy in any way.** In other words, she wants you to let her lies pass.

Why?

For the same reason any five-year-old gets mad at her playmates for not following her script in playing Pretend. She stamps her foot and yells, "No! You're supposed to say/do THIS! not that!"

And so, when a normal person lies, he is trying to get you to believe his lie. He knows you are a person, like him, with an inner life, and a mind of your own. But a narcissist does not relate to others humanly. Her disordered personality never developed properly. She relates to you as a newborn infant (at the Narcissistic Stage of child development) relates to its mother — as but an [object](#)^[144] in a world that revolves around her.

She learned to operate Mother like we operate robots. We push buttons and levers to control robots. An infant bawls to push Mother's buttons, making her perform a series of services till she gets to the one the infant wants and he stops crying. Which is Mother's "Off" button. In other words, Mother is just a tool for the infant to control.

Whether by choice or disability, a narcissist's brain does not work right: it remains forever that infantile. You are not a person to her. She is unaware of your inner life. She doesn't think about what you might think any more than the author thinks what a character thinks of the job the author is doing. It would be as if Shakespeare wondered what Hamlet thinks of Polonius appearing and walking down the same corridor at this particular moment in this particular scene.

It ain't gonna happen. Shakespeare ain't gonna wonder what Hamlet thinks about that, because Hamlet is just a character. So, if Shakespeare says that Polonius appears, Hamlet had better not act as though Polonius ain't there.

And Hamlet sure as hell had better not say, "Hey, Bill, you are crazy and imagining things. Polonius ain't here right now. He's probably sleeping with his whore downtown." That's essentially what you do to a narcissist when you rudely awaken them from their fantasy by correcting their version of what's going on.

Children with imaginary friends do the same thing. You must go along with their

play of Pretend, by setting a place for that imaginary friend at the table.

In fact, you can crash a narcissist's brain by asking her what she thinks you think. The question does not even compute, because she does not recognize your autonomy. You are just a character in a play she composes (and stars in) by editing bits and pieces of reality serendipitously on the fly.

So, you might as well ask her what a hammer or a robot of hers thinks. She just wants the **objects** around her (which are here for her sake, not their own) to behave as though her fantasies are true. So, when she tells you the sky is purple, she doesn't want you to believe that the sky is purple, she just wants you to ACT as though the sky is purple.

Why? To make it easy for her Magical Thinking Machine to PRETEND that the sky is purple.

Because she's in the Looking-glass Room. From our perspective it looks like the real one, the one we're in. But occasionally we see her doing something weird, like if she were to speak to someone who isn't there. Hmmm. What is she seeing? What lies outside the frame in her world? as though outside the frame of a camera shot?



Into the Looking Glass

In another moment Alice was through the glass, and had jumped lightly down into the Looking-glass room. The very first thing she did was to look whether there was a fire in the fireplace, and she was quite pleased to find that there was a real one, blazing away as brightly as the one she had left behind. 'So I shall be as warm here as I was in the old room,' thought Alice: 'warmer, in fact, because there'll be no one here to scold me away from the fire. Oh, what fun it'll be, when they see me through the glass in here, and can't get at me!'

Then she began looking about, and noticed that what could be seen from the old room was quite common and uninteresting, but that all the rest was as different as possible.

— Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*

Get it? That's where she is, in a world of her own creation. Welcome to The Twilight Zone. She's always there. She's never here. But we see no evidence of that till her pathological lying indicates that her world, beyond the frame, is different. As different as possible from the real world.

What's more, her world is a psychedelic trip. For, like any author, if some aspect of the story world becomes problematic, she can alter it on a whim.

Because she's just playing Pretend, like any child her mental age. And pretending is believing. For a time. But when Mom yells, "Lunch is ready!" normal child come out of the Looking Glass. The problem with a narcissist is that she's stuck there.

She likes it there. It's fun to have people see her through the glass and be unable to get at her.

6.5.2 Cramming It Down Your Throat

A narcissist lives in a world that is a work of art, a product of her own imagination, a mere apparition. So, appearances are all that count. She wants the objects in her world to NOT contradict the illusions she creates. **Since she wants to control your behavior, not your thinking, she thinks nothing of telling you lies that you could not possibly believe. Then she just throws a fit if you contradict them.**

How does she get people to let her boldfaced lies pass? That's easy. Child's play. In early childhood she learned how to control people with **temper tantrums**.

Let's say, for example, that she has just, out of the blue, spoken to you abusively in a manner that treats you like dirt. You tell her not to talk to you like that. She will deny what she just said and the tone she said it in. Reflexively. You can count on it. Every single time.

What are you going to do? You can either let her get away with this insult to your right to know what you know, or not. Let's say you refuse to let her impose

his fiction on you and reply, "Yes you did say that." You try to continue, citing your reasons for wanting her to stop treating you that way, but she butts in and yells "No! I didn't!" as often as necessary to make you give up trying to talk into his fog horn's blast. Since you can't get a word in edgewise, before you know it, the argument has degraded to . . .

"Yes you did."

"No, I didn't!"

"Did."

"Did not!"

She will repeat "Did not" one billion times if necessary to have the last word and thus alter history. In other words, she crams her lie down your throat. Trying to make the simplest point to a narcissist is like a visit to

[Monty Python's Flying Circus Argument Clinic](#)⁴⁶⁴.

Needless to say, you find this behavior so obnoxious that you soon learn to choose your other option — to just ignore her lies. But, in so doing, you let her have her way with you: you let her cram her lies down your throat, without even putting up a fight.

And you enable her to carry on this craziness.

Being amoral, her behavior is chosen solely on the basis of whether it gets her what she wants. At an early age, she learned that behaving like a cantankerous, irrational three-year-old works. So, she never gives it up.

To win an argument, you must get down to its level. So, she brings it down to a level lower than you care to stoop. She knows you feel it's beneath you to engage in such childishness. Since she has no self respect, she is shameless, and behaving this way is not beneath her. In fact, unless they're upset and regressing temporarily to such extreme childishness, this behavior is even beneath children beyond the Age of Reason. So, even a ten-year-old narcissist is already silencing his playmates this way, simply because they won't quarrel with someone the

mental age of a spoiled three-year-old.

This is how narcissists train you to let their lies pass. In other words, this is how they control your speech and, to a large extent, your actions.

How do narcissists rationalize this? By twisting the course of logic a full 180 degrees, of course. While she was throwing a fit over some unwanted fact I mentioned about a third party, I asked a narcissist why she had to control other people's speech to keep them from saying anything she didn't want them to say. She said others had no right to "control her ears."

Ah, T.S. Eliot was wrong: perversity is what's endless.

But, no matter how big a fit they throw if you don't, letting the narcissist's lies pass is a big mistake. It facilitates her delusions, and it gives her a power rush in thus cramming her insults to your intelligence down your throat. You are spoiling that brat and making a monster of her by doing this.

Yet people make this mistake because of their GOOD qualities. They make it because they do not want to get down to her level and fight all the time.

So, it's a Catch-22. There is no such thing as peaceful co-existence at close quarters with a narcissist. It's either get abused or fight all the time. Those who live with narcissistic parents and siblings truly are trapped in a crucible. They would abandon ship in a New-York minute if they could. So they cannot understand why friends, lovers and spouses don't just leave narcissists.

There is, however, peaceful co-existence at a distance. You can win it by teaching a narcissist that you *will* get down to his level. Like any bully, he can't take what he dishes out. So he slinks off to look for easy prey.

I used to ponder whether the narcissists I knew believed their outrageous lies. But I eventually saw that it's a moot point. For one thing, people can willfully believe a known lie. For another thing, people can believe a thing one minute, believe it not the next, and believe it again the third. That's not true belief. That's a psychedelic trip. Or, if you prefer Thomas Aquinas' opinion, such lightly held ideas are superstitions, not true beliefs.

6.5.3 Delusion

Narcissists carry their contempt for truth to bizarre extremes, but they are not alone in thinking that believing a thing makes it so.

There are artists (pronounced ar-TEESTS) who argue that the moon is made of green cheese for you if you choose to believe it is and that you are just a simpleton if you disagree.

Many people make-believe. They believe their own lies to unknow that they are being naughty by telling lies.

Unfortunately, the brain is programmed to perform logical operations on its ideology. So the result of this mental virus is the conclusion that believing your own lies makes you innocent of lying.

People abuse their minds like this and then wonder why their brains don't work right! They wouldn't dream of bollixing up a computer by feeding it erroneous information like that, but they recklessly wreck their own minds with it. Go figure.

If we untangle that twisted logic, we see that believing a known lie is a form of lying. To oneself.

It's just pretending.

So, if a person deludes himself by making up a lie and believing it, he isn't innocent: he's just a double liar.

And a narcissist is the worst kind of double liar.

6.5.4 Consequences of Pathological Lying

It takes little thought to see how a head full of lies is not a good thing. For one thing, a narcissist's need to think nasty lies about the good makes him unknowing of who his friends are and whom to trust.

For another thing, his past could catch up with him at any moment. One risk is that someone from a group that got wise to him and ran him off will connect with people where he is now. Someone he abused and/or destroyed could be plotting revenge. People in his current Pathological Space could compare notes and thus discover what he is. And there's always a risk that his family or

employer might be warned.

He must weave a complicated web of lies and keep track of which ones he's told whom. Every time he loses track of his various and changing versions of things, tripping himself up and confusing himself, he runs the risk of doing himself in. So his world is a jungle, but he's got himself believing he's so special that he can get away with anything forever, and that makes him behave recklessly, as though it's a beach.

Moreover, you can't habitually force thinking to take tortuous, anti-logical pathways without damaging the brain's ability to think straight. As he ages, his mind muddles.

Much of his lying is through **abuse of words**. That is, he calls things what they ain't. Over time, words melt together and lose their meaning to him. And it isn't just the words (i.e., the symbols for concepts) he loses: the concepts seem to go too! Which makes sense, I guess, since words are the mental "hooks" we hang concepts on.

I suspect that all narcissists have the same attitude as one I knew. Calling him on calling something what it wasn't pushed his button to blurt "Call it whatever you want." This answer was so automatic that sometimes his "Call-it-whatever-you-want" reflex fired when it shouldn't have, because you were actually saying something else. But he never seemed aware of that. Often, when he said this, he seemed to be thinking out loud and saying this to himself more than to you.

In his milieu, he had no need to pass for educated enough to speak standard English, so it's interesting to note what he did with it. Though he had a year of college, he said things like "et" instead of "ate," pronounced *Illinois* as *Illinoiz*, *Italian* as *Eyetaltan*, and went to the "can" not the bathroom. Nobody had any idea where he might have picked up such lingo. Apparently, he just liked English better that way.

Whenever he ordered "chabliss" in a restaurant, his wife had to tell the puzzled waitress that he wanted Chablis. One time she wasn't right there, and the poor waitress kept asking, "What?" His wife arrived then and snarled, "You know people don't understand you if you don't pronounce words the way everybody else does." He acted a bit stunned, like that was some sort of revelation.

The damage a narcissist does to his brain by abusing words eventually becomes evident in his speech. For example, you might notice that his vocabulary becomes so limited he calls anything that comes in an envelope a "letter." No big

deal?

To the contrary, that's a very big deal, because words are what we think with! And when the word represents something abstract (e.g., truth, goodness, beauty) the word is all we have to think with. The narcissist thus sabotages his mind so that (a) he can't think his way out of a paper bag and (b) he cannot speak a five-word sentence without getting stuck at a loss for some common noun or verb that his brain can't come up with.

Another consequence of pathological lying seems to be a pathological fear of questions. In fact, there's no quicker way to shut up a babbling narcissist than to ask him a question. Any question. His tongue locks. He acts as though, by asking a question, you are going through his underwear drawer looking for drugs or something.

If your question is a purely academic one about something he is expert in, and you allay his fear by assuring him that all you want is the benefit of his great knowledge on the subject, he will be happy to answer. And he will expound on the subject at length.

But otherwise forget it. People who live with narcissists learn to never ask them about anything. They don't know anything and don't remember anything about anyone or anything. If necessary (as in the case of a personal question), they won't even understand the question. Their tongue will just lock, and they will gape at you like, "Huh?"

They will tell stories about past events, never getting the story straight. But if you ask them about that event, they know nothing about it.

And don't bother pressing them, for they will lead you an erratic chase. Whenever they can't duck a question, lying seems to be a knee-jerk reflex. One old narcissist I knew was so addled that he revealed much about himself without realizing it. If you asked him any question, however harmless, the truth was the last thing he thought of answering with. He seemed to have a phobia of it. Instead, he panicked for "the right answer." Unsure what it was, he'd blurt the first absurd lie that came to his head.

I found this so incredible that I once did my darnedest to get him to just answer with the harmless truth about something. I rejected that first absurd lie, demanding the truth. Quicker than the speed of thought he blurted back another absurd lie that didn't even speak to the question. I got like a dog with a bone, and this continued. I asked why he wouldn't just tell me the harmless truth about this

trivial matter. It was so trivial I can't remember what it was, but it had to do with what he thought about something. He said he didn't know what to say, what was "the right thing to say." I said I didn't want the "right" answer, I wanted the truth. He just repeated his absurdity, over and over, whining, "But I don't KNOW the right answer!" How can a person not know "the right answer" about what he thinks?

In the end I had to take him at his word. There is no such thing as the truth to narcissist. He just always gives you the "right" answer. The one that aggrandizes him. If there isn't one that will, you might as well ask a chimpanzee what the speed of light is.

I think this is more than a pathological liar's fear that you are trying to catch him changing his story about something. I think it is also one of many communication-blocking devices narcissists use. I think that is because communion/communication is the very substance of human relationship, and narcissists fear all such connections.

One I knew regarded relationships as liabilities and described them as "taps" that "tapped her out." Of what? Attention, I suppose. To avoid two-way connection with those they parasitize, narcissists must block true communication. So, like ticks, they make sure all intercourse flows one way. Narcissists never give you a straight answer.

In fact, if you press them for one, their efforts to block communication become frantic. One narcissist I knew often mentioned a great fear of "those people who want to get into your head." The circumstances and the people she was talking about made the remark ridiculous. My impression was that narcissists go around keeping people out of their heads because they fear that those who get to know them well will eventually discover the [darkness within](#)³² them.

What happens if these evasive maneuvers don't discourage you from seeking an answer to your question? Well, if you keep pushing their fog-horn button when it starts blurting lies at you, it keeps blasting the lies back at you louder and faster. Soon the mouth is going faster than the brain. Each lie is more absurd than the one before.

For example, a woman asked her narcissistic sister to test-print a short document on her computer. The narcissist played Keep Away, saying she wouldn't have time for three days. The woman, replied, "You haven't ten minutes free till Wednesday?"

Whoops. When you catch a narcissist blurting something absurd like this, she tries to escape like an octopus does — in a billowing cloud of spewed ink to cloud the issue. So, instantly she becomes irrational. In this example she did so by blurting another lie, even more absurd. "You're just trying to barge into my life!"

Unperturbed, the woman gave her some more rope to hang herself with: "Asking to test print a few pages on your printer is 'trying to barge into your life'?"

 This accusation by the narcissist wasn't just absurd: it was also projection. That narcissist called this woman daily, jabbering nonstop for hours about every household chore she had "accomplished" the day before. So, the *narcissist* was the one trying to barge into somebody else's life.

That pushed the narcissist's fog horn button again. Bzzt. So the narcissist blasted something even more absurd.

This ping-pong match went on for several minutes, the narcissist's off-the-wall replies reminding you of what Alice heard in Wonderland. The woman calmly just kept pushing that button, replying to each ridiculous assertion by quoting the narcissist back to herself in a questioning tone. Bzzt. Bzzt. Bzzt.

The conversation must have been a hoot. The narcissist's runaway mouth got so far ahead of her brain that she became a blathering idiot. She was busy, busy, busy with very important stuff.

"So," the woman replied, "debugging these printing problems on a product for sale is of no importance compared to the billions and billions of things you have to do over the next three days?" (A narcissist thinks her every fart is more important than any concern of anybody else.) Bzzt.

So, the narcissist's fog horn somehow metamorphosed that excuse into an accusation that she feared her sister. (Only a narcissist could twist that into an accusation.) She would call the police if her sister didn't stop.

"Okay, if you're so afraid of me, why are you calling me all the time and asking me to come over?"

So, the narcissist revised history with her reply, changing her previous statement that she feared her sister might physically attack her: now it had been fear that the sister wanted access to her computer to wreck it.

And so on. And on. And on. Contradicting herself like crazy and bouncing back

one absurd lie after another, with her mouth obviously going much faster than her brain. **The narcissist was just throwing up a wall of flak to keep any communication from getting through it.**

It was like the classic [Monty Python Dead Parrot sketch](#)⁴⁷³.

You can't communicate with a fog horn like that. It takes a person with zero self-respect to make themselves such a blathering idiot just to throw up a billowing smokescreen of nonsense that the other party can't penetrate to make a single point or extract one straight answer. We normally see such behavior only in spoiled three- or four-year-old children. They don't feel it's beneath them to be irrational, because they haven't attained the Age of Reason yet.



But I think narcissists probably do this for other reasons too, not just to fog the issue in a blizzard of Nimrodian nonsense. I think they do it partly to discourage you from attempting to communicate with them, by flying in your face like this every time you try. They anti-respond to everything you do. So, if you persist, they just make their absurdities and lies more, instead of less, irrational. What you end up with is a hurricane of lies that will make your head spin.

All narcissists I have known (even the most feared ones) are likewise thrown into confusion by questions. They are so paranoid that they seem to feel threatened by almost any question. I suppose this is partly because they are control freaks: control freaks must *ask* questions all the time but never *answer* any. I bet it's also partly because they have trouble keeping track of all their lies and what version of events to believe in any particular setting at any particular moment. They may feel (at least subconsciously) that you are trying to catch them in a lie.

Like all inveterate liars, narcissists think everybody else is a liar. (This is partly projection and partly paranoia.) If you know a narcissist, you have probably noticed that he doubts things no normal person would doubt.

He doubts even when:

- the person he doubts has a long track record of conduct that marks him as exceptionally honest
- the person he doubts could have no reason to lie
- it wouldn't matter if the thing he doubts *were* a lie (such as a harmless fish story).

In other words, the narcissist's doubt is unreasonable doubt.

Yet he is easy pickings for a con artist. If shown a carrot or stick or both, he believes something dangerous to believe, even from a stranger, even from somebody with much to gain from lying, or even from somebody he knows lies like a rug.

6.6 The Con Artist

Narcissists abuse for the power rush they get from vaunting themselves on others. It's the strongest support for their grandiose delusions. They can't get enough of this pain-killing drug. The maximum high, of course, is in **absolute power**, which is absolute control.

What's that? Absolute power is the total conquest of another's will. Your will, not theirs, controls him or her. In other words, the victim becomes an executioner of your will, like a hand or foot of yours. It's akin to the mythical notion of possession of another by a demonic spirit.

There's but one way to demonstrate absolute power: break a person so utterly that he delivers himself up entirely for you to abuse so as to suffer maximum impact for your pleasure. For, anyone you can make *offer* themselves to be your punching bag, and in a way that maximizes your enjoyment by maximizing his suffering — anyone you have that much control over, you own and you have absolute power over, because that person no longer has the will of their own. He has been degraded to nothing and ceased to exist as a person. You possess him. He is an object that exists for your sake.

Yes, this is the nightmare of the criminal psychopath.

But it may surprise you to know that it is also the nightmare of the art of torture and former European methods of execution by torture. I wonder who laid awake nights dreaming up these sick spectacles, but every detail was designed to do this to the victim. The process was called "reduction to a state of victimhood for penal slavery." The prisoner was called the "victim." His executioner was called

the "victor" and "the executioner of the victim" as in "the operator of a machine."

By devious methods at every turn, the victim was forced to offer himself for abuse or made to look like he was offering himself for abuse. This is why, for example, the condemned had to actually pay his executioner to gibbet and torture him to death. What if he refused? Would you dare make your executioner mad at you?

In other words, everything was designed to make the victim bend over for it. Which is the Sin of Sodom, but both Church and State let that slip their minds.

Our forefathers were so outraged that they put the right to pursue happiness up front in our charters of freedom. Which is why no one ever had to kneel down and put their head on a chopping block here.

It may also surprise you to know that professional con artists do the same thing to their victims in a non-physical way. They are every bit as sadistic as the violently criminal psychopath. In fact, a con artist's abuse penetrates to a deeper level. In either case, however, the high the abuser gets is extremely addictive, creating a serial offender.

Narcissists are con artists in more ways than one might think. The bright ones may move on to criminal con artistry or become serial bullies in the workplace, often using the havoc they cause as a smokescreen for ripping off the cookie jar while they're at it.

6.6.1 Essence of Con Artistry

We often think of a con artist as just someone who puts on a good act, someone who fools people into thinking well of them and trusting them. Like a charlatan. This is more or less true, but a con artist's act isn't all that good. It shouldn't fool people. The art is in the power to [manipulate](#)^[202]. Con artists are wizards of human nature, because they are cynics, so they see what moves us better than we do. The intelligent ones are actually masters of mind control.

Con artist is short for *confidence artist*. A confidence artist defrauds people by suckering them to gain their confidence so that they put an inordinate amount of trust in him.

When we hear the term "con artist," we usually think of the typical street con

artist who sells the Brooklyn Bridge or property in Florida sight unseen. But not all con artists are primarily after money. Some, for example, are false messiahs or cult leaders. And not all work the street. Some are administrators and executives.

To understand con artistry is to be immune to it.

A con artist works his magic by **violating relationships**.

What's a relationship? A relationship is a bond between two parties. Only two parties, never more than two. The relationship may be intimate or distant or anything between.

There is an appropriate amount of confidence associated with any relationship. The more intimate the relationship, the more confidence we have in the other party. The word *confidence* comes from the Latin word for faith, which originally meant "good faith" = sincerity, honesty, or honor.* Confidence is simply a measure of how certain we are of the good faith of the other party to the relationship. We believe those we have confidence in. In other words, they have credibility in our eyes. The more confidence we have in a relationship, the more trust we invest in it, and the more trust we have on account in it.

* Loose use, or deliberate misuse, of the word adulterated its meaning to "belief."

A con artist comes between the two parties in a relationship to

- gain unwarranted confidence that is rightly due only to a legitimate party to that relationship
- embezzle the trust on account in the relationship.

The trick to understanding con artistry is realizing that there are many kinds of relationships, not just those between two people. A relationship can exist between any two entities, one or both of which could be a collective entity, such as a whole nation of people.

The relationship a con artist violates could be the relationship between a person and an institution, such as his bank. It could be the relationship between a people and their government or their deity. It can even be the relationship between "a fool and his money." Indeed, your typical street con artist always ultimately comes between a fool and his money. Hence the patented con-artist motto: *A fool and his money are easily parted.*

But there are even more intimate relationships. There is likewise a relationship between a person and his or her word. Or, between a person and his or her self.

Fidelity, or faithfulness, is simply being true to the other party to that relationship. Hence the terms *marital fidelity*, being *true to oneself*.

Treason or betrayal is a breach of that contract.

6.6.2 Bank Examiner Con

The con artist waits outside a bank, looking for a sourpuss, because there is a high probability that such a person likes to think ill of others. On seeing one, the con artist approaches and poses as a law enforcement officer investigating a certain teller in the bank. He asks sourpuss to help by making withdrawals in an effort to get the goods on the teller.



Carrots are his bait. The prey has eyes for nothing but, so he is blind to all the signs of bad faith in what the con artist does. One carrot is the juicy lie about the bank teller stealing money. This plays the Teeter Totter game, making the mark feel good about himself in getting to abhor someone else's conduct. Another carrot is the opportunity to be viewed as a good person, even a hero, for helping the phony bank examiner catch a crook. The mark imagines his name in the headlines for this.

The mark who goes for carrots alone is pretty cheap though. Most require a stick too. So, if the mark does not immediately take the bait, the con artist shows disapproval of him as, perhaps, not the good person he was thought to be.

The next thing you know, the mark has put the confidence he should have in the legitimate law enforcement authorities into this total stranger. The confidence he had in the bank teller, whom he has known for years has suddenly vanished — on hearing this tall tale from a total stranger.

You can see why con artists feel that their marks deserve what they get. They don't, of course, but it does make you shake your head. People are that eager to believe bad things about others and that fearful of some total stranger's disapproval that they will do something this foolish just to please that total stranger.

So, the con artist has violated the relationship between the mark and the bank teller.

The next thing you know, the mark is withdrawing money from his account and giving it to this stranger. The scheme would be dangerous if there were any chance the mark would contact the police or FBI about this bogus investigation. But the mark obeys the con artist's orders to keep this affair a secret between the two of them. The con artist has thus violated the relationship between the mark and legitimate law enforcement, cutting the line of communication between them. He has also embezzled the very high level of trust in that account.

By the time the mark realizes that he is being robbed, he is so ashamed of both his foolishness and the unsavory bait he jumped at that another Deadly Sin, pride, makes him, the *victim*, cover up the crime. Is that not being his own worst enemy?

What's more, this happens early on, long before the con artist has finished bleeding the mark's life savings dry. (Banks suspect foul play when huge withdrawals are made for no apparent reason.) Rather than suffer the humiliation of going to the police and explaining how he's been had, the mark goes into denial so deep one must see it to believe it. If that is not the con artist exercising mind control, nothing is.

And so, by covering up a crime-in-progress, the victim surrenders himself to it! In other words, he delivers himself up entirely for abuse so as to suffer maximum impact for the con artist's pleasure. [Sound familiar](#)^[262]? Moral rape: making the mark bend over for it like that is the exercise of absolute power over him.

What more could the con artist ask? Thus, the mark betrays himself. So, the con artist has violated two more relationships: he has not only come between a fool and his money, but also between a fool and his very self.

All con schemes work essentially the same way. The con artist tempts one of the Seven Deadly Sins in the mark, often greed, lust, or envy. Everybody wants something for nothing, and con artists exploit that. Then the shamed victim covers up the crime-in-progress. So, the con artist gradually sucks him dry like a spider that paralyzes its victim and slowly sucks out its innards.

The con artist is the cruelest criminal. Indeed, con artists are notorious for becoming sadistic. They get hooked on the heady, narcissistic rush they get from going through people like Godzilla, and the experience of this power becomes

more important to them than the money. Law enforcement officials who deal with them characterize them as just plain evil.

Whether they start that way or not, they must surely become malignant. To do this to someone, con artists must rationalize by viewing the mark as deserving it and as contemptible. They must make light of his agony and laugh at it. In other words, con artists must be devoid of humanity, or empathy.

To justify himself, a con artist may even view himself as a tester of faith (that is, a tester of the faith in the mark's relationships to determine whether it is bona fide) and the appointed punisher of any mark who flunks. For example, I know of one who pointedly told mysterious allegories in which he always figured himself as some sort of "bringer of things to light" about people. His marks included many who spoke Latin. Latin for "the light bringer" is lucifer. Not funny, eh?

What mistakes did sourpuss make?

His first mistake was being a sourpuss who jumps at the chance to think ill of people. That is spiritual envy.

His second mistake was letting the con artist between him and that teller, whom he had known for years. People we know, we have reasons to trust; strangers, we don't. That is common sense. The mere word of a stranger should not have made him believe she was committing a crime. His greasy hands betrayed her, because he disregarded everything he knew about her conduct to believe this good-name-slaying story about her. It's hard to sympathize with someone who doesn't know that he should value his own firsthand knowledge of a person far more than the mere word of any third party, let alone a stranger.

His third mistake was letting a stranger come between him and a whole institution, legitimate law enforcement authority. Being told not to discuss this matter at police or FBI headquarters or with any other law enforcement official should have set off blaring alarm bells.

His worst mistake was being too proud to face facts and save himself. Thus he broke faith with his very self.

The mark let the con artist interlope in (adulterate) the following relationships:

- between him and the teller
- between him and law enforcement
- between him and his money

- between him and his self

6.6.3 How to Keep Con Artists Out of Relationships

There is some fascinating advice in the ancient Hebrew scriptures about the sanctity of relationships and keeping con artists out of them. It includes a good deal of quiet humor. The first movie in Steven Spielberg's *Indiana Jones* trilogy, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, really drives the point home. (And in a very entertaining way.)

In the movie, a man of bad faith, Beloch, tells us that the Ark of the Covenant is a line of communication with God. In other words, it represents the relationship of the people with God.

As with any relationship, inherent in it is a contract (the Ten Commandments). Yes, even in informal relationships, there is an *implied* contract. It may be as simple as: *We have a friendly relationship, so I promise not to hurt you, and you promise not to hurt me. I promise that what I say to you will be the truth, and you promise that what you say to me will be the truth.* Even enemies may have such a contract, one that acknowledges a state of war between them but, say, promises to abide by rules of war and to keep any promises made in negotiations. Whether spelled out or not, the contract is just what both parties to the relationship have a right to expect from each other by virtue of that relationship.

The Hebrew scriptures say that the Ark of the Covenant (the symbol of the people's relationship to God) resided in the heart of the temple, the sanctuary, the Holy of Holies. Since entering a relationship is **coming between** the two parties to it, entry to the Holy of Holies was strictly forbidden. In other words, it was strictly forbidden that anyone come between the people and God. Like any relationship, it was private, so it was surrounded by a curtain.

Not even priests could enter, except the high priest. Yet, even he could enter only once a year, on the special occasion of the Day of Atonement.

Even then he entered only as a messenger **from** the people to deliver a formal apology for their sins. In other words, he was never authorized to deliver a message the other way, from God to the people.

Nonetheless, even in this brief, limited, once-a-year encroachment, he was regarded as suspect! Scripture gives him strict orders to watch his step. He didn't dare sneak in. To the contrary, he had to approach "with bells on." He had to

enter according to protocol as politely as you would approach and enter a couple's bedroom to make sure you were respecting their privacy.

That is hilarious. Who says Moses had no sense of humor?

But the lesson here is profoundly important and serious: **keep third parties out of relationships**. All friendly relationships, not just this one. This relationship between their God and the people is a relationship, not between enemies, but between a father and his children. No Henry Kissinger needed! No third party allowed!

At the end of *Raiders of the Lost Arc*, we see what happens when someone angers God by sticking his nose into that private relationship. (Ka-boom!)

Presumably that's because God doesn't like anybody playing him for a fool. He knows that anybody who insinuates himself into a relationship between two others (that are not enemies) is up to no good. False prophets interlope all the time, posing as go-betweens and thus embezzling the confidence and trust that belongs to a people's God. Next thing you know, they have his authority.

6.7 The Bully

Narcissists/psychopaths are slick at getting themselves hired into positions of power in companies and institutions. Result?

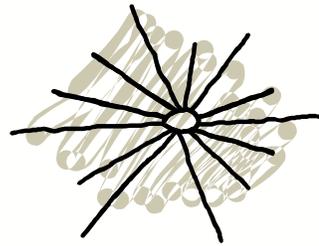
When the [bully](#) comes to town, the first thing he does is pose as a hatchet man.



Then he (or she) busts every relationship in the joint. Yes, like every narcissist, he is a con artist who works his magic by violating relationships, by coming between other people. In this case, he comes between everyone and everyone else.



Relationships Before



Relationships After

Divide and conquer.

How does he come between all those people? By simply talking privately with each employee about the others.

He uses carrots and sticks. They are most effective against the least competent, so, he likes them best. Besides, they're easiest to dominate, and that's what this is all about. (To hell with the interests of this business or institution: this is about glorifying his image by vaunting himself on others.) So, first, he menaces the dead wood about their shortcomings . . .



. . . and then asks them for their opinion about their betters. He does this to implicate them in his wrongdoing, so that, later, to protect themselves from a lawsuit, they must protect him

He knows what lure is irresistible to each type of game fish, so he incites a malignant **situational** narcissism in them. In other words, he plays the part of an *agent provocateur*. Which is the fancy French way of saying that he plays the Devil with them. Here are some examples to illustrate how he goes about it.



If the employee he's pocketing is dull, he asks that person to comment on the intelligence of a conspicuously intelligent employee. Wham! Fish hits that lure like a ballistic missile! Never sees the hooks in it. Why? Because it just so happens that an idiot is raring to delude himself that he is

exceptionally intelligent . . . and that his intelligent better is the idiot. This could be true even if there was no wildly swinging ax to duck.



If the employee the boss is pocketing is unqualified, he asks that person to comment on the qualifications of a highly-qualified employee. Because it just so happens that the unqualified are raring to delude themselves that they are really the most qualified . . . and that their highly qualified betters are the ones not qualified. All this farce requires is judging by invalid criteria.



If the employee he's pocketing is lazy, the bully asks that person to comment on the productivity of a highly productive employee. And so on.

Thus the con artist chooses his carrots and sticks for the **power of suggestion** in them. And, as they say, *Never underestimate the power of suggestion*. The stick is his axe. The carrot is the lure, the chance to project their own faults and shortcomings off onto their betters.

In other words, as an *agent provocateur*, the narcissistic/psychopathic boss incites his marks to project their faults and shortcomings off onto their betters. You might say that he steers them into playing Doctor Frankenstein with images, exchanging their vices and flaws with the corresponding virtues and good qualities of their betters. Just like a narcissist does.

In other words, they pull a switch with the intelligence of one of their colleagues; they pull a switch with the qualifications of another; they pull a switch with the productivity of yet another; and so on, until they're perfect. Just like the narcissist.

In their dreams. Which are nothing but a collective game of Pretend.

So, the narcissist corrupts the employees. He destroys their integrity. Or, it is more accurate to say that he just tests it, and they flunk the test. That's what *he* would say. He would say they are flunking a test of faith, proving that theirs is bad (bogus) faith.

I'm not just saying that. I knew a narcissist once who did exactly that and considered it hilariously ironic that he got away with it in religious institutions. The things those people did proved beyond all doubt that they had no fear of the real God. Which amounts to no fear of there really being a God.

Whatever you think about them shouldn't cloud his role in the affair. He is playing the Devil with them, tempting them. He is deliberately depraving them. The dead wood are his favorites, because they naturally *think* they are the most at risk and therefore are desperate to aim that wildly swinging axe of his at someone else. So they are the most tempted, the most obsequious, and the most useful to him.

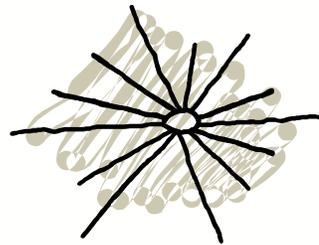
See also

[The Mobbing Encyclopedia](#)
[Mobbing USA: Emotional Abuse in the American Workplace](#)

And so, from the moment people start "going in there" for these "little talks," nobody trusts anybody. The workplace suddenly falls silent as people stop talking to each other. This con artist has busted the group by dissolving the previously existing network of relationships, replacing it with a sphere of individual relationships — all with him.



Relationships Before



Relationships After

It's actually more complicated than the first drawing suggests, because in many workplaces, the employees don't just have contact with those working beside them. Each has a personal relationship with every other employee in the place. All those interconnecting lines of communication are cut, because the situation has exploded into a back-stabbing melee in the mud overnight.

So, each employee finds himself in the predicament of Hamlet: he can trust no one **not** to seize upon something he says (twisting and exaggerating it if necessary) and run to the boss with it

Consequently, the flow of information ceases. The effect is like a shadow of darkness sweeping over the place, leaving everyone alone in the dark and hearing footsteps in the attic, wondering what's going on. Wondering what others are saying about him to the boss. Before you know it, you have a full-blown witch hunt, and the truly wicked are all in the first row cheering every burning.

This happens most often in private, not-for-profit institutions, especially

secretive and low-paying ones. In them, the bully is often a woman, and she can violate the law and deny civil rights with impunity. The victims are first abused and bullied to the point of mental exhaustion and then ferociously calumniated — so badly that they just crawl off somewhere to die. Even if they had the strength to fight, they have been impoverished first, so no lawyer wants the case, especially against a powerful institution that can stonewall for ten years.

See also [Bullying in the Workplace](#) by Tim Field.

Through the willful and wanton destruction of the victims' careers and entire lives, the bully makes a horrifying **example** of them to terrorize the rest. He also lets the bystanders know that, by informing against the victim, they are in complicity and legally liable for **slander that affects the status of employment**. Which turns them all to sludge . . . way down deep there in the bottom of his pocket. For, to hide their own liability, they must hide his.

So, they are victims too, all wondering whom he will sic everybody on next.

As in every con scheme, the *victims* cover up the crime.

In his [reign of terror](#)^[37], he can slash their wages and triple their workload, but they just whistle in the dark. Indeed, they act as though everything is hunky dory, never better. And they go around chirp-chirp-chirping like a bunch of blissful little birdies in a state of plenitude of grace.

He can toy with them all, not just whomever he's after at the moment. He can bully and abuse to his heart's content. Because he owns them, they bend over for it with a smile. Ah, [absolute power](#)^[26] = nirvana for a narcissist. He'll get so drunk on it that he'll amuse himself with it. For example, he tries to think up a whopper too big for them swallow, so they have to insult themselves for him, by pretending they're too brain-dead to know its a boldfaced lie. Or he'll ask their opinion on something and then mercilessly keep flip-flopping the cues as to which is the right opinion . . . so the poor fish has to keep flip-flopping too. The more obvious it becomes that he is just, plain evil and probably a psycho, the more they fall all over themselves to ingratiate themselves to him. He is their God.

Though a narcissist will do this just to vaunt himself on people, he is bound to see the potential for gaining materially as well. With his holocaust as a smokescreen that keeps the employees preoccupied and intimidated, he can get away with embezzlement or anything. He just keeps a bag packed. When he's finally moved on, the private institution, another victim, likewise covers up his

crime against it for him, to avoid bad publicity and legal liability.

He even gets [a recommendation to help him do this again, somewhere else](#).

 Note: Though labor unions have their faults, and though they serve as adversaries to the employer in many ways, a strong (i.e., unbustable) union serves both its members and the employer by preventing such goings on. They educate their members about the divide-and-conquer scheme, warning them never to fall for it and inform against their peers (for anything but theft or other violations of the law). And if a member does try to get in good with a boss by doing so, union members make him or her sorry. Unions will also bring union-busting suits against the company for such activities by a bully boss. That's why you seldom see a narcissistic/psychopathic boss preying on labor in a place with a strong union, though you will often find them preying on the salaried personnel there.

6.8 The Brother or Sister from Hell

All narcissists are con artists. Fortunately, however, not all are smart enough and fortunate enough to get into a position where they can become professional con artists or serial bullies in the workplace.

But a narcissistic brother or sister almost always dangerous. To get all their parent's attention, they often try to get Mommy to like them best. How? By lying to Mommy about their brother or sister. This campaign starts in early childhood and continues into adulthood, when the narcissist tries to get brothers or sisters exiled from the family. Even disinherited if possible.

They do this by coming between their parents and their sibling with calumny. The accusations are so wild that the parent does not even bring the matter up to the accused. Probably at first she doesn't believe it. But she has a problem: one of these kids is crazy — either the one the wild story is about or the one telling it. All too often, into denial she goes.

All that does is deprive the accused of his RIGHT to defend himself.

Over the years, Cain relentlessly hacks away at his brother's image. Abel never knows what's going on behind his back, because the accusations against him are regarded as none of his business: they're a secret, just as in the Inquisition.

Thus, the narcissist violates and corrupts the relationship between his parent and sibling. Because the parent allows him to invade it. No parent has any business listening to one child badmouth another. (No employer has any business listening to one employee badmouth another, either.) Doing so breaks faith with that slandered child. It is an abysmal betrayal of a sacred trust.

Of course, usually one parent is a narcissist himself, so he has no feelings for his children and will believe whatever it serves his ego to believe. Since the "normal" parent accepted abuse and allowed the abuse of her children rather than divorce, and since she has not even gotten treatment for the narcissistic child, by now she is probably deep in denial, emotionally unstable, and in need of psychiatric treatment herself. One sign of this is that the narcissistic child starts "parenting" his parents.

 In so doing he is relating inappropriately to them. That's the most conspicuous outward sign of a narcissist/con artist = relating to others inappropriately. The only universal relationship is friendship, so any two people can be friends. But, for example, a teacher can't also be pals with his students and shouldn't relate to them as their pal. **Confusion of relationships is always a red flag. Con artists always impose too nearly and relate from above.**

6.9 Other Predators

Being predators who need to abuse the vulnerable, and being so grasping when it comes to attention, it is little wonder that narcissists are grasping about material things as well.

As mentioned above, they may try to get a sibling disinherited. They may swoop down on the elderly with truckloads of help and attention, **coming between** them and their children = heirs.

The red flag is the usual inappropriateness of a confused relationship: the narcissist relates to the elderly person as a loving child would and by doing things for this elderly person that only a loving child normally would. Also, the narcissist constantly expresses disapproval of the elderly person's real children for not doing enough.

Abusive narcissistic teachers come between the child and his parents, cutting that line of communication. They may do this by telling the child that they are good friends with the parents and see them regularly, discussing the child. The

child is cunningly convinced that his parents will believe the teacher, not the child. The teacher menaces the child with the threat of telling his parents bad things about him.

This threat is very disturbing to children, because they need their parents to think well of them. Then, when the teacher tells the child not to tell his parents what goes on between them, he comes off as doing this for (of all things) the child's sake.

Children should be taught that if anybody tells them not to tell their parents something, they should immediately (a) get away from that person and (b) go straight to their parents and tell them.

Pedophiles come between the victim and his parents the same way. In both cases, the red flag is that the abuser relates to a child too nearly, so nearly as is appropriate only for a parent.

Narcissists are envious of pets. If a spouse or sibling has a beloved pet, that pet may be in danger. A narcissist needs all your love and attention and hates your pet for getting any.

Speaking of pets, narcissists remind me of a kitten I took care of for a day. It wouldn't let my poor Cairn Terrier, Gigi, into the same room with me. Every time she tried to come to me the kitten went wack-o in a wild attack that drove her off. The kicker was that afterwards the kitten showed little interest in me . . . till it saw Gigi peaking around a corner looking wistfully at me. Then it would run to me, climb onto my head and shoulders to have me all to itself, and hiss at Gigi to keep her away. The darned thing was relentless! My poor Gigi was devastated. Her beautiful eyes said to me, "Don't you want me anymore? How can you let it do this to me?" I never get mad at animals, but I got so mad at that kitten I shut it out on the porch, permanently, and went to show Gigi that nobody would ever **come between** us.

PART VII

What's in There

What's in There

My Cairn Terriers never get used to the train. It passes too near and too loud, shaking the ground. In fact, all the birds and wild animals flee its approach. Inside the house a dog is brave. There he wants to protect us by making an uproar louder than the train's, as if being louder than it dominates the darned thing. But outside, the bravado disappears. Cairns take on a man or a dog ten-times their size, but when the train comes, they act like we're all gonna die and point their butts at it. You cannot get a dog to look at what terrifies him. Pick him up and take him to the door, where from safely within the house and in your arms he can see the passing train: he will look everywhere but. It seems to me that people do the same thing.

What's inside the narcissist that terrifies him so? Why won't he look at it? Why does he hectically avoid seeing what's within? What keeps him fixed on and identifying with an external mirage instead?



I don't know what's in there, but I have a sneaking suspicion, which I share with you at the end. But first, I'll tell you what one narcissist told me about it. Sort of. I say "sort of" because the narcissists I have known seem to lose the power of speech when certain things come up. It's as though their tongue locks. Their communication-blocking reflexes kick in to frustrate any attempt to get them to explain what they mean. You never get a straight answer. Instead, they give you some mysterious cliché for a line about something, as if that says anything you can get a handle on. Word-for-word, that line is all you ever get about it.

So, I will just relate what she said about it, leaving you to make what you can of

it. (What about [Internet narcissists](#)^[283] who bare their souls?)

At the time, I didn't know this woman was a narcissist. You could tell she wanted to confide but was cheating. Presumably, she feared she wouldn't get the reflection she wanted in the mirror of my face if she really told me her secret.

She was talking about her return to her family after she had rejected them, turning to college friends she worked with in a bar. (She didn't mention telling them just awful lies about her family to suck attention, sympathy, and money from them. Nor did she mention that she had tried to get herself adopted by the wealthy owners of that bar. Nor did she mention that she returned to her family because these people got her number and, in extreme outrage, drove her off — partly because she had violently abused a suffering Vietnam veteran she toyed with and then spurned.) All she said was that, when she found herself living alone, she nearly committed suicide. Why? She said it was because she couldn't bear to look inside herself. Just being alone made her go there.

She couldn't bear that because "all she did was use people." She often emphasized that she would have been "one of those suicides who doesn't even leave a note."

At the time, all I knew was that she had gone wild when she went to college and had rejected her family for awhile. So, I was mystified as to what she felt so guilty about and why she would not have left a note. Knowing how malignant her behavior was, though, makes both things understandable.

So far as the experts know, narcissists often have suicidal thoughts but rarely kill themselves. Which tracks with the way their Magical Thinking Machines work. Suicide is not Godlike or grandiose. They are going to blame someone else — preferably their chief victim — for their lonely situation. They're more likely to become psychotic and kill this person than themselves, though there's no evidence to suggest that this is common either. Personally, I would put nothing past a severely affected narcissist who thinks he can get away with it. But not all narcissists are severely affected and able to get away with murder.

She said the only reason she didn't kill herself is that she got the idea to just "go back" instead. Go back to her family and the way she was before. (She didn't mention that she went back to use them again. And that "the way she was before" was the phony image she had projected before, which was totally different from the image she had projected to her college friends.) Welcoming her with open arms, her family believed her lies about those people slipping her LSD and dragging her away from them into a slough of immorality.

This narcissist feared for her sanity. On the pretext of telling about the book entitled *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*, she described what it is like inside an insane mind. She told me that insane people deliberately stepped back and forth across the line between sanity and psychosis until they did it once too often.

The strangest thing she said was that she believed people can be possessed by the devil, even innocent little children, even against their will. From some this might not seem so strange, but her background viewed the devil as a metaphor for the malevolent spirit of some people. It contained no fundamentalism. No influence that decimates these gnostic myths by interpreting them literally. Not in her family, her schooling, or religious indoctrination. She wouldn't listen to reason: she just believed it. Her mind was as immature as a preschool-aged child's, in which believing a thing makes it true — no reason or logic or facts necessary.

What does this mean? In plain English she was saying, "The devil made me do it." A child's evasion of responsibility.

From the example above, you can see how, at a young age, a narcissist has already done such unconscionable things to those who least deserve it that he becomes like Macbeth: "so steeped in blood" that he cannot really "go back." Nobody can bear to know himself as "evil." A narcissist is just like the rest of us in that. So, he thinks he must continue living the lie. (See below for the mistake he makes in thinking that he cannot bear to look within at his true self.) And he lives in fear of his past catching up with him.

This is the saddest state of affairs. I know that if narcissists ever chose their other option, repentance, they would not die.

By "repentance" I don't necessarily mean the religious thing. In fact, even religious repentance is often cheated on to become but a semblance of the real thing. By "repentance, I simply mean turning your life around, reforming. Of course you can't do that and keep ill-got gain. If you have falsely accused someone of something, you can't continue acting and talking as though they are guilty of it. So, if you've done damage, repentance can require restitution. And that in turn can require coming clean about some things. There's the rub.

But most victims would give anything for the opportunity to forgive the narcissist. At least the most important victims would, those who loved him or her, those most innocent and deeply hurt. So, repentance would be hard, but it wouldn't kill narcissists.

To the contrary, they would be saved. Yes, they would have to know themselves and acknowledge the awful things they've done. But they would also have to be fair with themselves and understand why. They would come to know the immense comfort and relief there is in being human — nothing more, nothing less. And those they have abused would weep for joy, lovingly embracing and thanking them.

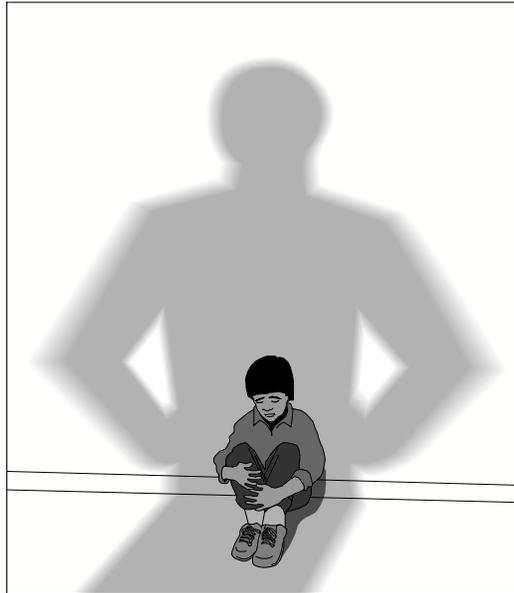
But, as far as I know, no narcissist ever takes the easy way out and just repents. In this, however, narcissists are just more stubborn than normal people. Very few people ever repent anything unless you get them between a rock and a hard place, forcing them to. That too is sad. Because, when you're wrong and you say, "You're right, I was wrong, and you've got me dead to rights, and I'm sorry, and I will not do that again, and this is what I will do to make it right," you take the easy way out and actually **raise** yourself in that other person's esteem.

One man I know paid a hospital visit to his narcissistic uncle, who was bedridden by serious illness and supposed to be conscious but seldom behaved as though he was. This visitor quickly left and went straight to the elevator, nearly fainting and quivering with tremors. The narcissist's family asked what was wrong. He said that his uncle had looked at him with such hatred . . . he groped unsuccessfully for words to describe it. He said you could just see the hatred in that man's eyes coming out from inside him. The nephew said it was so disturbing it went right through him, that he knew his uncle was "in there," behind those eyes saying to him, "You [string of four-letter words omitted], standing there over me, well and on your feet!" He said he knew his uncle hated him for being stronger and standing above him in that bed. He said he knew his uncle wanted to tear him down and put him flat on his back in that bed instead, walking out in his place.

The narcissist's family didn't doubt this interpretation at all. The narcissist had been looking that way at his family and the nurses all along. And this behavior was of a piece with his behavior toward them all his life. But, their reaction nonetheless sent a new chill up the nephew's spine. They looked at him in wonder that he was so upset about it. He says they looked at him as if to say, "Well, yeah. So, what else is new?" So, he tried several times to get them to know what this *was* inside that man. But they were so used to the narcissist's malignant spirit that they didn't understand why its manifestation should surprise and horrify the nephew so.

Indeed, if you must live with the devil, you go through life whistling in the dark

So, what's my "sneaking suspicion" about what's in there?



The Shadow and the little child the Shadow ate.

It has possession of his mind, his house. Like any little child, he adores Big Daddy Demon, imitates Big Daddy Demon, and has an unsettled issue in trying to win Big Daddy Demon's approval. So, instead of kicking his tormentor out of his house, he abuses others to be like Big Daddy Demon and fool himself about what he is.

Like Big Daddy Demon, he abuses those most innocent and defenseless, those least deserving of the punishment for his Daddy's sins. That's what they exist for.

And so the curse of malignant narcissism is passed from generation to generation in families.

In the cases on which my work is based there has been what I call a true self hidden, protected by a false self. This false self is no doubt an aspect of the true self. It hides and protects it, and it reacts to the adaptation failures and develops a pattern corresponding to the pattern of environmental failure. In this way the true self is not involved in the reacting, and so preserves a continuity of being. However, this hidden true self suffers an impoverishment that derives from lack of experience.

— [D. W. Winnicott, from "Clinical Varieties of Transference," 1955-56](#)

Maybe if a narcissist looks inside, he should ignore the terrifying imaginary thing in there and see the real thing huddled in the deepest darkest corner, with its face turned toward the wall — that beautiful, perfect, innocent three-year-old child. Whom some bitch or son of a bitch was not satisfied with. No, his monstrous ego didn't eat that little but real human being: he's still in there. Just small. And it's *his* house.

So, why not find him and do him justice to remove his undeserved shame, putting it on the flawed being it belongs to? Then let HIM rage for once and throw that demon out. I bet he can drag Beelzebub kicking and screaming to the door and drop-kick his or her ass out. No doubt it will be a battle. But he don't need no priest or superstitions: he just needs to want back *his* house.

7.1 What Narcissists Say

NPD is full of paradoxes that make it a migraine headache to explain. For example:

- If you describe the bad things narcissists do, you must always contrast their behavior in the dark with its covering "make-up" put on in the light of day.
- If you set out to explain how narcissists ignore their children, you must digress to explain the narcissist who does just the opposite, the "doting" narcissist. You must point out the difference between negative and positive attention, showing how both behaviors are essentially the same, being but different means to the same belittling end.
- If you try to explain how narcissists abuse people, you must also explain how they flatter people and are very, very nice to them, again showing how both behaviors are essentially the same, being but different means to the same exploitative end.
- If you try to explain that narcissists seek adulation, you must pause to explain the phenomenon of the narcissist who makes a name for himself as a criminal or brutal dictator — just an alternative means to the same attention-getting end.

The list of these seeming paradoxes goes on and on. So, superficial knowledge about narcissism is useless. You must understand the deep motivations to make sense of it. For, each narcissist has his own style.

Here again, we arrive at a seeming paradox: If narcissists are so unrevealing of what's inside, how do we explain the phenomenon of Internet Narcissists? those who write a book that bares the secrets of their soul? those who run a Web site? those who make public appearances and counsel the victims of narcissists? You explain it with one word: *attention*.

This does not mean, however, that an Internet Narcissist has nothing valuable to offer us. In fact, a narcissist who tries to explain his feelings and motivations is displaying rare courage in facing his true inner self. So, I think you have to give credit where credit is due to narcissists who write and speak publicly about themselves, their illness, how they think, and why they do the things they do.

Two caveats though: Never forget for one second that:

- They are narcissists acting for their own sake, not yours.
- They are gaining attention and guru status.

How to judge? Go by the gold standard: **By their fruits you will know them.**

- If the fruit of his discourse is to misappropriate your sympathy, it's rotten.

- If the fruit of his discourse is to warn you, relieve you, and help you understand, it is good.

Let's look further.

- **If you catch him making you feel sorry for narcissists**, shake off the spell and notice what a farce that is. A malignant narcissist is a joker whose favorite trick is to pull an identity-switch with the victim. Before you know it, he has you sympathizing with "poor-little-meek-and-sensitive" him and censoring the victim instead . . . for not just letting him get away with whatever he did. The joke's on you, and the narcissist is laughing up his sleeve at you for being so easy to impregnate with absurdities. The victim has every right to yell back, hit back, get a divorce, call the police, or whatever it takes to teach an abuser never to abuse again or to prevent a habitual abuser from ever abusing again. No matter how sick in the head the poor narcissist is. "Sorry" is nothing but hot air, and a narcissist will blow it just to make the victim feel obliged to give him another chance . . . to abuse again. So, don't let narcissists sneak illogic into your head. Don't let him confuse *humanity* with *human* and confuse the noun *human* with adjective *human*. It's a shell game with words. Inhumanity isn't human. By definition, treating others with inhumanity is having no humanity. So, narcissists dehumanize themselves (through acts their twisted minds think dehumanize their victim) — nobody else does that to them. Sympathy for such a predator is as inappropriate as sympathy for the mythological character of the devil would be.
- **But if he talks straight, and if his words comfort the victim**, and if he helps us avoid being fools and victims of his kind, that narcissist is doing GOOD. He's also making amends in one of the few ways he can and deserves credit for doing so. Also, by knowing himself, he is combating the disorder, not capitalizing on it by just making it an excuse for his behavior.

Not that you should swallow whole everything he says. If you know what's good for you, you don't swallow whole anything **anybody** says. On some things he may be dishonest. On some things he may not have fought his way through delusions to the truth. And, on some things he may not have peeled away all the layers of the onion to arrive at the heart of a matter.

Yet, for the most part, the words of narcissists who do not try to misappropriate your sympathy ring true to me because they make sense and square with my own impressions and experience with narcissists. You too may find them enlightening.

7.2 Do They Have Feelings?

Yes! Very, very tender feelings! Since actions speak louder than words, this example will help you understand his or her feelings.

A narcissist's wife of forty years was dying of leukemia. He visited her at the hospital daily. And he told relatives and everybody he met that he did so. Probably they noticed that he never spoke of her though.

All he talked about was the ordeal her illness put *him* through. All he could tell you was she had cancer. He didn't know when she was getting chemotherapy, or blood, or morphine. He never spoke to the doctors and nurses about her. Those were all responsibilities for his grown children to relieve him of. He never asked her or anybody how she was or what the prognosis was. And he never even talked to her.

In every way, he showed that he was there only to go through the motions of being a loving husband.

In fact, within minutes of arriving at the hospital, he would start jingling his car keys and talking about going home. In the meantime, he hectically ignored his dying wife. He did this by spending the whole "visit" running here and there around the hospital. To the cafeteria, to the rest room, to get a newspaper, and so on. He spoke to his wife and children only to announce where he was going next. Throughout two ten-day hospitalizations the last six weeks of her life, he spent no more than five minutes at a time in the same room with her. Even then he kept his back to her, fascinated by what was going on in the parking lot outside the window.

In short, he acted as though his dying wife wasn't even there. Already.

Such brutish insensibility to human feelings came in under even the lowdown double-standard of decency his family had expected of his highness. His elder daughter kept the lid on the volcano inside her only to minimize for her mother's sake, in hopes that the hospital staff were too busy to notice. Till one day she and her mother had a meeting of the eyes over it.

The mother looked from her daughter, to her husband's back, and then into her daughter's eyes again. The daughter responded by doing the same. Thus the mother had said, "Do you see what he's doing?" and the daughter had replied, "Yes, I do." Both their faces went black. At this zero valuation of what she meant to him, the mother's face expressed a sense of betrayal so sickening it out-

Judased the betrayal of a Judas priest. Her head just dropped, and she looked away like someone who wants to turn their face to the wall and die.

Now, the daughter is a meek and gentle woman; she had never even thought of raising a hand against anybody her entire life. But at this moment, she says, something inside her snapped. Before she knew what she was doing, she was taking a long stride on her way across the room. She says it was to deliver her father "a full-swinging kick in the ass." One of those moments to make the crowd in a movie theater cheer. She says, "The reason I was going to do that is because it was the only way to get him turned around to face the right direction. And I figured it was about time we got to look at his other ass."

And that is exactly what she was going to say to him when he whirled around.

The mother could see that there was about to be a row, and was satisfied with this proof that she meant something to her daughter. So she raised a hand to signal her daughter to stop. Then she indicated the narcissist with a wave-off and a nauseous look that said he was too deplorable and sickening to even be worthy of contempt.

The narcissist had no idea what had gone on behind his back in silence and how close he had come. A minute later he left for another buzz around the hospital. Another daughter arrived, and when he came barging back in loud-mouthing to interrupt their conversation and command all attention, the older daughter kept right on talking as if he were not there. The mother and the other daughter glanced back-and-forth between them several times before they caught on and nearly blew it by laughing at this chance to give the unfeeling brute a dose of his own medicine. They played along, as though intently interested in whatever trivial thing the older daughter was saying just to keep talking through him as if he were not there.

His reaction to this teeny-weeny dose of his own medicine? You should have seen the hurt and devastated look on that poor little kicked puppy-dog's face! He was deeply, deeply wounded by this callous treatment! He acted like a sheepish little boy who could not imagine why or how people could be so cruel to him! He just hung his head and walked back out of the room like someone in utter dejection who wants to go crawl in a hole.

Yes, a narcissist has very, very tender feelings. But only for himself.

For anybody — ANYBODY — else he is as devoid of human feeling as a brute, cold-blooded, predatory beast. Think of the inhuman, mindless, machinelike

look in the eye of snake slowly, slowly swallowing whole it's live, wriggling-in-agony prey.

That's how much "feeling" your narcissist has for you — exactly as much as that snake has for its prey = zero.

7.3 Are They to Blame?

In a word, yes. I hold that opinion for the same reason [the courts](#)⁸² do: because narcissists can, and do, control their conduct:

- They are one person to those who can fight back or get away from them and another to the trapped and defenseless.
- They are one person in the light of day and another in the dark.
- They act-out a charade to portray themselves as the opposite of what they really are.

That proves they know that what they're doing is wrong (or they wouldn't hide it), and they can keep from doing it when the coast ain't clear. Sounds like guilt to me. How about you?

And so the bottom line on narcissists is that they are frauds. Totally bogus persons.

The first fact above proves beyond all doubt that vulnerability is what trips their trigger. In other words, they are predators — like bullies, hostile to all but too insecure to pick on anybody except easy prey. The second fact proves beyond all doubt that they know what they're doing and that they control themselves whenever they wouldn't get away with it. The third fact proves beyond all doubt that they know what they do is wrong. Otherwise they wouldn't be ashamed of it, covering it with a show of being the opposite kind of person.

This is why narcissists, psychopaths, and sexual predators go to jail for what they do. Though mentally ill, they are not "insane." An **insane** mind is an **unsound** mind — a broken mind, a brain that doesn't work properly, a brain that sees and hears things that aren't there, a brain that cannot distinguish reality from imagination, a brain that can't reason.

The insane stick out among us like sore thumbs. But narcissists, psychopaths, and sexual predators pass for normal. That's because, physiologically, their brains work just fine. Indeed, some are rocket scientists. Some are ingeniously cunning. So their brains function magnificently when they want them to. All are

perfectly rational when they want to be. They devise and control their behavior, doing their dirty deeds only on the sly. They are therefore absolutely responsible for what they do.

Yet, just as their victims are responsible only for their conduct and not their feelings, narcissists are responsible only for their conduct and not their feelings. So, let's be fair. There's too little research on NPD to say this with much certainty, but indications are that the way narcissists think and feel about things cannot be changed. My own observations and experience make me think this probably so.

So, before we get self-righteous and polish our halos, let's understand that normal people are not tempted the way narcissists are. You can't take credit for not murdering anybody if you've never been tempted to. And you can't take credit for not doing what narcissists do till you've lived a day in their mind.

I truly hope I'm wrong, but it appears that treatment can only —

- help them understand themselves
- teach them to choose different behaviors in reaction to things
- walk them through forward logic and thus help them untwist their thinking patterns

But, the older the narcissist, the more deeply ingrained the thinking patterns, and the harder they are to change. This is because you get a thinking pattern by thinking that way for a long time. Thinking patterns are nothing but cerebral "habits" that become spontaneous over time. Like a knee-jerk reflex. So, unless some miracle drug comes along that can aid in unlearning these habits, change in a spontaneous thinking pattern takes years to reprogram. And it cannot be done unless a narcissist really wants to change the way she or he thinks and works hard at changing it.

Since narcissists can and do control their **conduct**, however, treatment does show promise in helping them choose to control it even when the coast is clear and the potential victim is trapped and vulnerable. Treatment can also provide them with tools — appropriate ways to respond to things that trip their trigger, ways that enable them to get along in society. But it doesn't seem likely that psychiatry will ever be able to rid narcissists (or psychopaths and other predators) of their warped perceptions and temptations. So, the damage done in early childhood, while the personality-circuitry of the brain was establishing its network of connections, cannot be wholly undone.

So, let's deal with that elephant in the middle of the room: the malignant

narcissist personifies our concept of the devil. Everybody who has seen a narcissist with their mask off gets the big chill, stands there in horror, and knows that. I wish I could wash all the religious implications out of it though.

All I see in the myth is that the devil is an evil spirit. Literally and "ill" spirit. One that hates innocence and goodness. We all have a spirit. It can get ill. So, where do we get the idea that the devil is some other kind of spirit, an alien person without a body floating around somewhere? Sounds like projection to me.

In the documents current beliefs are based on, the devil is nothing but an "ill spirit." Literally an "ill wind." That's because *spirit* originally meant nothing more than "wind" or "air." (We still see this meaning in the word *respiration*). It stood for the air people breathe, expelled as "wind," especially the "wind" they exhale while speaking. Some people have bad breath — either literally or figuratively or both. We still connect with this concept when we mention the "spirit in which words are spoken."

It can be "ill" or wholesome. *Wholesome* is a word adulterated and reduced over time to *holy*, which in scripture meant nothing more than "wholesome."

So, let's just leave it at that. Make more of it if you wish, but I don't. And let's remember that, in the ancient myth, Lucifer wasn't thrown down out of heaven because of who he was: he was thrown down because of what he did — make himself look good by making others look bad. Since that is never done in a wholesome spirit, that's what he was condemned for. And that's why his name was changed from Lucifer (the brilliant one) to Satan (the slanderer, literally "the name-slayer").

The only hope I see lies in getting at the root of the problem — the real person inside the narcissist, the three-or-four-year-old crouched with their face to the wall in the deepest, darkest corner of the narcissist's soul. That beautiful, perfect, and fully human child needs a mirror.

A faithful mirror to replace the warped one in a warped parent's dissatisfied eye.

A true mirror that gives them something real to identify with.

Otherwise, how can narcissists be human? If they don't identify with the humanity in themselves, how can they relate humanly to anybody else? How can they even relate humanely to an animal?

Narcissists identify with a grandiose (false) image, an idol, not with the human person inside. This is why they have no humanity (empathy). This is why they have an alien mentality and behave as an alien species, viewing human beings (and all living things) as prey. There is no other way to get them to join the human race than to show them that they belong to it.

PART VIII

The Narcissist's Strategy

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Remember that a narcissist's goal is attention. His or her whole life is a game of monopoly for it all. Keep in mind that attention comes in many forms²³, including regard, love, and respect.

The grandiosity is an excuse to justify hogging it all.

The abuse denies it, bringing the victim low, either by slander or treating them like dirt.

The lack of empathy is partly play-acting grandiosity by viewing the deprived victim as a bug and partly to un-conscience the cruelty of narcissistic abuse.

So, at bottom, it's all about attention.

Though a narcissist may be overtly exhibitionistic at times, NPD is different from other attention-getting disorders. A narcissist's attention-getting is covert most of the time. There are two reasons for this.

- She can't abuse just anybody without risk of payback. So, (normally) she needs to project an image that reflects well on her. People respond negatively to any but subtle exhibitionism that somehow stays beneath their radar. So, exhibitionism rarely gets a narcissist the reflection she wants to see in people's faces.
- Needing to be the center of attention is a childhood trait. Being childish is not grandiose, so the narcissist must get attention without seeming to seek or want it.

Besides, a god isn't exhibitionistic. God is self-sufficient, needing nothing from anyone. God never cries out for attention. Instead, she is subtle: she needs to project an image of herself as so special that others owe her all their attention without her having to ask for it. Or appreciate it (which would be paying some attention back). In other words, she acts like a queen, who is above noticing all the attention she gets from everyone around her but regards her dignity as slighted by anything less than all of it.

This absurdly haughty attitude is born of another thing that distinguishes narcissistic attention-getting from other personality disorders. Narcissists are infinitely stingy with their own attention and infinitely covetous of everybody else's. In fact, their most characteristic behaviors are behaviors that deny

attention to anybody but themselves.

That's because a narcissist's addiction to attention is addiction to a pain-killer. So, the more she gets, the more she needs. This is, as it were, as if eating made a person famished instead of satisfied! This is the vicious cycle heroin addicts and narcissists are in. A narcissist's thirst for attention is so unquenchable that she cannot get enough of it.

That says it all. Her need is so ravenous that, just as a starving man feels entitled to take food away from others, as a penniless man feels entitled to take money away from others, and as an addict feels entitled to take heroin away from others, she feels entitled to take attention away from others. She needs it all and then some.

So she just regards it all as rightfully belonging to her. (She doesn't distinguish between *mine* and *thine*.) God's needs come first. She needs it all to survive, to prevent withdrawal into that suicidal hell within. So, her whole life is a desperate game of monopoly for it all. She cannot stand to see anybody else get any.

That's stealing from her.

Just like a spoiled brat who won't share her toys.



So, whenever possible, she deprives others of **all forms of attention**. That is, she contrives to make sure others get no regard, affection, appreciation, consideration, respect, and so forth. She must get it all.

8.1 Grandiosity Veiled

Grandiosity is a hallmark of Narcissistic Personality Disorder.

As I mentioned previously, in certain milieu, such as a ladder or a pedestal of any sort, the shameless self-promotion of grandiosity is an asset, or at least certain aspects of it are. That's because it creates the illusion of superiority and

gets attention. For example, it can be an asset on the corporate ladder or in politics or in Hollywood.

So, normally, the grandiosity shows only if the narcissist is some kind of "star." Stars are light-years away from us, which is a safe distance. Therefore, when we see grandiosity in a public figure, we don't take it personally. In fact, we view them as "different" and "interesting" for flaunting their belief in their godhead. It gets them what they want, publicity/attention/specialness.

The great boxer, [Mohammed Ali](#), back when he was Cassius Clay, demonstrated what I mean perfectly. Whenever he got before a camera, he proclaimed himself "the greatest, the prettiest," and so forth. This got him the attention and the fans his career needed in a novel way — by spoofing the typical star-type grandiosity in all its naked glory.

Instead of being grandiose, he was being a comedian spoofing the grandiose. Too bad other stars didn't get the joke.

Thinly veiled grandiosity is what keeps the Hollywood and rock star babbling inanity on late-night TV talk shows going. These stars blurt whatever comes to their head as though it's automatically brilliant just because *they* said it. They are special, you know. Which is presumably what they think qualifies them as an expert on foreign affairs. To make a splash, they deliberately act out and say outrageous things. But if they behaved that way in your living room, you'd throw them out.

The same shameless self-promotion, projected a little differently, comes off as charisma in politicians. Unfortunately, this is precisely why so many malignant narcissists rise to become President-for-Life. Being narcissists, they have had lifelong practice at playing to the faces in a crowd and creating false impressions. Season that talent with strategic grandiosity and you have a national savior.

Take a man like Hugo Chavez. He's a buffoon (Adolf Hitler was too), but he has his people under a spell. Surely they couldn't stomach him at the supper table with them, but from afar, from up there on that podium, he seems fascinating.

If you ever get a chance, watch videos of all these leaders' speeches: Chavez, Adolf Hitler, Saddam Hussein, Muammar Kadafi, Fidel Castro. See how their eyes light up before a crowd as they undergo a transfiguration in their glory — all that sweet, sweet, sweet attention. They rant or ramble on, making their people stand there for hours, even in the rain, while they yakking off the top of

their head about whatever comes to mind, certain that the whole world is hanging on their every word and dying for the fruit of their lips on any topic they care to expound about.

Nevertheless, we don't tolerate overt grandiosity in people we must actually have anything to do with. So, most narcissists must veil their grandiosity with false modesty. It goes on like make-up to cover a pimple — thick.

In fact, it was a malignant narcissist who taught me what to make of it when *anybody* puts on *any* act a little too thick. She saw the "hot pants" underneath the prudish act of women who go out of their way to show how religious they are, who are scandalized by the sexual conduct of other women, and who like white, long-sleeved blouses with ruffles and ribbons and bows buttoned all the way up to their chinny-chin-chins. Maybe Shakespeare had a phony teach him this lesson too. For, he made the pot call the kettle "black" by putting the line *Methinks the lady doth protest too much* in the mouth of Hamlet's mother.

We see a public example of this make-up artistry in the child sexual predator who is — of all things — a priest. People have to call him "Father," which amounts to regarding him as a father figure. He capitalizes on the unwarranted intimacy and trust this title infuses into the relationship. He wins universal praise for his interest in children. Because the parishioners judge by appearances, the clothes make the man. So, they jump to exactly the wrong conclusion about him taking certain "troubled" children under his wing to be alone with them behind closed doors.

We see the same thing in a politician who gets himself photographed going to church every Sunday with his family. He is so concerned about families and family values that he cannot utter two sentences without getting the buzzword *family* in at least once. Then we find out what's underneath all this make-up, what regard he really has for family when we see what he has been doing to his own family all along, in the dark.

And so, any act put on thick is actually a sign of its opposite. False modesty is a sign of grandiosity.

Because it is just a veil, it can come off — zap — just like that. The [transfiguration](#)^[208] is instantaneous and shocking. Suddenly you have a different person before you, one who is insufferably haughty, imperious, arrogant, insolent, contemptuous, and abusive.

8.2 The Art of Lying

The title is redundant, because art itself is a lie, actually. So, the title might as well read "The Art of Art."

Take a novel. It's a long lie the author tells you.

Fortunately, however, there are ground rules to the game (the adult version of "Let's Play Pretend"). For example, you find the novel in the fiction aisle. And, while reading, you cooperate by suspending your disbelief in the lie, pretending that you believe the story is true. When finished, you stop playing Pretend and know that none of that stuff ever happened.

All art is merely the representation of something. Something that may be real or imaginary.

So art isn't holy, not inherently good. Like language, whether it is good or evil depends on the fruit it bears.

I had an industrial quality stapler once. One day, the staples got really jammed. So, in haste, I grabbed the first tool at hand, a big screw driver. Too big. I was jamming it into the breech and got it stuck in there. My tenth grade Biology class was watching with amusement. I couldn't get the screw driver out.

So, I set it aside — this bizarre looking stapler cum screw driver — among the other objects of the museum I maintained in the room, saying, "Well, it doesn't work now, so it's a *l'object d'art*." They looked a little confused. "An art object. Now that it's useless, it's a work of art."

They thought I was kidding.

Narcissists are artists. Nasty ones. They are truly amazing in their glib ability to make anything of anything. With nothing but words.

How? By playing a variation of the following childhood game: Go up to another kid and say, "Shut your eyes." A deplorably high percentage of kids obey. Then say, "Now open your mouth." The results are much better, because few kids are that stupid.

But many adults are. As Mark Twain often lamented, people swallow ideas

whole without examining them first.

Even a smart breed of dog knows better. Even from you, a Cairn Terrier carefully examines what you hand him if he doesn't immediately recognize it as food you have given him before.

People who obsess over what they put in their bodies pay no attention to what they let in their heads. They post no gatekeeper at the entrances of the eyes and ears to run a sense-facts-and-logic check on ideas before deciding to let them in.

In fact, you needn't even tell most people what you want them to think of something. *Never underestimate the power of suggestion.* Just subtly suggest what you want them to think of something and they will take a flying leap to that conclusion. No matter how absurd.

So narcissists can plant absurd ideas in people's heads simply by portraying something, say, stingy as generous. Or vice versa. People seem oblivious to how absurd the narcissist's assessment is. They just go, "Yup, yup yup" and suck it up.

Here is an example of the nonsense people are capable of swallowing. In this example, people with a political agenda are exploiting human gullibility. But, as you read it, think of narcissists, exploiters who likewise exploit this weakness in us:

Several billion people in the world regard our invasion of Afghanistan as aggression against that country. Which begs the question: *What do they think aggression is?*

If the people who think this weren't a majority, they'd be the laughingstock of the world.

For, they somehow manage to regard the United States as the aggressor in this war by somehow regarding Afghanistan as innocent of the 9/11 attacks on the United States. Right, if a terrorist army in bed with the United States government and protected by the United States government trained in Arizona and then blew up something in Iran, would anyone regard the United States as innocent of the deed?

The swallows of this absurdity seem so devoid of sense that they think a country has no right to defend itself against a smaller country. Do they have any active brain cells at all?

They seem too stupid to know that the people of a country are responsible for its government. Though we may sympathize with people under a dictatorial regime, the people put it in power and have a responsibility to overthrow it. If they don't and that government gets them into wars, they suffer the consequences. Too complex?

In fact, the people of Afghanistan are exceedingly lucky that their government got them into war with the United States and not any other country in the world. For we take great pains to avoid civilian casualties and succeed in keeping them at an extremely low level. Moreover, once war with the United States is over, it's over. We extend our hand in friendship to a defeated nation and help it get back on its feet. No other nation on this planet has ever done that.

So, how can several billion people swallow such an absurd assessment of these events?

In the light of this tendency of the human race, you almost can't blame narcissists for their contempt for the rest of us. They think that if we are that stupid, we deserve to be lied to. This farce enables narcissists to make light of their lying and view it as smart and funny, not wrong. They are just making fools of us.

Unfortunately, it's too easy.



For example, in a certain Catholic School, few of the lay teachers went to daily mass. One woman did go about once every other week or so and began going more frequently when her mother fell ill with terminal cancer.

A narcissist on the staff, who actually went to mass much more often as a rule, made this out to be a sign of — what? Devoutness and concern for mother? No. As a sign of moral turpitude! Some great evil, or demon, she must be struggling with inside.

What did people do? They bought it, hook, line, and sinker.

The kicker is that going to daily mass was viewed as a sign of the opposite — devoutness — in the narcissist herself and several lay religion teachers who also frequented daily mass. So, how on earth could anyone fall for such an absurd line?

I think narcissists' glib ability to make anything of anything naturally evolves from so much constant practice at manipulating people in every interaction. They are never expressing themselves. They are never dealing with the matter at hand. They are always absorbed in doing this...



In other words, they are always just playing you for a flattering reaction to them. **That makes truth irrelevant, because the reaction is all that counts.** So, if the truth won't get the reaction they want, they tell you whatever will get it. Indirectly then (whether aware of it or not), they are trying to control what you think, because what you think is expressed in the reflection.

It stands to reason then that anyone who practices creating false impressions 100% of the time is going to get exceptionally good at it in 10, 20, or 30 years.

The deception in narcissists' talk usually lies more in what they leave out than in what they say. Their remarks are often vague and mysterious, just enough to plant a seed and let your imagination do the rest.

For example, I know of a narcissist living with her parents on a professional's salary and earning more than her father. She paid no room or board. She didn't even buy her own toiletries or cigarettes. Her mother did her laundry and fixed all her meals.

To make all these incriminating facts go away, she told people that she and her parents preferred an informal arrangement. She said she carried her weight by seeing things they needed but couldn't afford and buying it for them, "like the snow thrower I bought them."

What she left out is that the snow thrower was the only thing she ever bought, and that she bought it as much for herself as for them, after a terrible blizzard that dropped more than twenty-four inches of drifted snow, an amount her father couldn't possibly clear. She left out the part about her mother saying they

couldn't afford a big enough one at the time and that the narcissist should pay for it, since she lived there free and never helped clear the snow.

But Miss Glib successfully passed off buying that \$500 snow thrower as carrying her weight for 20 years. Simply by making it SOUND as though that was carrying her weight. Nobody ever added it up to see that it wasn't even one month's room, board, and cigarettes.

8.3 Projection

Projection is a new name for an old thing, scapegoating. In this section I just explain it in general terms, with examples. In the next section, we zero-in on how narcissists project and what is unique about the way they do it.

Projection. We find it everywhere. Which should be no surprise. It's actually the oldest trick in *The Book*. Really. The Serpent pulled it on Eve in the Book of Genesis when, in the very act of lying to Eve, he accused *God* of being the liar.

Here's how the story goes. The serpent had just suggested that Eve eat the Forbidden Fruit, and she replied that God told them not to because eating it would bring about their fall. The cunning serpent said, "God told you THAT?"

Slick, eh? In the very act of telling a whopper, the sneaky snake left-handedly called God a liar, through the power of suggestion. Thus the Prince of Lies pulled an identity-switch with God.

Moses ritualized a demonstration of projection in the Book of Leviticus as the prescribed rite for the annual Day of Atonement.

In this "atonement" ritual, all the people had to come forward, one by one, and make the scapegoat (a perfect yearling firstborn male to represent someone unblemished and with great potential) take their sins away from them and onto himself. How did they do this? By accusing him of their sins and laying the blame on his head. Then they had to purge themselves of *him* and make *him* atone for their sins. How did they do that? By chasing him away into the desert until he gave up trying to follow them back home, and then deserting him there. Which was the sentence worse than death = doom, because he would slowly die of thirst.

One hardly thinks they enjoyed doing this. Would you?

Wouldn't you instead get Moses' message? More powerful than a sermon, eh? Wouldn't you hang your head a little, thinking, "Jeez, are we that transparent?"

But never underestimate willful obtuseness' power to get things exactly backwards. Soon, people had done just that. Instead of being ashamed of how they "cleansed" and "saved" themselves (from justice) by scapegoating those who have the most to lose and are the least deserving, they thought this ritual meant that this is the right thing to do! the way to cleanse yourself of sin!

How convenient.

They didn't get it later, either, when John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth came along and said: "Read our lips: To cleanse yourselves of your sins, R-E-F-O-R-M."

They just anti-got it again, thinking this meant they should graduate from animals and sacrifice these two men as the scapegoats to die for their sins.

So, then St. Paul gave it a shot. He really tried to make people see that they'd better quit acting stupid and cut it out. In his letter to the Romans, he basically put it in the plainest terms possible — those of a threat that asked, "Just whom do you think you're fooling?"

You — who steal — preach that other people should stop stealing. You — who commit adultery — preach that others should stop committing adultery. You — who commit sacrilege — preach that others should stop being idolaters.

— Letter to the Romans, Chapter 2, verses 21-22

How's that for letting the self-righteous know that you know all their finger pointing is just projection/scapegoating?

Ah, but obtuseness is invincible. It went in one ear and out the other. All three peoples of that Book (Jews, Christians, and Moslems) still got the message exactly backwards.

Projection. We see it everywhere. It's a kind of baptism = a mud bath people give their betters, by rubbing themselves off on them. Here's how it works.

Got a guilty conscience? If so, you've certainly been tempted to say to yourself, "I'm not so bad." To prove that, you must look around for an example of someone who's worse. Then you can say to yourself, "Aha! I'm not as bad as so-

and-so."

But guess what? You didn't pick a so-and-so who really has that fault and has it worse than you. You picked someone with very little mud on his name, someone who looks cleaner than you, if possible, someone who has the corresponding virtue instead of that fault.

We're all tempted to pull this stunt. Some of us do, and some of us don't.

For example: If you're stingy, look for someone with a reputation for generosity, because generosity in your neighbor puts *your* stinginess to shame by serving as a foil that (by contrast) makes your stinginess more noticeable. Then smear your vice off on *him*. Tell everybody that he's stingy. Make everything he does sound stingy.

Thus you kill two birds with one stone: you rid yourself of your stinginess and him of his generosity.

Not. But looks are everything, and Truth doesn't matter, and this fraud makes you look good by comparison with him. Ah, cheating is much easier than freeing yourself of sin the legitimate way, by repentance.

You can see why narcissists highly prize this device called "projection" and become expert in it.

Projection. We see it everywhere. For example, guess who's favorite portrayal of the President of the United States is as "a Hitler" or "even worse than Hitler?" You guessed it, the Germans. German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder did it in campaign speeches to turn the tide and get elected. And guess whose favorite and constant characterization of Americans is as "arrogant?" You guessed it, the arrogant French. Projection.

Again, for example, who accuses the liberator of nations of being imperialist? Imperial Europe, of course. Home of the Soviet Empire, the British Empire, the French Empire, the Spanish Empire, the Nazi-German Empire, and a dozen others — for, even small European countries like Belgium and the Netherlands have conquered primitive peoples that lack firearms in Europe's thousand-year-long quest for dominion.

Once you catch on to projection, you do recognize it in a vast amount of the badmouthing you hear. Guess what nation produced the following headline in its leading newspaper right after the 9/11 Attacks? "Shaken, New Yorkers question

themselves about the basis of their lost grandeur." Where on earth did such an off-the-wall headline come from? You guessed it: from the nation of the people questioning themselves about the basis of their lost grandeur, France.

Projection.

Magicians call this trick "misdirection." With one hand magicians misdirect our attention so we don't see what they're doing with their other hand.

Finger-pointers do the same thing. They direct people's attention (critical attention, negative attention) away from themselves and what *they're* doing by accusing someone else of doing the same, or essentially the same, thing. Thus they make themselves seem like people who never would dream of doing such a thing themselves — while in the very act of doing it.



The worst examples of this that I personally know of happened in schools. In one case, a teacher (a malignant narcissist in a private school) took indecent liberties with, and sexually abused, pubescent boys he lured into his home while his wife was at work on the night shift. It was later discovered that many people knew that he invited boys to his home on Friday nights. But nobody had seen anything wrong with that. Over time, many school employees had caught him in his classroom alone with a boy — behind a closed, sometimes locked, door and in the back where neither could be seen from hall. Nobody had seen anything suspicious in that. Many people knew this teacher had an explosive temper that he often had to make excuses to a berated student for, but nobody had seen anything abnormal in that. In fact nobody saw anything inappropriate in the inappropriately patronizing and intimate relationship he had with his students. Even when it came between them and their parents.

And nobody thought anything of it when, every few years, he seized any opening in a conversation to pop off with: "What? Are you the only one around here who doesn't know? He likes boys," referring to some unmarried teacher. One unmarried teacher after another.

Thus he play-acted the part of a man who was abhorred by homosexual child abuse = certainly NOT the type who might do such a thing himself. Though

people saw plenty to view with suspicion in that unmarried teacher, nobody saw anything suspicious in the accuser failing to cite any evidence or **report** these allegations he was so sure of. They didn't even see anything suspicious in the accuser glomping onto that unmarried teacher to become his best friend. Even when his doing this became a glaring pattern.

Indeed, every single unmarried teacher who came to that school got assassinated by this, his best friend. And nobody thought anything of it! Satan polished his halo by being a pillar of his parish, a lector and lay communion distributor. And he got away with this for over fifteen years.

A serial killer is less cruel. He doesn't betray a sacred trust by doing it to people who have every good reason to trust him. And even if he tortures them, he doesn't doom his victims to a *life-sentence* of torture in Hell.

 Notice that the "innocent" people he fooled ain't innocent. They committed the Original Sin, believing an obvious lie just because it was juicy. Like Eve.

Let's weigh what she did, because it is typical. If you but note the prior facts, you see that it flew in the face of reason for her to think God was lying. He was her creator. He provided everything for her and Adam. Which means that he had proved he wanted what was good them. He denied them but one thing, telling them that it was for their own good. So, what was she thinking? She had every good reason to believe that he was telling the truth.

Moreover, what credibility is there in a stranger who slithers up to you like a sidewinder? Why not doubt the serpent — someone she had no reason to trust?

Bottom Line: God has high credibility; serpent has about zero credibility.

So, Eve wasn't honestly fooled: she just liked serpent's version of the world better, because it made her able to be as God.

Adam's reason for swallowing the lie was even worse: he just did it to agree with Eve. In other words, to please her he prostituted his mind to her. And thus political correctness was born.

 Narcissists and political character assassins are dangerous precisely because people do this. If, say, you have known someone for 10 years, you

know a lot about him. Doubtless, you have seen his honesty tested and seen that he proved to be an honest man. So, nobody should be able to slither up to you tomorrow and tell you he's dishonest. If you buy that, you are betraying that honest man. To believe that lie, you must annihilate history and 10 years of evidence to the contrary. You are not innocent.

Here's an example of the finger-pointer being guilty of the moral equivalent: Mr. Self-Righteous union-busts to keep the workers in his shoe factory so poor they go barefoot — and shows moral indignation in loudly condemning his neighbor for "muzzling an ox trampling the grain." He gets all fuzzy looking if you try to explain to him that he's doing the same thing, only worse. That's because he views rules, not as guidelines to be followed, but rather as red lines to catch *other* people with one toe over so he can condemn them. So he ignores the spirit of the law and obsesses over the letter of it.

Here's another example of projection that camouflages guilt for the moral equivalent. It also shows that even religious institutions are guilty of projection to polish their image.

The Catholic Church points the finger at mothers who have abortions, saying, "What kind of mother does that?" Okay, that position on the issue is reasonable, and it is the type of thing religion is expected to express its opinion on. But why the obsession with this particular issue when the Church has so little to say about countless other issues?

For example, why don't we hear the Church crying out against Catholic dictators who mass-murder and torture their own people? Why does it declare women who have abortions excommunicated but not them? Why didn't it condemn the Irish Catholics in the IRA murdering Protestants? Why doesn't it cry out against the Mafia? Why doesn't it stop taking money from gangsters and burying them as Catholics in good standing? Why don't we hear the Church crying out against the scourge of child-beating and wife-beating, anti-Semitism and other bigotry, drugs, sweat shops, union-busting, exploiting undocumented migrant workers, and so forth? Why don't we hear it preaching against slander and character assassination? Why is it obsessed instead with just gays and women who have abortions?

Could it be to make us forget what the Church has done to her own children? The Church goes to great lengths to portray an image of itself as our "holy mother," virtually fusing its image with that of Jesus' mother. Yet recall how truculently she has waded through her children by the tens of thousands throughout history. She aborted the lives of countless of her children —

throughout the 900 years of the episcopal and monastic inquisitions and now by allowing predatory priests and other religious to sexually prey on countless more of her children. She has stonewalled justice, intimidated victims who seek it, and protected criminals — spiriting them off to Rome or to a distant school or parish for a fresh set of unsuspecting prey.

So, we might turn Holy Mother Church's rhetorical question back on her: *What kind of mother does that?*

And to be fair, the Catholic Church certainly isn't the only religious institution guilty of using the pointed finger for misdirection to get our attention off its own sins and act like the opposite of what its conduct makes it. In fact, it does at least have something officially on record against many other evils: religious preachers of other denominations don't even seem to know that the other great evils exist.

Paul was in line with the ancient Hebrew scriptures. Scripture has a name for the spirit in which people point the finger at someone crying, "Look what they're doing! It's evil!" The name of that spirit is *satan*, which means the "finger-pointer," the "name-slayer" (slanderer, character assassin), the "prosecutor/persecutor," or the "accuser." In some places (e.g., the Book of Job) they also call this spirit "the policer of the world."

So, projection is everywhere. The worst thing about it is that mud sticks best to a clean spot. I'm sure that people who do this think they're clever, but it's child'splay. Send a muddy child into an unsupervised school yard and wait to see what happens. He will rub himself off on every cleaner, smaller child he can find, till they are all crying and he looks good by comparison.

Looks good by comparison. Those are the all-important words. The hypocrite makes himself look good by comparison with others. He does that the easy way — by smearing himself off on others to make them look bad. This is the root of envy. Which is NOT a rare motive for what people say about others. It's an all-too-common motive.

8.3.1 The Projection Machine

Narcissists don't just project their faults and failings (character flaws and bad acts) onto you, they also project their feelings, emotions, and beliefs onto you. Actually, "into" you (See [Projective Identification](#)³¹² next).

The projected beliefs may be beliefs about themselves or beliefs about you or

beliefs about anything. In fact, in posing to the mirror of your face, they are projecting their image onto you = their belief about themselves onto you.

The projected feelings and emotions may be positive ones or negative ones that they want to get rid of.

Note that the narcissist projects both positive and negative things onto you. In projecting positive things on you (e.g., his grandiose false image) he is using you as a mirror.



In projecting negative things on you, he is using you as a dumping ground.



Here we focus on the bad, or negative, things narcissists project, their faults and failings in particular.

When narcissists slander and calumniate you, they have two objectives. One is [projection](#)^[300], and the other is to muddy a bright spot in your character with whatever slander or calumny they're projecting at you. It's as though any shine on your image diminishes the glow of their glory.

Don't take my word for it: test a narcissist. Praise someone before a group and see what happens. The next day the narcissist launches a smear campaign against that praised person.

This is, of course, the mentality of the rapist, who must tear others "down off that pedestal." The narcissist just does the deed in a non-sexual way.

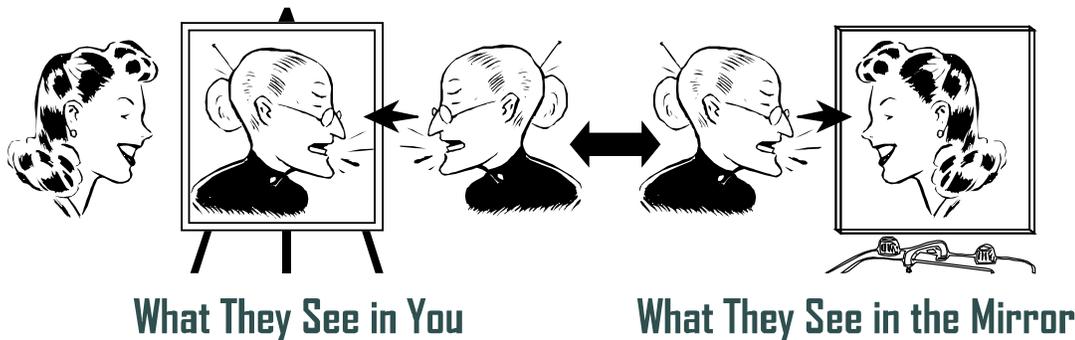
Now, you'd think it would be hard to accomplish both objectives — projection and smearing — at the same time. But it's uncanny how narcissists manage to do so! It's all in the way they word their "line" on you. They are glib and

amazingly adept at killing two birds with one stone: they not only ditch one of their faults, they muddy one your virtues in the process.

Note that in doing this, the narcissist isn't attacking your faults and shortcomings: she is attacking your virtues and accomplishments. Consequently, when she is conducting a campaign of character assassination against someone, **the arrows she shoots never hit one of that person's real flaws.**

The result is something like Dr. Frankenstein accomplished with body parts. A [chimera](#). The narcissist's false image contains the virtuous qualities in other people's characters, and their images have had those virtuous qualities replaced with the flaws in the narcissist's character. In other words, the narcissist steals your virtues and dumps on you her faults.

In doing so, the narcissist is stealing your identity, pulling an identity switch with you, piecemeal.



It's a kind of magic, an illusion created with nothing but words, which can warp perceptions by making anything of anything.

For example, let's say that the narcissist is stingy and that one of your virtues is that you are outstanding for your generosity. She hates the glow of that shiny spot in your character, because it serves as foil to her stinginess, making it more noticeable by contrast. So she muddies your image and glorifies her image by misappropriating your generosity to herself and misappropriating her stinginess to you.



How? She goes around lying about how much she gives to charity and about helping people out all the time. More important (since one must be careful and subtle about boasting), she just makes everything she does *sound* generous. She also goes around telling lying stories about you, stories that have you being stingy. More important, she makes everything

you do *sound* stingy, however generous it manifestly is. In [The Art of Lying](#)^[296] I gave an example of how a narcissist can make one \$500 purchase sound like payment for room, board, toiletries, cigarettes, and laundry services for twenty years — in order to *unsound* like a freeloader.

This is what makes narcissists stand out. Normal people do project. They sometimes even smear. But not in such a calculated fashion. In [What Makes Narcissists Different](#)^[237], I enumerated the difference between the way normal people project and the way narcissists do:

- Normal people project when put on the defensive. Narcissists project in unprovoked attacks.
- Normal people don't smear themselves off on just *anybody*. They wouldn't dream of harming those near and dear. All people are nothing but [objects](#)^[144] to narcissists, so they smear themselves off on their own parents and children as thoughtlessly as we smear ourselves off on a towel. For no reason other than to cause pain, they will say anything — ANYTHING — about them, without a second thought.
- Normal people are likely to shake themselves off on whoever happens to be near at the moment. So, they sometimes project a flaw off onto someone who actually has it. But narcissists project ironically, accusing those with the corresponding virtue of a vice.
- Normal people stick to slander (which has at least some degree of truth in it), rarely engaging in calumny (lies). When they do calumniate someone, they at least have a natural reason for animosity toward the target. Narcissists are perverted. There is no natural reason for what they do.
- Even when normal people do calumniate someone, they don't go hog-wild and calumniate that person so badly and so widely as to destroy them and ruin their whole lives. Narcissists do go hog wild. They are mental children and therefore as dangerous with their mouths as an angry five-year-old with an assault weapon.

In fact, a narcissist is most likely to smear off on someone he owes gratitude, because needing help damages his image. So he repays help as though it were an insult. He must devalue it by devaluing the giver of it, as if such a contemptible person is incapable of really helping someone as grand as he.

Unlike narcissists, normal people don't do it because damaging others makes them feel good. In fact, doing this makes a normal person feel ashamed. But it makes a narcissist feel grand.

When it's fully conscious calumny a narcissist is spreading, he just thinks it's funny that people are such idiots that he can get away with it, feeding them ridiculous lines about others. Lines that are preposterous in the light of the target's known conduct. The narcissists I have known all let it show at one time or another that they had nothing but contempt for the people who believed them. I am sure that a narcissist views his success at lying as proof that he is brilliant and that all mere mortals are as stupid as sticks.

Narcissists aren't projecting guilt so much as they're projecting **shame**. In fact, it may well be that they have no concept of guilt and have it confused with shame. Which is pain.

So this wicked behavior is a way to ditch their pain onto you. It's a psychological pain-killer, like a drug, and that's why causing you pain makes them feel good.

Here's an example of a famous smear that illustrates how it works.

Jesus of Nazareth was exceptionally careful to avoid blasphemy. He went way beyond custom in this regard. His tremendous reverence for the name of God was his most outstanding virtue, because he put everyone, including the prophets, to shame in this regard. In fact, it was the first thing people noticed about him as word of him spread and he became famous — that he spoke on his own authority and never prefaced his preaching with "God says...."



In scripture, *blasphemy* meant simply "blame." To blaspheme someone was to give him or her a **bad name** by giving him the blame for something. Actions blaspheme as well or better than words. For example, if, acting in the name of the pope and on his authority, you commit crimes, he is blasphemed by them, because your actions in his behalf give him a bad name. The same would be true if he were the President instead of the pope. Or your boss.

In the strictest sense, blasphemy can be unintentional. For example, if you botch some mission or miserably fail at some assignment, your superior is blasphemed by the lousy job you did. It gives her or him a bad name. I mention this because Jesus of Nazareth is interesting and peculiar in the great care he took to avoid blasphemy, even unintentional blasphemy.

Notice that he is the only prophet who never prefaced his preaching with "God says" That's "blaming" God for what you say, isn't it? It passes to God the responsibility for your words.

Jesus wasn't the only one who realized that this is blasphemy, but Jewish scholars got around this embarrassing habit of the prophets by saying that "true" prophets weren't blaspheming when they put the responsibility for their words on God, only "false" prophets were.* Hence "taking the name of the Lord" wasn't blasphemy, just "taking the name of the Lord in vain."

* Over the centuries the Scribes edited the scriptures, weeding the "false" prophets out.

Notice that attributing your words to God attributes to *you* his authority, his name. When you do that you're acting in the name of God. Hence one form of blasphemy is claiming authority that rightly belongs only to God (or any superior).

The Jews had great reverence for the name of their God and took great care never to tarnish it any way. In fact, to treat it as most holy, they avoided profaning his formal name (Jehovah) by using it in everyday speech. They rarely uttered it out loud. In fact, it's rarely uttered even in scripture. Jesus' everyday name for God was "Father." He had such great reverence for the name of God that he said nobody should share the name of "father" with God. For, any man was sure to soil the name of "father" now and then by doing something unworthy of a father and thus profane a name of God. So he would have frowned on priests being called "Father." In fact, he frowned on all clerics taking reverential titles.

Bottom Line: You can't get any more innocent of blasphemy than he was.

Okay, so, if you or I wanted to smear Jesus, blasphemy would be the last thing we'd accuse him of, right? Because it's JOKE, and everyone would know that.

Or would they?

Well, whether they would or not, we're normal, so we'd accuse him of something believable, like being a drunk or something. But that isn't the way a narcissist thinks. The narcissist(s) in the Sanhedrin who plotted against Jesus went right for that greatest shining virtue of his in leveling the charge of blasphemy against him. They just had to muddy it o'er.

Unbelievable. Yet the people believed it.

And consider the source of this accusation. Look who's accusing him of blasphemy. The Sanhedrin, blasphemously acting in the name of God.

In other words, in the very act, they were projecting the blot of their sin onto his outstanding virtue.

Unbelievable. Yet the people believed it.

Near the beginning of the Spanish Inquisition, a Spanish archbishop or cardinal (whose name I forget) remarked that the accusations leveled by the Inquisition were so widely believed because people are much readier to believe the unbelievable than the obvious. He said a mouthful.

I call narcissists "[projection](#)^[300] machines." I am convinced that projection is a knee-jerk reflex in them. That is, whenever a moment of self-awareness threatens to let them know a flaw in their character they're revealing or some bad thing they're doing, they instantly go into denial about it (= repress conscience of shame) by projecting the semblance of that flaw or misdeed off onto the handiest scapegoat — usually the very victim of whatever abuse they're dishing out.

How's that for maximum irony? Hence, while hurling a hailstorm of wild accusations at you, you can count of one them being that you are hurling wild accusations at them. Every single time. They can't help it. I think they have been twisting their thinking for so long (since early childhood) that twisted thinking is hard-wired into their brains. I think projection is such an ingrained habit in them that often they're unaware that they're doing it.

Projection is such a reflex in them that they give themselves away by some of the accusations they hurl. For example, if a narcissist says he fears you might attack him physically, look out: he is at least pondering whether to attack you physically. If she says she fears you might get into her bank account, know that she is at least pondering getting into yours. Every single time.

Narcissists aren't the only people who project. But they are different in that they have done it so much for so long that they do it like a machine — automatically, every single time. And they rarely hit one of the target's real faults. Instead the accusation is a joke, smearing one of that person's virtues as a vice.

8.3.2 Projective Identification

Even if you hate to fight, if you have any self respect you're bound to feel compelled to stick up for yourself now and then. For, people who actually have

to do it know that docile submission ain't the virtue it's cracked up to be. They see it for what it is.

It's the worst thing that can happen to you. That's absolute power over you. Possession of you. That's bending over for it. It makes the victim hate himself. The only time it's conscionable is if you are a child, who really has no choice. Otherwise, you need to have a backbone.

So, now and then, you're bound to object to the degrading way the narcissist treats you. He or she will throw a fit at you for objecting, and there will be an argument.

Or, you're bound to say or do something that fails to reflect the narcissist's grandiose specialness and thus "slight" him or her. To do this, just relate to the narcissist as his or her equal; just act like you deserve consideration in some matter. Then look out. Uproar.



But even if you don't do these naughty things there are arguments, aren't there? Because a narcissist just has to take a crap on someone every so often to feel better to about him- or her-self.

He knows just how to pick a fight. And when he wants to pick a fight, there's no avoiding it, because he is a spoiled-rotten child, so he will keep at it till he gets what he wants. He will work you into some kind of corner, demand something impossible of you there, and then throw a fit when you can't do it.

The narcissist won't even let you walk away. She will follow you telling you how intolerable you are just for **being the way you are**, saying that she doesn't have to put up with that. If even *that* doesn't get a rise out of you, when she has you in a corner, she'll assault you, forcing you down on your back and climbing on top of you, saying, "I'm stronger than you."

During the argument, the narcissist throws up a wall of flak to keep anything you

say from getting through. Sheer volume is the chief tactic, to drown you out so you give up trying to speak through the blast of that [fog horn](#). Another technique is to seize upon some word near the beginning of your sentence and butt in on you to blast off with it on a tangent. Yet another technique of communication blocking is to call things what they ain't. Whatever.

Since you are trying to communicate, you try to calm him or her so that you can reason with them. Why do you never succeed? Because that is precisely what the narcissist doesn't want. So, forget it.

Face it: he or she is perfectly rational when they want to be, so they are being irrational now on purpose. To BLOCK communication.

For, the narcissist can't win any reasonable discussion, and a narcissist *must* always win. They haven't a leg to stand on, and they know it. Sense and reason and decency are all on your side. So, the only way the narcissist can **win** is by shutting you up. Bullying.

During this fit, the raging narcissist projects his or her anger off onto you and accuses you of being the one who is "flying into one of your rages." How do I know? Because your narcissist is just a narcissist, and that's what narcissists do.

When narcissists pull this stunt, they aren't using you only as a [dumping ground](#)^[306] for their toxic emotions: they are also doing their best to make you act out their fantasy that *you* are the raging maniac here. In other words, they are trying enrage you. Get it?

That trick is called "[projective identification](#)."

Projective identification (DSM-IV, pg. 756). The individual deals with emotional conflict or internal or external stressors by falsely attributing to another his or her own unacceptable feelings, impulses, or thoughts. Unlike simple projection, the individual does not fully disavow what is projected. Instead, the individual remains aware of his or her own affects or impulses but misattributes them as justifiable reactions to the other person. Not infrequently, the individual induces the very feelings in others that were first mistakenly believed to be there, making it difficult to clarify who did what to whom first.

Indeed, when you're trying to pacify a raging maniac, and she heaps insult on injury by mocking you with the accusation that you are the one "who got mad," the one who's "flying into one of your rages," normal people do get angry.

There'd be something wrong with you if you didn't. In fact, even [therapists](#), who are trained to avoid this pitfall, can hardly help getting angry when narcissists pull this stunt on them.

It is the result of an interplay between two other psychological ploys narcissists use.

One ploy is identifying with their reflected image as their self. The fancy name for this mental trick is "introjection." *Introjection* literally means "throwing inward," which is the opposite of *projection*, "throwing outward." Introjection is defined as relating to something that comes from the outside as though coming from the inside.

That's what Narcissus is doing here in relating to his [reflected image](#)¹⁶ as though it's his inner self...



We have an inner life in which we are constantly in touch with ourselves. We have no fear of losing contact with ourselves, so when we need to focus on other things or people, we can. But Narcissus has access to his *self* only through [mirrors](#)²⁸.

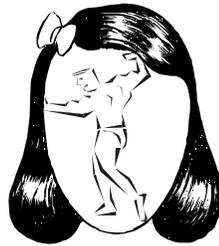
Mirrors that are sometimes naughty, because they want to express themselves instead of reflect him. Mirrors that sometimes want to pay attention to someone other than him. Mirrors that sometimes reflect a less than grandiose image of him. So, his whole life is about controlling those mirrors, in a desperate struggle to make sure nothing happens to his image/self.

When a person with introjections projects, their [introjections determine the projections](#), distorting them. In addition, the projector **pressures the victim to behave in a way that reflects his fantasy**. That's projective identification.

INTROJECTION + PROJECTION => PROJECTIVE IDENTIFICATION

In other words, the narcissist pressures you to play along with his game of Pretend. He projects the anger, fear, envy, and character flaws inside him onto you and works to make you display them. For example, if he is stupid, he will project his stupidity off onto you AND make you feel stupid so that you act out his fantasy of the stupidity being in you rather than him.

In any case, he's dumping his pain into you, using you as a toxic waste disposal site. He also projects an image of himself as a God (compared to you) on you and works to make you reflect it in relating to him. In this he's using you as a mirror.



This explains most of a narcissist's weird behavior. He is just trying to make you act that way. To do that, he generally uses the same technique a spoiled brat does: he simply switches into Obnoxious Mode the moment you aren't acting that way.

Why manipulate you instead of just come right out and tell you how he wants you to act? Because then he'd have to suffer awareness of the crazy, imbecile thing he's doing. He won't do that. He refuses to know he's playing Pretend. If any awareness of that starts to surface to consciousness on him, he instantly represses it.

But that doesn't stop him from doing whatever it takes to make you act the way he wants so that your behavior reflects a superman in him.

It is vital to keep this in mind: this is what's going on in all your interactions with a narcissist.

8.4 Control by Temper Tantrum

Let's pretend you're a steer and I'm a cowboy. I am peaceable enough when you're doing what I want. That is, mainly, when your behavior is in the direction

I want. Due north, toward Kansas.

But when you get out of line, I throw a temper tantrum. That is, I ride my big horse at you, waving that big, attention-getting thing (otherwise on my head) at you, yipping and yelling and making other loud, sharp, threatening noises and whistles at you. I may even brandish my lasso at you. If necessary, I will cut you off. But usually that isn't necessary, because the moment you see me start to act up, you just veer back into the right direction. Due north, toward Kansas.

The fancy name for that trick is "behavior modification," through "negative reinforcement."

It's what you housebreak your puppy with. It works like this: if the trainee does something other than what is wanted, make him miserable. You know, loud noises, scowls, nasty tone, antic and threatening gestures — a temper tantrum. Just make his whole little world totally obnoxious.

When, by chance he happens to do what you want, give "positive reinforcement" by making his existence pure bliss.

When training Mamma, point at a candy bar in the grocery store. The moment she starts to say "No" erupt into screaming and bawling as loud as you can so Mamma fears that everyone in the store thinks she's beating you.



Then the instant she hands you that candy bar, break off mid-"WAAAAAH!" and burst into the biggest, cutest, sweetest smile she ever saw.

She may be slow, but she'll learn.

Note that the temper tantrum in each case is a put-on. Yes, Cowboy may be a little ticked off at Steer, and you may be a little ticked off at Puppy, but not *that* ticked off. Your act is just a grossly exaggerated and menacing display of displeasure that unnerves the object and makes him anxious to turn it off and avoid triggering future replays.

Even a spoiled three-year-old child's temper tantrums are put-ons. For, they occur exactly as I described the one above. The spoiled brat switches the temper

tantrum on and off in the blink of an eye, with no warm up or cool down. Which means that he isn't *that* upset over the candy bar: he's just [mask switching](#)²¹¹.



He uses the temper tantrum as a stick to regulate Mother's behavior. The sweet, adorable smile he breaks into when she conforms to his specifications is just a carrot (positive reinforcement) to reward her for being a good Mommy by doing what he wants.

Even infants catch on! They sometimes throw a temper tantrum, not because they're suffering with hunger or a soiled diaper or for any other conceivable reason. They just do it to get attention:

I do not remember my first lie, it is too far back; but I remember my second one very well. I was nine days old at the time, and had noticed that if a pin was sticking in me and I advertised it in the usual fashion, I was lovingly petted and coddled and pitied in a most agreeable way and got a ration between meals besides. It was human nature to want to get these riches, and I fell. I lied about the pin — advertising one when there wasn't any. You would have done it; George Washington did it, anybody would have done it. During the first half of my life I never knew a child that was able to rise above that temptation and keep from telling that lie.

— Mark Twain

This may be hard to hear, but your narcissist is controlling you with a device no more sophisticated than the good old temper tantrum.

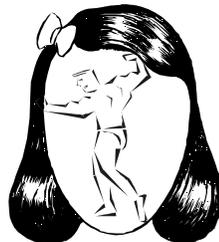
Throwing temper tantrums to manipulate your behavior is but an aspect of narcissists doing everything *for effect*, an aspect of them going through life playing to mirrors so as to get the wanted looks and behaviors in reaction. In other words, remember that this is what he's doing the whole time...



This is what you are to him...



And this is what your looks and behavior are to reflect...



You get the temper tantrum the moment you aren't doing that, the moment you aren't playing along with his game of 'Pretend.' In it he is God. He is the center of your universe as well of his own. You are to be in awe of him, to admire him, to see to it that the King lacks nothing he needs or wants, and to change his diaper regularly.

Since all narcissists do 24/7 is play Pretend, and all they want is for you to play along, they never needed to mature and find other ways to interact with people. So, they just use . . . and use . . . and use . . . and use the temper-tantrum technique. The moment you stray from his script, he raises an obnoxious ruckus.

You know what he wants. If not, keep trying things, like you do with a baby, till you hit on the right thing and the ruckus stops. This is extortion. Give him what he wants, or he won't let you have any peace.

One thing that will push a narcissist's temper-tantrum button for sure is objecting

to their abuse. You mustn't do that. You must docilely submit to abuse from God Almighty. In fact, it isn't abuse for God Almighty to treat you like dirt, because that's what you are relative to God Almighty, so quit insulting him by expecting him to treat you as an equal.

8.4.1 Forcing Submission to Abuse

Life with a narcissist is a never-ending put-down. How does he or she force the other members of the family to put up with it?

The narcissist just does whatever it takes to make them submit to her abuse. Any complaint goes in one ear and out the other, as if unhearing it annihilates it. Then the narcissist flies in the face of the complaint by **repeating the offense, more forcefully and with contempt**. She thus trains her family to submit by teaching them that demanding better treatment only gets them worse treatment.

What if that doesn't work? To repulse any further insistence that she treat them with respect, she just throws a temper tantrum.

One might as well try to talk into the blast of a foghorn. Sheer volume and irrationality can silence the other party, because nobody beyond the age of reason will degrade themselves by getting down to her three-year-old spoiled-brat-throwing-a-fit level to argue with her. Nonetheless, terror tactics, like hateful looks and a threatening posture in a menacing advance, or even wind-milling fists, may be part of the tantrum.

Every narcissist I have known has such uncanny skill in perverting the course of logic that every statement one makes bounces off his or her forehead twisted a full 180 degrees. They grab some word near the front of your sentence and blast off with it in God-knows-what direction to yell you down in a whirlwind of bewilderment.

One might as well argue with a cantankerous three-year-old.

Moreover, the narcissists I have known project this childishness onto the victim in the very act. For example, one man I knew reacted to any complaint about his insulting treatment of others by bawling "WAAH!" like a baby as if imitating the person trying to talk to him. But it's not enough for the crybaby to make *her* the crybaby, he also had to make himself the offended party. He did that by whining "Get off my back!"

Enough to make the head spin. He's twisting everything, isn't he? The big baby is calling *her* the big baby. The offender is calling *her* the offender. There's no end to this shit. There is no getting through that irrational wall of flak.

Presumably that's because, as I mentioned above, **narcissists want their unanswered say**. When they accuse you, you mustn't answer the accusation. When they insult you, you mustn't answer to tell them not to insult you. When they treat you abusively, you mustn't answer to complain about it. You must shut up and docilely submit to it.

For, remember, you are worthy of NO attention^[23], no regard, no consideration, and so forth. They won't even listen to you speak.

Narcissists are desperate to shut you up so you don't answer them, lest human voices wake them there in the Land of Pretend and they drown.

How desperate? So desperate that they go nuts if you won't shut up. From what I've seen and heard, it's common for them to threaten to call the police^[211] on a family member who won't just shut up and take it but insists on a chance to speak.

To deny you your right to speak, the narcissist just blabbers at the top of her lungs to drown you out. Or refuses to stay put and listen. She obdurately refuses to let you say anything she doesn't want you say.

You are supposed to shut up and just bend over for her abuse, to play along and pretend with her that she is God Almighty and you are dirt who deserves to be treated like that.

Do it or she will get so obnoxious that it will make you scream.



Narcissists throw temper tantrums because their personality development was arrested (at least in some aspects) at the stage of three-year-old. Again, let's remember what Mark Twain said about an infant's temper tantrum:

I was nine days old at the time, and had noticed that if a pin was sticking in me and I advertised it in the usual fashion, I was lovingly petted and coddled and pitied in a most agreeable way and got a ration between meals besides. It was human nature to want to get these riches, and I fell. I lied about the pin — advertising one when there wasn't any.

In other words, a temper tantrum is just a baby's lie. Baby *acts* enraged, like something is killing him. Why? To command your attention and control your behavior.

You can tell it's a lie — a melodramatic acting job — because Baby turns it on and off as if by throwing a switch. It's just his way of saying, "Don't go there" when you do something other than he wants you to. His way of saying, "Pet and coddle and humor me if you want any peace."

That's exactly what a narcissist does. And, like an infant, he is liable to hit you in one of his fits — in the same mindless state of mind as an infant hits its mother: as though you are but an object, a naughty toy, not a human being.

So, in a crucible, such as a home, the only way to coexist with a narcissist is to just let the brat have his way. He wants all the toys in his corner of the room so that nobody else can have any.

Often he is the man of the family. Since nothing short of beating him up for it could make him share his drug, his wife and children have no recourse. Nevertheless, if the man of the family is a real man, who will not use physical force on a woman or child, a narcissistic wife can be just as big a bully as the stereotypical narcissistic father.

The situation is better today, now that we are rid of the religious and social taboos against divorce that formerly doomed a narcissist's family to the hell that is his home. Also, today women have earning power, which allows them to escape without condemning their children to poverty. Nonetheless, the narcissists I have known had ingenious, even diabolical ways of trapping their spouse and making him or her financially dependent. For example, they immediately get their spouse pregnant and keep her pregnant so that, by the time Dr. Jekyll's mask is off, she has several babies and no job. Or, they seek out a woman who already has several young children, heroically insist that she quit working, and cunningly manipulate the situation to burn the bridges behind her. Or they stealthily calumniate their prey to get them fired and destroy their career, then play the part of a rescuer to support them. The prey is usually a

spouse, but it can be a child, a sibling, a parent, or any other unfortunate person who can't just walk away.

Though allowing a narcissist to get away with it is a big mistake, people do this because of their GOOD qualities. Indeed, the narcissist preys on the good qualities of normal, decent people. It is their GOODNESS that betrays them.

That's because normal, decent people don't like to fight. Also, they are rational and therefore know that the narcissist himself is the one degraded by the stupid game he plays, not them. Moreover, they have self-respect, so they can't bring themselves to stoop to the level he brings an argument down to. So, they rise above it, allowing the overgrown child to have his way in treating them without respect.

Unfortunately, thus, they spoil the brat, teaching him that his tactics work.

Since he can't live up to the basic standards of decency, they allow God the lower set of standards he needs, expecting no better behavior from him. Quite correctly, they see that he is inferior and incapable of better behavior. But there is a terrible pitfall in thus allowing him to relate to them inappropriately, as though he deserves all attention and they are insignificant. Thus, the whole family engages in tragic role playing that insidiously stamps its face on their character.

No wonder the narcissist gets grandiose delusions and believes that he really is something special. No wonder he takes on a dominant character becomes a domineering person.

And no wonder that his family becomes docile, even to the point of reduction to a state of victimhood. In fact, in a Christian society, they are pressured by outside forces to do so, because their anger (which is a feeling, not an act of the free will) is somehow regarded as a sin, and docile victimhood is somehow touted as a Christian virtue. Though it takes strong people to take narcissistic abuse, submitting docilely to it is bad for the backbone.

And the double-standard thus established is insidious. By expecting no better behavior from the narcissist, his family makes him infallible. That is, he cannot be faulted for anything he does. So, who IS to blame for his behavior then? You guessed it — the victim.

8.4.2 Acting Like It Didn't Happen

The next day, after taking a crap on you, he is all smiles. And expects you to be, too. In fact, he pulls the [projective identification](#)^[312] stunt on you to project his cheery mood into you.

Ah, how nice. Your abuser carries no grudge, eh?

If you don't pretend that the person who attacked you yesterday is a friend
If you don't pretend that you have no apology coming If you don't pretend that nothing has affected your relationship with the narcissist That is, if you don't act like it didn't happen . . . you are a sinner who doesn't forgive and forget, who doesn't "put it behind you," who "dredges things up from the past." Sound familiar?

This means that, in his home, his whole history of abuse must be washed away by everyone acting as though it didn't happen.

Acting as though it didn't happen. What does that make of it?

If I held a door for you yesterday, today you can act like it didn't happen. If you thanked me for holding that door yesterday, today I can act like it didn't happen. But if something important happened, we don't act like it didn't happen, do we?

Acting like abuse didn't happen is a lie.

Acting like it didn't happen makes nothing of it.

So abusing you is nothing. And if it's nothing, it isn't wrong.

And if abusing you is nothing, you are nothing.

Acting like it didn't happen is a statement that nothing happened. That him abusing you is okay. For, it puts abusing you in the same category as thanking you or praising you or kidding you — in the category of things for which there is no penalty = the category of non-wrong things you can do. Indeed, there is no such thing as a wrong deed that carries no penalty.

He doesn't have to patch your wounded feelings. He doesn't have to say he's sorry. He doesn't have to promise never to do it again. He doesn't even have to admit he did it. Let alone that it was wrong.

He has incurred no liability whatsoever. Anyone who says you're morally

obligated to forgive him had better clear the cobwebs out of their brain and start thinking for themselves.

By playing along with him in acting like it didn't happen, you are consenting in making abusing you okay. You implicitly give permission to do it again the next time he's constipated.

This is how you brainwash people and break their backs — by forcing them to act like it didn't happen. Especially when you raise them from birth in such an environment.

Imagine having to treat as a friend someone who treats you like dirt. That is acting out a lie.

Imagine having to treat as a true father, mother, spouse, brother, or sister, someone who has a long history of viciously attacking you for no reason. Someone who just needs to take a crap on you every so often. Someone who then feels better and is all smiles the next day, thinking you should be too.



And thus he just flushes his offense away by acting as though it never happened — forcing you to act out this charade for him.

Imagine having to relate to such a hostile enemy as to a friend.

Can anything be more perverted, self-destructive and against Nature?

That is the bending-for-it the narcissist imposes on those trapped with him in his home. If you are, or were, a child who grew up in a home with a narcissistic brother or sister and/or a narcissistic parent, you have my deepest sympathy.

8.5 Shock Tactics

Narcissists use shock tactics. They use them simply because they work. That is, they get a narcissist what s/he wants.

Narcissists shock you by reacting to something in a way that stuns you, like seeing an apple fall *up* from tree would. This is analogous to hitting someone on the head before you rob them. You are intellectually incapacitated, perplexed. While you're pinching yourself, you are disarmed, because you don't know what's going on. Your mouth is agape. You think there must be some misunderstanding, so you try to smooth it over.

The next thing you know, you've been run over. Shock tactics.

They prove that seeing isn't always believing, because afterwards you wonder if you imagined it. Maybe you missed something. The narcissist's behavior was so bizarre and crazy and hazy that you just can't quite believe it happened. Especially when he seems so normal today.

The typical reaction is to go into denial. To act like it didn't happen. That's what normal people do when they can't get their minds around something. In this case, it's a big mistake, because that is exactly what the narcissist wants.

Then it never happened, you see. His crazy behavior never happened. Really. He never abused you. Really.

Never, never, never forget for a moment that the narcissist ain't all there: he lives in the Looking Glass, the Land of Pretend, where acting makes it so. Truth has no relevance in that world. It doesn't even exist. The next day he acts like it didn't happen. That's his way of saying, "Let's Play Pretend It Didn't Happen." When you play along and act like it didn't happen, it didn't happen. His slate is clean, and he's not a crackpot.

So it's no wonder that narcissists like shock tactics when they discover how well they work at getting people into denial and acting like it didn't happen.

Especially when they hear idiots commenting, "Look, today he's acting like nothing happened. Well, okay, he has a terrible temper, but he's basically a good person, because see? he doesn't carry a grudge." The narcissist thinks, "Give that idiot an award!"

There are three elements to a narcissist's shock tactics:

- perversity
- extremism
- surprise

I mean *perversity* in the strictest sense of the word, as "thoroughly twisted." In other words, perverse behavior is not just odd, aberrant, or off course: it is backwards or upside-down, the antithesis of what would be appropriate.

A perverted reaction to something shocks us, because it's the opposite of what we expected. It also disarms us, because, in our interactions with others, we act with a view to the reaction we can expect in return. For example, you don't tell someone you love them to make them mad at you. If this is the first time you've told that person you love them, you might not know what to expect, but anger isn't one of the possibilities you have in mind. So, when he reacts with anger, you are stunned.

Usually we do know what to expect. And when we are wrong, there's normally some logical reason for it. For example, sometimes we get an unexpected reaction because we didn't see the action from the reactor's point of view.

Yet certain behaviors are so universal that we know what to expect even from a stranger with a different language and culture. Or even from an animal. For example, showing love evokes affection. Doing a favor evokes gratitude. Appeasement evokes peace.

But what happens when someone from the anti-universe reacts to these things with hatred, resentment, and aggression instead?

Ask Alice. She's been to Wonderland.

The narcissist's perverted reactions to things are also extreme. Extremely crass, vicious, and violent (either verbally or physically). He is a child who does not restrain his own behavior. The only reign on it is what he thinks he can get away with. So, behind closed doors with his family or a lone employee, he goes over the top in wanton meanness. It makes him feel as unbounded as God.

And last, the element of surprise. You'd think he had a hair trigger. His temper flares in a fraction of a second and unexpectedly, for some anti-reason.

Irascible? I don't think so. Narcissists are no more irascible than you or I. Their shock tactics are a device, that's all. In medicine and Oriental culture, this type of

reaction, an anti-reaction — a perverted, extreme, sudden reaction — is called an **insult**.

Here's an example of an insulting reaction: You throw water on a fire to put it out . . . only to have it flare up into a raging fire that vaporizes the water.

In other words, an insult is a blowback reaction, one that flies in the face of the stimulus. A narcissist's perverted reactions to things are insults, and they do **INSULT** you. For example, you try to appease him when he gets mad about something: instead of cooling off, he does the opposite — he flies into a rage over what you just said and attacks you all the more vehemently.

Narcissists cannot help but discover at an early age that normal people are taken aback by such absurd behavior. In fact, I doubt they need be aware of learning this. I say that because we sometimes subconsciously adjust our behavior to the kind they want in order to push their OFF button when they go into Obnoxious Mode on us. So, it seems to me that they can half-consciously learn some of their tricks.

However conscious they are of what they're doing, narcissists are amoral, so since shock tactics get them what they want, they use them. That's really all there is to it. Nothing deep, smart, or fascinating about it. Even a dog learns to growl and act ornery if it gets what it wants that way.

So, the moment you depart from a narcissist's script, he snarls. That is, the moment you act like his equal or as though you deserve anything. His sudden surliness at such moments is just his way of saying, "Don't go there," as if he were [herding stray cattle](#)^[316] back in the right direction. Play along; say or do nothing that contradicts his lies and delusions. It's hard enough to believe them, and you are hurting him if you aren't helping him believe them.

Here is an example. Let's say your narcissist has gone off about something. You try to smooth it over by saying, "Oh, come on. Let's not fight. I didn't mean anything by that. Really. I'd never want to hurt you."

He gets madder yet. Huh? Yes, he gets madder yet.

Why? Because that still isn't what he wants you to do. You still aren't playing along with his script in Pretend. **You didn't admit any wrongdoing**. What you said to appease him doesn't appease him because it doesn't reflect on him as grand and on you as a guilty, despicable thing.

Never forget that he is a mental three-year-old who knows only one trick: throw a temper tantrum whenever people aren't doing what you want them to. And keep throwing it till they get it right.

One of the most memorable scenes in Dante's *Inferno* occurs at the gates of Nether Hell. It is far below God's dump for the vast masses of weathervane minds blowing whichever way the wind of political correctness blows today. It is even far below those guilty of sins of incontinence or raw emotion. So far below that a gigantic, iridescently multi-colored winged scorpion (fraud) had to fly him and Virgil down from a precipice to the bottom of that abyss.



For a place nobody wants to go, the City of Dis was well defended. Huge walls. The Harpies (Furies) were the gatekeepers. Dante and Virgil had been able to relate to, and reason with, the souls in Upper Hell, had never been attacked by them, and had always gotten appropriate, natural reactions from them. So their initiation to Nether Hell was a shock.

For some inexplicable reason, the Harpies flew into a rage at Virgil when he asked to come in. Virgil, the personification of Reason, was stunned and perplexed by this backwards and extreme reaction. It was a blast of antigravity that blew back in his face and got him headed the opposite direction.

Moreover, he then acted as though it hadn't happened.

As they say, *Truth is stranger than fiction*. This was truth. Like Shakespeare, Dante was a keen observer of human behavior and knew that this is exactly what people do when subjected to the shock treatment: They blink and act like it didn't happen.

Like Virgil, people are perplexed by off-the-wall reactions to things. Like Virgil, we cannot imagine why anybody would do that. Like Virgil, even seeing that doesn't quite make us believe it. So, like Virgil, we go into denial about it, because it's too crazy to really have happened.

Been there? If you live with a narcissist you have.

Normal people would never degrade themselves by behaving stupidly, irrationally, childishly, or insanely on purpose. So, they don't realize that the narcissist is different — a being with a towering ego and zero self respect, who therefore is not above behaving stupidly, irrationally, childishly, or insanely on purpose . . . just to get his way with you.

Because he never has to know he's doing that. He can forever unknow he's doing that. That's what his Magical Thinking Machine is for. Playing Pretend.

8.5.1 Outrage

When a narcissist launches one of his surprise attacks, a normal person's first reaction is to assume it's a misunderstanding and try to resolve it. That's her first mistake. She does this because she assumes she is dealing with a normal human being, who must have felt offended by something.

But a narcissist evades and discourages your attempts to find out why he's mad.

Typically he does this with a reply that is a reply to something other than what you said. So, to an observer who entered at your question it would seem that you are like two actors saying lines from the scripts of different plays. In fact, that *is* essentially what's happening. Remember, the narcissist has the personality of a little child, who does not distinguish between reality and fantasy. So, his off-the-wall reply IS a line from a script, the fiction about this incident that he is imagining.

This is how the verbal exchange typically plays out. You ask why he's mad. He has no answer that he dares acknowledge, so the question is a threat to his delusions. At all costs, he must protect them. So, he annihilates your question by acting as though you never asked it. You get a comeback that replies to something other than what you said.

That's his way of crossing out your words and revising them. Typically his nonanswer hurls an incitatory insult or wild accusation. It's bait to draw you off the scent.

His favorite wild accusation is that *you* are always hurling wild accusations at him. Before you know it, this living, breathing Projection Machine is acting out a fictitious script in which **you** are the one who got mad, *you* are the one "flying

into one of your rages" over nothing.

 AND he is doing his best to make it so. He is trying to outrage you. For more on this game of projecting his own feelings on you and then trying to make you display them, see [Projective Identification](#)^[312]. Moreover, outraging you will really make him feel grand about how mightily he vaunted himself on you.

People typically report that the narcissist twists everything so fast and furiously that it makes their heads spin.

Sanity will get no further with him on these points than it did on the first point. For, he ain't all there. He's off in his own little world, simultaneously writing the play and acting out the part of the hero in it. If you contradict these lies, he will do whatever is necessary to cram them down your throat.

Like a three-year-old, volume is his weapon of choice: He will scream to yell you down and silence you. If that doesn't work, he'll probably get physical.

Also, narcissists relentlessly block communication by yanking a conversation bewilderingly off track every which way at once. So, rarely can you say afterwards what a rage or an argument was even about. Usually it's some vague rendition of you just being the way you are. And the narcissist says he doesn't have to put up with that.

You can't even just try to smooth it over with some form of appeasement. That's about as effective as it was with Adolf Hitler. His eyes light up at that — vroom! — he just shifts into high gear and runs you over. In other words, he just gets madder. Because you gave an inch, he takes a mile.

He acts like he's the one who is outraged, but that's part of the farce produced by his Magical Thinking Machine. You are the one subjected to outrage.

This is a willful and wanton outrage. The *aim* is to outrage you, to break you down into burning outraged tears. That's victory for the bully.

The reason all this outrages you is because it *is* an outrage. Especially in trying to cram his lies about you down *your* throat. That's extreme perversity — making someone bend over for it. And, if you have any respect for Truth, his willful and wanton contempt for it is another outrage.

So, don't let anybody send you on a guilt trip over this. First, you did nothing to

provoke it except get caught in his cross hairs. Second, don't let any airhead who just mouths whatever nonsense blows in the wind today tell you that you shouldn't be angry.

It is absurd to regard feelings as wrong or sinful. If a person gets burnt, there's something wrong with him if he doesn't feel burnt. Feelings are not a matter of choice, an act of the will. We can lie about them. We can deny/repress them. But we can't change them.

Know your anger. Because it's dangerous to repress it. Doing so just banishes it to the subconscious where it still motivates your behavior like an unseen puppet master. Know your anger, so you can deal with it appropriately and temper it with reason and good judgment.

8.6 The Perfect Crime

The narcissist commits the perfect crime — the one so outrageous nobody believes it happened. People always ask, "But why would anybody do that?" as if the motive of pure malice doesn't exist.

But it does. We see proof positive of that everyday in the newspapers. So, perhaps we should know what we know: there are a lot of people human predators out there.

Besides, why not ask the other question too: *Why would anybody invent such an outrageous accusation?* Statistics show that the blowback from coming forward with allegations of abuse is so strong and painful that few offenses are reported and false accusations are rare. In other words, the victim prefers to just take the abuse rather than get "that" for trying to get anybody to believe him.

That's because the victims are good people mortified by the thought of everyone thinking them evil for falsely accusing someone. They'd rather die than have the their whole world think "that" of them. This is true in child abuse, spousal abuse, rape, bullying, pedophile priests, and denial of civil rights in the school or workplace.

So, if people are going to jump to a conclusion, they should at least jump to the other one, the more likely one = that the alleged victim is probably telling the truth, incredible as it may seem.

But it's best to just investigate instead of jumping to conclusions. These crimes

occur so rampantly because law enforcement officials think they can divine the truth and decide to blow off the victim's complaint. They don't dare do that anymore in some areas, but it's time they stopped feigning omniscience in all abuse matters.

Narcissists have been practicing their art since childhood, so they needn't be smart to be good at it. They have a predator's radar. They are constantly acutely aware of anyone who may be watching them, anyone they can put on a show for, and this ingrained habit also makes them immediately aware of it the moment they are in a situation where nobody (but the victim) can see or hear what they're doing.

So, contrary to conventional wisdom, narcissists don't go off over little things: they go off whenever they have opportunity to let Mr. Hyde out without any witnesses.

Instantly they become a different person, shockingly abusive to deny respect with maximum impact by an extravagant display of contempt, indecency, and loathing.

And what do they do when they smell blood? Every one of them I have known or heard of reacted to the smell of blood by — WHAM — jumping on the victim again and harder.

Notice how unnatural that is. When a normal person fights, he or she lets up when they smell blood, because their objective has been accomplished and they have no desire to just hurt people. But not the narcissist. The smell of blood gives him a hit of his pain-killing drug, so that he just wants more. Therefore, what prompts normal people to reign-in an attack prompts a narcissist to pour it on all the more. Every one of them makes it a willful and wanton outrage.

And a diabolical one to boot. For, making the offense so outrageous, so willful and wanton, makes it incredible, right? Narcissists are fiends who know this. Their victims invariably complain that during the abuse the narcissist has *dared* them to tell anybody about it, taunting them that nobody would believe it, that "everyone knows you're crazy." That's why so much narcissistic abuse, in the home, school, workplace, and church goes unreported. Not because it's not a crime, but because the victim knows that nobody would believe old Angel-Face did such a monstrously evil thing.

8.7 Getting Away With It

Many, if not most, narcissists get away with bullying, slander, calumny, and abuse (even as prosecutable offenses) their whole lives. How? It's easy:

- make the abuse so outrageous people cannot see why anybody would do such a thing
- destroy the victim's credibility in advance.

No one does the things a narcissist does without thinking about the possible consequences. So, they are going to think up ways to avoid those consequences, too.

It doesn't take a genius to figure out that if you want to get away with abusing someone, you first launch a pre-emptive attack on their character, so that nobody will believe them when they soon complain about what you are doing to them.

Indeed, even children are smart enough to pull this stunt. They know enough to discredit their victim in advance — as "lying" and "imagining things" and "crazy." Yes, even young children at what we consider an innocent age are smarter than we often give them credit for being.

See also [The Smear Campaign of the Abuser](#)

Lundy Bancroft, author of 'Why Does He Do That — Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men,' says: "Abusers increasingly use a tactic I call "pre-emptive strike," where he accuses the victim of doing all the things that he has done."

See [Understanding the Battered in Custody and Visitation Disputes](#)

Everybody knows that when somebody defends himself *from* accusations *with* accusations, the crowd always believes the one who accused first and views the defendant as the attacker. This is irrational, because the initial accuser is the attacker and there is no more reason to believe one party than the other.

So, people don't do this in good faith. Indeed, the more preposterous the initial accuser's accusations, the more firmly people believe them! They do this out of self interest, because the return allegations make them look bad for eagerly swallowing the first accuser's preposterous and juicy lies whole. All con artists are thus protected by the pride of those they con.

The narcissist commits moral mayhem by destroying the victim's reputation and credibility, so that nobody will believe her about him. His description of her is projection, a perfect description of himself. That makes her radioactive, exiling her "to the desert" in the biblical sense, by busting her relationships with all who know them both and even with law enforcement and potential attorneys. Nobody will even listen to her. Thus, the narcissist reduces her to a hapless and helpless state.

Narcissistic bullies in the workplace, especially as administrators in nonprofit institutions, are notorious for doing this. Their total destruction of the victim's life is so willful and wanton that it can sometimes only be viewed as a deliberate attempt to drive him or her to suicide. And all too often it does.

See also

[Bystanders, observers, and witnesses — Why won't they help the victim?](#)

Yet the pattern is the same outside the workplace. For example, I can always tell when one narcissist I know is about to fly into a Narcissistic Rage at somebody to drive them "out of her life." She does this whenever her abuse has gone too far and she realizes that, out of concern about her mental health, they may start talking to her family or supervisors. The object is to cram so much gratuitous abuse down their throats that it psychologically chokes them and they just go away, emotionally eviscerated and probably needing therapy now themselves. (In my opinion, narcissists should be held as legally and financially accountable for these psychological damages as they are for any physical damage they might do.)

How can I tell when she's about to do this to somebody? She starts telling weird stories about that person. The details differ from case to case. For example, if she has been callous with that person, she accuses them of "being callous." If she has nosed into that person's private and personal matters, she accuses them of "being nosy." If she has told that person wild lies about her family, she accuses them of telling wild stories about their family. If she has beaten that person, she accuses them of "being violent." If she has been frigid to his acts of love, she accuses him of being a "pig" who just wants to "pork" on her. But one detail is almost always the same: she tells you stories about that person that could be true only if he or she were crazy and imagining things. In other words, the narcissist not only makes you dislike that person, she destroys his or her credibility.

Even a stupid narcissist I knew was smart enough to do that.

So, if you have known an adult narcissist for a long time, you probably think he

has a long trail of weird friends, lovers, schoolmates, and fellow workers or employees throughout his past. It has probably occurred to you that he seems to have run into a great many strange characters in his life. More than ten people should have. Guess why?

8.8 Withholding

I knew a man whose first family moved out on him, and, when another woman and her children moved in, they were overjoyed at the sight of the swing set and the basketball hoop. You could tell those poor kids had nothing and suddenly felt rich.

But letting their delight in these things show was a big mistake. The jerk suddenly stopped mowing back by the swing set, so that the weeds grew so tall around it they couldn't play on it. And he started parking old junked cars underneath the basketball hoop.

It was so obvious — because that was the only part of the lawn not mowed, and there was no need to park those vehicles right under the basket. Those boys often looked wistfully at it, but I never heard them ask if they could play.

I'm sure I know why they didn't.

Been there. Everyone who's ever lived with a narcissist has.

My mother told me about a man many years ago, whose sons worked hard all week on the farm (back in the days when they chopped wood, milked cows by hand, and plowed with horses). They had to come and ask him every Friday evening for a little money to spend at the local dance. And he always took off on a long walk out in the fields to make them chase him all the way out there for their pay.

I used to call it playing "Keep Away." Psychologists call it "withholding."

By withholding whatever they know you want, narcissists make themselves feel important. If you are observant of little children, you'll notice they do the same thing. For example, a child can be bored with a toy and about to leave it lay — till he notices that some other child wants it: then he plays Keep Away. If the other child pleads for it, he just gets more determined to keep it away, clutching it tightly to himself and yelling, "Nnno!"



Never forget that: the narcissist you are dealing with is full grown but every bit the three-year-old, and not a sweet one, either.

This stunt is a power play too, of course. I know a woman in whom it's a knee jerk reaction: whenever someone says "Will you...?" or "Can I...?" the first thing out of her mouth is, "You'll have to wait." However long you can wait, she will make you wait longer.

Narcissists often have to make you beg or grovel too.

When they see your eyes light on something you want, they look at it and see nothing but a stick to use as leverage on you. God Almighty wants to make you pray to him for it.

8.9 So, how do I win this game?

You don't. At least, I know of no way to win it, and I don't think there is one. Irrationality and perversity are invincible.

So, it's a catch-22. You can fight all the time, which is no way to live. Or, you can just take it, which is no way to live.

What would "winning" be, anyway?

The obvious, best solution is to just get and stay away from the narcissist. Some say they have managed to set firm "leave-us-alone" boundaries within a home.

But at least now you know what you're up against. You know the pitfalls and why you can't get anywhere. You understand your feelings better. You know it isn't your fault. And you can see whether your own behavior needs changing.

That's all you really have any control over. You can't change the narcissist. You can't even get through to him or her. But you can change yourself, if necessary, to make life better.

PART IX

The Teeter Totter Game

The Teeter Totter Game

Oh, Kitty! how nice it would be if we could only get through into Looking-glass House! I'm sure it's got, oh! such beautiful things in it! Let's pretend there's a way of getting through into it, somehow, Kitty. Let's pretend the glass has got all soft like gauze, so that we can get through. Why, it's turning into a sort of mist now, I declare! It'll be easy enough to get through —' She was up on the chimney-piece while she said this, though she hardly knew how she had got there. And certainly the glass WAS beginning to melt away, just like a bright silvery mist.

In another moment Alice was through the glass, and had jumped lightly down into the Looking-glass room. The very first thing she did was to look whether there was a fire in the fireplace, and she was quite pleased to find that there was a real one, blazing away as brightly as the one she had left behind. 'So I shall be as warm here as I was in the old room,' thought Alice: 'warmer, in fact, because there'll be no one here to scold me away from the fire. Oh, what fun it'll be, when they see me through the glass in here, and can't get at me!'

Then she began looking about, and noticed that what could be seen from the old room was quite common and uninteresting, but that all the rest was as different as possible.

— Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*

Children play. They play soldier, cops and robbers, hospital, cowboys and Indians. They pretend they are flying a spacecraft or driving a car. A race car. They dress up in big people's clothes. The girls get doll babies to play mommy with. Boys get trucks and tractors to play man with. Children are grand and perform heroic feats in their fantasies.

That's because being a child is hard on the ego. Children cope by escaping reality in these grandiose fantasies. To all outward appearances, the world they're living in is the same one you and I see, the real one. But there beyond the looking glass, what can't be seen from our perspective is "as different as possible."

They act-out their fantasies by pretending they're true.

Stage actors who act by pretending they really are the character they're playing and that the story is true can lose themselves in the character during a long-running show. Time for a trip to the psyche ward.

But normally only children fail to distinguish between fantasy and reality,

preferring the former (e.g., a monster under the bed or an imaginary friend). Children and narcissists, that is. A narcissist never outgrows this behavior.

Pretending is a strange thing. Have you ever pretended a lie over the phone — say that you cannot take part in some activity because you are busy with some big project today — and noticed how quickly you start believing that you're engaged in this big project that you're describing? Spooky!

The mind is a powerful thing, so it's best not to play games with it. Unfortunately, narcissists are reckless with theirs. Inherent in the very act of pretending is the underlying belief that pretending a thing makes it so.

In the Teeter-Totter Game that is what a narcissist is doing — playing, acting out a grandiose fantasy that bolsters his or her ego.

There is one big difference between child's play and narcissism though. A child's playtime fantasy dissolves when it's time to come home for lunch. A narcissist is trapped in his fantasy. He is preoccupied with it. He has lost himself in the imaginary character he's playing.

Since narcissists unknow the real person inside and identify with their image instead, like all hypocrites, narcissists are for looks only. So they don't care about being good, they just want to look good. Since looking good is all that counts, they do it the easy way. The easy way to look good is to look good by comparison = make those around you look bad. Substitute any pair of opposites for the words *good* and *bad* in that sentence:

- The easy way to look strong is to make those around you look weak.
- The easy way to look smart is to make those around you look stupid.
- The easy way to look important is to make those around you look insignificant.
- The easy way to look honest is to make those around you look dishonest.
- The easy way to look competent is to make those around you look incompetent.
- The easy way to look clean is to make those around you look dirty.
- The easy way to look superior is to make those around you look inferior.

The list goes on and on. I call it the Teeter Totter Game. Raise yourself by lowering somebody else. In other words, aggrandize yourself by devaluing somebody else.

Not. But don't try to make a narcissist understand that. he will just squint in pretending that *your* thinking is the fuzzy thinking.

For, nothing is absolute in a narcissist's world = everything is relative, relative to *him* — even Truth. So, Narcissus demeans others as much as possible, because the lower he brings them, the higher he brings himself.

Not.



This explains why narcissists usually treat their own immediate family worst: There are few outside the immediate family whom the narcissist dares to abuse so badly as to treat them like dirt. So, spouse and children are valuable for this use. They are worth every penny it costs to support them, because the narcissist gets the biggest step up on them.

And so, tearing down and putting down others is an integral part of NPD. Thus, the narcissist aggrandizes himself at others' expense.

9.1 The Rules

This multi-page article sets forth both the strategy and many of the tactics narcissists use to put others down. These methods are well documented. What I have tried to do is explain what the narcissist is up to in terms that are meaningful to the average person. More important, I give examples. That's because, like a picture, an everyday example is worth a thousand words. My aim is to help you understand and recognize narcissistic abuse *while* it is occurring. That helps you deal with both your feelings and the narcissist.

A caveat. Not everyone you catch playing the Teeter Totter Game is a malignant narcissist. Normal people sometimes play it against people they resent or dislike. Normal people also dish it back to a narcissist, thinking to teach him a lesson or beat him at his own game. Normally decent people often behave this way during a witch hunt or hostile takeover, to direct that wildly swinging hatchet toward

their betters. People who've let wealth or success go to their heads (acquired situational narcissism) may behave this way. Sanctimonious hypocrites make a virtue of tearing down others so they look good by comparison. Yes, narcissistic abuse is narcissistic abuse, no matter who does it. And understanding narcissistic abuse is crucial to dealing with anyone who dishes it out. But usually they are not malignant narcissists suffering from NPD. So, be careful with that label.

What distinguishes the person suffering from NPD is that, in him, the Teeter-Totter Game is like a knee-jerk reaction and seems compulsive. Indeed, narcissists dish it out like machines, indiscriminately — with a few noteworthy exceptions:

- They never do it to anyone there is risk of retribution from.
- They never do it to anyone they can aggrandize themselves by association with (e.g., a feared boss, a V.I.P. or anyone with power). .
- They never do it to anyone they're "courting," setting up, conning (e.g., a potential mate or business partner or some other host they will parasitize).

Which makes the narcissist's intent clear: everything he does is all about glorifying his image, period. A good example is the narcissist who has acquired a beautiful "trophy" wife. He idealizes her in public to other people (a way of boasting that he has the best wife) while devaluing her in private to her face (a way of putting her down to vaunt himself on someone).

Yet as complicated as the narcissist's game is, there are two generalizations you can make. First, whether he raises or lowers a person, he does so for his own aggrandizement. Second, he either idealizes or devalues a person to you: there is no in-between. If you know a narcissist well, you have probably noticed that he either sees nothing but good in a person or nothing but bad. You have probably seen his appraisals of people go upside-down overnight, for little or no apparent reason.

So, narcissists obviously do know what they're doing and can control it; they just don't unless that person might punch them in the nose or they might better exploit a particular person in a positive way. What's more, the more vulnerable and defenseless the target, the worse the abuse. So, his chief targets for abuse are those who would be a normal person's last targets — his own children, spouse, siblings and others near and dear to him. (Yes, they are dear to him, because he needs punching bags.)

Note that in this he is behaving like an animal predator, targeting easy prey, not anyone he has any reason for animosity toward. Love is obviously not a factor. The bully is attacking vulnerability and defenselessness.

Nothing but the credible threat of retaliation that puts him in a world of hurt can make him stop putting you down by playing the Teeter-Totter Game with every interaction, day in and day out. So, unless you're going to beat him up or leave him, just get used to it. Bucking this abuse, either through protest or through an appeal to reason or an appeal to the narcissist's heart, just touches off the typical Narcissistic Rage.

Which is essentially an irrational and violent temper tantrum, such as a spoiled brat throws to make you shut up and let him have his way. It's a fog horn he blows to drown you out, blocking communication, so that you just shut up and submit to Teeter-Totter abuse because the only thing more obnoxious is the way he acts when you try to get him to stop it.

In the examples that follow, you find two kinds of narcissistic interactions: those with the person the narcissist devalues and those with other people concerning that person. In interactions with the person he devalues, the narcissist denies many things, like acknowledgment of rights, credit, gratitude, and so forth. But these are just different ways of denying that person **gratification**.

Often, those denied it eventually come right out and ask for what they want from the narcissist. For example, after slaving over Thanksgiving dinner all day, his wife might say that she wishes he would say a meal was good now and then. On Prom Night, his daughter might ask him if he thinks she looks nice. Somebody grieving or depressed who needs comfort or somebody to talk to will see him acting as though he can't stay far enough away from them and come right out and ask for comfort, a shoulder to cry on, or somebody to talk to. This appeal would prompt a normal person to give it up. But it prompts a narcissist to withhold like a child withholds a toy that another child asks for: He wraps both arms around it tightly and clutches it close to himself, yelling "No!"

In other words, he reacts hostilely to an appeal for consideration, as if it were a hostile act. Those who live with narcissists get mighty sick of this. Sooner or later they make confrontational requests for the consideration it would kill him to give. "Was the meal good? Did you like it? Would it kill you say so?" "You have never said you loved me. Do you?" "I really need somebody to talk to and I have no one else. Can't you listen for a minute?" The more forceful the demand for his attentions, the more violently he repulses it. At this point he will almost always fly into a Narcissistic Rage. In a narcissist who has abused his mind for decades, it may be so infantile that it even includes bawling (i.e., uttering no words, just roaring to drown you out), covering his ears, squeezing his eyes shut tight, and stamping his feet.

9.2 Physical Bullying



One of the first, and least sophisticated, ways a narcissist pretends to be greater than you is by vaunting himself on you to degrade you by physical bullying. We see this behavior in the typical neighborhood bully, who picks on, and beats up on, kids littler than him.

Studies have been done in which hidden cameras were used to capture bullying behavior in a school yard. It starts with actions that may not seem very abusive, unless you take into account how greatly disturbed and humiliated the victim is. These behaviors include *downward* shoves, sudden advances to yell at the target in a taunting manner with arms flailing or to push the victim *down*. — always DOWN.

The message is clear: *I raise myself by lowering you.*

Bullying children act out these little out-of-the-blue assaults as though nothing is meant by them and as though they are merely a spontaneous part of the general active play of the group. In fact, these sorties are so brief and seemingly nonchalant that you hardly notice them in all the commotion of children at play. Camouflage! No wonder teachers watching the playground from indoors don't realize what's going on.

So, you think nothing of this behavior till you carefully observe long enough to catch on to the pattern and see how degraded the victim is made to feel by what must go beyond mere excitement and be deliberate, repeated taunts and physical put-downs. It's plain to see that even little children deeply feel the moral implications of physical actions and are deeply wounded by them. It's the psychological aspect of the abuse that hurts most, even in this unsophisticated form of physical narcissistic abuse.

Of course, the more a bully gets away with, the bolder he gets. I hope it's unnecessary to say just how mean and sneaky child bullies get.

Your typical wife beater is a grownup doing the same thing. He can't devalue her enough, because the more he does, the more he's pretending to aggrandize himself. So, he even forces her to her knees and rubs her face in dirt and excrement to aggrandize himself as much as humanly possible. Oooh, does that make him feel grand.

But most narcissists learn more sophisticated, and safer, ways to do the same thing. Subtly, so as to avoid arrest and prosecution.

Not that adult narcissists are unlikely to be physically violent.

If, for example, a narcissist has gotten away with physical violence against a brother sister, he or she will continue to be physically violent with that sibling throughout their adult lives, even if that narcissist doesn't dare to lay a hand on anyone else. This is because physical violence has been established as part of their relationship and the narcissist doesn't fear being held to account for it. She has been given the right to punch and kick her brother and sister. Even adult female narcissists will force a sister onto her back and climb on top her, saying things like "I'm stronger than you."

And the brother or sister has been brainwashed into tolerating it, into believing that her rages are their fault...

- and that her physical violence is acceptable, because that's just the way she is
- and that they must just take whatever someone else dishes out, because it's a sin to fight or yell back or even get angry
- and that you must love a brother or sister no matter what (even if they hate you)
- and that you must never report to the authorities anything that would embarrass your family
- and that it is a sin to not forgive what the sister from Hell does today so that she has no reason not to do it again tomorrow.

Also, a narcissist failing to get the attention he craves becomes desperate for it and may turn to physical violence as a way to get attention.

[Lee Harvey Oswald](#)^[179] seems to be an example of this. When his Russian neighbors got his number and lost interest in him, he asked permission to return to the United States. He apparently won it with a crude pipe-bomb placed near where Soviet Premier Khrushchev was to make an appearance. Once here he tried to get attention by shilling for Communist dictator Fidel Castro. Ho-hum, nobody noticed. So then he tried to assassinate a right-wing general. Failed. Finally he succeeded in getting attention. Boy, did he get attention. The piss ant

assassinated President Kennedy (a president he had often said was a good one he approved of) just because Kennedy would be passing through his gun sights that day and to get attention by knocking off someone — anyone — important.

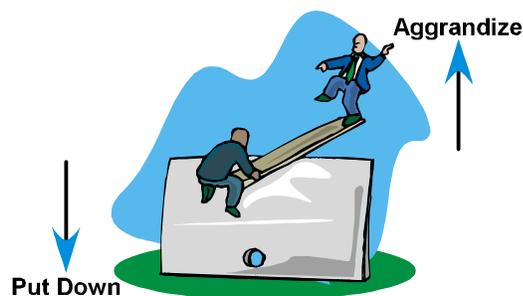
Note: Oswald's assassin, Jack Ruby, seems to have had him pegged and killed him to deny him the limelight Oswald was so eagerly waiting to step into before the press that day.

In fact, a criminal psychopath may be a narcissist who turns to physical violence like rape, child molestation, or serial murder for the same reason. Or, they may do it simply because they have gotten away with everything they can think of short of that. This has emboldened them, and the only way they can push the envelope to something more risky (i.e., stimulating) is to prove their grandeur by getting away with abuse that constitutes a violent crime.

In any case, it is a mistake to view all physical violence as unsophisticated abuse. The the violent physical abuse of criminal psychopaths is very sophisticated. Think of the symbolic mind games the physical violence of [Ed Gein](#), [Jeffrey Dahmer](#), and [Ted Bundy](#) acted out. Remember also that they like to force their victims to bend over for it and that they force their victims to beg for their lives. As always, the mental cruelty, not the physical violence, is the most abhorrent aspect of it.

It's all a way of saying, "See? I make you nothing, so I am God Almighty." The Teeter-Totter Game.

9.3 Refuse to Acknowledge Your Presence



Why elevate yourself just a little by devaluing others a little, when you can elevate yourself all the way to God status by devaluing others all the way to zero? All you have to do is make nothing of them.

Act like they aren't there. Unsee, unhear them. Pay no more attention to them than you would to a fly on the wall. That's a powerful way of pretending that

they are beneath your notice, which makes you God Almighty.

An example is the narcissist in a restaurant who won't look at his family or join in the conversation. While there's food on his plate, he stares at it. Before and afterwards, he turns his chair a little aside and stares intently at some fascinating feature in the corner of the ceiling, thoughtfully resting his chin between the thumb and forefinger of the arm he props up at the elbow so he can ponder the mysteries of it for twenty minutes straight.

Another example is the narcissist who makes a big show of coming to visit his dying wife in the hospital. But he never talks to her or even looks at her. He goes straight to the window, keeps his back turned to her, and stares intently at some construction work going on in the parking lot below.

Yet another example is the narcissist who works nights and won't even yell at his children when they raise a ruckus to awaken him early. That would acknowledge their presence, so, no matter what, he can't do that. It would be a come-down for God Almighty to even know they're there.

When he meets people he knows, he avoids eye contact — you know, that momentary eye contact that amounts to recognition and acknowledgement of your presence. By acting like he doesn't see you or refuses to look at you, he shows that he's not open to an exchange of greeting.

In distant settings, he is portraying himself as distinguished — important or famous — by treating you as just another face in the crowd of "the unwashed masses." Thus he says, "You aren't worthy of my notice." Or "You are so insignificant that I don't remember ever meeting you. I don't recognize you."

In the workplace, a severely afflicted narcissist is brazenly rude in doing this. When he meets you, he avoids eye contact with a scowl. As if expecting him to acknowledge your presence were an imposition. As if saying "hi" to people you know is silly or phony or something. As if he is above that. As if this age-old universal rule of courtesy does not apply to him.

Either way, he's exalting himself at your expense: you are beneath Superman's notice.

For, in his twisted thinking, his falling short of the common standard of civility makes him superior. (Then scoring an "F" makes one superior to someone who scores an "A," right?)

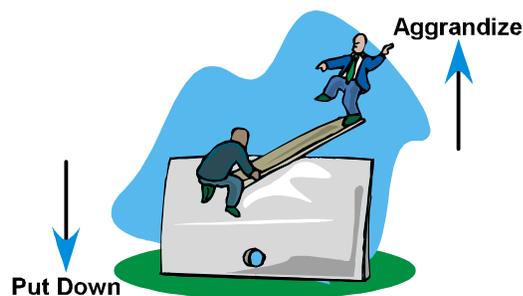
Shakespeare emphasized that the truly noble live up to higher standards than others. Similarly, he emphasized that the "grace" attributed to noble lords and ladies was supposed to be graciousness. In other words, the truly noble treat everyone with polite respect. All Shakespeare's heroes exemplify this, but he personified the perfection of true nobility in the character of Hamlet.

I know of a narcissist who did this to his fellow employees for many years, and they never got used to it. They subscribed to the myth that it was *their* fault it bothered them. Baloney. We cannot help but sense, not only the put-down, but also the hostility in this behavior. That's because greeting behaviors to establish an encounter as that between friends or foes is hard-coded into the genes of all animals. So, it's unwise to go against our instincts and into denial about how this treatment makes us feel. That narcissist is not only saying, "You are beneath my notice," he is withholding the customary greeting of *Good morning* (short for *May you have a good morning*) or the like — an expression of goodwill. So, this withholding is actually an expression of **aggression** that we should pay attention to our instincts about.

It's the defense mechanism of a pathetic little man. He acknowledges the existence of only his pets, people he has trained to wag their tails and mirror him. Everybody else (i.e., those who don't worship him) is a threat to his flimsy facade. The all-important word there is *threat*. Like anyone, the narcissist is hostile to anyone he views as a threat.

Ironically, when trying to control you, the same narcissist may give you an impudent stare, maintaining an inappropriate eye contact in a kind of stare down.

9.4 Denigrate Others



A narcissist speaks of others in a way nobody wishes to be spoken of. That is,

the narcissist speaks of others in a way that damages their image. Narcissists do this on the premise that making others look bad makes them look good by comparison.

Often the detraction is camouflaged in subtlety, left-handed, couched in innuendo and heavily perfumed to smell like innocent humor or "concern." Concern, especially "Christian concern," is the really putrid disguise for slander, the one that makes you want to puke. If you ever catch wind of a bunch of people going around expressing Christian concern about one of their number, look out, there's about to be a crucifixion. And nine times out of ten there is at least one malignant narcissist orchestrating it.

So, for disguise, narcissists often denigrate others by damning with faint praise or betraying with a kiss. One I knew came out smelling like a rose by always sprinkling his rotten offering with incense like *I don't want to sound, but . . .* or *I don't want to look, but . . .* Or *I don't want to seem, but . . .* And then he proceeded to BE exactly what he'd just said he didn't want to sound or look or seem. It makes you want to go off like Hamlet and cry, "*Seems, madam! Nay, it IS! I know not seems.*"

All too often the narcissist's audience hears no harm in his words, because they themselves are gratified by detraction of someone else. Juicy. Yet, their intelligence would instantly improve the moment such words were spoken of themselves. And the narcissist would be enraged if anyone spoke of him the diminishingly way he speaks of others.

Under such phony disguises, the vandal keeps chipping away at another person's image till the cumulative effect has so marred it that nobody thinks well of that person. Detraction is just another way of playing the Teeter-Totter Game. I gave some examples of how narcissists vandalize other people's image in the [2nd Red Flag of Narcissism: Damages Others' Images](#)^[88].

One easy way to nick a person's image is with a nickname. Many narcissists never grow up and stop imposing stupid nicknames on people. (Nobody dares call *him* by a nickname though.) He names people whatever he pleases. It never occurs to him that someone else's name isn't his to do with as he pleases, that they and their parents have say in what they should be called.

A good example of this that everyone knows about is the way Native Americans are caricatured by some sports teams. Many Indians object on the grounds that these caricatures portray their race in a way that damages their image, pointing to logos of a maniacal, red, war-painted face that is all a wide-open mouth

screaming a bloodthirsty war cry.

The narcissist refuses to confront the real issue and confuses it by sidetracking the debate off onto whether the Indians complaining should be offended. All narcissists always pull this stunt when you protest the way they talk about you. Their minds perform logic with an egg beater, the result being that the narcissist thinks the offender may determine what the offende may be offended by. Narcissists thus presume to be the judge of a complaint against them.

No wonder they always get acquitted! No wonder they find that the offended party should be satisfied, or even flattered by, what he does to their image.

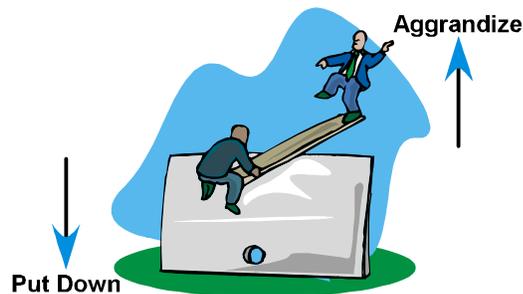
An orderly mind knows that if people are offended, they're offended, period. Whether they're too touchy or not is beside the point. The point is that, unless you *want* to offend them, you stop doing what offends them if you can. Showing respect for their feelings by doing as they ask wouldn't hurt a thing. In fact, it would prove that no disrespect is intended. So why would anyone acting in goodwill refuse to prove that? Why prove instead that you are at least guilty of callously not giving a damn if they are offended?

But the narcissist never does respect your wishes. Instead, he uses egg-beater logic to make a virtue of doing what offends you all the more.

Good people don't diminish others in any way they speak of or depict them. Good people don't spread nasty rumors and gossip. They speak well of others. And when they do have to bear witness against someone, they bear true WITNESS, which isn't a cheap shot or an anonymous denunciation behind the back. True witness is responsible witness, on the record and for the sake of justice, not character assassination.

Moreover, whether you believe in him or not, I think everyone agrees that Jesus of Nazareth was an example of an honorable man. Note that he had not one bad word to say about anyone, not even publicans, Samaritans, Roman soldiers, prostitutes. In fact he characteristically found something about them to praise them for. Correction. There is one group of people he attacked — those sanctimonious hypocrites who played the Teeter-Totter Game = went around showing how holy they were by calling other people sinners and lowlifes = the scribes and Pharisees, professional fault-finders. Those he cursed with a sevenfold curse and repeatedly attacked. My kind of guy.

9.5 Devaluing Contributions



If you know a narcissist, you've probably noticed that she has a peculiar habit of itemizing each party's contribution to a thing. She does this to stake out her claim to the credit for the part that was her doing or idea, as if she's afraid you're going to steal it from her. That's because she thinks you're like she is, a person who steals the credit due others. Rest assured that, in telling the story behind your back, she will get all the credit and leave you out of the picture.

For instance, though she still lives with them scot-free, you will have to paint your folks' garage. The next time, they probably will prevail on her to do it, because it really is embarrassing to have another son or daughter come from a hundred miles away to do it when she *lives* there.

Then, for the next twenty years, she tells the story of the operation, magnifying every step and detail of the work so much her audience sweats just hearing about it. And she will lie by omission that she is the only son or daughter who ever painted your parents' garage. If you remind her that you did, she will say that she had to scrape every bit of your painting off because you didn't scrape enough and therefore she "worked hard." It goes without saying that the work you put in was nil.

At the workplace too narcissists devalue the contribution of everyone else. The result is that the narcissist is elevated to "special" status as the only one who can be counted on, the best teacher in the school, the one all the kids want for Chemistry, the only one who cares whether the meat going out the door is safe for people to eat, the only one keeping bad jobs from coming off the line and out to auto dealerships in an unsafe condition. I gave an example of this in the [narcissistic daughter's story of her "heroics" in caring for her sick mother](#)^[81] for a few weeks, one in which the visiting nurses are incompetent.

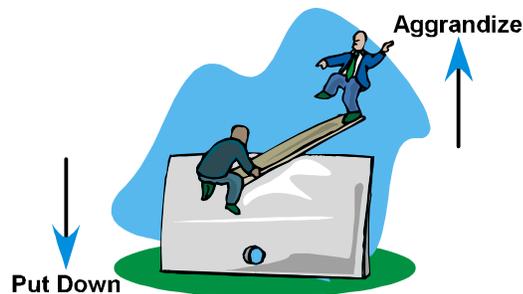
As [Joanna Ashmun writes](#):

The simplest everyday way that narcissists show their exaggerated sense of

self-importance is by talking about family, work, life in general as if there is nobody else in the picture. Whatever they may be doing, in their own view, they are the star, and they give the impression that they are bearing heroic responsibility for their family or department or company, that they have to take care of everything because their spouses or co-workers are undependable, uncooperative, or otherwise unfit. They ignore or denigrate the abilities and contributions of others and complain that they receive no help at all; they may inspire your sympathy or admiration for their stoicism in the face of hardship or unstinting self-sacrifice for the good of (undeserving) others. But this everyday grandiosity is an aspect of narcissism that you may never catch on to unless you visit the narcissist's home or workplace and see for yourself that others are involved and are pulling their share of the load and, more often than not, are also pulling the narcissist's share as well.

It's always the same old story. Others did nothing. Or, if they did do something, they didn't do it right. Or if they did, what they did was unimportant compared to what the narcissist did, and they did very little compared to what he did in almost single-handedly shouldering this huge burden all by himself.

9.6 Devaluing Help



Because narcissists can't get enough attention, because they need it all, a narcissist's middle name is Needy. But being needy is anti-grandiose. So narcissists must delude themselves into thinking they are the opposite, self-sufficient. And they must project their infinite neediness off onto others.

This creates a problem for them: how to suck all the mothering they need and pervert the transaction so that Mamma comes out looking like the one whose needs were served. The convoluted game these sidewinders play is a piece of work.

For example, the narcissist keeps coming to the kitchen to see whether food is on the stove. In and out. In and out. In and out. If that doesn't work, he sulks around

the kitchen looking hungry. It would kill him to say what he wants though. His wife is to ask him whether he wants dinner now. He gets surly and keeps buzzing in and out, in and out, in and out, till she gives in and does. He replies "Okay" and acts as though the early meal is for her convenience.

If the above tactics don't get his wife to attend to his unspoken need, he says "When are we gonna eat?" as if she is tardy or failing in her duty.

But if she strapped him to a rack and used medieval instruments of torture on him, she couldn't get him to confess that he wants something to eat. It would be an unbearable humiliation for Superman to show he has feet of clay and admit that. Nor could she get him to simply ask her to prepare dinner early. God Almighty should not have to ask anybody for anything. Besides, whenever he finds out that someone wants something, he plays Keep Away with it, so he assumes that she would do the same. Though he has known her for twenty years and she has never done such a thing, he doesn't know her well enough to know that.

So, narcissists suck your attentions and help, but they never ask for it, and they never accept it when offered. In their world, a work of fiction, they need nothing. Also, they don't pay their way. That is, they deny you what they owe you in return for your attentions and help — credit for what you've done, gratitude, appreciation. Then these deadbeats view your wanting what they owe you as (of all things) **NEEDINESS** in you!

The game narcissists play is so highly nuanced and duplicitous that I should mention an exception here. If you are staying away from a narcissist, he will ask your help. He will trump up some emergency to justify calling you for help. But he's just fishing for you with that for bait. If you take it, he will play you like a fish on the line.

For example, one narcissist I know of monopolized daily phone conversations with a friend, jabbering for hours. Yet it was always the friend who had to call. The friend tested her, sometimes not calling for weeks. The narcissist would never be the one to call. But then when the friend did call, the narcissist seemed thrilled, got more excited than usual, and was super sweet.

One day the narcissist indirectly let it slip that she viewed herself as generously "being there" for the friend, who "needed someone to talk to." Needless to say, the shocked friend was farced out and cried, "What?" She stopped calling and stayed away from the

narcissist. Then the narcissist trumped up an emergency, called the friend, won her sympathy, and gradually played the friend back into her life. At which point, she stopped calling again — after she had the friend calling *her* again.

Such tortuously twisted thinking is not just reckless abuse of the brain, it's diabolical. By never paying their debts of gratitude, they *make* you thus "need" what you've got coming. Then, of course, "needy" you is just "tapping them out" by wanting too much gratification in the form of "please" and "thank you."

My own observations lead me to believe that narcissists actually have a great (almost panicky) fear of ever having to admit that they need or want anything. Or ever having to express gratitude. They act as though that would be a horrible degradation. The truth is that there is nothing in them to tap out: they're morally bankrupt. So, you might as well try to get blood from a turnip. The families of narcissists get so sick of this that they just let the pathetic brat pass as a charity case. He's the one who needs a free ride, so he need never pay his way with a "please" or "thank you."

And so, infinitely needy Narcissus twists it all as usual — so thoroughly that he deludes himself into thinking he needs nothing from the inferior, human beings around him who always need something from him. He is self-sufficient like God = he cannot ask for anything, and he cannot say "Thank you." (Yes, I know that makes him more impotent than omnipotent, but this is his twisted logic, not mine.)

An infant whose whole world is but a collection of objects that revolve around him, he manipulates them to behave as though his delusion is true (projective identification). That means *you*. To support his grandiose delusion, you must make sure he never needs to ask for anything. You must divine or anticipate his needs. In other words, Superman is an infant who needs your mothering but can't tell you what he wants.

Again these examples run the risk of oversimplifying the tangled maze of a twisted mind. I have seen narcissists over-thank, magnifying something you did for them to astronomical proportions.

It's always ungratifying. It can even be insulting. For example, nobody likes their acts of common decency (viz., helping in a medical emergency) characterized as heroic. Any stranger, lowlife or hardened criminal on the scene would do likewise. Making a big

deal of it makes common decency a big achievement for you. Which is no compliment.

When I observed over-thanking, it usually seemed a case of protesting too much. For example, if you confront a narcissist with his behavior, he has nothing to say for himself. He acts deaf, as if his unhearing them annihilates your words. But later you often hear an echo. For example, say you confront him about never saying "thank you." Later he thanks you profusely for some little thing. For days. He "proves" that your accusation was false by gobbing this make-up on his image really thick over that spot. Then he goes back to being himself — an ingrate.

Another time he shifts gears is when the situation changes. If he fears abandonment (by you or whomever he currently lives with), he will suddenly start flattering you and thanking you to death for things. You will suddenly become the greatest person in the world. That's because, like any parasite, he cannot survive without a host. Don't fall for it.

Pour a narcissist a drink and he will say, "There" or "Okay" instead of "Thank you."

To test a person you suspect of being a narcissist, give them something in a way that leaves them almost no way to avoid saying "thank you." For example, one narcissist I know of was given canned food her friend could not use on a special diet. If the narcissist didn't want it, she should have said so or accepted it saying "thank you" and afterwards threw or gave it away. But guess what she did? She took it saying that she didn't want it and would throw it away.

How's that for denying someone a "thank you" with maximum impact?

Thus this narcissist devalued the gift and giver. In the narcissist's game of 'Pretend,' her friend is a Zero, you see. So, the friend can give nothing that would be of any value to a Superwoman like the narcissist. And she couldn't just turn down the offer: she had to take the food and TELL Zero how anti-appreciated it was. In other words, Superwoman had to be abusive about it.

That example clearly shows that, though narcissists are extremely touchy and prone to rage over some imaginary slight, they insult people as offhandedly as they step on a bug. This narcissist saw no reason why her friend should be offended.

Are you divorced and alone for Thanksgiving? Your narcissistic sister thinks you should be grateful for the table scraps she graciously bestows on you in a brown paper bag at her back door.

These examples show not only how averse to saying "thank you" narcissists are, but also that they do not think others have any right to decent (let alone tactful and polite) treatment from them. That's because they gotta have it all, so they fight tooth-and-nail over every ounce of gratification in a social transaction.

For example, I know a narcissist who does not even know how to find and navigate the directory tree in Windows Explorer, let alone how to move, copy, paste, or rename files and folders. I offered to show her how to manage her files and to install any additional Windows components she might want. She kept putting it off. One day, I was there for other reasons and wanted to get it over with. On suggesting that we get to it — boom — she went off. She said I was pushing her to do that for me. Yes, you read right. She viewed letting ME help HER as HER doing something for ME.

Yet, according to her logic by egg beater it *was*: Accepting my help would be an acknowledgment that a peon like me could help God Almighty. Unthinkable. She must prevent me from extorting this teeny weeny bit of gratification from her. It was something to fight over. Something to keep away from me, at any cost.

Note that, in this example, the narcissist acted as though I was the one playing the game.

That game corrupts all a narcissist's interactions with others. In this case, it adulterated the interaction so that it wasn't about her file system and Windows installation: it was about her ego instead. She was so fixated on the implications for her ego that she was blind to the fact that, in refusing this help, she was cutting off her nose to spite her face. Narcissists often make such stupid, egotistical choices for this same stupid reason. That is how narcissistic business executives run businesses into the ground.

For more examples of how a narcissist denies gratitude in this game, see [Narcissistic Pathology of Everyday Life](#). It is academic but well written = very readable. Even if a few sentences in the first part go over your head, the examples of narcissistic behaviors are great and easy to understand.

In fact, narcissists never acknowledge that others deserve *anything* decent. Only the best of everything is good enough for the narcissist, but anything is good

enough for everyone else.

For example, let's say that your landlords haven't painted in fifteen years and have refused to fix leaking faucets and holes in the wall from falling plaster. The narcissist will say that the rent isn't high enough for you to deserve that they keep the place up — indeed that they are "carrying" you. In other words, they're being charitable, and you don't deserve a decent place to live.

And so, by thus devaluing you, he thinks he elevates himself. Yeah, sure — to the level of a churl.

9.7 Belittling Ability & Achievement



Most narcissists I know about missed their calling: they would have made excellent spin doctors, propagandists, and trout fishers, because they knew how to bait and cast a line. They also were ventriloquists to avoid responsibility for what they said. Each had two or three wooden-headed dummies to go forth and echo their lines all over the place, thus serving as their remotely controlled mouthpieces.

Are you outstanding for your intelligence? Or have you done something brilliant? One narcissist I know of was sure to show how fair-minded he was by granting you the line that you were "knowledgeable." For, of course, any idiot can learn enough about something to get knowledgeable. He had one of those give-away majors and was so envious of a science teacher that he thought it was smart to act unaware that science teachers sometimes need to wear lab jackets to protect their clothing: He made fun of it by calling it a "barber's jacket" on the grounds that, by wearing it, she was trying to impress everybody as if she was "some kind of doctor."

You wouldn't be caught dead reading the *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The New Yorker*, or even *The New York Times*, because he'd make the line on you that you were

trying to impress everybody as though you were some kind of intellectual.

To sic him on someone, all his boss had to do was praise that person in front of him.

For, narcissists must be the greatest, so they can't let anyone be higher than them on that teeter-totter.

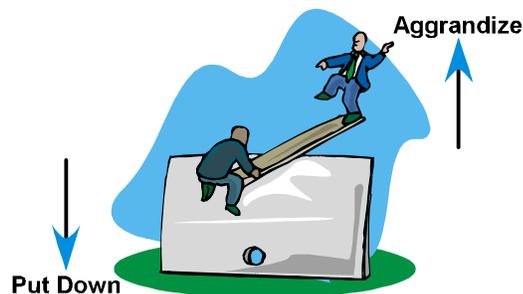
One narcissist I heard of was a coach. Through his ventriloquist's dummies he circulated lines that waged a continual campaign to deny all coaches besides him and his dummies any recognition or credit for anything. He could even make nothing of an undefeated season and a second place finish at State. That gets no recognition. But his team's Conference Championship was the talk of the town.

Then there's the narcissistic parent who never attends parent-teacher conferences or looks his kids' great report cards. He even manages not to know about it when one of them becomes a National Merit Finalist. Any excellent thing they do or achieve is a non-event. He thus devalues their achievements by making nothing of them. Only his (far inferior) achievements are worthy of acclaim, and he can't get enough ooh-ing and ahh-ing over everything he does.

One narcissist I know of devalued a self-employed woman's work by never referring to it as "work" or a "job" and never mentioning her occupation or title. She just referred to her as "being on the computer" every day.

Of course the main way narcissists devalue work, abilities, and achievements is by total blindness to them. As if that annihilates them. Get wild applause compared to him and he will be totally unaware of that. Though his knife will be in your back the next day. For, by shining you have diminished the glow of his glory.

9.8 Refusing to Acknowledge Rights



Only special treatment is good enough for the narcissist, but nobody else deserves any consideration at all.

For example, let's say you are victimized by some powerful person or institution in a way that would outrage any normal friend or loved one. Some travesty of justice or affront to basic human rights. Maybe it's an unscrupulous employer or an employer covering up malfeasance in high places to avoid bad publicity. Maybe it's a religious institution suckering you with dirty tricks to falsely incriminate you, the victim of a crime, in order to avoid a lawsuit when you find out that it has no intention of dealing with the criminal in its ranks. Maybe it's a bully in the workplace. Maybe you were raped by a powerful and important businessman who buys off authorities. In any case, expect no comfort or support from a narcissist. He will not acknowledge that you have any rights that were violated. I know of one who made nothing of fraud, extortion, denial of civil rights, and obstruction of justice with the line, "They can just do that to you."

If you put yourself in the victim's shoes, you can see that the callous line *They can just do that to you* has the moral effect of a club. For, it not only obstructs facts, reason, logic, and morality — if they can just do that to you, you have no rights. If you have no rights, you are not a human being. You might as well be a bug. So, the line *They can just do that to you*. is a dehumanizing value judgment that beats you down when you're already down. It is typical of the line a narcissist makes up and sticks to about such things

In fact, to rub your face in this zero valuation of you, the narcissist will stay, or get, on good terms with that employer, institution or person. He tips his hat to that businessman on the street and keeps purchasing merchandise in his store. He keeps going to that church and sanctimoniously prays for you, bad Little Red Riding Hood, for staying away from Grand Mother's House. He keeps secret that employer's abuses or that businessman's crime. To others, he wags his head about you and "your problems." No matter that you are supposed to be his "best friend" or a "beloved" member of his immediate family.

Thus, he betrays you with a kiss by associating with your wrongful mortal enemy. As if he just doesn't see what might be wrong with that.

Making nothing of crimes against a person makes nothing of that person. If you don't like this devaluation and ask the narcissist to at least admit you have rights and have been wronged, he will do what narcissists always do whenever you try to pry any regard from them: he will make himself the offended party whose rights are being violated and throw a temper tantrum.

PART X

The Rat Game

The Rat Game

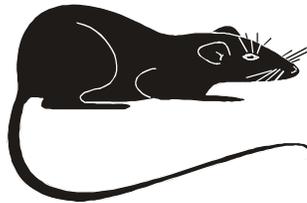
In a psychological experiment, you can take a bunch of lab rats, put them in a cage, and equip it with a button that delivers a treat when they push it. Soon those rats will learn to push it like crazy.

Then alter the button so it sometimes delivers a painful electric shock instead of a treat. Those rats still keep pushing it.

Fix it so that it almost always delivers a painful shock. Ditto.

Fix it so it always delivers a painful shock. Ditto.

Long after pushing the button never delivers a treat, those rats keep pushing that button till it kills them.



Sound familiar? If you're the victim of narcissistic abuse it should. This is what people with Narcissistic Personality Disorder do to you.

10.1 The Treat

The treat is some positive judgment they bestow on you. From what I've seen, it's usually a presumptuous judgment that you should reject simply because they aren't your superior or your god. But when that presumptuous judgment happens to be a favorable one, most people don't mind.

For example, the narcissist might take an opportunity to say, "You're a good person." Mmh-mmh good. What a tasty treat. But that's just as wrong as saying, "You're a bad person." In fact, it's an outrageous judgment, because it's a judgment of your human worth. Anyone who makes it is playing God. Your reply to either "You're a good person" or "You're a bad person" should be the same: "Who do think you are?" That narcissist actually insulted you by placing you beneath her — by acting as your judge.

Hence, even in flattering you, the narcissist aggrandizes herself at your expense!

But we prefer to avoid conflict, not realizing that we're dealing with a predator who will view that as a sign of weakness and start to salivate.

Besides, not knowing (or unknowing) that this flattery is insincere, we can't help but feel gratified by it. That's in our genes. Being thought a good person is the most important thing in the world. We like it. We'll come back for more. And we'll just unknow the unpleasing little detail that relating to us as our judge is in itself a put-down. We'll tell ourselves that this person didn't intend a put-down.

But hold that thought. Would you ever say "You're a good person" to somebody else? How many other people have you heard say that or something like it? It just isn't done, is it? Normal people don't even think of saying such a thing. It's too presumptuous.

About the only time normal people would say this is in comforting someone who had been jumped on and made to feel like a bad person, someone you wanted to comfort. But in that case you aren't judging so much as rejecting someone else's judgment. You aren't bestowing this condescending judgment on them from on high, you're making an act of faith in them, stating your belief that they *are* a good person. A much different thing.

This is why these judgments from narcissists always strike us as peculiar, even if we can't think quick enough to analyse them and see exactly what's wrong with them. Our instincts warn us that there's something fishy about this. And we should pay attention to them. It's a bad sign that we are dealing with an aggressive egomaniac, someone we should avoid a close relationship with.

But if this narcissist is a parent or brother or sister, we have no choice. There will be an uproar if we object to the put-down. And it will all be *our* fault. We just have to put up with them using us to get a step up on.

One day I had the chance to see a narcissist in action in the workplace. He followed a new employee into the lounge, and though he almost never deigned to even look at, let alone speak to, anyone around there, he suddenly became talkative: "You've got a lot on the ball," he said to her. He wasn't her superior. He was just a fellow employee who had no idea what kind of job she was doing, but he gave her a favorable job evaluation on the spot. He had to speak in vague generalities for lack of any knowledge about her work, but she bought it. She fell for it like a sack of potatoes. And kept going back for more. Which she never got.

He did that with every new employee. And that's how he collected a pack of hounds from those with least integrity, who never quit coming to him day after day, wagging their tails for a treat. They knew what they had to do for one: sic on whoever he made some cutting remark about. The whores.

But if your narcissist doesn't try to get you do anything depraved, like this guy did, it's hard to see any harm in him or her.

On my tennis site, I give this example in my introduction to psychological warfare:

One afternoon, back when I was in college, I worked as the attendant at the university's indoor athletic facility while two professors had a go at each other down on Court Number One. I remember the scene vividly. We three were the only people in the place, and something was in the air. So I shut my books and began studying the professors.

At 3-3, ad-in, the server scrambled valiantly but lost a spectacular point, one the receiver just wouldn't be denied. It was so exciting I almost jumped up and applauded. The receiver matter-of-fatly said, "You did good to win that point. That was a big point."

The other man blinked and his mouth opened slightly, but he just nodded and headed for the baseline to get ready for the next game.

He was done for. I'd never seen anybody's game fall apart so suddenly. It was no contest from that point on.

What happened? There are two kinds of tennis players: those who know what just happened and those who don't. That was psychological warfare, otherwise known as "gamesmanship." A powerful weapon.

This is what that receiver did. First, he made a mountain of a molehill, because it wasn't that big a point (the big points were to be expected in the next game). On the other hand, he also made a molehill of a mountain, for the play was much more than "good" — it was fantastic! He thus **devalued** the other man's play. That should set off your NPD Alarm. "You did good to win that point. That was a big point." Doesn't that remark strike you as peculiar?

The customary remark is "Nice shot" or "Nice point," thereby judging the **play**, not the **player**. But people out to dominate others characteristically do this in their speech. They are role-playing. And if you allow them relate to you as your judge, you are accepting the role of an inferior in the relationship.

Notice what a left-handed verdict the sentence was. It says, 'For you, winning that point was a feat.' Making it "good" for the server to have won "a big point" delivered a lethal stroke of psychological warfare, for it underhandedly called the server a choker. What a put-down at a moment that deserved praise. What a patronizing head pat. It reversed the impact of that moment by destroying the joy and confidence it should have engendered in the point's winner. And with that stroke of psychological warfare, a nasty man about to lose the first set snatched victory from the jaws of defeat.

So, narcissists always treat you to some judgment they're not fit make. For example, they'll say, "You are the greatest _____ [fill in the blank]." And it's always something they're not qualified to say, something they have no authority in. They can't just stick to bestowing judgments they are fit to make.

10.2 Why the Rats Keep Trying

Why do we keep coming back for more when we usually get a painful shock instead? A great mystery. But since we see the same behavior in rats, it could be hard-wired into our brains.

There's reason to think so. Nature endows all creatures with instincts that promote survival. One is the instinct to seek more of what pleases. Another is the instinct to avoid what hurts. **But in nature, the same thing never does both.**

That only happens in perverted environments, like a lab-rat cage or a relationship with a narcissist. That's where a diabolical master of ceremonies changes the rules on you, so that what once brought pleasure, instilling you with great desire for more, gradually changed into something disappointing, something that always brings pain. For, once we or those rats are conditioned to seek gratification from a source, that instinctive drive is established and well-nigh impossible to kill. It's as strong as sexual drive or the drive for food.

Surely rats don't keep ringing that bell because they're "gluttons for punishment." Their brains are too primitive to be bollixed up with stupid ideas like that. So, I'm very skeptical about the old blame-the-victim = glutton-for-punishment = codependence theory.

Besides, the victims of narcissists tellingly always speak of "the good times," wanting them back. That's not being a glutton for punishment. That's desiring pleasure! Just like those rats. The problem is hope, which can be the cruelest of all cruelties.

Yet we humans are much better off than those rats. We can fight instincts with what we understand intellectually. The children of narcissists usually have no trouble bugging out for good the moment they're free of their parents' home. But they've spent about 20 years in the home of the narcissist. So they know by now that the "good times" were just the narcissist with his or her mask on. Spouses and lovers haven't that much history to go on. So, they cling to hope that the narcissist can change, that he can be what he once was again.

PART XI

Controlling the Pathological Space

Controlling the Pathological Space

This part of *What Makes Narcissist Tick* is for people who need to understand how a narcissist manipulates the bystanders to turn the whole world against the victim.

It is written mainly with the victim of a narcissist in the **workplace** in mind, because it explains "mobbing." Nonetheless, the explanation applies to any social unit from the family to the family of nations. At key points I include examples to show how it applies to places other than the workplace.

In any case, the narcissist turns that world upside down into a world where fair is foul and vice versa, a world where the victim is the attacker and the attacker is the victim. A world in which, as one narcissist put it to me, she "comes out smelling like a rose." In other words, Hell. Specifically, the bottommost pit in it, dubbed by Dante as Catch-22.

So, this part is about how narcissists get away with it. But it's more about the bystanders than the narcissist. It will help you understand why they gang-up the way they do, re-victimizing the victim and protecting the bully from justice. Once you understand, you won't make the mistake of trusting or expecting anything from them. But you will also understand why turning to **outsiders** for help is the way to go.

To begin, let's consider the situation a narcissist is in.

No one does the things a narcissist does without thinking, "What if people find out that I did this?" No doubt: he or she would become a social outcast. The shame would be unbearable. They'd never be able to show their face in public.

On discovering the things a narcissist does on the sly, people would be shocked. Such acts speak for themselves and emit a blast of anti-gravity that makes us abhor anyone who does such things. Whether we consciously analyze it or not, we feel in our guts what it means to attack children and hate the innocent, especially those whose only offense was to love and trust you. That isn't human; it's an alien mentality. Through such chilling acts we get a glimpse into a malignant soul and find ourselves on the edge of the abyss, confronting the pure will to evil. The angel-face that masked the narcissist's true self is suddenly seen for what it is, a sick joke.

Obviously, a narcissist doesn't want that to happen. The malignance inside is his

or her biggest secret. Narcissists live in constant [fear of being exposed](#)^[32] for what they are and would rather die than be exposed. They are careful whom they let Mr. Hyde out at and play Block the Kick to discredit the victim so that no one will believe their complaints. The tragic result is that [people abhor the victim](#)^[97] as the one telling vicious.

Another thing narcissists do is try to control their Pathological Space, the network of relationships in their home, extended families, workplace, and neighborhood. The narcissist's malignant influence permeates the Pathological Space, manipulating people's behavior and perceptions. The narcissist needs to control what word gets around in it. In addition, controlling people is desirable in itself for a narcissist. It "proves" his delusion that he is a god. Since childhood, narcissists have constantly gained experience [manipulating people](#)^[202]. As adults they are expert manipulators and often can control whole groups.

See also

[The Rape of the Mind](#)

The Psychology of Thought Control, Menticide, and Brainwashing
by Joost A. M. Meerloo, M.D

The narcissist makes them his minions, his remote-control mouths. Because he makes them all fear him (though none will admit that), they say and think whatever he wants and do his bidding. This is what, in the workplace for example, enables him to get away with murder: it's just the victim's word against everybody else's.

In fact, manipulating a group of people is easier than manipulating one person. For, human society is like a nest of social insects. Buzz, buzz, buzz till suddenly the gang instinct kicks in and it's unanimous. Zoom, they swarm. Somebody becomes a social outcast. It's the proverbial fate worse than death. So nobody wants to be caught dead near anybody the evil eye is on. Parents betray their children. Brothers betray sisters.

See also

[Bystanders, observers, and witnesses — Why won't they help the victim?](#)

Because people are like this, cynics can exploit and manipulate people like puppets. En-masse even. A sad fact but true.

It's dangerous to go through life with the misconception that most people are truly good. We should face the fact that the great majority of people just go

along with the herd. No matter what it's doing.

So, it doesn't pay to be too trusting of people who haven't earned our trust. (Con artists get rich on misplaced trust.)

Because most people's behavior conforms to whatever wins them approval and acceptance among their neighbors in the herd, a cynic can use this power over them to make them build him a pyramid or to march them off to war. But he puts it to most effective use when he uses it to sic them like a pack of hounds on some person or group.

That demonstrates his absolute power over them and makes an example of what happens to anyone he sicks them on, establishing for him a reign of terror. In a nation, a workplace, a neighborhood, or a family. It happens in any **closed environment**. If you introduce a narcissistic bully to orchestrate it, you get a bloodbath every single time.

There is an old movie I do not remember the name of that shows how he does it. It is about people in an overcrowded lifeboat. I saw it as a child, and I remember it as almost nothing but shots of people's faces as they sat in silence. Periodically, without warning, they'd suddenly all go for someone and throw him or her overboard. At first, the chosen one made some sense, as someone fat or seriously injured. Soon, the lifeboat was no longer crowded, but they kept ganging up on someone every so often and throwing that person to the sharks.

I could not tell why they were doing it or how they knew which one to gang up on. My mother muttered, "Look at what he's doing." It was the sailor at the rudder. He was doing it with his eyes. The others all sat there as if innocent of all knowledge of what was going on, but they watched him out of the corners of their eyes. The sailor's eyes darted from one to another, frightening each that he or she would be next, as all eyes settled upon whoever he looked at.

This eye dance was like the dance a bee does whenever it returns to the hive after having found a good source of food. The dance gets the other bees excited and urges them off in precisely the right direction, till — zoom — off they go. The sailor was the dancing bee thus giving the others directions. The hive — the collective, machine-like mentality of social insects — observes the dance, which tunes the buzz till suddenly, in unison, it swarms.

Depressing, but true. One malignant narcissist I know of sees himself as someone who shines a black light on the chameleons in whatever place he terrorizes. In it their true colors show.

11.1 Reign of Terror

Remember that narcissists make themselves look good by making others look bad. They also get high on trampling people and treating them like dirt. So, if you give a narcissist power over others in a closed environment, he will conduct a kind of slander-and-abuse-fest known as reign of terror.

I don't use that term figuratively. A reign of terror is a specific, well known phenomenon caused by the group dynamics in a closed environment under a bully. That is, a tyrant of some sort. He or she terrorizes by orchestrating persecution (i.e., "mobbing") of some target, who serves as a scapegoat. The tyrant makes a terrifying example of this scapegoat, an example that intimidates the bystanders into docile submission and complicity.

Their complicity implicates them in the wrongdoing, which is why they dummy up, deep down there in his pocket. To cover their own guilt, they cover his and blame the victim.

Why do they walk right into such an obvious trap? Because they are afflicted with something one may call the [Normal Personality Disorder](#) ;-)

We usually hear of a reign of terror occurring in a nation under a dictator. In fact, the term was coined, I believe, to describe what happened in France under Robespierre after the French Revolution. But a reign of terror can occur in any closed environment, like a workplace (common in hostile takeovers), an organization or institution, a family, or even an exclusive segment of society. It can occur even without a particular bully orchestrating it, though not as efficiently.

If you inform yourself about all the well-known reigns of terror throughout history, you can't help but notice the method in this madness. You can't miss it: Antiochus, Nero, the Inquisition, both the Catholic and Protestant witch hunts, Robespierre, Stalin, Hitler, Mao, Pol Pot, and Saddam Hussein all went about it in exactly the same way. In fact, Senator Joe McCarthy (of "Red-Scare" infamy) went about it the same way. In fact, every bully in the workplace goes about it the same way. And every school yard bully goes about it exactly the same way. It's child's play.

Even more surprising, if you compare all these reigns of terror, you can't help but notice that a reign of terror is no end in itself, but rather just a means to *another* end. What other end? Power. Gaining and/or maintaining power. As the *Book of Revelations*, otherwise known as *The Apocalypse* (written in code by

Christians under such persecution) puts it: 'Babylon rides that seven-headed beast (of persecution) to power.'

This piece just explains how bullies go about it, how a reign of terror works. When you see how it works, you realize that it's not far-fetched at all. The way people react to what the narcissist/bully does is predictable. The outcome is predictable too. The formula?

Closed Environment + Bully in Charge → Reign of Terror

I write this because, when people hear of a reign of terror, they're incredulous. They don't believe such a thing could happen, mainly because they don't believe that normal people would do such bad things. This is tragic. They blow off the report and jump to the conclusion that the person telling them of it is lying or imagining things.

But people with the power to do something about it — law enforcement officials and others with power over the situation — should just **do their job**. They have no business pretending omniscience and blowing off such reports with the old "Now why would anyone do that?"

Indeed, why not ask that question about the person reporting it to you: "Why would anyone make up such a tale?"

It's easy to find out whether a reign of terror is occurring. Just walk into the place and you'll smell something wrong within five minutes. In their peculiar reactions to things, you'll be able to see that there's something very wrong with the inmates.

A good example of how early reports are blown off is in how early reports of the Holocaust were blown off. Consequently our armed forces were shocked when they reached Germany and saw the Death Camps — 10 million victims later. We could have saved most of those people if our press and government had just dealt with those early reports responsibly. The war would never have gotten so far out of hand on us, either.

The overwhelming question is *Why?* Why does a boss (of any sort) conduct a reign of terror? What does he or she get out of it?

If that boss is a malignant narcissist, he or she does it just to do it. As I said, it's a slander-and-abuse fest. Nirvana for someone suffering from NPD. The narcissist gets to go through victims like a Kansas tornado goes through a mobile-home park. POWER! Nothing aggrandizes like the power of wanton destruction. The

narcissist gets a continual power rush that can only be described as analogous to a continual orgasm. So he gets to thump his chest and give a Tarzan yell over all those he vaunts himself on.

Yet the narcissist often capitalizes on the situation to gain other things as well. He or she would be a fool not to, because a reign of terror dummies everybody up and makes a perfect smokescreen. It's a distraction. The narcissist (who is, after all a con artist) can be robbing the place blind under cover of it.

For example, some of those who conducted the Savings-&-Loan junk-bond schemes got away with it by conducting a reign of terror in the workplace. People ducking that wildly swinging axe (that blackballs as well as fires) are not going to worry about your retirement funds.

It appears that some unscrupulous private institutions routinely hire such administrators, viewing them as hatchet men, to periodically go through the workforce, replacing everyone with new hires at the bottom of the (now-slashed) pay scale. These institutions can hardly go to the authorities then when they discover that their hatchet man has robbed them. For, they must keep covered up their complicity in denying workers' civil rights during the secret job actions nonprofit institutions are allowed to conduct. So, they are in his pocket as deeply as those he bullies. And so, like every con artist, he has implicated his victims in one way or another, so that *they* are covering up his crimes for him.

If a narcissist takes over your place of employment or nation, there isn't much you can do about it, unless you can bring some strong **outside force** to bear on the situation and call the attention of the **outside world** to what's going in. Any incorruptible people on the inside are dead meat almost from the get-go.

Many brutal dictators appear to have been malignant narcissists, and Europe has produced its share of them. As far as I know, there's no real doubt that Stalin, Hitler, and Saddam Hussein had NPD. Stalin and Hitler didn't invent the tactics they used to get people to persecute a target person or group. The Inquisition used the same tactics.

Step 1 is to deface and dehumanize the image of the target person or group. Literally. In art and speech, you caricature them as animals or monsters. We see this being done to the image of "the Americans" in Europe today. The caricature of America and Americans is similar to what was done to the image of the Jews 70 years ago.

As the old saying goes, *Never underestimate the power of suggestion.* A

dehumanizing caricature suggests subhuman status. Works like a charm: when you dehumanize someone's image, the standards of fairness and decency no longer apply to them. That makes it open season on them, so you can then do anything to them without being criticized for it.

Step 2 (usually carried out concurrently) is to promulgate conspiracy theories and atrocity stories about them. This incites mob hatred the tyrant can sick on the target person or group, as the Inquisition sicked the masses on Jews, Moslems, heretics, Protestants, homosexuals, unmarried women, dissidents, or any individual. The Inquisition's own handbooks say it considered the infamy it imposed on people its most dreaded and potent stick — not the stake or confiscation.

The conspiracy theory and the atrocity story set the first phase of the process in motion. It was called the *diffamatio* (defamation). The very fact that a person or group had wild allegations flying around about them was treated as a crime in itself and used as "sufficient cause" to subject them to trial under a system that presumed their guilt. And, as in the famous case of Joan of Arc, the inquisitors, along with their fellow theologians and canon lawyers at the universities, took care of the defaming-in-advance themselves via conspiracy theories and atrocity stories. Dictators since Nero use these patented tactics to incite mob action that gives them great power.

11.1.1 The Power Play

How does one gain **power** through inciting a persecution? It's easy to see how if you put yourself in the mob's shoes.

Once a *diffamatio* has created an evil entity in the people's eyes, you just harness all that hostility for it by presenting yourself to the people of this group as their protector or savior from this imaginary enemy. You lead the persecution. You fan the flames. You portray the target person or group as to blame for all the people's problems and as an existential threat to their survival. You make yourself the people's champion against the evil entity, their brave hero in the struggle against it.

This patented stunt has been pulled so often at the national level throughout the world that it's standard operational procedure for wanna-be dictators and for dictators already in power who want to dispel opposition and stay in power. Even in democracies, political parties are stooping to this tactic, demonizing their political opposition, absurdly blaming everything every evil actor in the

world does on their own government's officials from the opposing political party.

But this demagoguery can be adapted for other social units as well, such as a family or a business.

You just assassinate the character of some target person or group to make an ill wind blow. What's an ill wind? It's a ganging up. It's the breath of a multitude of voices throughout the society saying nasty things about the target person or group. You might think of it as a persecutory buzz in a hive of social insects that gets louder as the herding instinct kicks in to tune the buzz till they're all on the same (politically correct) wavelength.

This happens because most people have weathervane minds. For example, if you're old enough, you know that the people who were long-haired, anti-materialistic hippies dodging the draft in college during the Vietnam war are the ones who suddenly appeared after the war as short-haired materialistic yuppies the moment the draft ended. They are the people who couldn't tolerate your passing up a toke on their marijuana- or hashish-laced-with-heroin joint at a party back then = those who can't tolerate your smoking a cigarette anywhere within the city limits, even outdoors, today.

Notice how a such a movement gains steam. That happens because people like to make themselves better than others by finding someone or some class of people not-good-enough for them. At first, the anti-smoking crusaders had some grounds to claim that smokers are a threat to them. But when their numbers become overwhelming, they no longer even try to justify their infringements on liberty. Unless they're claiming that smoking a cigarette outdoors contributes to global warming.

Such purgatory movements materialize and run their course in societies all the time. All that changes is the target and the constitutional underpinnings of a society that protect minorities from the tyranny of the majority.

A narcissist capitalizes on this tendency of the masses. Hitler made scores of speeches ranting about the Jews. The Inquisition preached countless sermons telling horror stories about heretics. You just bash that target person or group's image viciously, relentlessly. Soon it no longer bears any resemblance to the true image of that person or group. It's a work of art. A caricature.

And that caricature always makes out the persecuted person or group to be evil and dangerous, a threat. Get it? Zoom, the mob then flees into the open arms of the con artist (bully) for protection or salvation from the victim. This farce

would be hilarious if it weren't so tragic.

You can even pull this off in a business or a nonprofit institution. A ripe one is one that's encountering difficulties. Take anything for example. Let's take something as fine as the system of Catholic schools in a diocese. They have encountered difficulties because of the shortage of nuns. Over the past decades, those highly qualified nuns have had to be replaced by lay teachers. Which means that costs have sky rocketed. These schools simply can't compete for the best teachers. Schools that used to charge a nominal tuition and provide scholarships for anyone who couldn't afford it have had to raise tuition to very high levels. For this and other related reasons (including a sharp reduction in the number of practicing Catholics), enrollment has plummeted.

Crunch: skyrocketing cost and plummeting enrollment. Something's gotta give. *What can we do? Which translates to Who do we blame?*

The answer is that no one's to blame. But the view from inside a particular school or parish creates a virulent group dynamic. Reduction of force. Whom to we choose to throw out of this overcrowded lifeboat? Everyone wants to make sure it's somebody else. This only contributes to the ill wind blowing throughout the community as talk starts flying that enrollment has fallen because of some of those teachers. Ah, so let's do a nationwide search for a hatchet man.

"You rang?" the narcissist replies.

He can go through one Catholic school after another, all across the nation, and get away with it every time. They all heave a sigh of relief when the Devil leaves town, but they never warn the next diocese not to hire him, because then they'd have to admit some things about themselves to explain how he managed to get them to do what they did to people. Not to mention how he managed to raid the cookie jar without anyone noticing where the money went. Not to mention how the quality of education went to hell under him.

Manipulating people *en-masse* this way is an art at least as old as the Emperor Nero, because the human race never learns. The bully is just a cowboy herding cattle with meaningless words and noise and antics. He just steers them.

Then the wanna-be strongman or totalitarian organization pretends to be out to save the people from this (imaginary) enemy. He's their hero.

But why don't the people in a family, business, school, party, or nation turn on a bully when he tips his hand and they realize what he is?

Because they're in his pocket by then. let's see how he manages to put them there.

11.1.2 Pocketing the Prey

In attacking the "evil" target group or person, the bully goes way over the top in an extravagant display of wanton destruction and/or wanton cruelty.

Why? Because **wanton** destruction and **wanton** cruelty are glaring signs of something that rattles our cage. Even if we can't put it into words, deep down inside we know what it means. For example, you knew what it meant on September 11, 2001 when you saw wanton destruction and wanton cruelty on your television set. You knew you were confronting the pure will to evil.

For, wanton destruction and wanton cruelty just don't square with any intention other than the intention to cruelly destroy. It is like killing to kill, not for food or in self defense or as an act of legitimate justice.

Therefore, through wanton destruction and/or wanton cruelty, the bully disabuses us of the notion that he thinks he's doing the right thing. Yes, that's right. The narcissist would never admit it on the record, but he makes sure we know that he is just plain evil. That he isn't really trying to do anything good. And that his claims to be saving or protecting us are a mockery.

Why does he do this? To terrorize us. Wanton destruction and/or wanton cruelty make a shocking and terrifying example of what will happen to anyone the bullying narcissist or institution attacks.

Don't doubt that the people of the Middle Ages were as shocked as you or I would be at what the Inquisition did to heretics. Don't doubt that the people of Europe were as shocked as you or I would be at what they saw Hitler's brown shirts and SS doing to the Jews. And don't doubt that the people of both the Arab Middle East and Europe were as shocked by 9/11 as we were. That was the purpose of these atrocities — to terrorize. Not the victim so much as *everybody else*.

Diabolical, eh? What the Inquisition, Hitler, and al Qaeda did was deliberately wanton and outrageous for that purpose.

Every bully in the workplace does the same thing: he doesn't just fire people, he blackballs and calumniates them to ruin their whole lives. Every school yard

bully learns to do the same thing — shock his playmates with how extravagantly cruel he can be to anyone he goes off at. Result: **ALL THE PEOPLE ARE TERRIFIED.**

They start whistling in the dark. Or to put it with another cliché, their heads — thump — all go right into the ground.

That way he doesn't have to take on and directly threaten everyone: he just hits on someone defenseless to terrorize everyone with how wild and vicious he can be. You see variations of this strategy even in the classroom. Whenever abusive teachers want to intimidate the whole class, they go off at one particular "dirtball" they have targeted as the scapegoat for each class. The rest of the kids kiss up to that teacher and blame the "dirtball" for the rants they have to listen to all the time. They make sure the bully teacher knows they don't like that "dirtball" either.

That's what institutes a "Reign of Terror." Nobody dares to cross that guy. He becomes their god. They made him their god by letting him sic them on a scapegoat like a pack of bloodhounds. So, they are implicated and have guilt to hide and project, which the scapegoat makes a handy scapegoat for.

All the bully god need do now is periodically renew the atmosphere of terror by reminding everyone of what happens to anyone he doesn't like. So, if he's a school yard bully, next week he beats up on another kid in front of them all. If he's a bully in the workplace, next month he starts "scrutinizing" another employee. If he's Hitler, he soon starts going after homosexuals too.

Have the people learned their lesson? No. To the contrary: they have anti-learned their lesson. This time they are even more eager to go along with it.

They seize chances to show him they're eager to do whatever he wants. Which is why they often come up and kick someone he knocks down.

Their behavior, of course, is incredibly stupid and self destructive. Any idiot can see that the target is innocent and therefore could be anyone and therefore might as well be you and therefore will sooner or later BE you. So, anyone can see that it's in your own self interest to be faithful to friends and neighbors and stick up for them against the bully. For, as the old story goes: *First he came after the Jews. Then the homosexuals. Then the communists. And so on. But I never did anything about it. Then he came after me, and there was nobody left to do anything about it.*

So, people do know that this is mass self-destruction. But they repress that knowledge, going into denial where they whistle in the dark telling themselves "He ain't after ME."

It's their refusal to know the truth that destroys them. And they do this for the simple lack of the courage to face facts. They choose the state of mind known as terror instead. Every single time.

In fact, the more glaring the truth becomes, the deeper into denial people go. This is a phenomenon one must see to believe.

In a fascinating passage, the prophet Ezechial mentions that people do this. He says that when God sent him to tell the people the truth, it was so that the truth would shut their eyes even tighter, not open them; would plug up their ears more, not unplug them; would make their hearts more callous, not more human. Why did God send the prophet on such a counterintuitive mission? It was the people's trial. They would thus prove the case against them by showing that they were hypocrites and therefore unworthy of forgiveness and mercy.

So, to keep the bystanders duly terrorized, the narcissist constantly assaults their delusion. How? By deliberately going after those who least deserve it, going after people (or kinds of people) who have been his biggest supporters. It's what I call the "Wild Man Act." It disabuses them of any notion that he is out to do anything good. It lets them know that whatever accusations he makes are purely malicious, not sincere.

That's chilling. It warns in language plainer than words: "Look out. I attack people for no reason. I don't hesitate to attack anyone. And I am so wild I might just go off and attack anyone, including YOU." That makes this terrorist as scary as can be. It makes people fall all over themselves to suck up to him.

Thus he, their god, gains absolute power over them. Like Henry VIII, all he need do is hint that he would look favorably on someone who got rid of Thomas a' Becket. If he's a bully in the workplace, he calls a meeting and says he would look unfavorably on anyone who _____ [fill in the blank], being just specific enough with his diction to let everyone know whom they're being cued to sic on next.

That's a Reign of Terror as simply as I can explain it. This has happened countless times throughout history: Antiochus did it, Nero did it, Diocletian did it, the Inquisition did it, Robespierre did it, Stalin did it, Hitler did it, Senator McCarthy did it, Mao did it, Pol Pot did it, Saddam Hussein did it, the Ku Klux

Klan does it, and Osama bin Laden does it. It happens in every purge or witch hunt. Every bully in the workplace does it. Every school yard bully does it.

Every malignant narcissist does it. They were/are all cynics who have learned to exploit the human race this way. And, as the saying goes, *Those who don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it.*

It can happen in any closed environment — a home, neighborhood, organization, institution, or nation. The bully god can be an individual, a faction, a bureaucracy, an institution, or even a segment of society that controls who and what gets heard. Of course when a group is the bully god, that group itself must be kept in lockstep. So, there's always a Little Reign of Terror inside it too.

11.1.3 Little Reign of Terror Inside a Collective Bully

This section of *What Makes Narcissists Tick* won't apply in many cases, so you may want to skip it. It explains how a collective entity, an agency of some sort, can be so tightly controlled that it conducts a reign of terror. We understand how one bad person may do so, but we naturally find it hard to believe that an entire agency would, that no one in that agency would blow the whistle or refuse to go along with it.

So, the question is *How do you get a large number of ordinary people to go along with something so unconscionable?*

Believe it or not, it's frighteningly easy. You just make all their choices for them till their will offers no resistance and you control their mind. You get your foot in the door by starting with little things, seemingly harmless things, like what they shall eat or wear.

We see a good example in the Inquisition. Its worst abuses were committed by the Monastic Inquisition under the pope (as opposed to the Episcopal Inquisition under the bishops). It was run mainly by the Dominicans, the Franciscans, and other religious orders. One should think it would be the other way around, with the worst abuses coming under the bishops. But they behaved like choir boys compared to the monks! How did such a vast number of supposedly moral and religious people come to cooperate in this iniquity? What kept all these monks and friars in lockstep to run the Reign of Terror?

Basically the same thing that enforces conformity among the clergy today. We see it also in cults. Islamo-fascism. And in the Communist Party of China. And

in the Communist Party of the former Soviet Union. In fact, you see elements of this method to enforce conformity throughout the far left. It's less subtle and easier to explain in the Church, so that is why I use the Church as the example of how it's done. And notice along the way how that narcissist in your life is doing pretty much the same thing to you.

The people in religious orders are dependent for everything (including respect and human companionship) on Mother Church. Their words and movements every minute of the day are dictated. Someone else decides what you eat. Someone else decides *when* you eat. Someone else decides how much you eat. Someone else decides when you wash your hands. Someone else decides when you take a bath. Someone else decides what you wear. Someone else decides how you wear your hair. Someone else decides how much hair you may have. Someone else decides whether and how and when you may go out into the outside world (= go outdoors and play for awhile?). Someone else decides whether and when you may have contact with your family. You own nothing, so someone else decides whether you may have the pen and paper to write your mother with. Someone else decides when you stand, sit, or kneel. Someone else decides what job you do today. Someone else decides what town you live in and can move you to anywhere at any time. Someone else decides the proper attitude you should have. In some orders, like the Trappists, someone else even decides whether and when you may talk.

Notice by my wisecrack in the middle of all that how similar this is to the way we treat children. But that's unfair: these people are treated more like children than children are!

What's more, unlike with children, the tendency is to deprive. No sex. You must fast. You mustn't ask to write home too often. You must dress like a sack of potatoes. You mustn't have a full head of hair. Men must be tonsured to make them bald. Women must have their hair cut short like convicted prostitutes. The food is like that in a concentration camp. And your sleeping quarters are freezing cold. You aren't allowed enough sleep and are even wakened in the middle of every night to pray. (Some of these restrictions have been relaxed today in some orders, or at least the culture of deprivation through them has been modified during the last few decades to attract new recruits. But not nearly as many as you would think.)

What do you suppose treatment like this does to people? Anyone who knows many Catholic clergy will tell you that they are astonishingly childlike. And childish. We can easily give the Church the benefit of the doubt and say that it is probably naively continuing ancient practices. But if it is acting in good faith, it

must take a serious look at them.

All of this control-freakism naturally leads to the ultimate in control-freakism: someone else gets to decide what you think/believe. Though the laws against heresy aren't enforced against laity with any regularity, it is still a fundamental doctrine of the Church that it has the right to determine what you shall think and believe.

From the Jesuit Rules for Thinking with the Church, by St. Ignatius Loyola

Spiritual Exercises, part ii,

13. That we may be altogether of the same mind and in conformity with the Church herself, if she shall have defined anything to be black which to our eyes appears to be white, we ought in like manner to pronounce it to be black."

15. We should not speak on the subject of predestination frequently.

18. Although it is very praiseworthy and useful to serve God through the motive of pure charity, yet we must also recommend the fear of God; and not only filial fear, but servile fear, which is very useful and often even necessary to raise man from sin....

Obedience

Let us with the utmost pains strain every nerve of our strength to exhibit this virtue of obedience, firstly to the Highest Pontiff...by persuading ourselves that all things [commanded] are just; by rejecting with a kind of blind obedience all opposing opinion or judgment of our own.... And let each one persuade himself that they that live under obedience ought to allow themselves to be borne and ruled by divine providence working through their Superiors exactly as if they were a corpse which suffers itself to borne and handled in any way whatsoever; or just as an old man's stick which serves him who holds it in his hand wherever and for whatever purpose he wish to use it...."

Why would people willingly give up human status and be degraded to the status of an object, a tool? Well, for one thing, it's a nice responsibility dodge. That way you can do anything you're told and say, "I was just following orders." Children never want to accept their responsibility.

Even the secular clergy (those not cloistered in religious orders, mainly parish priests) are tightly controlled. The bishop heads their feudal household. A priest's relationship to his bishop is that of a vassal to an absolute monarch. Bishop says, "Jump," and Priest says, "How high?" That isn't just the law: that's

the culture. Priests take great pride in humble, unquestioning obedience; they view it as heroic. A priest isn't allowed to work in the area he's from, where he has family and friends. He isn't allowed a wife and children. So, his only real source of human companionship is the clergy (and that small segment of parish pillars so in lockstep they might as well *be* clergy). For no stated reason and without warning, the bishop can uproot a priest with a PhD in education and exile him to a parish in some tiny town in the north woods where there is no Catholic school. Or even to another diocese. Or even to a secret ... "home."

What's he gonna do? He has no insurance, no possessions beyond a car and few personal effects, no savings, no nuttin'. In other words, he is extremely vulnerable to the anger of his bishop. And who would stick up for him? Would the other priests be caught dead having anything to do with one the bishop "looks unfavorably" on? In short, he is utterly dependent on his bishop's favor for everything necessary to life and everything that makes life worth living.

Like a prisoner. In fact, some of you may have noticed that the description of life in a religious order sounds strikingly familiar to the KGB's famous method of "breaking" people to establish mind control over them. They did the same thing. The prisoner didn't get to make up his own mind about anything. For example, he'd be given a plate of food and then have to sit there and wait till he was told to take a bite of this or that. The KGB borrowed this method of establishing mind control from the Church. They added a few purely psychological techniques of medieval torturers to formulate a highly efficient process.

The interrogations officer, since his critical objective is breaking the subject's will to resist, should attempt to control the psychological factors in every aspect of the subject's life from the earliest possible stage, normally the time of arrest.

— from declassified CIA document: *The Interrogation of Suspects Under Arrest*
by Don Compos interrogations

Anyone willing to use known principles of control and reactions to control and capable of demonstrating the patience needed in raising a child can probably achieve successful brainwashing. ... Meanwhile a strong sense of dependence upon the interrogator is developed. It does not take long for the prisoner to realize that the interrogator is the source of all punishment, all gratification, and all communication.

— [CIA Report On Communist Brainwashing](#)^[48b]

Within a month or two, the KGB could "break" and "brainwash" almost anyone without torture or ever even laying a hand on them. The trick is to have the controller (a KGB agent) play the same role as the Church by posing as the prisoner's "friend." A narcissistic friend, a "conditional" friend. That is, a friend

on condition that you please him. Conditional friendship is essentially "conditional" love = "I love you if you are the way I want you to be and if you do what I want you to do."

What you end up with is VERY suggestible people, people as suggestible as children, people you could hypnotize in a flash, people easily induced to think, say, or do whatever you want. This makes a person but the executioner of someone else's will.

Is that not "possession"? But where's the Little Reign of Terror in all this?

In the power it gives the head of the group. That is way too much power to give anyone. It will corrupt them.

For example, even if the bishop or the head of the convent were a decent person to begin with, this is absolute power over others. Absolute power corrupts absolutely. So, it *will* be abused. He or she will use their power to make life better for those they look favorably on and miserable for those they look unfavorably on.

Their favorites will be those who figure out how to be the most useful to the boss. Then Boss simply manipulates the whole convent the same way any gang leader manipulates a gang. He or she can dictate groupthink and sick everyone like a pack of hounds on anyone who gets out of lockstep and says that what the Inquisition is doing is wrong. They will seize upon any subtle hint the superior drops, indicating that they can score points with the boss by persecuting a certain person. In this way the boss can mold minds and finely tune behavior, because anyone whose compliance and attitude isn't perfect "gets it." *It* is moral persecution by the rest.

Moral persecution — doesn't sound like much, but it's a very potent psychological weapon. More potent than physical torture. The KGB discovered that all people are deeply affected by being viewed as a bad person. So they used moral persecution as their main club. Relentlessly, they harassed the prisoner as evil for being on America's side during the Cold War. And it worked. In fact, the far left in general wields moral persecution as its main weapon: "We are the good guys because the right is evil." Obviously, the people in a religious order are exceptionally vulnerable to moral persecution, because they want very much to feel like good people. So, you can draw blood easily in this crowd.

And blood doesn't make those who taste it gentle. The psychological abuse inside religious orders is so cruel you can't believe such nicey-nice people

capable of what they do inside the secrecy of their cloisters. I've had people who left convents tell me of it. The scars run deep, and the pain and shame never go away. While I was teaching, a psychiatrist addressing our in-service group on Reality Therapy got side-tracked, mentioning that he had treated many nuns and angrily saying, "You wouldn't believe the cruel things those people do to each other!"

That's what keeps them in lockstep, considering it a virtue to have no mind of their own.

I'm sure you noticed that a cult or a malignant narcissist does many of the same things a KGB Controller or a convent does. The narcissist is a control freak. He decides what you wear. He decides whether you can go out. He decides how much you can spend. He treats you like a child. He keeps you all to himself, isolating you so that you have little or no contact with the outside world and are therefore absolutely dependant on him for everything, including human respect and companionship. In short, like the convent and the KGB, he busts right through the boundaries of personal privacy, presumptuously making choices for you that are rightly only yours to make. As though you are an executioner of his will, not your own will = an object, like a puppet, a tool.

Not good. You are a prisoner. And the more you let him make *you* an executioner of *his* will, the more he possesses you and controls your mind.

That's how he makes you think it's your fault. That's how he makes you feel responsible for *his* behavior in abusing you. That's how he ensnares you in the Cycle of Abuse, so you keep coming back for more. **And that's why you must take possession of yourself, control of yourself, making your own choices. Never relegate that right and responsibility to anyone else. If you do, he will get control of your mind without you even realizing it. And then he will use you like a tool to hurt yourself.**

11.1.3.1 Inside a Class

We see the same thing happen, though less efficiently, in an unformed collective entity like a class.

The intelligentsia is a good example. It's a fairly closed society, within which such influences can operate with little interference from the rest of society. Worse, in these circles it's fashionable to condemn, not to merely disagree or debate with logical arguments. "My Gawd! That painting is dreadful!" Which translates easily in political matters to "You are an idiot!" without ever stating

how so or why. Unfortunately, you can say the sky is purple or that Albert Einstein was an idiot under those ground rules. So, happiness in the intelligentsia depends on political correctness, to avoid getting ganged-up on with such unfair attacks.

Academics are among the most forceful at enforcing groupthink. Academia naturally attracts more liberals than conservatives. That isn't necessarily by design, but the situation you end up with makes it easy to get groupthink going and institute a tyranny of the majority. Result: Harvard employees gave 97 percent of their donations to the Kerry campaign, and William & Mary, employees gave 100 percent of their donations to the Kerry campaign.

You just don't get such lop-sided statistics among people thinking for themselves. In fact, they're more lopsided than they look at Harvard. When you see that the 3% of donations given to Republican candidates was given by professors who gave more to Democrats, you see people who want political appointments just hedging their bets with a little money to Republicans.

With such safety in overwhelming numbers, people step over the line with impunity — both with their colleagues and in the classroom. Never underestimate the power of the smirk, snort, snicker, guffaw, tch-tch, nose curl, head wag, and dirty look at anyone who doesn't sufficiently hate George W. Bush. Not to mention the patronizing "Now surely-you-must-admit." Or the social worker / school counselor look that says, "We are here to help you."

And nobody can *over*estimate the dreadful power of shunning.

In such an atmosphere, people just go with the flow and thinking stops. You hear nothing but slogans. The political ideology is held rather like a religion by people who can't make a valid argument to support their stand on an issue. Indeed, their opponents could do so better than they!

Result? Instead of admitting they have no facts or arguments to support some assertion, they pretend that you are too "simple" to understand and that they are being kind by not going over your head (as an adult pulls punches in a debate with a child). Hence, anyone who disagrees with them does so because he or she is stupid. End of discussion.

The following quote shows how great is the pressure to conform in the intelligentsia. This guy is a French journalist, Pascal Bruckner (in *Le Monde* 2) telling the treatment he got for being an outspoken critic of anti-Americanism. But notice that what starts as a complaint ends morphing into a confession of

past guilt:

I learned what it is to get insulted in the street, threats on the telephone. My North African friends told me, "You have brain damage," those of the Esprit review dropped me. ... I felt very alone. I asked myself: "Have I made a huge blunder?" ... I am not ready to engage myself for such causes again. ... Unfortunately. ... I gave the impression that I was championing a guy like Bush, whom in the final analysis I hate.

You have to break a person's back to make him do that. Otherwise he'd leave out either the first part of that statement or the last. But Bruckner admits that he's knuckling under to abuse, hastening to assure people that he's seen the light and now hates President Bush.

We see yet another example of conformity among the intelligentsia in our mainstream media. The statistics on journalists' political donations are nearly as lopsided as those for academia. And look at the great bias that results. We saw the same thing before World War II. The *New York Times* relentlessly withheld, obfuscated, and buried the story of what Nazi Germany was doing to the Jews and what was going on in the Death Camps. Why? Because the intelligentsia was pacifist, as usual. The kicker is that owner of the *Times* was Jewish. That's how afraid to blow against the wind the intelligentsia are.

So groupthink is a very real and potent thing, and when you have a narcissist orchestrating and manipulating it, look out.

11.1.4 What Keeps a Reign of Terror Going

Now back to the main event — the Big Reign of Terror.

We all can see that if anyone's rights are violated, nobody's rights are secure. If you abandon, instead of love, your neighbor when he comes under attack, he won't be there to love you if you come under attack.

If people had any sense, instead of ganging up on whomever a bully sicks them on, they'd gang up on the *bully*. They'd strike, till that employee is re-hired and the boss fired. They'd do what many schools now teach little children to do: go and **stand beside** whomever the bully is picking on and tell the bully to stop it.

But that just doesn't happen unless an inexperienced wanna-be bully botches it. All he has to do is first slip them in his pocket by getting them to do one thing they shouldn't have, one thing that contributes to someone's victimization. It's as easy as dropping a heavy hint that you're a hatchet man and then sitting down to

chat privately with each employee — about the others.

Just suck a little slander that affects the status of employment out of them.

Then, when the first head rolls, make the spectacle a doozy.

When they see your victim fired and blackballed and hear that his marriage was busted by all the rumors flying around about him and every other shockingly vicious and cruel thing you went a mile out of your way to do to him in the process, they will all crawl down into the very bottom of your pocket and stay there forever. No matter what. Their shame and guilt is the Demon at the Door.

Yes, now they know that they walked into a trap. That you suckered them to implicate them in what you did. Now they have to cover up your crime for you.

It's a Catch-22. They are scared to death of you. But they can't bear witness against you without incriminating themselves, so they have to protect the predator who is preying on them. Could anything be more bizarre and unnatural?

And have they learned their lesson? No!

In fact, next time, they're eager to do it again, and worse, just to prove it wasn't wrong and stupid the first time they did it.

And the guiltier they feel about it, the more they do it.

That's why persecution goes hand-in-hand with scapegoating, to scapegoat the victim with the **growing guilt for the persecution itself**. And scapegoating is done by projection.

But projection doesn't ditch guilt, it ditches blame. Guilt is merely repressed. Buried like a *corpus delicti*. Having gotten away with murder, they're haunted by nightmares of that *corpus delicti* arising from its shallow grave. As it thrusts up one hand, then the other, out of the ground, the murderer keeps frantically shovelling on more dirt to keep it buried.

Similarly, when people let a bully sic them on some target person or group, the more they persecute, the more their guilt and shame for doing so threatens to surface to consciousness. To keep it buried, they keep finding more fault in the target to blame the victim with = shoveling on more dirt.

If that won't work because the target has been eliminated, the bully just serves

them up another target to project their guilt and shame off onto.

Either way, they incur more guilt and shame. Necessitating more projection. See what a vicious cycle gets going? And how it feeds on itself?

This is why any purge or persecution gets fiercer and fiercer. This is why the people involved seem to get drunk on blood and act as though the more they drink the thirstier they get. It's a runaway freight-train ride to mass self destruction.

They know it, but they can't stop. With every swing of the axe, it becomes more glaringly obvious that sooner or later their own head will roll. But the more forcefully this truth imposes on their mind, the more forcefully they deny it. They repress knowledge of it to the level of the subconscious, thus altering their state of consciousness — lowering it — which diminishes their intellect and awareness.

11.2 "Innocent" Bystanders

What about all the innocent bystanders? What can you expect from them? In a word, nothing.

The most deplorable thing about narcissistic abuse is the bystanders' reaction to it. It can end your naïveté and turn you into a cynic overnight. The universal complaint of those targeted by narcissists is that they are universally abandoned. But let this fact comfort you. It's not because of something wrong with you, it's because of something wrong with them.

Something that, perhaps for lack of a better name, has been dubbed [Normal Personality Disorder](#) ;-)

First let's understand this phenomenon. I warn you that doing so is painful. But from this understanding you can gain some guidance on where to look for help and where to place your trust — in outsiders, not insiders.

*Thou shalt not be a victim. Thou shalt not be a perpetrator.
Above all, thou shalt not be a bystander.*

— Israeli historian Yahuda Bauer
as quoted on the wall of United States Holocaust Memorial, Washington, D.C.

People are like sheep. When a wolf approaches, you think they are blissfully unaware of his presence, but they are studying his every move. By showing no

alarm, each sheep is just being careful to draw no attention to itself. The moment the wolf sets the evil eye on one of their number, the rest explode in all directions away from that lamb. In other words, they leave the victim to the wolf.

Which is to say that they abandon the lamb to the wolf. They betray (hand over) the lamb to the wolf. They sacrifice the lamb to the wolf. Don't tell me fifty sheep couldn't stand off a wolf, because they could. They just don't. Later, they come back to graze upon that very spot as if Lamb never existed.

History is replete with examples the human race doing the same thing. The most ironic famous example is what happened to Jesus of Nazareth. The same people who thronged to welcome him crying, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" one day abominated him crying "Crucify him!" the next. All because the wind shifted. So, they couldn't get close enough to him one day, and they couldn't distance themselves from him enough the next.

It is very tempting to take the side of the perpetrator. All the perpetrator asks is that the bystander do nothing. He appeals to the universal desire to see, hear, and speak no evil. The victim, on the contrary, asks the bystander to share the burden of pain. The victim demands action, engagement, and remembering.

— Judith Herman, Harvard psychiatrist, as quoted by Kenneth Pope in "Torture," a chapter in the *Encyclopedia of Women and Gender*

The same thing happens in every purge, pogrom, persecution, and witch hunt. People behave like unsupervised children do when a school-yard bully sets the evil eye on one of them. In fact, bullies quickly learn to exploit this behavior. *The Lord of the Flies* is a brilliant, sad, and enlightening novel (also made into a movie) that explores this phenomenon.

Before you know it, the bully is constantly picking on somebody. Why? To periodically make an example of what happens to anyone he sets the evil eye on. In other words, your little school-yard bully is now a terrorist. He is victimizing one kid *to control the others*. And he does so just frequently enough to maintain the atmosphere of terror he thrives on.

He deliberately targets the last ones to deserve his hatred, because that shows the others that they needn't give him any **reason** to attack. He is so **wild** that he is likely to just go off at anyone. This makes the other children fall all over themselves to ingratiate themselves to him. They are so anxious to kiss up that they take advantage of opportunities to be seen by him abusing his victim

themselves. So, he can sic them like a pack of hounds on anyone he wants.

How do the other children justify taking no action against the terrifying bully and persecuting the victim instead? The same way the terrifying bully does — by *blaming* the victim. How do they deal with their guilt? The same way the terrifying bully does — by projection. Onto the victim, of course. So, the victim gets to be, not only the victim of their sins, but also the one punished for them to boot.

To "rationalize" (= irrationalize) what they're doing, the bystanders twist their thinking to pervert everything, so that anything the victim does is somehow wrong and everything the terrifying bully does is somehow excusable. They do this by looking on what the wild one does like those three famous apes...



See No Evil, Hear No Evil, and Speak No Evil

This is the worst form of lying, and to do it one must pervert the very mind to think something utterly absurd. Frankly, I don't understand how people can have so little self respect that they can bear to make such fools of themselves. But they do.

Those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities.

—Voltaire

We see an example of this today in people making excuses (and blaming the victim) even for the sickening actions of Islamist terrorists whose behavior is the blatantly psychotic crime against humanity of indiscriminate mass murder of people for being the wrong kind.

And the kicker is the flagrant double standard: if the victim **lifts a finger to defend himself**, those "innocent" bystanders suddenly come to and scream bloody murder.

Is this Comedy Central, or what? They condemn the victim as evil for "attacking" the poor Islamists (waging war on him). This farce is extreme perversity, what Biblical theologians identify as the Sin of Sodom = "forcing someone to bend over for it." Christian theology marks it as the "outrage that cries out to the top of Heaven for vengeance."

Notice what these "innocent" bystanders are doing. They're awarding the bully the status of a child = one not responsible for his own behavior, one who may lay the blame for everything he does on someone else. In other words, the terrifying bully can do no wrong. Thus they absolve him of responsibility for whatever he does. No matter what, it is always the victim's fault for making him mad.

Every bully and rapist and wife-beater says the same thing. Boys will be boys. What he did to her is her fault. She must dress so as to control his sexual appetite for him (by looking like a sack of potatoes). In the same way, we make Islamo-fascists mad by not letting Osama bin Laden dictate our foreign policy = making him mad by not letting him be our slave master. We mustn't set these wild people off by making them mad. Every time they throw a terror tantrum, it's our fault.

No matter what the context, it's always the same old story: Blame the Victim. That way, the wild one gets to do whatever he wants and have somebody else be to blame for it. Now *that's* infallibility.

So, your "innocent" bystanders aren't innocent at all. Sad fact, but true. They're collaborators.

Are they all crazy? No, they are just **actors**. They are playing 'Pretend.' They are pretending that they don't know any better. They are pretending that black *is* white and that up *is* down. They are pretending that they really are the nice people they're portraying and that the story is true.

So long as the house lights are down and **the outside world** (the audience) is out of sight and out of mind, they are in their own upside-down little world. A Wonderland where anti-logic is logic, where foul is fair, and vice versa. Where their absurd charade is 'their' reality.

They are just being politically correct in their pretend world, which is a virtual reality that their virtual conspiracy enacts.

If the outside world intrudes on their play though, they'll check back into their senses instantly. Why? Because they know outsiders have nothing to gain by pretending they're too stupid to know better. So the actors know outsiders won't buy it. That's why the moment outsiders show up, the actors immediately drop character and behave as though they've been caught naked.

11.2.1 Moment of Truth: What are you doing?

...Their act is so thin, there's nothing to see through. So, they know that the only ones they're capable of fooling are themselves. The powerful end of *The Lord of the Flies* portrays this moment of truth vividly. A grownup wades ashore and, incredulous, asks, "What are you doing?"

Suddenly, all those naked little boys at play, like Adam and Eve, look down at themselves and see that they're naked. In other words, they suddenly get real. That's because they instantly realize that an outsider has no reason to go along with their play-acting.

Unlike them, he will know what he knows. So, they don't even try to tell him that the victim's efforts to defend himself are a wicked attack, because they know that he will know a joke when he hears one.

Thus, the arrival of an outsider catches them with their pants down. **The bully is no threat to him, so he needn't go along with them in pretending that black is white, that perversity is right.** They are ashamed before him, because he catches them doing something very, very bad. Which is why they suddenly stop acting and see that they're naked.

Those four little words, *What are you doing?* are the most powerful words a person can say to children at play. I know, because I tested them.

One day, I was walking down the hall and heard an uproar in a tenth-grade classroom. I know how wild teenagers can get, and I knew how prone they were to wildness in that particular teacher's class, but this tumult was astonishing. The kids were *literally* bouncing off the walls. In fact some were jumping from desktop to desktop to make their way across the room. Half were throwing things. And every single one of them was yelling. Not seeing the teacher in all this commotion, I thought the class was unsupervised, so I went in, wondering how I was going to put the lid on this chaos. Then suddenly I was appalled to see that the teacher *was* there and that some of them had surrounded her, mocking and waving their arms at her so abusively that she was just yelling abuse back at them like a little girl at the point of outraged tears. I knew these kids as good kids, so I was shocked. Luckily, I remembered the end of *The Lord of the Flies*. So, I went to a spot where I felt most visible and just stood there looking around at everything everyone was doing. There was so much commotion it took ten or fifteen seconds (which seemed like an eternity) to get noticed, but one by one the kids caught a glimpse of me watching them and were so startled that they stopped dead in their tracks. It was hard to tell who was more shocked, me or them. I waited till my presence had thus quieted the room enough so that I could

be heard. Then, deliberately speaking softly (so that they would have to make an effort to hear me) I said the magic words, "What are you doing?"

Suddenly my good kids were back, lowering their eyes and hanging their heads in acute shame. You could have heard a pin drop in that room. Without another word, I turned, pretending that I had come to deliver a message to the teacher, and got the heck out of there.

Eisenhower did pretty much the same thing at the end of World War II, when American troops came upon the Holocaust as they reached the Death Camps. He had the perfect cure for eyes that hadn't seen what was going on, ears that hadn't heard what was going on, even downwind noses that hadn't *smelled* what was going on. He issued orders to have the German people from the surrounding towns marched out to file through the camps and look upon what they had done to please Hitler, while the American army watched and the newsreel cameras filmed so that the whole world could witness the moment. Suddenly, the German people were no longer shameless. Suddenly they could see what they saw, hear what they heard, smell what they smelled, and know what they knew.

Proof that children can check back into their senses as suddenly as they check out of them.

11.2.2 Can it happen here?

We like to think that couldn't happen here. But it could. It could happen anywhere. Like Russia. Cambodia. Kosovo. Rwanda. China. Darfur.

Some sad facts: The Vichy French eagerly rounded up, not only Jewish men, but also Jewish women and children for shipment to the Concentration Camps. This was, as yet, long before the Germans were interested in collecting any but the men. The Germans even protested! But the French insisted on shipping off the women and children too. Then they seized their homes, bank accounts, and businesses. Slovakia *paid* the Nazis to take the Jewish women and children too. Slovakia — a very religious Catholic country with a Catholic priest as its head of state. And then they too seized the victims' businesses, bank accounts, and homes. The next-most-eager to sic on the Jews were the Poles, another very religious country. In Warsaw, they came to the ghetto to sell loaves of bread to starving Jews for jewels, huge sums of cash, or whatever else they could extort. What about the wonderful Swiss, who remained neutral (ah! how brave!) to make their homeland a safe-haven? See [The Sinister Face of 'Neutrality'](#), *Frontline* on PBS.

In fact virtually every European people went along with the Holocaust and grasped at the spoils. (Only in some Scandinavian countries did a significant number of people do what they could to save Jews.) Even many Brits, who did not have the excuse of being occupied, approved of Hitler's policy against the Jews right up to the moment they found themselves at war with him. So much for the "innocence" of bystanders. We see their guilt complex in their anti-Semitism to this very day.

In the long term, Nazism was powerful not just because of the numbers of party stalwarts, but because millions of Germans were prepared to inform on one another, obey orders, and remain passive while others became victims.... We now know that ordinary human beings are capable of doing and tolerating terrible things.

— Victoria J. Barnett, *Bystanders: Conscience and Complicity During the Holocaust*

Indeed, and we have objective, scientific proof of that. Why and how did we obtain it? Here's the story.

Near the end of World War II, when our troops came upon the Nazi Concentration Camps and Death Camps, the sight of what Europeans had been doing in the dark stunned us and shook our faith in humanity. How could civilized people become such beasts? Indeed, *the* most civilized people in the world had done this, not any of the "savage" peoples they had looked down their noses at. That was an epiphany, and it demanded a radical re-think about a lot of things. We were so perplexed and troubled that we asked, "Could it happen here?" So psychological experiments were run to answer that question. In these experiments, American people were asked to teach a learner something. The learner was separated from the teacher in another room, but the teacher could hear and/or see him. The teacher was misled into thinking that the experiment was to study the learner's behavior. But it was actually to study the teacher's behavior.

The teacher was told to administer an electrical shock to the student every time he answered a question "wrong." As in, "has a politically incorrect opinion about something."

Usually at that point in the instructions to the teacher, the psychiatrist administering them got a double-take. But the tactics of propaganda and con artistry are no secret, so the psychiatrist just used them on the teacher. He talked on, without dropping a beat, ACTING as though he had no idea why anyone might think there was anything wrong with inflicting pain on the learner for the sake of this experiment. Beyond this too-stupid-to-know-right-from-wrong act,

all he had to do was wave mental "carrots" and "sticks" at the teacher he was training. Some were as subtle as a smile or frown at how the teacher was responding to instructions. He implied that the teacher wasn't being "a good person" by questioning what he was being told to do to his student for the sake of this important experiment. That's a very powerful stick, leftists and con artists zap people with it all the time.

In other words, the experimenter was doing to the teacher what he was telling the teacher to do to the learner. In a different way, but a more effective one. This is nothing but training, like you train a dog, with positive and negative reinforcement.

For example, in the Bank Examiner con, the con artist says he's a law enforcement officer and acts like he thinks the mark isn't being a good citizen if he doesn't seem willing to hand over the money in his account to the con. That's all you have to do to control most people: just threaten to view them as "bad" for not behaving as you want them to.

Back to those psychological experiments conducted after World War II. The teachers had a control dial to vary the strength of the painful electric shock they delivered the student for every response that differed from the "right" one. They were instructed to keep increasing the voltage till the student got it right (as in "came around to the right way of thinking on the issue"). The student, of course, was an actor who wasn't really connected to any torture device. But every time the teacher shocked him, he acted like he was. He would writhe and cry out in pain. For all the teacher knew, he was really torturing another human being.

Results? Rare was the recruit who said, "You want me to do what?" and walked out of the experiment. Then there were a few meeker souls who participated for awhile but were stricken with pangs of conscience as they kept turning up that dial and the screams of increasing agony got to them. But more than seventy percent of the recruits were participating right up to the end at the maximum/lethal level which was supposed to kill the student.

These recruits were Americans, and this was right after World War II, when all America was aghast at what had been found in the death camps and wondering how a human being could do such things. So, if you could get Americans to do this right then, you can get *any* people to do it *anytime*. Indeed, the Russians did it during the pogroms and Stalin's purges. The Chinese did it during Mao's Cultural Revolution. The Cambodians did it under Pol Pot. The Hutsi did it in Rwanda ten years ago. And it's going on right now in Darfur.

Worse yet, an unexpected trend showed up in the process. As the teacher got further around that dial, he began exhibiting disturbing behaviors.

For one thing, like a narcissist, he became more brutal. At the same time, he became more brutish. In fact, he became as brutish as necessary to block out and disregard the suffering of his victim. By connecting electrodes to his brain, you can actually watch the brain activity diminish as this happens. Evidently, people just willfully shut down parts of their mind. Which is what happens during hypnosis — a state of diminished "knowing."

An example of what I mean by brutishness is sitting around talking about the weather and eating your lunch while the guy next to you nails a screaming man's wrist to a cross. That's brutish because that's what a "brute" (i.e., an animal) on the scene would be doing — nonchalantly grazing with no idea what's going on. God forgive such people, because we can't. If you recognize the story, note that these are the only people Jesus of Nazareth did NOT forgive — those who "unknow what they are doing."

Brutishness is making yourself no more sentient than a brute beast, so you can pretend something that should evoke humanity from you isn't happening. The brutish don't relate to the humanity in a human being. Instead, they relate to him as though he were but an insignificant [object](#)^[144]. Now, if you don't relate to *human* being, you must fall short of it. So, I don't know where narcissists and others get the idea that behaving like this makes them superior.

Nonetheless, as the suffering of their "learners" increased, the teachers became more brutish to block it out. More brutish than a dog would have been at the sight, or any warm-blooded beast. Indeed, if a warm-blooded animal came upon someone in the throes of such agony, it would respond in some way. It would be upset. Probably it would flee in fright. But not a brutish person. He just keeps right on eating his sandwich and talking about the weather as if it isn't happening. He is therefore a lower life form than a warm-blooded animal: he is as brutish as a cold-blooded reptile.

This discovery goes a long way toward explaining the Holocaust. It answered the overwhelming question: *How could human beings do such things?* Answer: *It's easy. They just stop being human beings.* They can turn off their humanity like a light switch.

The teachers exhibited other disturbing behavior too. Though stooping to the level of a brute degrades rather than glorifies a person, as a teacher got further

around that dial, he showed that he became proud of what he was doing, that he felt (of all things) exalted by it. In other words, he puffed up into a goose-stepping Nazi right before the psychiatrists' astonished eyes. Then, when he had finally killed his victim, he asked to "teach" another.

Needless to say, once they were sure what they were seeing, these psychiatrists had to discontinue the experiments, for fear of making monsters out of the teacher-recruits. What if this taste of blood morally depraved them for life? or deranged them, making them thirst for more, so that they turned into serial killers or something?

Now, remember how they got people to do this: They didn't threaten or bribe. The psychiatrists simply waved subtle "carrots" and "sticks" at the teacher-recruits, like a smile or frown to show approval or disapproval of how the teacher responded to instructions. And they simply implied that the teacher wasn't being "a good person" by objecting to what an authority figure told him to do to his student for the sake of science.

If that's all it takes to get more than 70% of people to do something despicable for the sake of science, think what you can accomplish for the sake of their religion, their country, their clan, or for their personal gain.

These experiments showed that the vast majority of people will think or do anything to be regarded as "good people" by those around them. The key words there are "to be regarded as 'good people.'" They don't care about really *being* good. If you change what's politically correct, their "morals" instantly accommodate to the new world they find themselves in. So, overnight, what was wrong becomes right for all they know, and what was right becomes wrong in their eyes.

That's the ugly truth about the human race. And unknowing it won't make it go away. But that doesn't mean it's hopeless. It just means that you can't count on help or decency from INSIDERS, the bystanders.

11.3 Outsiders

People prostitute themselves to a bully out of fear, which is understandable. But amazingly foolish. If they had any sense, they would do the opposite of what they do. Instead of abandoning the first one the he sets the evil eye on, they would rush to that person's side and tell this bully that "What you do to him you do to us."

But don't count on it. Few have the integrity to do the right thing. That's a disagreeable thing to know. But if you've seen a narcissistic bully rule a family, a business, an organization, or a nation, you know it's true. History records this lesson for us repeatedly and will continue to do so till we learn it.

So, seek help among **OUTSIDERS**, people from outside the narcissist's Pathological Space. The bully is no threat to them, so they probably have no reason to think with lies. They may find it hard to believe, but they can be willing to know the truth. Nothing compels them to play the fool by playing along with the disgusting charade. They are free to view it correctly, as a farce.

They are not already under his influence, so you can warn them in advance about how manipulative he is and what a con artist he is.

If necessary, have the courage to **shine the light of day on what is going on so that the outside world looks in on what is going on.**

That's how you get the insiders to drop the charade and get real. The moment they see outsiders looking on, they rediscover their sense of shame. Because now it isn't 100-to-1 their word against yours, anymore. Now the whole world gets a vote, and they know that the rest of the world has nothing to gain by pretending this farce is legitimate.

Till then, insiders — even if friends and family members — may treat you like you're radioactive. They go to great lengths to avoid wit-ness of what happened. They say they had no idea what was going on and that the narcissist never said one bad word about you to them. This is the Mark of Cain, a sign that their knife is in your back. For, an innocent person bothers to know what happened to his brother.

Bystanders resent the tortured because they make them feel guilty and ashamed for having done nothing to prevent the atrocity. The victims threaten their sense of security and their much-needed belief in predictability, justice, and rule of law. The victims, on their part, do not believe that it is possible to effectively communicate to "outsiders" what they have been through. The torture chambers are "another galaxy".

— K. Zetnik's testimony in the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem in 1961.

They all have a vested interest in covering up, because they all have complicity or negligence in it to cover up. For example, the non-narcissistic parent covers her guilt for not protecting the child from [abuse](#)^[22b]. The non-narcissistic neighbor or teacher covers their guilt for not sounding the alarm and reporting evidence of abuse. The co-worker covers his guilt for going along with crimes

committed against his colleague.

And so, they all are in [the narcissist's pocket](#)^[37], covering up his crimes for him with sealed lips. In other words, they participate in a virtual conspiracy.

Yes, even though they too are victimized by what this agent provocateur does! Even others destroyed will not bear witness. Why? Because they participated in the lynching of someone lynched before them. The need to protect their self concept as that of a "good" person is so compelling that they would rather die than let the whole thing come to light — for the same reason that thieves don't report being robbed by their fellow thieves.

This is the deplorable state of affairs a narcissist (like any con artist) creates in a family, a neighborhood, a church, a workplace, an institution, or nation he has the power to corrupt. Everyone abandons you. People see you coming and get away.

Even those who bear no direct guilt distance themselves from you — and will alienate you to make you stay away — simply because they listened to the narcissist slander you. Like Adam and Eve, they shouldn't have believed it, so they run and hide when they see you coming. They do not want to get involved, no matter what the consequences of to you of their refusal to bear witness to/of what they know. They do not want to hear you defend yourself. They do not want to know that they have been duped. They do not want to know that they have done wrong. They want to unsee the damage done. They want it all (= you) to go away.

So, it's probably best to kick the dirt of that **corrupted** place from your shoes. For, before you trust an insider, a bystander, you had better be sure that he or she is a hero.

PART XII

Controlling Your Borders

Controlling Your Borders

Here you *will* get advice. It is standard advice, the same advice any professional give: Control your borders. In other words, defend your personal boundaries. Make others respect them. (Of course, respect other people's boundaries as well.)

Why? Because if you don't, you will cease to exist as a person. The narcissist (or psychopath) will bust through them to own you, to make you an executioner of *his* will instead of your own, manipulating you against yourself like a puppet, without your even realizing it.

Boundaries mark out your territory. Control of your boundaries is control of your territory, and control of your territory is ownership of it. If you let someone penetrate your boundaries — that is, if you let him just make himself at home on your turf as if he owns it — he gains some control over your mind. Yes, penetrating boundaries is art of brainwashing and mind control. The deeper and more frequently someone penetrates your personal boundaries, the more control they get.

Anyone willing to use known principles of control and reactions to control and capable of demonstrating the patience needed in raising a child can probably achieve successful brainwashing.

— [CIA Report On Communist Brainwashing](#)^[480]

When the controller is a narcissist, this is a very serious matter. That's how he "gets into your head" as one narcissist I know puts it. That's how he makes you think it's your fault. That's how he makes you feel responsible for *his* behavior in abusing you. That's how he ensnares you in the [Cycle of Abuse](#)^[429], so you keep coming back for more.

Therefore, if you're on a guilt trip about why you keep loving him or her, why you keep coming back for more, get off. Boundary-busting tactics work on hardened soldiers and CIA agents. So, you've nothing to be ashamed of. There's nothing wrong with you. You have no subconscious desire to suffer.

You're just reacting the way normal people do. Not that it isn't the worst thing you could do! It ***IS*** the very worst thing you could do! Stop doing it immediately! But take comfort in knowing that you're not doing it because there's anything wrong with you. You're doing it because you don't realize what's going on.

In fact, the CIA found long ago that about the only people resistant to brainwashing/mind control are those who've been through it before and understand how they (and their emotions) were manipulated. That's good news. If there's a narcissist in your life, you are such a person. You've been through it before.

You can put that experience to good use in understanding how you were manipulated by it. That makes you a good deal more resistant to it in the future. This is why, as I mention [elsewhere](#)⁴⁴⁵, the normal children of narcissists often have an acute sense of where their boundaries are and stand firm on them. They are like the little piggy (in the Fairy Tale of the Three Little Piggies) whose house is made of brick.

What are personal boundaries? This is an abstract concept that is hard to explain, but it needn't be explained to anyone whose boundaries haven't been eaten away. That's because we instinctively know where our personal boundaries are and sense it the moment anyone tries to violate them. Our instincts prompt us to resist the imposition.

The only problem is that some people get conditioned to disregard their instincts.

12.1 Personal Boundaries

An example of a personal boundary is worth a thousand words. So here are ten examples.



Your mother is visiting. You leave the house for awhile, and when you return you find that she has rearranged your cupboards. Something inside you stiffens, and you resent what she did. Do you know why? Is it wrong for you to feel this way? Should you correct your feelings?



You are confiding in a friend about narcissistic abuse. She says you shouldn't feel angry about it. Something inside you tightens. She goes on to say that anger is reprehensible, you know. Now you feel the muscles in the back of your neck tightening. She says your abuser is controlling you by making you angry. Who's really the one trying to control you right now?



You're getting ready to go to some event, say a play, a restaurant, or a dinner party. Someone comes in, your spouse perhaps or an older sibling or a parent.

This person gives you the once-over and doesn't approve. "You should wear that _____ [fill in the blank]." Why do you feel an inner need to resist that person's will?



You are five years old. Your parents take you to a restaurant and tell you you'll love chicken and dumplings. When it comes, it's covered in peas, which you detest. You can't eat it. You are ordered to eat it. And you are ordered to keep on eating it, bite after bite, despite how revolting this food is to you, because you must not "embarrass your parents." Quite against your will, you are about to really embarrass them, aren't you? Why is virtually being force-fed something against your will such a traumatic experience that it makes you throw up?



You are home for the holidays. You are driving an old car. It has a minor problem, not worth fixing. Your father or older brother tries to make you think it's a serious problem that could severely damage the engine and be a safety hazard. But you know enough to catch inaccuracies in what he says and see that he's just pulling a stunt for attention. He will fix the car, make a great big deal out of the whole affair, worry you with endless what-ifs along the way, and just generally make the repair job the only thing that happens in the world for the next two days = get to be the center of attention. So, you say that you're not going to get it fixed. He gets angry with you and comes toe-to-toe with you glaring down in your face, just as years before when you were a child. Acting as though you are damaging *his* car, he orders you to get it fixed, says he won't let you out of the driveway till it's fixed, and blames the problem on that cheap motor oil you use, ordering you to use the brand he chooses for you instead. Why do you feel that you must stand up to him and have *your* way about these things instead of his?



You are an adult visiting your parents' home. Your brother or sister picks a fight with you in an out-of-the-way place and orders you out of your parents' home. Whose rights/boundaries have been violated?



Your boss calls a staff meeting and tells everybody that he "would look unfavorably on" anyone who doesn't express a certain opinion about a particular new program whenever anybody in the community asks about it. What's wrong with him doing that?



You are a born-in-the-USA American and an atheist, because you just can't

believe in good faith that there is a God, and you are as sure as possible (= as sure as we are that there are no Italian restaurants on Pluto) that there is no God. But some people think that's just tough. They say that, because many of those who started this country were Christians, it IS a Christian country. Therefore, to take the pledge of allegiance to its flag, you must declare the nation "under God." Why do you feel offended and feel that you must resist them?



Your boss calls you into his office and says he has some complaints about you. You are to take the rest of the day off while he thinks things over. No, he isn't ordering you to leave the premises; he's ordering you to choose to leave the premises. What's wrong with that (besides the fact that he's playing a dirty trick to get you to incriminate yourself)?



You are in third grade, and Sister Mary Annunciation is saying that you must obey the Church, and after that, you must obey your parents, and then other authorities like the police and the government and so forth. As usual, somebody pipes up and asks, "But what if they tell us to do something wrong?" Sister Mary Annunciation says they won't tell you to do anything wrong. But what if they tell us to rob a bank or the candy store? She sighs. This goes on and on every time the Fourth Commandment comes up. Eventually Sister Mary Annunciation develops a hearing problem, so that whenever anybody asks, "But what if they tell us to do something wrong?" her nonreply sounds like a broken record: "You must obey the Church, and after that, you must obey your parents, *et cetera*." Finally, Sister Mary Carina can't stand it anymore and when the next kid asks, "But what if they tell us to do something wrong?" she pipes up, "Well then, just don't do it, dear!" Ah, what a relief. All the little children are satisfied and relax. But Sister Mary Annunciation gives Sister Mary Carina a look beyond the poor power of words to describe.

Let's take a look at what we've got here:

- Someone else deciding how your house should be arranged.
- Someone else deciding how you should feel.
- Someone else deciding how you should dress.
- Someone forcing something into your body against your will.
- Someone else deciding how you should treat your own private property.
- Someone deciding who has permission to be in someone else's home.
- Someone else deciding your opinion.
- Someone else deciding that the country you were born isn't for your kind and that you must speak as though a God you don't believe in exists = that you must make a liar of yourself in pledging allegiance to your country's flag.

- Someone else determining your will about whether to remain at work that day.
- Someone else claiming the authority to absolutely control your conduct.

The reason you inwardly bristle at these actions (as even the children in Sister Mary Annunciation's class did) is because they are violations of personal boundaries. Violations of someone's rights and sovereignty. In every example except the one about your sibling throwing you out of your parents' home, it is *your* rights and sovereignty that have been violated. (In that case it was your parents' rights and sovereignty that were violated.)

Some of these violations are so minor as to seem trivial, and in fact *are* trivial. Yet they all have a cumulative effect. Every infringement on personal boundaries, however small, eats away at them a little, blurring them. The next time someone imposes on that boundary, you are less likely to perceive that he or she has crossed the line = you are less likely to resist the intrusion. The result is a weakening of personal sovereignty.

Hence, over time, you don't even sense the crossing of that boundary anymore and become very yielding to control. That makes you easy prey for manipulative people like narcissists, psychopaths, con artists, false messiahs, dictators, and your garden-variety control freak.

The process of border breakdown is insidious, because subtle, minor assaults on our boundaries come at us from all sides every day, in the media and from the people we interact with. The effect is rather like that of hundreds of bacteria eating away at the membranous boundary of a body cell. It gradually disintegrates and they get in.

Now look again. The cell, where is it? It's gone. The environment has flooded in and the cell no longer exists as a separate entity. Rather like if the United States were to throw open its southern border and let Central and South America flood in. The same thing happens when personal boundaries break down. Outside influence floods in and takes over so that, in effect, you no longer exist as a distinct person. You are more like an appendage of whoever controls you.

Another thing that blurs and weakens boundaries are common violations of them that seem harmless and are firmly rooted in custom. They are the rule in society, everyday occurrences deemed acceptable and even righteous by nearly everyone. The impositions of religion are not the only example, but they are an excellent one because of their depth and scope. Think of religious dietary laws that decide for you what and when and how much you may eat. Rules of ritual purity that

decide for you what you may touch. Religious dress codes. Not to mention letting an institution decide what you may read and think.

Ordinarily, there's no harm in letting religion cross these boundaries to make our personal private choices for us, because neither the Church nor most parents are in the habit of telling children to rob the candy store. But what happens when some other authority figure comes along and demands the same obedience? Can they all be trusted not to order people to what's wrong or injurious to themselves?

In fact, it's grossly ignorant of both current events and history to presume that even parents or *any* religion would *never* do that. Those little children in Sister Mary Annunciation's class knew better, and so should we. I think it would seem best for religion to back off and respect that line, changing these rules and laws to guidelines people may freely choose to follow for the symbolic and spiritual value in doing so. In fact, I think religion should insist that everyone back off and respect personal boundaries, instructing people to let no one cross them — telling people that we each are morally responsible for our own conduct and do not escape that responsibility by letting others make our choices for us (as in "I was just following orders").

But since that won't happen, if you let your religion cross those lines, it's crucial to make sure you know where they are and don't let just anyone else cross them, too.

If your personal boundaries have been eroded by narcissistic abuse, you need to locate and reestablish them.

12.2 Who has the right to make a decision?

Only those who experience the consequences of a decision have a right to any say in it. This is just common sense.

In other words, if Being A gets to make a decision that Being A won't experience the consequences of, a choice that only Being B will experience the consequences of, Being A has no vested interest in making a choice that will be good for Being B.



Common sense, right? What do we call Being B? A "specimen," that's what. A specimen being experimented upon. Or toyed with. Or tortured.

This is why teenagers who throw a party while their parents are away often get the shock of their lives. If the situation they got themselves into will prevent them from fingering the culprits, the other kids trash the place. Why not? It ain't their home. So, what's it to them?

We see the same thing destroying the United Nations. There are about 192 nations in it. On any given matter at least 180 have nothing at stake. So why should they care? Their votes are cast in pure envy and rivalry or are up for sale. Hence the macabre, absurd, and thoroughly despicable decisions that have resulted. You have to blackmail or bribe your way to sanity there.

We see the same thing even in the relatively small Security Council. Since only the United States and the United Kingdom ante up a respectable amount of resources and money to enforce its resolutions, the other veto-wielding powers usually have nothing at stake in the matter. So, their vetoes are for sale and waved around for power plays and extortion.

Why should we be surprised? People are not as good as they try to make us think they are. And, as Bob Dylan sang, "Something for nothing is everybody's plan."

This is why, when it comes to *your* private property, only *you* have any say regarding it. Nobody else can tell you what color to paint your house. Nobody else can just barge into it without your permission. This is why you have exclusive **ownership rights** in your property. They insure that you, and you only, have any right to make decisions about it. Because you, and you only, experience the consequences of those choices.

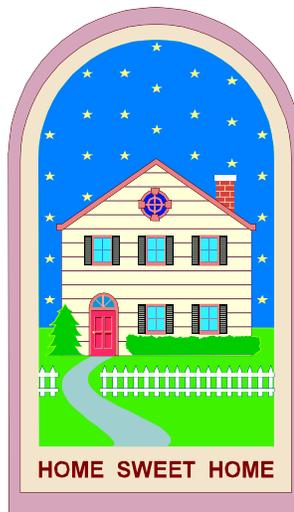
Failure to respect this truth is what's wrong with those boundary violations in the [previous section](#)⁴⁰³. You alone must live with your cupboard arrangement, so your mother doesn't get to decide what it shall be. You alone wear an outfit and are seen in it, so nobody else gets decide which one it shall be. You alone own yourself and are morally responsible for your conduct, so nobody else gets to dictate it.

An understanding of this basic principle makes it clear where your personal boundaries are.

12.3 Privacy

The right to privacy is simply the **right to own property privately**. For instance, the Capitol (building) in Washington, D.C. nobody owns. Yet, all citizens of the United States own it, because it's public property, so collectively we own it. On the other hand, if you own your home, it's private property that you alone own.

What is ownership? In other words what rights does property's owner have in it? We have fewer rights in public property than private property. We all have the right to enter public property. But I can't just walk into the Capitol and decide to redecorate the place the way I want. If I tried to do that, I'd be treating it as though it were my private property.



Privacy is a relative thing. Things that touch you nearly are more private than things at a distance that may only touch you indirectly. For example, your bedroom is more private than your backyard.

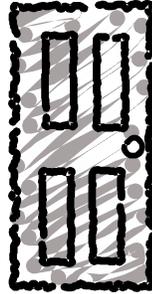
By rights, nobody has the right to step foot on your property without your permission. But good luck trying to prosecute a trespasser for stepping one foot off the sidewalk onto your lawn. He hasn't exactly violated a sacred boundary. Someone who cuts across your yard isn't imposing much either. Unless you look up from the dinner table and he's two feet from your elbow at the window, looking in. Now your privacy has seriously been breached. In fact, you rightly view this breach as threatening. Most people wouldn't agree that it's so threatening it justifies you grabbing your shotgun and shooting him though. Most people would say he'd have to enter your house to justify deadly force.

See what I mean? Infringements that touch you *nearly* are the most wrongful and threatening. That's simply because they penetrate privacy further, claiming more-

sacred rights of ownership that don't belong to the violator.

12.4 Your Chattel

The outermost boundary of your privacy is your property line. The next definite boundary is your door.



You have the sole right to determine what goes through that door. I don't have the right to just barge in like I own the place, do I? That's claiming a right of ownership that doesn't belong to me.

I certainly have no right to take anything out of your home without your permission, either. Nor do I have the right to decide what you may bring out of your home or who may come out of it. It's your home, so you control what enters, exits, and stays there. If I attempt to do that, I am acting like I own your home and everything in it.

I'm stating the obvious, aren't I? Ownership rights are so self evident that we rarely consider just what they are. Hence, if you ask many people just what rights they have in their private property, their eyes would glaze. Yet anyone instinctively knows and bristles the instant someone else starts "acting they like own" his or her private property.

Instinctively we know that if you let them get away with that, soon they *will* own it. Indeed, possession is 9/10 of law.

Let's say you invite me into your home. Then I say, "This wall should be blue instead of pink," and start painting it. Do I have the right to do that? No, again I'm acting as though I own the place.

What if I just help myself to what's in your refrigerator or walk into your bedroom? You wouldn't like that either, would you? Your food isn't my property, and your bedroom (or office or any other closed room you haven't

invited me into) is the sanctum sanctorum of that home. It is a more private place than your living room. In entering it, I have crossed another boundary, without your permission, into intimacy.

12.5 Your Person

The next boundary is your person itself. Very private. Our advanced sense of its privacy is what causes our species' instinctual need to keep it private with clothing.



Nobody has rights of ownership over your person or anything that touches it directly — meaning your personal effects like your clothing and anything you wear or carry. Crossing this boundary without permission is assault. Now the violator assaults a person, not just that person's chattel.

If your person is your private property, do I have the right to decorate it as I please? How can I presume that right if I don't have the right to decorate something **less near** to you — your living room — as I please? By pretending that I have the right to decorate you (i.e., decide how you should dress or wear you hair), I am treating you like I own you.

It's demeaning. It's a chief tactic of narcissistic men, a way of treating a woman as if he owns her, as if she exists for his sake to be pleasing eye candy for him like any other household decoration he owns). The narcissist wants a woman he can make think she must dress to suit *him*, a woman who will let *him* control what she wears.

When she *chooses* to wear what he likes, that's one thing. But when *he* chooses what she wears, that's another. And if she knows what's good for her, she won't let him cross that line. Because it's a violation of her personal sovereignty over herself.

Since you alone experience the consequences of this choice, you alone get to make it.

No, this doesn't mean you have the right to walk naked down Main Street. There I do have a stake in the matter, because that does affect me. Something that far out-of-whack with

cultural standards of decency (= non-incitement) whacks me in the face with what you virtually force me to look at because it's so attention-grabbing. It's something people find incitatory and offensive. Therefore your right to dress as you please does have some justifiable red lines near the extremes.

For, if I have the right to decide what you wear, I have the right to make you wear something you feel uncomfortable in. In fact, I have the right to make you go naked, don't I? I have the right to make you wear something that others will laugh at; I have the right to make you wear something that makes you unattractive; I have the right to make you wear something that attracts the eye of a rapist. And so on.

Why should I have any say in what *you* wear? I have nothing at stake in the matter. I might think it's fun to dress you up like a clown and see what happens.

Nobody needs to be told that giving others the right to choose what you wear (or how you wear your hair) is giving them a dangerous amount of power over you. For this reason, protecting our autonomy in choosing what we wear is instinctive. It's one of the first boundaries we establish in life as children who want to decide for ourselves what we wear. Decent parents, who respect their children as budding persons, back off at the first sign that a child wants this much self control. It's one of the first liberties we grant a child.

It helps a child's person-ality develop, because it helps that child differentiate himself from others, conceptualizing himself as a distinct person in his own right with a mind of his own. The flip-side is that he also views others as distinct persons in *their* own right, with minds of *their* own, and not mere objects to manipulate that exist for his sake

Letting others violate this boundary not only lets them treat you like their private property (which will lead to other acts of treating you that way), it also *will* lead to abuse of the power it gives others.

12.5.1 Violations of Person

Outside the United States, people tend to view rights as granted from above. Inherent in this principle is the notion that people have rights *by the grace of* the Church and/or State, not inherently as *inalienable* rights that they are born with and which cannot be taken away.

Hence both religion and the state sometimes claim the right to dictate how people must dress and wear their hair. If your religion or country does this, you

become so used to having this personal boundary crossed that you are unlikely to notice when a narcissist or some other control freak does.

You need to know where that boundary is and make sure that you let no one else cross it, too. These examples should help.

Both Church and State have had people publicly stripped for exhibition to expose them to public ridicule and contempt. Both also have cut off women's hair as a mark of infamy and have made people wear clothing that targets them for ridicule, abuse, and criminal acts without risk of prosecution.

Under Mao, the Communist Chinese tried to obliterate the individual in the collective by forcing all people to wear a drab uniform that made them look like sexless copies of each other. Just one of many ingenious methods of socialist mass mind control.

Hitler made Jews wear a yellow star of David on their clothing. It amounted to a target "marking them for destruction" in the Biblical sense. People saw that star and thought, "I can do anything to that person — insult, abuse, rob, or even kill him, because he has no rights and is therefore vulnerable as easy prey."

Every day, a Jew had to arise and put on that target, then go out into the world with it on. It would have been kinder to brand him on the forehead. At least *that* would have been something somebody else did to him: *this* was making him do it to himself. The mental cruelty in that twist comes directly from Hell.

That's mild compared to what the Inquisition did. To drive the point home, it made Jews wear an actual target on their clothing. Under the law, you were a heretic if you merely associated with, or showed any humanity to, a heretic: you had to completely shun heretics; you didn't dare even feed any of the starving heretics or their children. Heretics had no rights, so nothing you did to them was a crime. They were marked by being forced to wear a get-up called the [sanbenito](#). It was open season on them wherever they went.

Similarly, men abuse women whenever men get to make the rules about how women are to dress. This is simply because men don't incur the consequences of their choices for women. So, what do they care if their decisions are degrading?

If a man's upper arms are not pornography, neither are a woman's. Not even in St. Peter's Basilica. Neither are her legs. Or her face. Or her overall shape. Treating a woman's body as something indecent and pornographic sends an insidious message about womankind, a message that always leads to misogyny

and abuse of women as a man's private property.

Women born into such a culture may get used to it and decide to gain the benefits of being "good girls" by pretending that it is no degradation. But free women always deeply feel this insult to all womankind.

Even in Western society some vestiges of this treatment remain and are exploited by narcissists to make a woman feel like her value consists in being pleasing to a man or that she is but an appendage of "her man." She's denied her due by being introduced as, say, "a lovely mother of three" instead of as "a leading nuclear physicist." Unfortunately, few men can see the slight in this until they get introduced as "the handsome father of three" instead of as "a leading nuclear physicist."

A woman's body is as presentable as a man's and is nothing to be ashamed of and hid. To treat it as though it is is degrading. It's also a good way to make women invisible in society.

Men with the narcissistic belief that men are inherently superior to women make fools of themselves by wimping out to blame their conduct on women. How manly to dump their burden on "the weaker sex." In Iran, unless a raped woman can produce seven male witnesses that she wasn't to blame, she is condemned as guilty of being raped and can even be executed for the "crime."

Male supremacists also make fools of themselves by regarding men (like children) as lacking the self control and sound judgment to be responsible for themselves at the sight of a woman's eyes, face, arms, legs, or shape. They say that women must control men by dressing like a sack of potatoes so that automatic boys get no idea to think or do anything naughty. Women are to blame for what males/automatons think and do.

But if these men thought right-side-up instead of up-side-down, they wouldn't like the implication that they can't control themselves and that a woman operates them like robots simply by what she wears. This childish irresponsibility makes women the ones with power and men irresponsible children, too impotent to even control themselves and therefore unfit to rule anyone else.

12.6 Your Body = Your House

The next boundary is that of your body itself. Your body is your house. This is a concept with its roots in the Middle Ages and the Grail Legend. Penetration is

rape.

Penetration of the "house" of your body is analogous to penetration of your house by breaking and entering. You are your own private property. So, only you have the right to decide who or what enters your house.

Protecting this boundary is instinctive. For example, when you were a child you probably had a bigger kid come up to you and say, "Close your eyes." You probably did as you were told. But when he said, "Open your mouth," your eyes popped open, because you instinctively knew better than to let someone else decide what goes into *your* mouth.

Yes, there's more than one way to rape. For example, forcing food or anything down another person's throat makes that person feel raped because they *are* raped. It's in our genes to resist bodily penetration of any sort. That's a healthy natural instinct. Hence, we experience trauma and feel violated by any penetration of the body without our consent.

Narcissistic parents do this by being so overbearing as to force their children to eat things they don't want to eat. Decent parents stop at encouragement and persuasion, never crossing that boundary. If you do, that child may throw up because of the psychological trauma you are inflicting through this violation of his person.

If you bust the boundaries between the person of that child and the person of you (thus virtually making that child an extension of yourself), that child won't develop a complete person-ality.

The boundary of the body is sacrosanct. Nobody has the right to cross it without permission. To do so is to treat *your* body as *their* private property.

That reduces you to the status of livestock. We violate the bodies of our livestock, without a second thought, all the time. With injections of medicines. With artificial insemination to make them factories that manufacture other livestock for us. Because we own them.

In fact, this is the crux of the abortion issue. Passing over the unreasonable extremists on both sides (who are just bent on imposing their will on others), the reasonable people on both sides clash at this personal boundary. Pro choicers are protecting this personal boundary, while pro lifers view the matter differently, as one in which another human being has rights and something at stake in the decision. A truly difficult issue.

So difficult that many pro-choicers do favor limiting abortion rights and many pro-lifers do favor the exception of allowing abortion in the case of rape or incest, simply because there is no way to argue that you aren't crossing a sacred boundary and using a woman like you use a cow if you force her to bear offspring as a result of rape or incest.

The difficulty of this issue shows that the right to privacy (at this level) is so sacred that even the right to life must respect it.

See also

[Brainwashing](#)^[480]

[Little Reign of Terror](#)^[380].

12.7 Your Mind = Your Inner Sanctum

The innermost, and most sacrosanct boundary of privacy is the mind. Your mind is the sanctum sanctorum of your house: you alone live there. So, your mind is your private property, nobody else's.

The doors to it are your eyes, ears, and mouth.

What would you say if I appeared at your front door one day and started moving furniture into your house? By the same token, what would you say if you ran into me on the way out with a package and I stopped you saying, "No, you can't let that out of your house"? You'd teach goose-stepping me the difference between *mine* and *thine* in a hurry, wouldn't you?

What if I did the opposite? What if I appeared at your front door and said, "Bring such-and-such a thing out of your house and show it to me." Wouldn't I just be doing the same thing in reverse?

So, just as you alone have the right to control what passes through the front door of your wooden house, you alone have the right to control what passes in and out of doors of your mind through your eyes, ears, and mouth. In fact, because your mind is more private than your house, you have even more right to sole control over what enters and leaves your mind than you have a right to sole control over what enters and leaves your house.

That's just common sense. You have the right to sovereignty over your mind. It is your private property. You own it. Nobody else has a right to treat it as though they own it.

If I can't barge into your living room and furnish it as I please, why should I be able to barge into your mind and furnish it as I please? That is, why should I be able to decide what you shall think and believe? Why should I be able to decide what you may or must say? Why should I be able to decide what words you may or may not use? Why should I be able to decide what you may read? What movies you may watch? Whom you may listen to?

What your attitude must be? How you should feel about things?

By the same token, what gives me the right to do the opposite? The right to access your mind? Why should I be able to decide that you shall reveal your private thoughts to me? That you shall tell me anything I want to know about you? That you shall give me an opinion on anything I ask? That you shall tell me anything you have done wrong?

Any one of those acts is an infinitely more violent breach of your privacy and personal sovereignty than barging into your house and acting like I own the place. It's a deeper penetration than sexual rape.

Yet this most ballistic violence to privacy is also the most common violence to privacy. And the most dangerous to allow.

Again, it's your mind, not mine. It's your house, not mine. So why should I care if I make a mess of it? I have no vested interest in being careful about what I put there. Indeed, I may *want* your mind disordered. So, if you believe that I have the right to decide what you must think/believe, what's to keep me from filling your head with cons and other lies? Absurdities? Mysteries? Upside-down definitions of what's right and wrong? Bigotry? And wild stories about 72 celestial virgins just waiting for you if you become a holy human bomb?

Only you have a vested interest in keeping an orderly mind. Because you are the one who incurs the consequences of what lives there. So, you are the only one with a right to any say about what lives there. It's your [Garden](#)^[455].

What's to keep me from abusing the information I pry out of your mind? To manipulate you? To assume your identity? To embarrass you. To concoct a frame-up job for you? To damage your reputation? To pocket or blackmail you? To come between you and your loved ones?

The right to privacy at this level is the right to freedom of speech and conscience, the right to keep your own council, and so forth. If you don't defend this right, you don't have a mind of your own. Someone else owns it.

We Americans are death on the government attempting to step over these red lines, and Europeans would do well to learn from us on that point. But we let individuals and other institutions cross the line with impunity. On the other hand, Europeans are death on you invading their space, presuming that anyone you accost must answer your questions and that you have a right to ask personal questions of people you hardly know. Americans would do well to learn from *them* on *this* point. We are easily conned into thinking it looks like we're "hiding something" if we don't want to answer a personal question.

So what if we are? Is it better to be shameless, or modest, about what we should be ashamed of? Besides, what's nobody else's business is just nobody else's business. Nosey, prying people are never looking for anything good, AND they can twist *anything*. So, why hand them a shtick to menace you with? Keep what's private private.

12.7.1 Violations of Mind

Why are violations of the boundary of the mind the most common violation of personal boundaries? Since this is the greatest violence to your rights in yourself, you'd think crossing this sacred personal boundary would be a rare offense.

As I pointed out in [Personal Boundaries](#)⁴⁰³, it's because this line is blurred by people, institutions, and the media crossing it in many ways that are firmly rooted in social custom. These are everyday occurrences deemed acceptable and even righteous by nearly everyone.

Consequently, in our culture, this personal boundary has virtually disintegrated. Most people are so numbed by having it crossed all the time that they cannot feel it being crossed. Or, if they do feel their spine and the muscles in the back of their neck stiffen, they think that feeling is some kind of sin and that they should not have it and should not resist the imposition.

Let's look at some examples.

12.7.1.1 The Media

Joan of Arc and the Inquisition battled for weeks over whether she would swear to answer any and every question the judges asked. They wouldn't even assure her that they wouldn't ask for military and tactical information about the French forces. They badgered her to reveal private conversations between herself and the king. She had no right to keep what she thought about anything to herself.

In fact, this illiterate nineteen-year-old had to give them an opinion on every theological question they posed to her. Then they searched her answers for "error" = heresy. This is rather like making you or I answer a million questions on graduate level abnormal psychology on pain of death at the stake for giving any wrong answers. Once or twice it got to be too much for even those unconsciences, and a judge did speak up to say that the question was unfit to ask anyone but a doctor of theology. But he never got that question withdrawn.

She had no right not to take the oath promising to answer any question they asked, either.

Journalists often violate privacy the same way. Especially in press briefings, they act as though they have a right to know things they have no right to know. And they seem to think they have a right to extract an opinion from anyone about anything. Their tactics are the same as the Inquisition's. Never satisfied with the statement they get from a spokesman, they reject it and require a different one.

"Don't you think this? Don't you think that?"

"I already answered you. I said"

"Yesbut, what do YOU think? Don't you think this? Don't you think that?"

The Third Degree goes on and on and on. They don't want what the President says: they want some statement of what his spokesman thinks about it. In other words, they are out to *make* news, not report it.

When an answer isn't what they want, they often rudely reject it. How rudely? So rudely that members of the Washington press Corps have been known to reject an answer with "That's ridiculous" and then try to put other words in the spokesman's mouth. Just like the Inquisition. Almost never asking a question that would draw out new information about the events of the day, their questions relentlessly hammer away at the spokesman, pressuring him into some admission of guilt or failure.

Though the spokesman surely knows the psychological game being played, he usually does eventually give way to the psychological battering ram they're using and seems to feel that he should reveal things to them that they have no right to know. For example, the President's private conversations with people are private. The press has no right to what transpires in them. The spokesman's personal opinions about a policy are private. The press has no right to know them. (Why

should they want to? Unless they are looking for him to admit having a different opinion about something so they can report that there is some "big rift" at the White House.) Their rude arrogance in presuming a right to know such things is breathtaking. And they come on like gangbusters in this invasion of privacy.

But don't take my word for it. Here's an eye-opening [transcript](#) of a White House Press Briefing. While there, look through other ones, and you'll see that this behavior by the press is common.

Never let anyone do this to you. You are not the rude one if you shut them down: they were.

Privacy was once so highly valued that, in the tales of King Arthur, a knight errant's host didn't ask his guest's *name* till after supper! Why? Because he didn't yet know that knight well enough to ask him a **personal question**.

We get some of these good manners in old Westerns too: "You ask too many questions, pardna."

When a narcissist first gets to know you, he or she will seem very interested in you, asking all kinds of personal questions. But narcissists are interested only in information they can somehow use against you, either to manipulate you or slander you or otherwise exploit you. In fact, a narcissist is often just a blabbermouth who will broadcast (embellished) stuff about you in bars and clubs and lounges just to get attention with the stories he tells. The less he knows, the better off you are. He isn't interested in *you* anyway. He never comes to really know you at all.

12.7.1.2 Religion

Religion routinely claims the right to decide what enters, leaves, and exists in our minds. If you accept that your religion has this right, you need to make sure that you don't become so accustomed to religion crossing this personal boundary that you unwittingly let just anyone cross it.

That is, you must be aware of the ways you let religion cross it. So that you know exactly where that line is and don't anyone else cross it. Here are examples of where religion crosses it, examples that also serve as warnings of the danger when that authority is abused.

Christianity's most basic fundamental teaching is that you must believe a certain incredible story about Jesus of Nazareth to be saved from the fate of those who

don't: getting thrown away into place for the evil called Hell, to be punished eternally with torture. That denies us the right to think as we choose on the matter. Islam has a similar doctrine.

The Catholic Church goes further. It teaches that the Church and the pope as its head have the right to "determine" what we shall think/believe in all matters of faith and morals.



The domain of "faith and morals" is unlimited. The crucial article of faith is that you must obey the Church's rules, because God gave the Church the right to make the rules, and therefore disobeying Church is *itself* a sin. So, for example, any Catholic who has participated in an abortion is by the act excommunicated and has no right to the sacraments without first obtaining their bishop's absolution. Again, for example, when the Inquisition turned heretics and their families out into the streets, it was a sin **not** to let them starve, because the Church said you must absolutely shun them and mustn't help them or even just feed them and pronounced an anathema on anyone who did. It's an article of faith to believe that the Church has this right to be wrong and require people to do wrong, because it's an article of faith that the Church is infallible (unfailable) in matters of faith and morals. In other words, it's "right" by definition, not by principles of morality.

In fact, the word *heretic* means "chooser": a heretic is someone who chooses for him- or her-self what to believe. Though the law is rarely enforced, heresy is still the worst offense in the Catholic Church, so serious that a priest cannot forgive it in the confessional. It has to be forgiven by Rome.

From the Jesuit Rules for Thinking with the Church, by St. Ignatius Loyola

That we may be altogether of the same mind and in conformity with the Church herself, if she shall have defined anything to be black which to our eyes appears to be white, we ought in like manner to pronounce it to be black."

[...]

Let us with the utmost pains strain every nerve of our strength to exhibit this virtue of obedience, firstly to the Highest Pontiff...by persuading ourselves that all things [commanded] are just; by rejecting with a kind of blind obedience all opposing opinion or judgment of our own.... And let each one persuade himself that they that live under obedience ought to allow themselves to be borne and ruled by divine providence working

through their Superiors exactly as if they were a corpse which suffers itself to borne and handled in any way whatsoever; or just as an old man's stick which serves him who holds it in his hand wherever and for whatever purpose he wish to use it...."

If I have the right to determine what you shall believe, I have the right to tell you that you must believe saying the word *popcorn* is a sin. This is the logic the Inquisition used to determine people's confessions for them. For example, say that some guy tells a joke. He tells the Inquisition it was just a harmless joke, not a sin. The Inquisition, speaking with the full authority of the Church, finds that it was a sin. So, he must **believe** that he sinned. He has no choice, because that's a matter of "faith and morals." It's also knowledge of a sin.

And, like [Joan of Arc](#)⁴¹⁸, he had no right to keep anything to himself. So he must confess this sin to the Church and do penance (usually fees and fines so high they left him impoverished, plus the *sanbenito*). Being a form of the confessional, the Inquisition had a heyday with that. Jump on some innocent thing someone said, declare it a sin, and then require him to confess or be slowly roasted alive.

So, if you let anyone else decide what you think, you are giving them the right to control your mind. Never give it to a narcissist. Pushed to its limits, that is absolute power over you. Possession of you.

12.8 The Holy Grail

Where is the Holy Grail? In the last place anyone would look for it. Right under everyone's nose. Where only the pure of heart will find it.

Within.

According to the Grail Legend, your body is your "house." And both your rights and responsibilities with respect to it parallel your rights and responsibilities with respect to the big house of stone and lumber you live in.

And so, when the Inquisition ordered Joan of Arc to obey the Church and put on a skirt instead of the men's clothes they said were inciting her guards to rape her, she said she'd think about it. She thanked them for their concern about her bodily purity adding that her spiritual purity needed defending too. They all became suddenly obtuse and acted like they didn't know what she was talking about.

In this titanic 144-against-1 battle for ownership of her mind/soul/spirit, she often reminded them that she wouldn't let them pollute her by inseminating her head. Making it absolutely clear that she knew spiritual/mental impurity is infinitely worse than sexual impurity.

Which is why she thought so much more clearly than them. Because what you got was pure her, not her polluted with anyone else who had got into her head and was making her think what he wanted her to think.

Never let a narcissist into your head. If you do, he or she will own you.

How? Simply by crossing personal boundaries in presuming the right to judge your private decisions. That's all control freaks (like Joan's judges) do. They judge everything you say, think, do, and even *feel*.



They have a carrot and a stick. The carrot is their approval. The stick is their disapproval. Of everything you say, do, think, and even feel.

If you let them relate to you as your judge in these matters, dodging that stick and reaching for that carrot, you cede to them the right to decide what you should say, do, think, and even feel.

In other words, you give control of yourself to them. Which is to say that you sell yourself to them in return for their approval. And you will be sorry if you do.

Keeping the Grail pure isn't just your right, it's your responsibility. You alone are responsible for what you say and do. You can't ditch this responsibility on people you let do your thinking for you. And if you let anyone else, especially a narcissist, assume rights of ownership over you, you cease to exist as a person. You become a tool, an executioner of his will instead of your own.

But he won't suffer the consequences of what he manipulates you to do: you will. So, protect your boundaries.

If you can't get a narcissist to stop relating to you as your judge, you can try this: Every time he or she relates to you inappropriately (i.e., as your judge or by abusing you in any way), take away the mirror.

By that I mean to abruptly cut off the interaction. Mid-sentence. Mid-word. It's easy on a phone: just hang up. In person, suddenly unsee him. (Perhaps look through him, focusing on the wall behind him.) Don't speak. **Give no reaction.** Act like he isn't even there. Walk away if possible.

In other words, **DO NOT PERMIT THE INAPPROPRIATE INTERRACTION.** Block it. Don't "be there" for his inappropriate relating to you. Leave him playing to thin air.

You don't have to let him relate to you inappropriately.

You won't win any arguments this way, but that doesn't matter. The crucial thing is that you are not submitting to the role he is trying to impose on you in the relationship. You're saying, "I don't like this role, and I ain't gonna play it. When you can come down off your cloud and be my equal, fine. Till then, go to Hell."

The message is clear in the only language a narcissist understands: *relate to me appropriately, or not at all.*

I'm not suggesting a week of "the silent treatment." That won't help. Not any more than it would help to yell "Bad dog!" at your puppy for a week after he piddles inside. So, if the narcissist later relates to you appropriately, *positively* reinforce that behavior by being polite.

PART XIII

Must I leave him?

Must I leave him?

On Internet message boards, people claiming involvement with narcissists ask, "Must I leave him?"

Whenever I hear this question, I get two ambivalent urges at once. One is to reply, "Yes! Yes! A thousand times, yes!" And the other is to reply, "What the heck kind of question is that?"

Notice that the grown children of narcissists don't ask it. The *mates* of narcissists do.

Typically, when adults realize that a parent who troubles them is a malignant narcissist, they react to discovering that the relationship never was a mutual symbiosis, but rather a parasitic one in disguise. Their words convey a deep sense of betrayal. And relief — in the knowledge that it wasn't their fault, that something is wrong with their parent, not them. In their words it goes without saying that they will break this hostile and predatory relationship that is so hurtful and harmful to them.

So, what's with the mates of narcissists? Often the thrust of their reaction is complaint about how wronged they are. Then they ask, "Must I leave him?"

To some extent, this difference is to be expected, because the relationship between parent and child is different than the relationship between lovers. And it is much older — a lifelong, virtually unbreakable relationship of blood, not a mere recent contract like marriage. We can expect the children of narcissists to take some things for granted about them that the mates of narcissists find hard to accept. Yet, there is the same abysmal betrayal in both experiences. And the same liberating justification. So, why do the reactions of many mates seem so peculiar to the children? Why do they often lack reaction to that betrayal and liberation?

13.1 Why people ask the question

For one thing, I suppose they are not all really mates of malignant narcissists.

Some could be lying or imagining things. People are more likely to wrongly claim that a spouse is a malignant narcissist than that a parent is one. Doing the latter goes against nature and is the last thing anybody wants to believe about a

parent. Also, it is hard to imagine circumstances in which there would be much, if anything, to gain by falsely accusing a parent. But there *are* untoward motives for wrongly claiming that a spouse or lover is a malignant narcissist.

Also, many perfectly *normal* people behave narcissistically at times (especially in retaliation for Narcissistic Injury) and even have some narcissistic character traits.

For example: Though a malignant narcissist will certainly do this, not every man who buries his nose in the newspaper to deny his wife attention is a malignant narcissist. If he is not, the problem in this relationship is a problem in a normal human relationship. If he *is* a malignant narcissist, there is no human relationship. She just thinks there is.

And it's not hard to tell the difference. Here are three ways to do so:

- Remember that NPD is a *pervasive* pattern of thinking and behavior. If this guy is a malignant narcissist, he does the same thing a thousand ways — in every conceivable way at every opportunity. If his wife is likely to call him on this insult, he delivers it subtly, both to preserve deniability and to put a more formidable wall between them than the newspaper. Why? Because it would kill him if she got one bit of attention from him by telling him to put down that paper and answer her. To guard against that, a real malignant narcissist doesn't enter the room till the food is served, and he leaves it the moment he is finished eating.
- Remember also that malignant narcissists are perverse. So, if this guy is normal and she complains that he makes her feel bad, he will soften. But if he is a malignant narcissist, he will go the other way: he will go for the jugular by being cruel and then heap insult on injury by making *her* out to be hurting *him*.
- Lastly, remember that malignant narcissists view all as but objects and therefore do not have a human relationship with anybody, even their own children. So, if this guy is a malignant narcissist, he is an emotional vampire even to his children. Normal people cannot conceive of hurting the self esteem of their own children.

Indeed, that guy with his nose in the newspaper may be thus reacting to a malignantly narcissistic wife. One who demands 100% of his attention 100% of the time. She is a jabberbox to keep him from getting in a word edgewise so that she need never pay one bit of attention back to him.

And so, you can't tell from a post on a message board whether it is from the mate of a malignant narcissist or from a malignant narcissist projecting and whining

about being denied the total attention he demands.

It is no wonder that the mate of a normal person with narcissistic traits asks, "Must I leave him?" For, the answer is obviously "No." Yet all she hears is "Yes!" from people who know what makes narcissists tick. It is also no wonder that a narcissist fantasizing that she is being denied the ego gratification she deserves asks, "Must I leave him?" For she can't. She is a parasite, and he is her host.

But there's no reason to think that all who ask this question are either exaggerating or are narcissists themselves. In fact, unless their accounts are fiction, some apparently *are* being abused by narcissistic mates.

Yet, please pardon me for being brutally honest: the question seems stupid to those who know what makes narcissists tick.

So, why do intelligent, informed people ask it?

13.1.1 Co-dependance

Conventional wisdom says that many ask *Must I leave him?* because they are "co-dependant" or "inverted narcissists." That is a fancy way of saying that they are gluttons for punishment, that they get some masochistic pleasure out of being abused. The line is that they seek out narcissistic mates. In other words, they are mentally ill themselves.

There *is* such a thing as the "martyr complex."

But beware, this explanation blatantly blames the victim. And any explanation that blames the victim should be viewed with healthy skepticism. Why? Because it is anti-logical.

Remember that society used to blame the victim for rape, racism, and every other form of abuse. Different forms of blaming the victim pass in and out of vogue, but blaming the victim is as old as the Bible (illness or misfortune was punishment for sin) and goes on forever. It starts in the school yard and continues in the workplace. Every time the big guy hits on a little one, everybody agrees that the little guy "asked for it." Nobody ever asks, "Now why would he do that?" For, they readily believe that the little guy is so stupid or crazy as to have poked his finger into that big guy's eye. But if you try to say that the big guy just attacked without being provoked, they never fail to skeptically

ask, "Now why would he do that?" See the double standard?

Saying that a mate reluctant to leave a narcissist is co-dependent ignores the countless ways that normal people can end up in a crucible, through no fault of their own. (See [The Rat Game](#)^[362].)

For example, much of what we know about narcissism has come from families in which the poisoned fruit ripened during the last fifteen-to-twenty years. These families were formed after World War II, when there was a shortage of men, and women alone could not support themselves. Doubtless, many women settled for husbands they would not settle for in today's world. Divorce was both financially unfeasible and taboo. Also, if a woman has a narcissistic father, she has no way of knowing that all men are not like that. She has been raised to view his dissatisfaction with her as her fault and to put up with being treated as inferior. She also has feelings abused from early childhood. Bruised feelings. So they are more sensitive than most people's feelings. Narcissists target women like this as easy prey because their self esteem is easy to puncture.

Narcissists need not be exceptionally intelligent, but they *are* exceptionally experienced, because they have been playing this game since childhood. So they are diabolical. Therefore, unless a narcissist is manifestly brilliant, he is bound to be underestimated and thought incapable of cunning and duplicity. It is amazing how little suspicion he arouses as he goes to great lengths weaving a web that traps a mate by isolating her from other people and making her financially, socially, and emotionally dependent on him. Then suddenly the honeymoon is over.

Plus, there is such a thing as the cycle of abuse.

13.1.2 The Cycle of Abuse

Strange as it sounds, many perfectly normal people get trapped in the cycle of abuse. We see it in the Stockholm Syndrome, named from an incident in which hostages took the side of their captors and clung to them! Since the Middle Ages, inquisitors and torturers have known and capitalized on this bizarre phenomenon in the hapless victims at their mercy. The KGB's famed method of breaking people deliberately brought it about to establish mind control.

Continually stomping on a person breaks her back. I mean that morally. It demoralizes her.

It is not natural for a person to take abuse. Our instincts prompt us to fight or flee. By "flee" I mean abandon the abuser, which usually means divorcing him. By "fight" I mean *strike back* to hurt the abuser so he has some reason not to abuse you again — fear that you will bite back.

But society blocks this common sense in our genes by infesting our brains with a virus — the stupid idea that divorce or fighting back is wrong. Especially when her abuser goes around putting on an Academy Award act of how hurt he is. Of course he's hurting: he doesn't want to lose his combination punching bag and Mamma.

What choice does this stupid idea leave the victim? She must choose whether to (a) be a bad person or (b) bend over for it.

Yes, society is getting involved and on the wrong side. Especially holier-than-thous.

Every person's most precious possession is her self-concept — the picture of herself she carries inside, the image of herself as a **good** person. People will do anything to preserve it. They would rather die than lose it or have it taken from them. So, she usually chooses to go against nature and be a good girl = put up with the abuse = keep turning the other cheek.

But it's a Catch-22, for then we say she is a bad person anyway — for thus "asking for it." Now we say she's co-dependent and has a martyr complex.

Perhaps *society* should have its head examined, not her.

How is she to take being "IT" in this game of "being damned if you do and damned if you don't?" How does one wrap a sound mind around it? Is there anything more her spouse and society could gang up and do to drive her crazy? It is no wonder that this universal oppression depresses her. Then we blame the victim for that too. Because God made women to smile all the time.

I think it was the prophet Ezekiel who got really sarcastic in rebuking us "from whom there is no peace" for thus pursuing her in this never-ending attack "crying, 'Peace! Peace!'" So, her abuser tramples her and then society piles on. First by its taboos against fighting back and then by blaming the victim for docilely submitting to abuse. When society thus gets into the act, how can she not be overwhelmed by that tidal wave? What is she to do?

We know the answer. Instead of curing her by eliminating the cause, oppression,

we drug her with Prozac.

And so the cycle of abuse rolls on. Like a steamroller. Over her most precious possession, her concept of herself as a good person.

And so, both the deliberate abuse of her mate and the ambient abuse of society very often do mental damage. The resulting mental disorder is described by the Medieval legal and theological term "reduction to a state of victimhood," because it was actually a judicial sentence executed so as to bring it about. It was the ultimate punishment of an age that laid awake nights thinking of ways to make punishments worse.

But remember that a [mental disorder](#)^[58] is not a [personality disorder](#)^[58]. In fact, both individuals and society wound us all, and a large majority of people suffer from some mental disorder at some time in their lives. For the most part, those who do not make matters worse by abusing their minds with lies, live normal lives. Most get over it or manage it on their own. And those who seek counseling are greatly helped into thinking straight again. Not so with personality disorders. Since we don't blame veterans for suffering post-traumatic stress, we shouldn't blame the abused for suffering reduction to a state of victimhood.

13.1.3 Bad Reasons

There are also some bad reasons for sticking with a narcissist. Maybe he's rich and she likes the lifestyle. There are mothers who, to keep their trophy mate, selfishly betray their children to abuse by him. More of them should go to jail for "failure to protect."

Then there is the woman who sticks with a narcissist under the illusion that she can win his stupid game. Let's call her the Game Player. (You can read about *The Games People Play* in the book of that title.)

This is how the game starts: She naturally reacts to the narcissist's Wild Act by trying to put the brakes on him. She does this by drawing two red lines: one at adultery and one at physically beating her or the children. Her abuser comes to a screeching halt at them both. Oooh, power. She gets this power rush because she thinks she is controlling him. She likes it. It is a pain killer for her battered ego. She wants more, because she has a score to settle. So, there's something in it for her too. She tries to beat this control freak at his own game.

To justify playing the game for her own ego gratification, she doesn't dare know

that she has a serious problem. No Problem becomes her middle name. So she doesn't dare be aware that his behavior is downright bizarre. Then she needn't reveal to her parents, siblings, and friends that her husband is cracked. For, they would be abhorred at what goes on privately in that house and think she was a bad mother for not getting her kids out of there. They would not let her unsee the psychological scars he leaves on them.

The game's the thing. She doesn't take it seriously. He will not say he loves the children, will not show any affection for them, will not take any interest in them, and will not pay any attention (except negative attention) to them at all. Unless he is the type of narcissist who lives vicariously through a child he makes a tennis star of, he treats his children as though they don't exist. In any case, they never achieve the status of persons with him. If they try to hijack his attention, he lashes out at them viciously for it.

Yet she expects them to grow up normal! She will even say, "Must I leave him? I want my children to grow up in a home with two parents!"

Well, lady, they are not now living in a home with two parents.

Her two red lines discourage him from doing anything that would leave evidence that could be discovered by the outside world. She rationalizes them as fulfilling her responsibility.

That's absurd. Her red lines only ensure that what a monster he is will never be discovered by the outside world.

So, he gets to psychologically abuse everyone to his heart's content. Narcissists prefer this more deeply wounding kind of abuse anyway. It destroys self esteem more effectively than physical abuse. They usually are tempted to physical violence only when frustrated in their attempts to land moral blows...and when throwing a terror tantrum just to scare anybody standing up to them. So a narcissist is quite content in a crucible with a game player.

The poor kids have to take it, but Mother can play. And so she and her narcissistic mate manipulate each other like wrestlers locked in mortal combat for the rest of their lives. They hold another round of the same fight every day. He keeps pushing her button to start it. He does it in a [Drive By](#)¹³⁵. Then he leaves her to stew and to imagine himself the victim. She plays right into his hands by punishing him with the silent treatment, never learning why it doesn't make her feel like the winner.

Everything is a power play. Like a narcissist, the more she loses, the more determined to win she gets. She never learns that one must be twisted to beat the twisted in the twisted game they play. No wonder she becomes narcissistic herself (though she does not suffer from NPD). No wonder she fails her kids.

If she asked the adult child of a narcissist for advice, he would urge her to get her children away from her husband. Not only are one or more of them likely to suffer from NPD, but those who grow up normal will grow up sorely lacking in self esteem and plagued by self doubt. Not something any responsible parent allows to happen to her children.

So, there are some of the reasons why intelligent, informed people ask, "Must I leave him?" Some of these reasons are quite understandable, and some are deplorable.

13.2 Begging the question

But what the heck kind of question is that? *Must I leave him?* What business is it of ours? Must I give you good advice when I won't experience the fruit of it? Hmm. Then I can experiment on you with my advice. If it causes a catastrophe, what's that to me?

I mean that anybody who has no stake in a matter should have no say in it. People who are not in the same boat with you always have ulterior motives for what they say you should do.

How can I say that for sure? Because somebody without an ulterior motive would respect the fact that your marriage is none of their business. Therefore, the type of person you can trust to guide you is also the type of person who won't want to. Only if this person is close, will he even be willing to talk with you about it. If he is close, he may help you think the matter through so you can identify your options and determine whether your mate really is seriously mentally ill. But he will be loathe to tell you what to do. Only fear for your physical safety would compel him to urge you to leave your spouse.

In contrast, those who jump at the chance to tell you what to do are often people just trying to *sound* like nice people. So, these sounders sound like the milk of human kindness flows by the quart in their every vein. But notice that there's not one drop of common sense in it. They're serving themselves, not you. You can tell because they are always politically correct and do much more talking than listening. They are just posing in a mirror. So, their advice is as worthless as hot

air.

Your situation is unique. Most people cannot comprehend, let alone appreciate, your predicament or the consequences of either staying with, or leaving, your "N." So, they cannot weigh all the criteria that must be weighed in your decision.

For one thing, if your spouse is a malignant narcissist, it may be dangerous to abandon him. Women have been murdered for doing that. The longer you have been together (= the less able he is to find a replacement), the greater the risk. That risk must be carefully assessed and steps to protect yourself carefully planned. You need tips from people who know what they're talking about, not moralizing opinions.

Also, it's easy for me to say that you should get your children out of that home. But it's not so easy for you if that would doom them to life in poverty.

On the other hand, the abuse is usually the kind that leaves no physical bruises. When described, it loses much in the translation. Only people who have experienced it sense how black it is and appreciate its devastating impact. Typically, others don't appreciate it at all and think you should just put up with these mere "annoyances" for the rest of your life.

Moreover, some things sound fine till they happen to you. Then suddenly the veil falls from your eyes and you see what's wrong with them. For example, men often see nothing offensive in the way they treat women — till they are treated that way. Again for example, people see nothing wrong in one man dying for everybody else's sins — till they are punished for somebody else's sin. Yet again for example, people think a man *praises* God when he crawls out from under the rubble of his house after a tornado and thanks God for sparing him — till somebody they love dies in the rubble of the house next door.

So, most people have no idea what you are going through and therefore are in no position to offer advice.

Moreover, there are a host of practical considerations.

Other people cannot appreciate your isolation and all its ramifications. If you leave the narcissist and people find out what happened in that home, they will not think well of you for allowing it so long. Are you prepared for that? Why did you let him come between you and your family? (Gulp.) Are you prepared to eat crow? What are you going to say to your parents and siblings about it now?

More important, being all about his image, a narcissist's top priority is to "come out smelling like a rose." Narcissists have been through upheavals before and know just how to do that. Plus, they have practiced character assassination since childhood. They often fool a woman's own family into believing that she is the demon in the affair. In fact, victims usually complain that their relationships with everyone are destroyed so that they lose their family, extended family, and circle of friends. This is usually a consequence of a break with a narcissistic sibling, but, as far as possible, it happens in a break with a narcissistic mate as well.

And it can cost you custody of your children. Your career. It can make you unemployable, largely because one of the lies he spreads about you is a lie every narcissist spreads about his or her victims. You can guess it by remembering that a narcissist is a Projection Machine. Yup, you guessed it: that you are the crazy one, not him.

My advice is to first find out for sure whether your mate really is seriously mentally ill or is just behaving narcissistically in certain circumstances. If he does not suffer from NPD, the relationship might be salvageable. If he does, there is no relationship salvage. **What you took for a relationship is just a shtick for him to club you with. In other words, you are married to someone who isn't married to you.**

Even before you decide what to do, collect evidence in case you need it someday.

Most important, give appropriate weight to the psychological welfare of your children. The saddest thing in the world is how this disease passes from generation to generation in families, spreading pain and suffering greater than which there cannot be.

13.3 Denial

Most people who get involved with a malignant narcissist do eventually decide to break away. At some point, they sense that, to survive as a person, they must. This often takes a very long time, but that is no reason to say that they are gluttons for punishment. A glutton for punishment never breaks away. So we must be careful not to judge too quickly. Denial is a powerful thing, and it is instinctive in traumatic situations.

Though I am less prone to denial than most people, I had an unforgettable experience with it many years ago. I was on a flight from Paris to Rome, and the

security was much tighter even than it is today. Everything got X-rayed *and* thoroughly hand searched, including your person. You probably would not believe me if I told you all the things that happened without me allowing myself to know what was going on. The more reality tried to impose on my consciousness, the more into a haze I went. I was in the boarding line for three hours before I gave in and looked up at the sign that said this flight was ultimately bound for Tel Aviv. My heart landed in the pit of my stomach. The people in that endless line behaved differently than Europeans. After nine days in Paris, it felt good to be among people like this, whom I felt must be mostly Americans. But now, for the first time I let myself see and looked around. Their hushed, almost whispering voices were not speaking English. And every twentieth man was bearded and dressed as an orthodox Jew.

But even that did not bring me out of denial. I kept whistling in the dark, to think this was probably routine and that there was no danger. The loaded plane then baked on the runway for several hours – I lost track of time. I didn't come out of denial till long after the cargo hold had been emptied, all the baggage re-searched by hand, and reloaded. Not once, or twice, but three times.

Denial is a slippery slope, so even that did nothing but accelerate me deeper and deeper into it. That's because every time a thought acknowledging reality managed to form, you quickly repressed it in denial to keep whistling there in the dark. I didn't come out of it till the plane had sat on that runway for so long you thought terrorists were in the cockpit and negotiations were underway. Not till the silent tension was so thick you could cut it with a knife and everybody was about to explode. (You were afraid to move or talk, for fear that everybody would attack you and tear you to pieces with their bare hands, thinking you were a terrorist.) The teenage girl in the seat behind me threw up for sheer fright and was comforted by two old men.

Then a young mother held up her one-or-two-year-old son at arm's length, obviously in some silent gesture that all understood. She made him giggle with delight for us. The center of all that silent attention, he held out his arms to be an airplane for us. To this day, whenever I recall that moment, I utterly break down into sobbing tears.

It changed my life. At the time though this vision just stunned me. Back into my senses. That's because I suddenly realized that people wanted to kill this child for being.

As if stuck by a hot poker or something, I turned around with a little voice in my head angrily asking, "Why? Where are they? Where are the bastards?" It was as

though a gigabyte of understanding downloaded all at once. "Humph," I thought, sitting back in my seat, "Figures! They're hiding! Cute! But I'll be damned if I'll be afraid of the people I *can* see!"

Why did I think that? Because when I came to my senses I noticed somebody's invisible finger on my button and snatched back control of my mind. That's why I suddenly could think straight enough to know whom to hate.

I am too ashamed to share what I had been thinking before that, as half-formed thoughts repressed just would not stay down, despite my denial, and kept surfacing to consciousness on me. But I will say that the terror tactics had me fearing those innocent people around me, not the unseen terrorists. To this day, I am both ashamed and amazed at how backwards terror had made me think. Because they were *dangerous to be around*, the other passengers were the "dangerous" ones in my mind, not the unseen terrorists. What a toxic thought. Imagine how it made me view them.

And there is a very short step between fear and hatred. One takes it in a heartbeat.

Yup, I was blaming the victim, viewing the targets of terrorists like Canadians and Europeans view Americans today. Yup, if we saw a bunch of sheep blaming the attacked one while making excuses for the wolf and even being friendly with him, we'd know they're crazy. But terrorized human beings NEVER fail to do just that.

Sure, those stupid sheep think that if they suck up to him, he'll like them and not eat them too. But we know that's too stupid for even a dumb animal to think. Yet, terrorized human beings NEVER fail to think just that.

I liken this crazy, backwards thinking to the true story of some children caught on a railroad trestle bridge when a train came. Observers said that, if they had done the natural thing — if they had run to the **nearer end** of the bridge, **away from** the train — they would have reached safety. But like deer in an automobile's headlights, their terror made them all run right into the onrushing train. Truth is stranger than fiction, eh? That's how backwards terror makes people think, and narcissists use terror tactics.

Terror isn't fright. Terror is a darkened state of mind. Terror is your head buried in the sand. Indeed, the very word *terror* comes from the Latin word *terra*, which means "earth" and comes from this ancient figure of speech. Terror is that underground state of mind otherwise known as denial — fear of facing facts. In

terror, you're on automatic pilot, acting on thoughts you repress to the level of the subconscious. Therefore, those thoughts can be absolutely absurd without your realizing it.

So, beware denial. It's a dangerous state of mind. A narcissist's shock tactics and terror tactics drive you into it. But don't go there. People in denial don't think straight. They think and do the most inexplicable things because denial compels them 180 degrees in the wrong direction. If I had not been deep in denial I would not have boarded that plane.

PART XIV

The Important Stuff

The Important Stuff

Narcissism as natural self love is a good thing, essential to survival. It's what makes us value ourselves. It's the root of our instinct for self preservation. In fact, humans don't have a corner on the market. Animals have a healthy self-love too. In infants, narcissism is critical to survival, and some failure of it to develop may have something to do with unexplained infant deaths. For example, as I mentioned above, their narcissism is what makes baby birdies stick their heads up out of the nest every time Mother comes near, stretching their gaping mouths wide and chirping their heads off. They are crying, "Feed me! Not him, not her — ME. Feed me!" Any baby birdie that doesn't do this well enough is going to starve. Thus the infants of every species compete with each other and run Mother ragged, so that she forgets her own needs in preference to theirs.

Their heavy dose of narcissism is what delights me no end about Cairn Terriers. I think that's because their healthy, natural, good-natured narcissism is in such stark contrast to the malignant narcissism I have had to deal with in other people. Each Cairn thinks he or she is the greatest dog in the world. (See [Gigi's Page](#).) They prance and strut and show off like crazy. And they will dominate just about any other dog, no matter how large. They will dominate you too if you don't watch out. They are entitled to and demand your attention! Now! And they know how to get it. They will get it by making you mad, if necessary. Nothing around here can be louder (and therefore be the center of attention) than Pierre. Them's the rules. It was the same with Gigi. And Cairns (like all terriers to some extent) have minds of their own. They won't do tricks to please you. Or for a treat, no matter how tasty. In fact they sulk at the offer, looking at you as if to say, "What do you think I am? a prostitute? Take that treat and eat it yourself. I ain't gonna do what you want just to get it." So, to "train" a Cairn, you have to *persuade* him to do what you want by making it a game in which he wants to do it to show off, because it's fun. Which is why he can never be loose — because if some varmint comes along, he won't care what you say: he's going after it. You can sort of train him to come when you call, but he will have to remind you first (by heading the other way for a moment) that he's coming only because he wants to, not because you told him to. I love it.

But malignant narcissism is perverted self love. In fact, it isn't really self love. It's self hatred. The person suffering from NPD hates himself and loves his IMAGE instead. He makes it look good the easy way — the way his narcissistic parent did — by making others' images look bad by comparison. That makes him a predator on the image of everyone around him. Everyone.

So, at bottom, the nature of the narcissist is the nature of a predator on his own kind. The importance of that fact cannot be overstated.



The brain of a predator just does not relate to the living soul of its prey. If you don't believe this, just watch PBS. Watch the behavior, and look into the eyes, of predatory animals while they're making a kill. There's nothing there. They are like machines at that moment. They must be, or they couldn't do it. In other words, Nature has equipped them with hard-wired circuitry in the brain that takes over the moment prey is sighted when they are hungry. It suppresses what we could observe in that animal only a minute earlier while it was playing with its siblings or a waving leaf on a twig, tenderly nuzzling its offspring or mate. Perhaps it was even grieving over the death of a member of the pack. But that's all gone the moment it sights prey while hungry. Then suddenly it's a killing machine.

It likes killing. Nature has endowed it with a taste for killing as necessary equipment for its survival. It even considers killing fun. Which is why we sometimes see in nature killing made sport: Chimpanzees (who don't eat meat) will gang-up on and attack a monkey, cruelly tearing it to pieces and having a blast over its heart-rending cries. Killer whales sometimes play with baby seals like a cat plays with a mouse. Wolves sometimes bring down and eviscerate prey they feed on the guts of till it dies and then walk away. Sorry, that's just the truth. Humans are animals too and have that same predatory mode. Nature endowed us with it as hunters. It's in everyone. But in narcissists and sociopaths something has gone haywire. They go into this mode against their own kind. And they are permanently in this mode against all their own kind.

Why? Because they don't view themselves as of our kind. They are of a superior kind. They think we are here to feed them, just as we think cattle are here to feed us. Correction: we do (or should) treat cattle humanely. We don't relate to them as objects like narcissists relate to us = like we relate to bugs or plants. Compared to us, narcissists are gods. Alien beings.

They can't help it. They are not to blame for feeling this way. Today the prognosis is poor. There is little sign of any real success in treating these people. Those who commit prosecutable offenses are repeat offenders — such as pedophile priests, sexual predators, and serial killers. They get this way as children and demonstrate it by torturing animals or murdering other children on a whim.

Though they can't control their temptations, they can control their conduct. And this is what competent psychiatric care can really help them with. It can show them better ways to deal with their problems, making them resistant to temptation. In fact, I think it could build in some TRUE self-esteem to counterbalance their self hatred. (Lifelong treatment would be necessary to maintain it though.) And a lion tamer can walk into the lions' den. But they are still wild animals, so he can never be sure they won't give in to the temptation to attack the prey tantalizing them beyond their power to resist.

We don't morally condemn those lions for being lions. And the only thing more stupid and useless than morally condemning narcissists for being narcissists is trusting them. Don't tempt them. Just because a pedophile priest has behaved for the last five years doesn't mean he won't finally lose it and eat another altar boy. Indeed, it's cruel to tempt him daily thus! You wouldn't wave a bottle of whiskey in front of an alcoholic, would you?

I don't see what's so difficult to understand about this. Talk therapy and/or punishment isn't the answer with PREDATORS. We must do whatever it takes to minimize or eliminate their access to vulnerable prey as targets of opportunity. Period. For ever. Indeed, these people will thank us for it. Consider how many of them deliberately get themselves caught just to stop themselves. Let's get a clue already and stop dangling bait before their eyes.

There are many ways to do this: prison isn't the only one. For example, don't let him teach school or be a police officer. Don't give him power over his fellow employees. Don't elect him to be President for Life. Don't let him live off his parents till they die. Don't follow him on a purge to cleanse the Holy Land. And if he steps over the line whack him, so that he thinks twice before doing it again..

And, especially, let's stop passing this curse from generation to generation by subjecting children to narcissistic parents. It takes the consent of the non-narcissistic parent for that to happen. So, just because your mother or father put up with it doesn't mean you should. If we began protecting the next generation today, this accursed cause of a vast amount of both the told and untold human suffering in this world would be gone in 50 years.

14.1 Why Do You Put Up With Abuse?

It's hard to understand why people put up with narcissistic abuse. Because of that, many assume that the victim is "co-dependent," which usually translates to "a glutton for punishment."



But isn't it pretty far out to so easily assume that people seek pain? We are hard-wired against that! So why jump that far in jumping to a conclusion? This isn't the same as the "martyr complex." People with the martyr complex aren't being abused. In their own estimation they're being underappreciated. Not the same thing at all.

Virtually everyone who has ever loved a narcissist gets angry with him- or herself, asking why they put up with the abuse. They ask themselves, "Am I a glutton for punishment? Why don't I leave? Why do I keep getting suckered back into a relationship?"

I have this much comfort to offer: You are reacting to narcissistic abuse the way normal people always do. Not that you should keep it up, but there's no reason to get angry with yourself or to wonder what's wrong with you.

This isn't to say that you might not be psychologically injured. Counseling might well be in order. But that doesn't mean you're crazy. The narcissist is the one whose crazy.

You are in a situation analogous to being on another planet with an alien who views you as prey but conceals that from you. The inner person in you is as far from its regard as the inner soul of a cockroach is from yours when you stomp it. In other words, this alien doesn't relate to you humanly — it is unaware of any common humanity shared by you both.

It relates to you as but an object. And that means exactly what it says: you might as well be a microscopic specimen or a nail this alien is hitting with a hammer.

Yet you are interacting as with another human being. That makes you dead meat. The norms of human interaction don't apply. Things don't mean the same to a narcissist as they mean to you. Narcissists are always acting on some alien premise that makes their reactions to things off-the-wall in our eyes. We aren't biologically, psychologically, or intellectually equipped to survive in such a world, which is rather like being on psychedelic trip.

We just make all kinds of wrong assumptions, that's all. So, it's crucial to make the effort to understand what's going on and to never, never, never, never go into denial.

Then you can make the best choices.

14.2 How to Help the Abused

Those abused by narcissists usually need two kinds of help: expert help and comfort.

The expert help needed varies widely. Narcissistic abuse and slander inflict psychological injury (not to be confused with mental illness) and therefore the victims often need psychological counseling. Women abused by their husbands or boyfriends often need practical advice and help getting themselves and their children away safely. Children need help from Social Services. In any case the victim may need legal advice. Especially when the abuse is a bully in the workplace in a private institution (e.g., a parochial school), the victim has usually been lynched and needs pro bono legal aid. Indeed, no lawyer expects to profit battling the interminable stonewalling such a secretive institution throws up to escape accountability. The same goes for narcissistic abuse in the form of pedophilia.

For information on where the victim can find such help, I suggest you start at <http://groups.msn.com/NARCISSISTICPERSONALITYDISORDER/home1.msnw>

When signing up for this (or any) group, I also suggest using a screen name and an email address from a free Webmail account like you can get at Yahoo or Hotmail or Go.com. This is just a precaution when interacting on a message board: Remember that you never know who all is out there reading your posts. You don't want any weirdo trying to contact you, so it's best to be anonymous. You do this through a free Webmail account under a screen name. You can create one of these Webmail addresses just for group memberships. Through it nobody

can find out your real name or where you live. Doing this also helps keep your regular email account free of spam.

Comfort anyone can give. The word *comfort* comes from the Latin word for "to fortify." That's what comfort is. It's the strengthening embrace that supports a person weakened by injury or abuse. It's the strengthening embrace that helps them to their knees and then to their feet. It's not rocket science. All it takes is compassion.

Those abused by a narcissist have had their self-esteem brutally bludgeoned by a bully who jumps up and down on their back to break it and then thump his or her chest.

What they need is someone to be there. To say that the narcissist's value judgment was wrong. They need somebody to treat them like a human being. Somebody to say that they are NOT nothing and that stomping on them is NOT nothing. Somebody to say and show that it matters. That's all. Any real human being is qualified to lend this aid. And it's not too much to ask.

All you have to do is listen. Show that you're listening by responding now and then. Say something that amounts to "Boy what she did to you really sucks," showing that it makes you sad or angry or both to hear about it. Then just show that the victim means something to you, that he or she is NOT a hunk of dirt in your eyes. It's not hard. It's easy and natural.

What the victim doesn't need is any more criticism or fixing. They don't need you to tell them how they should feel. They don't need you to act like it didn't happen. They don't need any preaching that they should forgive an unrepentant abuser who fully intends to keep right on abusing them. If you need to do things like that, then *you* are the one with heavy-duty needs and are in no condition to fulfill anyone else's needs.

14.3 Children of Narcissists

Many say that narcissists' children are likely to marry narcissists. While I see where this idea comes from and have seen it happen myself, I have not observed any "co-dependence." That's a fancy word for being a glutton for punishment.

The truth is more complicated than that. Also, let us not forget that we are talking about normal people. Yes, they typically are meek, too patient, and have low self-esteem. But that does not make them sick in the head. They are also

typically strong. Unlike the personality-disordered, they are not machines. They each respond to the influence of parental narcissism in his or her own way.

In fact, I bet research would find that the normal children of narcissists are more likely to *never* marry. This might depend on whether the narcissistic parent was father, mother, or both and on whether the child is a man or a woman.

I can hear those gears in your head grinding. Does this mean that they are likely to be homosexual? Considering all the Freudian permutations that could be at work, that doesn't seem far out to me. But I don't know of any homosexual children of narcissists. I know of one frigid narcissistic daughter of a narcissist, and I will bet the farm on another. But, I have seen nothing in the normal children of narcissists that hinted at anything but typical heterosexuality. Unless you subscribe to the bigoted myths that all married people are heterosexual, that all single people are frigid or homosexual, and that homosexuality is some mental disease.

There are, however, some other things it is pretty safe to say about the normal children of narcissists.

One is that they are likely to tolerate narcissists. When you grow up with things, you have no way of knowing that they are abnormal. You think that some people "are just like that." You're trained to tolerate it, because to do anything but is a sin. You're even brainwashed into thinking it's your fault. You have no way of knowing that everyone's home is not like yours, that you are growing up in a home headed by somebody who belongs in psyche ward.

If you are a Baby-Boomer, you didn't even get a clue from TV. You grew up watching *Father Knows Best* and *Leave It to Beaver*. Father's role reinforced your narcissistic father's superiority and infallibility by virtue of his age, size, and sex. But since TV fathers came from a different planet than yours, the threshold for suspension of your disbelief was much higher than for other people. Too high. So these shows, which challenged everyone's ability to suspend disbelief, weren't even remotely realistic to you. Never once did they make you wonder why, unlike the TV father, your father took no interest in you, never put his arm around you, never played with you, never had anything to do with you at all. That's because you never viewed TV as a portrayal of real family life. Therefore, even TV gave you no clue that other families were different, that your daddy sucked and that you had every right to what you craved. TV today is a little better at portraying normal family life, but not much.

Yet *tolerance* of narcissists is not *knuckling under* to them. Let's clear up the

sloppy thinking that equates the two.

Nobody knows better than the normal children of narcissists that, to survive as a person, you must never let anyone own you. They protect their right to private ownership of themselves, because they know the consequences of letting others make their personal and private choices for them. Such as what to think, how to feel, what to say. They know that letting anyone treat your head as his property, to furnish as he pleases, is moral prostitution that destroys your integrity. They also know that, like any partier who takes over somebody else's house, he is probably going to trash it.

And so, though narcissists ballistic ally violate every right to privacy they see, thinking their own privacy extends to the outer limits of deep space, the normal children of narcissists are keenly aware of the borders of personal privacy and have fortified them. For example, one narcissist I know of ordered an employee to take the rest of the day off. This was a dirty trick that had successfully gotten other employees to falsely incriminate themselves by obeying the order. But when he tried to thus make up the mind of a narcissist's daughter, he hit a brick wall. She replied, "You can send me home if you want, and if you do I'll go. But you can't order me to take the day off. And I choose not to take the rest of the day off."

Note the willing obedience up to a sharply drawn line she would not let him cross. How do the children of narcissists get so clear about their boundaries and so solid in defense of them?

By surviving a childhood like the story of *The Three Little Piggies and the Big Bad Wolf*. Each little piggy's house is his person, the private property of his body and mind. Our deepest instincts compel us to not let the Big Bad Wolf just barge in as if he owns the place. Why? Because doing that to another's body is sexual rape, and doing that to another's mind is moral rape, and even little children feel violated by either act. But, unlike the other little piggies, the narcissist's child has learned that when you say no, the Big Bad Wolf huffs and puffs and tries to blow your little house down. So, this little piggy built his of brick.

Note that this is true strength, backbone, integrity, moral purity. It is not the phony strength people of swollen self-esteem think they have. To the contrary, you find it in the modest. Note also that this is responsibility for oneself claimed, not avoided. In other words, the normal children of narcissists are often more grown up than many other people are.

Another thing it is safe to say about the children of narcissists is that, from birth,

they have had their self-esteem relentlessly assailed. Abused feelings are tender, sensitive feelings. As easily injured as burned skin. That is just a fact of life, not a moral fault.

So, the children of narcissists are quite sensitive to criticism. It causes them real pain, because it inflames old wounds. To avoid this pain, they are conscientious and try hard to be liked. Since they aim to please, so long as you respect their boundaries, you can easily get them to do anything they do not think is wrong or foolish. Yet they have been trained to feel that something's wrong with them if some intolerant person just can't stand them being the way they are, looking the way they look, feeling the way they feel, or thinking what they think. All this manifests itself as low self-esteem and marks them as sensitive.

Vicious attacks on sensitive feelings and low self-esteem draw far more blood than they would otherwise. So, the normal children of narcissists might as well go around wearing a target with the word VULNERABLE emblazoned on it. On seeing it, every bully in town thinks, "There is somebody I can really hurt" = "somebody I can be really powerful on."

Thus, narcissistic abuse in the home dooms them to life as a target for every bully they encounter. This is one reason why the children of narcissists do marry narcissists — not because they seek narcissistic mates, but because narcissists spot and target them as vulnerable prey. The wolf puts on sheep's clothing and sweeps her off her feet, idealizing her and showering her with affection. Till the honeymoon is over. Then Dr. Jekyll's mask comes off. She was no more likely to fall for this con artist than anybody else. Probably less likely, in fact. But narcissists target the *kind* of people the normal children of narcissists are.

Often a narcissistic parent targets one child, the most sensitive/vulnerable, to take the brunt of his vaunting abuse. Watching this puts the others through worse hell than his abuse of themselves does. It makes them hate bullying with such passion that they become protective. Hence, they often become altruists. They are unlikely to join everyone else in kissing up to a bully by sicking on whomever he is terrorizing them by making an example of. If the targeted child in their home takes it out on the rest of the world by becoming a narcissist himself, his brothers and sisters feel so sorry for him that they make excuses for him and take his abuse far too long.

Another thing it is safe to say about the children of narcissists is that they have a different view of marriage than other people. For example, the narcissistic son of a narcissistic mother may show no interest in marriage till she is about to die. Then he seeks a replacement for her. The narcissistic daughter of a narcissist

may choose to remain single because she "wants no one to own her."

Of course, other factors that vary over time influence marital choices. For instance, half a century ago, being an "old maid" was almost unbearably shameful and made one a social outcast, excluded from social events and the community of friendships that married couples can take part in. It also meant that one would never make a decent living, achieve social stature, or own a home. Though equal rights and the high divorce rate has made society less hostile to the unmarried over time, to this day many employers don't want bachelors.

The normal children of narcissists are nonetheless more careful about marrying than other people are. They have seen nothing in marriage that anyone would want. They dream about "true love," and like most of us, find nothing that fits its description in the movies. They do very much want to avoid the suspicious and critical view society takes of the unmarried, and they want very much to fit in. They also want children. But, the daughters of a narcissistic father, for example, have seen nothing mirrored in their father's eyes for a man to love. So, they doubt professions of love and fear that a lover just wants a wife. They live in fear of a life like their mother's. This ambivalence and caution, through sheer lack of luck, sometimes lead to never finding someone they trust enough to marry.

Sad? Yes, but not nearly as sad as women who need a man, who view themselves as worth only what they are worth to some man, and who surrender their self-respect to get one. The absence of cupidity is not a vice.

Yet another thing it is safe to say about the normal children of narcissists is that they have probably picked up bad habits in interacting with others. Outwardly, some of these bad habits appear narcissistic. Yet it is easy to tell the difference between a narcissist and a normal person. How? By simply asking him to stop it. The normal child of a narcissist will stop it. (A normal person who is not the child of a narcissist may not be so good about stopping it.) But a narcissist will do it all the more.

This section shows why you should not jump to conclusions about people. There are many more normal children of narcissists than narcissists. So, run that little test of asking him to stop it before you make any judgments.

These behaviors persist through young adulthood. They gradually disappear after the child leaves home, as he gets used to normal people and how things work in the real world.

For example, the child of a narcissist may impolitely enter a room talking to interrupt the extant conversation. He hasn't been taught that this is bad manners. To the contrary, his (dominant) narcissistic parent did that twenty times a day. Also, he has found it so hard to get attention that he feels he must hijack it.

The difference between him and a narcissist, however, is easily demonstrated. If you ask him to stop it, he takes the message deeply to heart. In fact, you will find yourself trying to make him feel less bad about it. His behavior will change. A narcissist's never does. To contrary, if you ask a narcissist to stop doing something, he does it all the more.

Again for example, the only humor he was exposed in his unhappy home was the unfunniness of sarcasm. Life with a narcissist left even his normal parent with nothing to laugh about, except — you guessed it — sarcasm. But again, if you ask him to stop it, he takes the message deeply to heart. Again you find yourself trying to make him feel less bad about it. Again his behavior changes. Whereas a narcissist's never does.

When the child of a narcissist leaves home, it takes a while for his own, natural sense of humor to germinate and grow in a new environment that is not hostile to it. The good news is that, by the time they reach their thirties, the normal children of narcissists often display a sense of humor more witty and charming than that of most other people. Perhaps because they themselves appreciate it so much.

Again for example, the child of a narcissist may not accept praise or compliments gracefully. He is unused to them! Like anything extraordinary in our world, this extraordinary event throws him off balance. He has never learned to simply say, "Thank you."

Like a narcissist, he may protest that he doesn't deserve it. But his reason for doing so is the opposite of a narcissist's. It's not because he feels it would humiliate him to say "Thank you." It's because this praise or compliment conflicts with a long history of judgments against him as being inadequate. He may suspect flattery. This goes with what I said above about the daughters of male narcissists doubting professions of love.

Here again, the difference between him and a narcissist is easily demonstrated. If the other party takes the bull by the horns in the direct approach and responds with, "Why don't you just say 'Thank you?'" or "I am not flattering you. I really mean it" the child of a narcissist ponders his behavior and changes it. A narcissist never does.

The normal parent can do much to ease her child's adaptation to the real world by watching for such behaviors and teaching him to cope with these situations in interactions with normal people. It is as easy as saying, "When someone compliments you, just say 'Thank you.'"

14.4 On Your Feelings

I address the victims of narcissistic abusers here. But this can warn their friends about how hurtful the stock responses to their pain are. If you are the friend of an abused person, don't make it worse. If you can't say what comes naturally and honestly, it would be better to say nothing at all than to say what sounds right because it's politically correct.

He who angers you controls you.

Baloney. That popular adage does not pass a basic nonsense check. Look, it says that good boys and girls are numb so that nobody can make them feel an emotion. It is also exactly anti-logical, blaming the victim. It pathologizes *you*, the victim of the narcissist, instead of the narcissist.

Stuff like this is my pet peeve. Once you start noticing how much political correctness is anti-logic, you can't help but wonder (with Mark Twain) whether anybody examines an idea before swallowing it whole.

We should be more careful what we let into our minds ([The Garden](#)^[455]) than what we let into our bodies. Rot like that adage does great added harm to the victims of abuse. First the narcissist outrages you till you want to scream. Then the do-gooders come along and tell you your outrage is a sin. Now, if that ain't the Sin of Sodom (making someone bend over for it), I don't know what is.

But don't take my word for it. Think for yourself.

The reasoning goes like this: So, the narcissist's abuse is nothing to get angry about? You are to act as though it didn't happen? In other words, you are to make nothing of it, right?

Wrong. For, if *it* is nothing, then *you* are nothing. Why? Because everybody knows that if I bash an object, that's nothing, but if I bash a human being, that's something. If I step on a bug, that's nothing, but if I step on a human being, that's something.

Yet, no matter what, the do-gooders just don't get it — till they're the one that gets bashed. *Then* they see the degrading value judgment in making nothing of it.

By telling you to make nothing of it, they are telling you that abusing you was nothing. That means **you are nothing**. Indeed, if your abuser bashed your automobile, they wouldn't tell you to make nothing of it, would they? An automobile is a thing of value, so harm done to it requires reparation. But, harm done to **you** is nothing, eh? What a dehumanizing value judgment.

And it lands on top of the one the narcissist dumped on you. Feel better now?

First he got on your back, and now they pile on too. The holier-than-thous should be criticizing the abuser's behavior, not the victim's. There's a name for people like that, "Job's Comforters" or "troublesome comforters." [See The Book of Job.] That's what I mean when I say that people saying stuff like this do more harm than good. Pound, pound, pound, they all pound you down with that club that says *Doing that to you was nothing = You are nothing. And it's a sin for you to not cover up for him by acting like it didn't happen.*

Just what you needed to hear, right? So, who's side are they really on? whether they realize it or not? Hard to take, isn't it? What a heartless thing to do to someone already down.

Why can't they just break down and say that it causes them sorrow to hear what was done to you and that it really sucked? Then all they'd have to do is act like you mean something to them. Why is that asking too much? Why do you get all that other crap instead?

Sometimes I think they just don't want your sad face to rain on their day. I think it's for *their* sake that they want you to take Prozac. They just want you to make it go away, to act like it didn't happen.

If it's a sin to even be angry about degrading treatment, then what *can* you do to contradict the value judgment in it? Nothing. If merely **feeling an emotion** is stepping off the straight-and-narrow, what could they give you permission to do? Nothing!

Ah, it seems to me that the one whose hands they should tie is your abuser, not you. This way they are accessories to mayhem.

The more you think about it, the more ridiculous the moralizing gets, doesn't it? Parrots who get their morality from prime-time TV thus deny you the most basic human right — the right to protect yourself. Just what kind of person would docilely accept abuse? would make nothing of it? A person who thinks he or she is entitled to better treatment? A person who thinks anything of him- or her-self?

A person with any self-respect? any dignity? integrity? a backbone? **If you are the victim of a narcissist, you know that your anger is your assertion of your self-worth.**

Sounders like to *sound* good by making others *sound* bad for not taking an affront to their human dignity as though it were nothing. Is that not rubbing the victim's nose in it? **That's what it feels like.** It's no longer just the narcissist abusing you, the whole world piles on to stifle your objection. This overwhelming pressure is what breaks the victim's back, forcing him to join in the zero valuation of himself. The result of this **self-betrayal** is **self hatred**. Which is precisely what drives so many victims of narcissists to needing psychiatric help themselves.

A word for those who think this is what their God wants them to do: Run a logic check on that one too. Is docilely submitting to abuse supposed to be holy? Uneducated Joan of Arc at the age of eighteen could reason that if God made her, and God doesn't make trash, she should fight to keep others from trashing her. It would be letting others trash a gift from Him.

An analogy: If God gives you a Jaguar, you show how much you appreciate his gift by letting others take a sledge-hammer to it? And He is supposed to be pleased with you for not even getting angry about it? I don't think so. Straight thinking says that those who believe in God should be angrier than those who don't. Moreover, why should the rules be different in moral rape than physical rape? Isn't the victim supposed to be outraged? If it doesn't make her mad, we say she liked it. And what do we call her?

So, if specious pontifications like the one at the top have you on a guilt trip, get off.

Feelings are not **conduct**. No clear-thinking person should confuse feelings with conduct. Conduct is a matter of choice. Feelings are *not* a matter of choice. So, the notion that feelings can be "right" or "wrong" is absurd. They just ARE, period. Indeed, if you get burned, you should feel burnt. If you don't, something is wrong with you.

Others should not judge your feelings. I do not understand why those who believe in God are the most prone to do this, for it out-gods their God (who, according to their scriptures, judges **conduct** only). Judging feelings is in itself a narcissistic behavior. In doing so, do-gooders are serving as a proxy for your abuser.

You can lie about your feelings. You can go into denial about them. And you can even repress them. But you cannot change them.

Denying or repressing feelings is a lie. Now that *is* a matter of choice, and lying is bad for you. It's self delusion. It's a kind of self-induced hypnosis to a state of emotional numbness. Not mentally healthy. Repressed feelings are merely submerged to the level of the subconscious. But the subconscious is just subconscious: it's not gone. Things buried there are still active. They influence and motivate your behavior without your knowledge. In other words, repressed feelings rule your conduct like an unseen puppet master. Thus, ironically, it is by getting you to deny your anger that the narcissist controls you.

Accept your feelings. Own them. Know them. Experience the tremendous relief and comfort in that. Then you can temper their influence on your conduct with reason and good judgment. You are responsible for your conduct — your words and deeds — not your feelings. Just because you are angry does not mean you are out of control of yourself as that stupid saying implies. It is the narcissist who has no self-control, not his or her victim.

Your anger, like any pain, will pass. If someone punches you, he is to blame for your pain, not you. By the same token, the one to blame for your anger is your abuser, not you.

See also: [Re-victimization by Victim Bashing](#).

14.4.1 On Conflicted Feelings

I think we all feel guilty at times about our feelings — or rather our lack of feeling — toward the narcissist. Something inside just dies when we confront the spirit in which a narcissist does what he or she does.

That is a confrontation with the pure will to evil. You know — the big chill. You stand on the edge of the abyss and look down into their soul and see there is no bottom. It's natural, it's human, to back off as if repelled by antigravity and abhor it. In fact, it's immoral not to.

But especially the parents and siblings of a narcissist often feel conflicted, because they sympathize deeply with the hurt little child inside the narcissist. They remember him or her. They witnessed the abuse. Just remembering it creates such a vivid experience that it enrages them all over again, 20, 30, 40 years later.

And they have occasionally caught heartbreaking glimpses of this ghost, this murdered little child inside the narcissist.

Dealing with these conflicted feelings is simply a matter of understanding them. They are natural. It's the situation that is unnatural, bizarre. That's because this hatred of the monster is directed at seemingly the same object as the love and grief for the innocent child inside.

That's just the way it is, and there's nothing we can do about it except keep clear about it and try not to confuse those feelings. The narcissist, by misidentifying, by identifying with his or her false image, has created this bizarre situation with their false and abhorrent persona.

14.5 On Forgiveness

These are just my thoughts on it. I present them as an alternative to what blows in the prevailing wind on the subject. I present them for those victimized by malignant narcissists to examine — not to swallow whole as the gospel according to some authority figure. In fact, I don't know whether I am an authority figure or not, but I certainly am no authority. And nobody has any authority over what goes into someone else's head.

How about a parable? Let's say that I steal \$10 from you. You come to me and say, "You stole \$10 from me. Give it back." I tell you that you're crazy. I deny the offense. What are you going to do about it?

Let's say that your response is to say, "I forgive you."

Now let's get real. What are we to think of you for that?

The first thing people think is, "**RED ALERT** — probably a false accusation." In other words, we suspect that your "forgiveness" heaps the insult of fraud upon the injury of calumny. Adding insult to injury is an outrage, extreme perversity, the Sin of Sodom.

The other possibility is that you have no power to assert your right to justice and that your so-called forgiveness is but a deceptive way to avoid admitting that. In itself, your powerlessness in the situation is nothing reprehensible, but what does it make of your forgiveness? If it is forced forgiveness, it is extortion. If it is phony forgiveness, it is fraud — under duress, of course, but fraud nonetheless. Either way, it's not legitimate forgiveness and no more valid than a false

confession.

Indeed, doing this adulterates your forgiveness. What an awful thing to do to such a precious thing as forgiveness! If I really have stolen from you, why I should I desire such cheap forgiveness as yours? It certainly isn't worth the pain of coming clean. And, if you are so holy, you should not want to discourage me from doing that. In short, your scot-free forgiveness — especially if it's only to save face — is understandable perhaps, but not honorable. Because it's not genuine.

So, this little story would never happen, because your "forgiveness" is bogus, and everybody knows it. In fact, it marks you as indelibly as Cain's answer to the question *Where is thy brother?* So, that's the real world in the material sphere of action. Why should it be different in the moral sphere of action?

Note that our ancient philosophy, as expressed in the Hebrew, Christian, and Islamic scriptures, uses the same terminology for moral forgiveness as for the forgiveness of a financial debt. Why? Because they are the same thing in different spheres of action. The parable shows why there is no such thing as the forgiveness of a whole debt. Only some *portion* of it. In real life, nobody forgives the entire amount of a debt! Some is always repaid before the balance is forgiven. If it weren't, the bank would call the FBI.

That's why you always pay at least \$1 for that vehicle your father gave/sold you, don't you? That's the difference between forgiveness and stealing or extortion. That \$1 acknowledges the debt/gift. The rest is mercy.

If we turn to the ancient Hebrew, Christian and Islamic writings, we see that the God of Abraham's forgiveness is legitimate, too. He does not forgive the unrepentant. To the contrary, he threatens them with fire and brimstone if they do not repent. Are his devotees not to emulate him?

I think that Catholic theology is the most detailed and precise on this point, though I do not see how secretly revealing my misdeed to a third party amounts to a real confession and how paying that third party whatever he charges releases me from my debt to YOU. Nonetheless, there is much common sense here that is taken for granted by the theologians of all Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

I neither accept nor reject notion that, if you believe in God, I owe him something too, as the father of us both. But that would be a separate transaction in a different offense — the one against him in my theft from YOU. At worst, I am disobeying his rules and causing him some grief in

the harm done to YOU. So, I don't see how a just God could be satisfied if YOU ain't. If I don't have to make amends to YOU, he is just be profiteering on sin that harms only YOU. Only when the debt is material, such as through the theft of money, do the Catholic authorities require restitution. Otherwise they seem to see no harm done to the human victim. I do. That is why I here deal with my debt to YOU and leave my debt to any God for others to argue about.

This theory says that I owe you your \$10 plus a penalty for stealing it from you. Let's say that a fair penalty is another \$10. So I owe you \$20.

Why the penalty? Because I wasn't born yesterday! If there is no penalty, the most I can loose is the \$10 I stole. Then the bottom line is that I owe zero. So, I have no reason not to try again tomorrow. Unless I'm a complete idiot, I will keep trying to steal \$10 dollars from you till I eventually get away with it. It's kinda like free gambling.

Which is why people who overlook their vehicle registration are so appalled when they get pulled over and see the amount of the ticket they get. The fine must be high enough to deter people from doing that on purpose. Otherwise, they would profit by breaking the law until they (rarely) got caught.

Now, how do I relieve myself of this \$20 debt to you? Catholic/Protestant doctrine neatly breaks my obligation down into four distinct acts:

- **Confession:** I must own/acknowledge what I have done.
- **Contrition:** I must show remorse for it. Thus I acknowledge that what I did was WRONG.
- **Penance:** I must acknowledge my obligation to pay you $\$10 + \$10 = \$20$. That's the amount of the theft plus a penalty for theft. In other words, I must amend the damage and pay a penalty to boot.
- **Firm Purpose of Amendment:** I must show that I am determined to never steal from you again.

Your reaction? You are overjoyed! You appreciate what I have done by considering my means and showing mercy. You say, "Thank you! Just pay me \$15 and we are even."

That's why they call it "reconciliation."

In other words, merciful you forgives a *portion* of my debt. Which is exactly what the God of Abraham does in "remitting sin." If people are required to be

fools who forgive the whole thing, I am idiot if I don't shed crocodile tears before the judge at my sentencing.

Indeed, Christian theology says the Unforgivable Sin is the unrepented sin, the unacknowledged sin. Yet the winds of political correctness would have us let that slip our minds.

The malignant narcissist is a master at cheating on repentance. Even if his other 99 dodges fail, he must be compelled by a serious and credible threat to take even the first step (Confession). Then he acts as though that's all that's required of him and makes you feel mean if you are not satisfied. Thus conned, you forgive him. After further abuse, you are not so easy. Again compelled by a serious and credible threat, he finds it necessary to take the first two steps (Confession and Contrition). Again he acts as though that's all that's required of him and makes you feel mean if you are not satisfied. Thus conned, you forgive him some more. After further abuse, you are not so easy. Yet again compelled by a serious and credible threat, he finds it necessary to take the first two steps plus a fraction of the third. That is, he pays no penalty for devaluing you: he merely takes back a smidgen of that devaluation and makes you feel mean if you are not satisfied. He may even think you're so stupid that you feel he has made amends by apologizing to you in private for what he said about you in public.

And so on. He never gets to Step Four: A Firm Purpose of Amendment. Oh, he may say he won't do it again, but he offers nothing as a sign of good faith. That is, he gives no guarantee or assurances. You just have to take this pathological liar at his changeable word.

A narcissist is a slippery fish who characterizes your remembering anything he did yesterday as "digging back into the past." He thus makes *you* the guilty party by answering your grievance with the accusation that *you* are guilty of "not putting it behind you" and are committing the sin of not forgiving. It's a Catch-22. (Catch-22 is the bottom level of Nether Hell in Dante's *Inferno*).

I doubt it was the good guys who made up this stupid rule. If Christians are to remember what happened to Jesus 2,000 years ago, shouldn't they remember what happened themselves and others yesterday?

What's more, the narcissist's crime is a crime in progress. That's because it is either ongoing abuse or slander and calumny that ruins the rest of a person's life. It is as impossible to forgive a crime in progress as it is to forgive a crime in advance. Purporting to do so amounts to saying that it is no crime = it is okay to be doing this to someone.

Did you ever notice that "Thank you" is the first thing out of a person's mouth when someone who has offended them sincerely repents? There's a reason for that.

In my own experience, forgiveness is something I long to give. In fact, I strongly suspect that those who "find it hard to forgive" have nothing to forgive. In other words: I suspect that they are narcissists. My greatest grievance against the narcissists in my life is that they won't let me forgive them.

It's sad, but the way I deal with it is by just writing them off. That is much worse than hate. That is for those unworthy of hate.

But don't expect your narcissist to understand that. His emotions are like the irrational weather. Mother is all good when she's there and all bad when she's not. He gets mad at a cat for hanging around his bird feeder, because he somehow views it as sinning and deserving punishment. He cannot understand that the cat is just being a cat. But we can understand that, and we can understand that a narcissist is just being a narcissist. No need to get mad about it.

This is not to say that narcissistic abuse does not outrage powerful emotions in us. But they diminish over time and leave nothing. Not hate, just NOTHING.

However you decide to handle your desire to forgive a narcissist, keep this in mind: Your mind is The Garden. Not wide open spaces. A garden is cultivated, surrounded by a fence or wall, and has a gate. You are the gardener and the gatekeeper. If you know what's good for you, you will assume your right/responsibility to decide what enters, exits, and grows there.

14.6 Where Logic Leads

Let us follow the course of simple logic, wherever it leads:

1. If people suffering from NPD can keep themselves from abusing when there would be witnesses, they can keep themselves from abusing when there wouldn't be witnesses. They just don't.
2. By going to great lengths to abuse on the sly, while portraying themselves to the outside world as the very antithesis of what they are, narcissists prove that they know that their behavior is wrong and shameful = something to hide.
3. Most children of narcissists don't choose to imitate the parent who hurts them and therefore don't become narcissists themselves. So, the child who does choose to imitate that parent does so of his or her own free will.

This is why the courts in the United States don't regard NPD as a defense. It isn't insanity.

Insanity is unsoundness of mind. The insane show that their minds are unsound by the way they go about a crime. They show that

- they don't know what they're doing
- they don't know it's wrong, something to hide and be ashamed of
- they can't control themselves to keep from doing it.

How do the insane show this? They show it by...

- attacking people in broad daylight, in front of God and everybody, like that tiger I mentioned in [this blog post](#).
- an absence of premeditation and cunning, in that...
 - they don't do wrong on the sly
 - they don't cover up their true character with an impressive facade
 - they don't plan ahead so as to sneak around and get away with wrongdoing on the sly.

None of that fit the *modus operandi* of people with NPD. In fact, the M.O. of the narcissist couldn't be more opposite, could it?

This is why NPD is legally a **character disorder**, not a mental disorder absolving one of responsibility for what he or she does.

In other words, NPD is NOT insanity. People with NPD are twisted, not insane.

Are they then just evil?

Nobody needs anyone to tell them the answer to that question. Just follow simple logic: Add it up: $2 + 2 = ?$

Narcissists don't do evil to do evil though. They don't love evil for its own sake. They do evil for the same reason a drug addict does drugs = because it makes them feel good. Hurting and degrading others affects them like a pain killer they get high on.

So, we cannot get on a high horse of moral superiority, for we aren't tempted as they are. We don't have their predatory urges.

But that doesn't mean that we should close our eyes to what they are. If hurting others makes you feel good, you *like* hurting others. Sorry, there's just no getting

around that.

If you want to hurt others, you're malevolent. Sorry, there's just no getting around that.

It's dangerous to be in denial of these facts. Dangerous to regard narcissists as people of goodwill who don't want to hurt others, don't mean to hurt others, and are suffering victims who just can't help hurting others. That's bull shit.

That just plays right into their hands. That's what they want — for you to be a sucker and feel sorry for them. To make excuses for them. To assign them a lower set of standards to live up to.

There's a sucker born every minute. Before you know it, they have you regarding *them* as the victim, feeling sorry for *them* instead of their victims. All hell must be laughing their heads off at this joke. What a travesty of justice. What a perversion of Truth.

Just because they occasionally suffer in the consequences of some bad thing they do is no reason to regard these victimizers as victims. So what if they have feelings — for themselves? There's a little more to being human than having feelings for YOURSELF. A dog has feelings for herself! In fact, a dog is more humane, because she has feelings for her master and her pups, but a narcissist doesn't.

It's a false choice — that suggested choice between hating narcissists and sympathizing with them. The sensible choice is simply to regard them as what they are: **predators**.

You know, like lions, tigers, great white sharks, polar bears, grizzly bears. We don't bother to "hate" them: we just STAY AWAY FROM THEM, NEVER TRUST THEM, AND DON'T GO INTO THEIR CAGE.

If you lie, you are a liar. If you kill, you are a killer. We are the sum total of what our choices to date have made us. Narcissists too are the sum total of what their choices to date have made them. Adult narcissists have passed the point of no return long ago.

Perhaps some day psychiatrists will learn some way to help them pay the toll to that demon at the door, so narcissists can return to the human way of life. Let us hope for that day, but let us not, in the meantime, be dangerously naive.

PART XV

Appendix

Appendix

15.1 Monty Python's Flying Circus

If you've ever tried to get through to a narcissist, you've been there. Enjoy.

- [The Argument Clinic](#)^[464]
- [The Dead Parrot](#)^[473]
- [The Black Knight](#)^[476]



15.1.1 The Argument Clinic

The Cast

MAN Michael Palin
RECEPTIONIST Rita Davies
MR. BARNARD Graham Chapman
MR. VIBRATING John Cleese
COMPLAINER Eric Idle
SPREADERS Terry Jones

Man: Ah. I'd like to have an argument, please.

Receptionist: Certainly sir. Have you been here before?

Man: No, I haven't, this is my first time.

Receptionist: I see. Well, do you want to have just one argument, or were you thinking of taking a course?

Man: Well, what is the cost?

Receptionist: Well, It's one pound for a five minute argument, but only eight pounds for a course of ten.

Man: Well, I think it would be best if I perhaps started off with just the one and then see how it goes.

Receptionist: Fine. Well, I'll see who's free at the moment.

(Pause)

Receptionist: Mr. DeBakey's free, but he's a little bit conciliatory. Ahh yes, Try Mr. Barnard; room 12.

Man: Thank you.

(Walks down the hall. Opens door.)

Mr Barnard: WHAT DO YOU WANT?

Man: Well, I was told outside that...

Mr Barnard: Don't give me that, you snotty-faced heap of parrot droppings!

Man: What?

Mr Barnard: Shut your festering gob, you tit! Your type really makes me puke, you vacuous, coffee-nosed, maloderous, pervert!!!

Man: Look, I CAME HERE FOR AN ARGUMENT, I'm not going to just stand...!!

Mr Barnard: OH, oh I'm sorry, but this is abuse.

Man: Oh, I see, well, that explains it.

Mr Barnard: Ah yes, you want room 12A, Just along the corridor.

Man: Oh, Thank you very much. Sorry.

Mr Barnard: Not at all.

Man: Thank You. (Under his breath) Stupid git!!

(Walk down the corridor)

Man: (Knock)

Mr Vibrating: Come in.

Man: Ah, Is this the right room for an argument?

Mr Vibrating: I told you once.

Man: No you haven't.

Mr Vibrating: Yes I have.

Man: When?

Mr Vibrating: Just now.

Man: No you didn't.

Mr Vibrating: Yes I did.

Man: You didn't

Mr Vibrating: I did!

Man: You didn't!

Mr Vibrating: I'm telling you I did!

Man: You did not!!

Mr Vibrating: Oh, I'm sorry, just one moment. Is this a five minute argument or the full half hour?

Man: Oh, just the five minutes.

Mr Vibrating: Ah, thank you. Anyway, I did.

Man: You most certainly did not.

Mr Vibrating: Look, let's get this thing clear; I quite definitely told you.

Man: No you did not.

Mr Vibrating: Yes I did.

Man: No you didn't.

Mr Vibrating: Yes I did.

Man: No you didn't.

Mr Vibrating: Yes I did.

Man: No you didn't.

Mr Vibrating: Yes I did.

Man: You didn't.

Mr Vibrating: Did.

Man: Oh look, this isn't an argument.

Mr Vibrating: Yes it is.

Man: No it isn't. It's just contradiction.

Mr Vibrating: No it isn't.

Man: It is!

Mr Vibrating: It is not.

Man: Look, you just contradicted me.

Mr Vibrating: I did not.

Man: Oh you did!!

Mr Vibrating: No, no, no.

Man: You did just then.

Mr Vibrating: Nonsense!

Man: Oh, this is futile!

Mr Vibrating: No it isn't.

Man: I came here for a good argument.

Mr Vibrating: No you didn't; no, you came here for an argument.

Man: An argument isn't just contradiction.

Mr Vibrating: It can be.

Man: No it can't. An argument is a connected series of statements intended to establish a proposition.

Mr Vibrating: No it isn't.

Man: Yes it is! It's not just contradiction.

Mr Vibrating: Look, if I argue with you, I must take up a contrary position.

Man: Yes, but that's not just saying 'No it isn't.'

Mr Vibrating: Yes it is!

Man: No it isn't!

Man: Argument is an intellectual process. Contradiction is just the automatic gainsaying of any statement the other person makes.

(short pause)

Mr Vibrating: No it isn't.

Man: It is.

Mr Vibrating: Not at all.

Man: Now look.

Mr Vibrating: (Rings bell) Good Morning.

Man: What?

Mr Vibrating: That's it. Good morning.

Man: I was just getting interested.

Mr Vibrating: Sorry, the five minutes is up.

Man: That was never five minutes!

Mr Vibrating: I'm afraid it was.

Man: It wasn't.

(Pause)

Mr Vibrating: I'm sorry, but I'm not allowed to argue anymore.

Man: What?!

Mr Vibrating: If you want me to go on arguing, you'll have to pay for another five minutes.

Man: Yes, but that was never five minutes, just now. Oh come on!

Mr Vibrating: (Hums)

Man: Look, this is ridiculous.

Mr Vibrating: I'm sorry, but I'm not allowed to argue unless you've paid!

Man: Oh, all right.

(pays money)

Mr Vibrating: Thank you. (short pause)

Man: Well?

Mr Vibrating: Well what?

Man: That wasn't really five minutes, just now.

Mr Vibrating: I told you, I'm not allowed to argue unless you've paid.

Man: I just paid!

Mr Vibrating: No you didn't.

Man: I DID!

Mr Vibrating: No you didn't.

Man: Look, I don't want to argue about that.

Mr Vibrating: Well, you didn't pay.

Man: Aha. If I didn't pay, why are you arguing? I Got you!

Mr Vibrating: No you haven't.

Man: Yes I have. If you're arguing, I must have paid.

Mr Vibrating: Not necessarily. I could be arguing in my spare time.

Man: Oh I've had enough of this.

Mr Vibrating: No you haven't.

Man: Oh Shut up.

(Walks down the stairs. Opens door.)

Man: I want to complain.

Complainer: You want to complain! Look at these shoes. I've only had them three weeks and the heels are worn right through.

Man: No, I want to complain about...

Complainer: If you complain nothing happens, you might as well not bother.

Man: Oh!

Complainer: Oh my back hurts, it's not a very fine day and I'm sick and tired of this office.

(Slams door. walks down corridor, opens next door.)

Man: Hello, I want to... Ooooh!

Spreaders: No, no, no. Hold your head like this, then go Waaah. Try it again.

Man: uuuwwhh!!

Spreaders: Better, Better, but Waah, Waah! Put your hand there.

Man: No.

Spreaders: Now...

Man: Waaaaah!!!

Spreaders: Good, Good! That's it.

Man: Stop hitting me!!

Spreaders: What?

Man: Stop hitting me!!

Spreaders: Stop hitting you?

Man: Yes!

Spreaders: Why did you come in here then?

Man: I wanted to complain.

Spreaders: Oh no, that's next door. It's being-hit-on-the-head lessons in here.

Man: What a stupid concept.

[Exactly. There is, of course, no end to this, so how did Monty Python's Flying Circus get out of this skit?]

Enter Inspector Fox of the Light Entertainment Police, Comedy Division, Special Flying Squad, who says, "You are hereby charged that you did wilfully take part in a strange sketch, that is, a skit, spoof or humorous vignette of an

unconventional nature with intent to cause grievous mental confusion to the Great British Public." He's interrupted by Inspector Thompson's Gazelle of the Programme Planning Police, Light Entertainment Division, Special Flying Squad, who places them under arrest for "one, acts of self-conscious behaviour contrary to the "Not in front of the children" Act, two, always saying "It's so and so of the Yard" every time the fuzz arrives and, three, and this is the cruncher, offenses against the "Getting out of sketches without using a proper punchline" Act, four, namely, simply ending every bleedin' sketch by just having a policeman come in."

15.1.2 The Dead Parrot

The cast:

MR. PRALINE John Cleese

SHOP OWNER Michael Palin

A customer enters a pet shop.

Mr. Praline: 'Ello, I wish to register a complaint.

(The owner does not respond.)

Mr. Praline: 'Ello, Miss?

Owner: What do you mean "miss"?

Mr. Praline: I'm sorry, I have a cold. I wish to make a complaint!

Owner: We're closin' for lunch.

Mr. Praline: Never mind that, my lad. I wish to complain about this parrot what I purchased not half an hour ago from this very boutique.

Owner: Oh yes, the, uh, the Norwegian Blue...What's,uh...What's wrong with it?

Mr. Praline: I'll tell you what's wrong with it, my lad. 'E's dead, that's what's wrong with it!

Owner: No, no, 'e's uh,...he's resting.

Mr. Praline: Look, matey, I know a dead parrot when I see one, and I'm looking at one right now.

Owner: No no he's not dead, he's, he's restin'! Remarkable bird, the Norwegian Blue, idn't it, ay? Beautiful plumage!

Mr. Praline: The plumage don't enter into it. It's stone dead.

Owner: Nononono, no, no! 'E's resting!

Mr. Praline: All right then, if he's restin', I'll wake him up! (shouting at the

cage) 'Ello, Mister Polly Parrot! I've got a lovely fresh cuttle fish for you if you show...

(owner hits the cage)

Owner: There, he moved!

Mr. Praline: No, he didn't, that was you hitting the cage!

Owner: I never!!

Mr. Praline: Yes, you did!

Owner: I never, never did anything...

Mr. Praline: (yelling and hitting the cage repeatedly) 'ELLO POLLY!!!!
Testing! Testing! Testing! Testing! This is your nine o'clock alarm call!

(Takes parrot out of the cage and thumps its head on the counter. Throws it up in the air and watches it plummet to the floor.)

Mr. Praline: Now that's what I call a dead parrot.

Owner: No, no.....No, 'e's stunned!

Mr. Praline: STUNNED?!?

Owner: Yeah! You stunned him, just as he was wakin' up! Norwegian Blues stun easily, major.

Mr. Praline: Um...now look...now look, mate, I've definitely 'ad enough of this. That parrot is definitely deceased, and when I purchased it not 'alf an hour ago, you assured me that its total lack of movement was due to it bein' tired and shagged out following a prolonged squawk.

Owner: Well, he's...he's, ah...probably pining for the fjords.

Mr. Praline: PININ' for the FJORDS?!?!?!? What kind of talk is that?, look, why did he fall flat on his back the moment I got 'im home?

Owner: The Norwegian Blue prefers keepin' on it's back! Remarkable bird, id'nit, squire? Lovely plumage!

Mr. Praline: Look, I took the liberty of examining that parrot when I got it home, and I discovered the only reason that it had been sitting on its perch in the first place was that it had been NAILED there.

(pause)

Owner: Well, o'course it was nailed there! If I hadn't nailed that bird down, it would have nuzzled up to those bars, bent 'em apart with its beak, and VOOM! Feeweewee!

Mr. Praline: "VOOM"?!? Mate, this bird wouldn't "voom" if you put four million volts through it! 'E's bleedin' demised!

Owner: No no! 'E's pining!

Mr. Praline: 'E's not pinin'! 'E's passed on! This parrot is no more! He has ceased to be! 'E's expired and gone to meet 'is maker! 'E's a stiff! Bereft of life, 'e rests in peace! If you hadn't nailed 'im to the perch 'e'd be pushing up the daisies! 'Is metabolic processes are now 'istory! 'E's off the twig! 'E's kicked the bucket, 'e's shuffled off 'is mortal coil, run down the curtain and joined the bleedin' choir invisibile!! THIS IS AN EX-PARROT!!

(pause)

Owner: Well, I'd better replace it, then. (he takes a quick peek behind the counter) Sorry squire, I've had a look 'round the back of the shop, and uh, we're right out of parrots.

15.1.3 The Black Knight

This is like an argument with a narcissist: you win everywhichway, leaving him or her without a leg to stand on, but never win.

From Monty Python and the Holy Grail, Scene 4: The Black Knight

Black Knight: Aaaagh! Aaagh!

Green Knight: Ooh! [stab]

Black Knight: Aagh!

Green Knight: Oh! Ooh! Uuh.

Black Knight: Aaaagh!

[clang]

Black Knight and Green Knight: Agh!, oh!, etc.

Green Knight: Aaaaaah! Aaaaaaaaah!

[woosh]

[Black Knight kills Green Knight]

[thud]

[scrape]

Black Knight: Umm!

[clop clop clop]

Arthur: You fight with the strength of many men, Sir Knight.

[pause]

Arthur: I am Arthur, King of the Britons.

[pause]

Arthur: I seek the finest and the bravest knights in the land to join me in my court at Camelot.

[pause]

Arthur: You have proved yourself worthy. Will you join me?

[pause]

Arthur: You make me sad. So be it. Come, Patsy.

Black Knight: None shall pass.

Arthur: What?

Black Knight: None shall pass.

Arthur: I have no quarrel with you, good Sir Knight, but I must cross this bridge.

Black Knight: Then you shall die.

Arthur: I command you, as King of the Britons, to stand aside!

Black Knight: I move for no man.

Arthur: So be it!

Arthur and Black Knight: Aaah!, hiyaah!, etc.

[Arthur chops the Black Knight's left arm off]

Arthur: Now stand aside, worthy adversary.

Black Knight: 'Tis but a scratch.

Arthur: A scratch? Your arm's off!

Black Knight: No, it isn't.

Arthur: Well, what's that, then?

Black Knight: I've had worse.

Arthur: You liar!

Black Knight: Come on, you pansy! [clang] Huyah! [clang] Hiyaah! [clang] Aaaaaaaah!

[Arthur chops the Black Knight's right arm off]

Arthur: Victory is mine! [kneeling] We thank Thee Lord, that in Thy mer--

Black Knight: Hah! [kick] Come on, then.

Arthur: What?

Black Knight: Have at you! [kick]

Arthur: Eh. You are indeed brave, Sir Knight, but the fight is mine.

Black Knight: Oh, had enough, eh?

Arthur: Look, you stupid bastard. You've got no arms left.

Black Knight: Yes, I have.

Arthur: Look!

Black Knight: Just a flesh wound. [kick]

Arthur: Look, stop that.

Black Knight: Chicken! [kick] Chickennn!

Arthur: Look, I'll have your leg.

[kick]

Arthur: Right! [whop]

[Arthur chops the Black Knight's right leg off]

Black Knight: Right. I'll do you for that!

Arthur: You'll what?

Black Knight: Come here!

Arthur: What are you going to do, bleed on me?

Black Knight: I'm invincible!

Arthur: You're a looney.

Black Knight: The Black Knight always triumphs! Have at you! Come on, then.

[whop]

[Arthur chops the Black Knight's last leg off]

Black Knight: Oh? All right, we'll call it a draw.

Arthur: Come, Patsy.

Black Knight: Oh. Oh, I see. Running away, eh? You yellow bastards! Come back here and take what's coming to you. I'll bite your legs off!

15.2 Brainwashing

The first letter and attachment below are from DECLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS 1984 microfilms under MKULTRA (84) 002258, published by Research Publication Woodbridge, CT 06525.

The second letter and attachment are from the Warren Commission documents.

CIA Report on Communist Brainwashing
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

25 APR 1956

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable J. Edgar Hoover
Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation

SUBJECT: Brainwashing

The attached study on brainwashing was prepared by my staff in response to the increasing acute interest in the subject throughout the intelligence and security components of the Government. I feel you will find it well worth your personal attention. It represents the thinking of leading psychologists, psychiatrists and intelligence specialists, based in turn on interviews with many individuals who have had personal experience with Communist brainwashing, and on extensive research and testing. While individual specialists hold divergent views on various aspects of this most complex subject, I believe the study reflects a synthesis of majority expert opinion. I will, of course, appreciate any comments on it that you or your staff may have.

(signed)
Allen W. Dulles
Director

ENCLOSURE
OA 53-37

(Approved for Release) (62-80750-2712X)
(Date: 8 FEB 1984)

A REPORT ON COMMUNIST BRAINWASHING

The report that follows is a condensation of a study by training experts of the important classified and unclassified information available on this subject.

BACKGROUND

Brainwashing, as a technique, has been used for centuries and is no mystery to psychologists. In this sense, brainwashing means involuntary re-education of basic beliefs and values. All people are being re-educated continually. New information changes one's beliefs. Everyone has experienced to some degree the conflict that ensues when new information is not consistent with prior belief. The experience of the brainwashed individual differs in that the inconsistent information is forced upon the individual under controlled conditions after the possibility of critical judgment has been removed by a variety of methods.

There is no question that an individual can be broken psychologically by captors with knowledge and willingness to persist in techniques aimed at deliberately destroying the integration of a personality. Although it is probable that everyone reduced to such a confused, disoriented state will respond to the introduction of new beliefs, this cannot be stated dogmatically.

PRINCIPLES OF HUMAN CONTROL AND REACTION TO CONTROL

There are progressive steps in exercising control over an individual and changing his behaviour and personality integration. The following five steps are typical of behaviour changes in any controlled individual:

1. Making the individual aware of control is the first stage in changing his behaviour. A small child is made aware of the physical and psychological control of his parents and quickly recognizes that an overwhelming force must be reckoned with. So, a controlled adult comes to recognize the overwhelming powers of the state and the impersonal, "incarcerative" machinery in which he is enmeshed. The individual recognizes that definite limits have been put upon the ways he can respond.
2. Realization of his complete dependence upon the controlling system is a major factor in the controlling of his behavior. The controlled adult is

forced to accept the fact that food, tobacco, praise, and the only social contact that he will get come from the very interrogator who exercises control over him.

3. The awareness of control and recognition of dependence result in causing internal conflict and breakdown of previous patterns of behaviour. Although this transition can be relatively mild in the case of a child, it is almost invariably severe for the adult undergoing brainwashing. Only an individual who holds his values lightly can change them easily. Since the brainwasher-interrogators aim to have the individuals undergo profound emotional change, they force their victims to seek out painfully what is desired by the controlling individual. During this period the victim is likely to have a mental breakdown characterized by delusions and hallucinations.
4. Discovery that there is an acceptable solution to his problem is the first stage of reducing the individual's conflict. It is characteristically reported by victims of brainwashing that this discovery led to an overwhelming feeling of relief that the horror of internal conflict would cease and that perhaps they would not, after all, be driven insane. It is at this point that they are prepared to make major changes in their value-system. This is an automatic rather than voluntary choice. They have lost their ability to be critical.
5. Reintegration of values and identification with the controlling system is the final stage in changing the behaviour of the controlled individual. A child who has learned a new, socially desirable behaviour demonstrates its importance by attempting to adapt the new behaviour to a variety of other situations. Similar states in the brainwashed adult are

[SECTION DELETED BY CIA]

pitiful. His new value-system, his manner of perceiving, organizing, and giving meaning to events, is virtually independent of his former value-system. He is no longer capable of thinking or speaking in concepts other than those he has adopted. He tends to identify by expressing thanks to his captors for helping him see the light. Brainwashing can be achieved without using illegal means. Anyone willing to use known principles of control and reactions to control and capable of demonstrating the patience needed in raising a child can probably achieve successful brainwashing.

COMMUNIST CONTROL TECHNIQUES AND THEIR EFFECTS

A description of usual communist control techniques follows.

1. Interrogation. There are at least two ways in which "interrogation" is used:
 - a. Elicitation, which is designed to get the individual to surrender protected information, is a form of interrogation. One major difference between elicitation and interrogation used to achieve brainwashing is that the mind of the individual must be kept clear to permit coherent, undistorted disclosure of protected information.
 - b. Elicitation for the purpose of brainwashing consists of questioning, argument, indoctrination, threats, cajolery, praise, hostility, and a variety of other pressures. The aim of this interrogation is to hasten the breakdown of the individual's value system and to encourage the substitution of a different value-system. The procurement of protected information is secondary and is used as a device to increase pressure upon the individual. The term "interrogation" in this paper will refer, in general, to this type. The "interrogator" is the individual who conducts this type of interrogation and who controls the administration of the other pressures. He is the protagonist against whom the victim develops his conflict, and upon whom the victim develops a state of dependency as he seeks some solution to his conflict.
2. Physical Torture and Threats of Torture. Two types of physical torture are distinguishable more by their psychological effect in inducing conflict than by the degree of painfulness:
 - a. The first type is one in which the victim has a passive role in the pain inflicted on him (e.g., beatings). His conflict involves the decision of whether or not to give in to demands in order to avoid further pain. Generally, brutality of this type was not found to achieve the desired results. Threats of torture were found more effective, as fear of pain causes greater conflict within the individual than does pain itself.
 - b. The second type of torture is represented by requiring the individual to stand in one spot for several hours or assume some other pain-inducing position. Such a requirement often engenders in the individual a determination to "stick it out." This internal act of resistance provide a feeling of moral superiority at first. As time passes and his pain mounts, however, the individual becomes aware that it is his own original determination to resist that is causing the

continuance of pain. A conflict develops within the individual between his moral determination and his desire to collapse and discontinue the pain. It is this extra internal conflict, in addition to the conflict over whether or not to give in to the demands made of him, that tends to make this method of torture more effective in the breakdown of the individual personality.

3. **Isolation.** Individual differences in reaction to isolation are probably greater than to any other method. Some individuals appear to be able to withstand prolonged periods of isolation without deleterious effects, while a relatively short period of isolation reduces others to the verge of psychosis. Reaction varies with the conditions of the isolation cell. Some sources have indicated a strong reaction to filth and vermin, although they had negligible reactions to the isolation. Others reacted violently to isolation in relatively clean cells. The predominant cause of breakdown in such situations is a lack of sensory stimulation (i.e., grayness of walls, lack of sound, absence of social contact, etc.). Experimental subjects exposed to this condition have reported vivid hallucinations and overwhelming fears of losing their sanity.
4. **Control of Communication.** This is one of the most effective methods for creating a sense of helplessness and despair. This measure might well be considered the cornerstone of the communist system of control. It consists of strict regulation of the mail, reading materials, broadcast materials, and social contact available to the individual. The need to communicate is so great that when the usual channels are blocked, the individual will resort to any open channel, almost regardless of the implications of using that particular channel. Many POWs in Korea, whose only act of "collaboration" was to sign petitions and "peace appeals," defended their actions on the ground that this was the only method of letting the outside world know they were still alive. May stated that their morale and fortitude would have been increased immeasurably had leaflets of encouragement been dropped to them. When the only contact with the outside world is via the interrogator, the prisoner comes to develop extreme dependency on his interrogator and hence loses another prop to his morale.

Another wrinkle in communication control is the informer system. The recruitment of informers in POW camps discouraged communication between inmates. POWs who feared that every act or thought of resistance would be communicated to the camp administrators, lost faith in their fellow man and were forced to "untrusting individualism." Informers are also under several stages of brainwashing and elicitation to develop and

maintain control over the victims.

5. Induction of Fatigue. This is a well-known device for breaking will power and critical powers of judgment. Deprivation of sleep results in more intense psychological debilitation than does any other method of engendering fatigue. The communists vary their methods. "Conveyor belt" interrogation that last 50-60 hours will make almost any individual compromise, but there is danger that this will kill the victim. It is safer to conduct interrogations of 8-10 hours at night while forcing the prisoner to remain awake during the day. Additional interruptions in the remaining 2-3 hours of allotted sleep quickly reduce the most resilient individual. Alternate administration of drug stimulants and depressants hastens the process of fatigue and sharpens the psychological reactions of excitement and depression.

Fatigue, in addition to reducing the will to resist, also produces irritation and fear that arise from increased "slips of the tongue," forgetfulness, and decreased ability to maintain orderly thought processes.

6. Control of Food, Water and Tobacco. The controlled individual is made intensely aware of his dependence upon his interrogator for the quality and quantity of his food and tobacco. The exercise of this control usually follows a pattern. No food and little or no water is permitted the individual for several days prior to interrogation. When the prisoner first complains of this to the interrogator, the latter expresses surprise at such inhumane treatment. He makes a demand of the prisoner. If the latter complies, he receives a good meal. If he does not, he gets a diet of unappetizing food containing limited vitamins, minerals, and calories. This diet is supplemented occasionally by the interrogator if the prisoner "cooperates." Studies of controlled starvation indicate that the whole value-system of the subjects underwent a change. Their irritation increased as their ability to think clearly decreased. The control of tobacco presented an even greater source of conflict for heavy smokers. Because tobacco is not necessary to life, being manipulated by his craving for it can in the individual a strong sense of guilt.
7. Criticism and Self-Criticism. There are mechanisms of communist thought control. Self-criticism gains its effectiveness from the fact that although it is not a crime for a man to be wrong, it is a major crime to be stubborn and to refuse to learn. Many individuals feel intensely relieved in being able to share their sense of guilt. Those individuals however, who have adjusted to handling their guilt internally have difficulty adapting to criticism and self-

criticism. In brainwashing, after a sufficient sense of guilt has been created in the individual, sharing and self-criticism permit relief. The price paid for this relief, however, is loss of individuality and increased dependency.

8. Hypnosis and Drugs as Controls. There is no reliable evidence that the communists are making widespread use of drugs or hypnosis in brainwashing or elicitation. The exception to this is the use of common stimulants or depressants in inducing fatigue and "mood swings."
9. Other methods of control, which when used in conjunction with the basic processes, hasten the deterioration of prisoners' sense of values and resistance are:
 - a. Requiring a case history or autobiography of the prisoner provides a mine of information for the interrogator in establishing and "documenting" accusations.
 - b. Friendliness of the interrogator, when least expected, upsets the prisoner's ability to maintain a critical attitude.
 - c. Petty demands, such as severely limiting the allotted time for use of toilet facilities or requiring the POW to kill hundreds of flies, are harassment methods.
 - d. Prisoners are often humiliated by refusing them the use of toilet facilities during interrogation until they soil themselves. Often prisoners were not permitted to bathe for weeks until they felt contemptible.
 - e. Conviction as a war criminal appears to be a potent factor in creating despair in the individual. One official analysis of the pressures exerted by the ChiComs on "confessors" and "non-confessors" to participation in bacteriological warfare in Korea showed that actual trial and conviction of "war crimes" was overwhelmingly associated with breakdown and confession.
 - f. Attempted elicitation of protected information at various times during the brainwashing process diverted the individual from awareness of the deterioration of his value-system. The fact that, in most cases, the ChiComs did not want or need such intelligence was not known to the prisoner. His attempts to protect such information was made at the expense of hastening his own breakdown.

THE EXERCISE OF CONTROL: A "SCHEDULE" FOR BRAINWASHING

From the many fragmentary accounts reviewed, the following appears to be the most likely description of what occurs during brainwashing .

In the period immediately following capture, the captors are faced with the problem of deciding on best ways of exploitation of the prisoners. Therefore, early treatment is similar both for those who are to be exploited through elicitation and those who are to undergo brainwashing. Concurrently with being interrogated and required to write a detailed personal history, the prisoner undergoes a physical and psychological "softening-up" which includes: limited unpalatable food rations, withholding of tobacco, possible work details, severely inadequate use of toilet facilities, no use of facilities for personal cleanliness, limitation of sleep such as requiring a subject to sleep with a bright light in his eyes. Apparently the interrogation and autobiographical, material, the reports of the prisoner's behaviour in confinement, and tentative "personality typing" by the interrogators, provide the basis upon which exploitation plans are made.

There is a major difference between preparation for elicitation and for brainwashing. Prisoners exploited through elicitation must retain sufficient clarity of thought to be able to give coherent, factual accounts. In brainwashing, on the other hand, the first thing attacked is clarity of thought. To develop a strategy of defense, the controlled individual must determine what plans have been made for his exploitation. Perhaps the best cues he can get are internal reactions to the pressures he undergoes.

The most important aspect of the brainwashing process is the interrogation. The other pressures are designed primarily to help the interrogator achieve his goals. The following states are created systematically within the individual. These may vary in order, but all are necessary to the brainwashing process:

1. A feeling of helplessness in attempting to deal with the impersonal machinery of control.
2. An initial reaction of "surprise."
3. A feeling of uncertainty about what is required of him.
4. A developing feeling of dependence upon the interrogator.
5. A sense of doubt and loss of objectivity.

6. Feelings of guilt.
7. A questioning attitude toward his own value-system.
8. A feeling of potential "breakdown," i.e., that he might go crazy.
9. A need to defend his acquired principles.
10. A final sense of "belonging" (identification).

A feeling of helplessness in the face of the impersonal machinery of control is carefully engendered within the prisoner. The individual who receives the preliminary treatment described above not only begins to feel like an "animal" but also feels that nothing can be done about it. No one pays any personal attention to him. His complaints fall on deaf ears. His loss of communication, if he has been isolated, creates a feeling that he has been "forgotten." Everything that happens to him occurs according to an impersonal time schedule that has nothing to do with his needs. The voices and footsteps of the guards are muted. He notes many contrasts, e.g., his greasy, unpalatable food may be served on battered tin dishes by guards immaculately dressed in white. The first steps in "depersonalization" of the prisoner have begun. He has no idea what to expect. Ample opportunity is allotted for him to ruminate upon all the unpleasant or painful things that could happen to him. He approaches the main interrogator with mixed feelings of relief and fright.

Surprise is commonly used in the brainwashing process. The prisoner is rarely prepared for the fact that the interrogators are usually friendly and considerate at first. They make every effort to demonstrate that they are reasonable human beings. Often they apologize for bad treatment received by the prisoner and promise to improve his lot if he, too, is reasonable. This behaviour is not what he has steeled himself for. He lets down some of his defenses and tries to take a reasonable attitude. The first occasion he balks at satisfying a request of the interrogator, however, he is in for another surprise. The formerly reasonable interrogator unexpectedly turns into a furious maniac. The interrogator is likely to slap the prisoner or draw his pistol and threaten to shoot him. Usually this storm of emotion ceases as suddenly as it began and the interrogator stalks from the room. These surprising changes create doubt in the prisoner as to his very ability to perceive another person's motivations correctly. His next interrogation probably will be marked by impassivity in the interrogator's mien.

A feeling of uncertainty about what is required of him is likewise carefully engendered within the individual. Pleas of the prisoner to learn specifically of

what he is accused and by whom are side-stepped by the interrogator. Instead, the prisoner is asked to tell why he thinks he is held and what he feels he is guilty of. If the prisoner fails to come up with anything, he is accused in terms of broad generalities (e.g., espionage, sabotage, acts of treason against the "people"). This usually provokes the prisoner to make some statement about his activities. If this take the form of a denial, he is usually sent to isolation on further decreased food rations to "think over" his crimes. This process can be repeated again and again. As soon as the prisoner can think of something that might be considered self-incriminating, the interrogator appears momentarily satisfied. The prisoner is asked to write down his statement in his own words and sign it.

Meanwhile a strong sense of dependence upon the interrogator is developed. It does not take long for the prisoner to realize that the interrogator is the source of all punishment, all gratification, and all communication. The interrogator, meanwhile, demonstrates his unpredictability. He is perceived by the prisoner as a creature of whim. At times, the interrogator can be pleased very easily and at other times no effort on the part of the prisoner will placate him. The prisoner may begin to channel so much energy into trying to predict the behaviour of the unpredictable interrogator that he loses track of what is happening inside himself.

After the prisoner has developed the above psychological and emotional reactions to a sufficient degree, the brainwashing begins in earnest. First, the prisoner's remaining critical faculties must be destroyed. He undergoes long, fatiguing interrogations while looking at a bright light. He is called back again and again for interrogations after minimal sleep. He may undergo torture that tends to create internal conflict. Drugs may be used to accentuate his "mood swings." He develops depression when the interrogator is being kind and becomes euphoric when the interrogator is threatening the direst penalties. Then the cycle is reversed. The prisoner finds himself in a constant state of anxiety which prevents him from relaxing even when he is permitted to sleep. Short periods of isolation now bring on visual and auditory hallucinations. The prisoner feels himself losing his objectivity. It is in this state that the prisoner must keep up an endless argument with the interrogator. He may be faced with the confessions of other individuals who "collaborated" with him in his crimes. The prisoner seriously begins to doubt his own memory. This feeling is heightened by his inability to recall little things like the names of the people he knows very well or the date of his birth. The interrogator patiently sharpens this feeling of doubt by more questioning. This tends to create a serious state of uncertainty when the individual has lost most of his critical faculties.

The prisoner must undergo additional internal conflict when strong feelings of guilt are aroused within him. As any clinical psychologist is aware, it is not at all difficult to create such feelings. Military servicemen are particularly vulnerable. No one can morally justify killing even in wartime. The usual justification is on the grounds of necessity or self-defense. The interrogator is careful to circumvent such justification. He keeps the interrogation directed toward the prisoner's moral code. Every moral vulnerability is exploited by incessant questioning along this line until the prisoner begins to question the very fundamentals of his own value-system. The prisoner must constantly fight a potential breakdown. He finds that his mind is "going blank" for longer and longer periods of time. He can not think constructively. If he is to maintain any semblance of psychological integrity, he must bring to an end this state of interminable internal conflict. He signifies a willingness to write a confession.

If this were truly the end, no brainwashing would have occurred. The individual would simply have given in to intolerable pressure. Actually, the final stage of the brainwashing process has just begun. No matter what the prisoner writes in his confession the interrogator is not satisfied. The interrogator questions every sentence of the confession. He begins to edit it with the prisoner. The prisoner is forced to argue against every change. This is the essence of brainwashing. Every time that he gives in on a point to the interrogator, he must rewrite his whole confession. Still the interrogator is not satisfied. In a desperate attempt to maintain some semblance of integrity and to avoid further brainwashing, the prisoner must begin to argue that what he has already confessed to is true. He begins to accept as his own the statements he has written. He uses many of the interrogator's earlier arguments to buttress his position. By this process, identification with the interrogator's value-system becomes complete. It is extremely important to recognize that a qualitative change has taken place within the prisoner. The brainwashed victim does not consciously change his value-system; rather the change occurs despite his efforts. He is no more responsible for this change than is an individual who "snaps" and becomes psychotic. And like the psychotic, the prisoner is not even aware of the transition.

DEFENSIVE MEASURES OTHER THAN ON THE POLICY AND PLANNING LEVEL

1. Training of Individuals potentially subject to communist control.

Training should provide for the trainee a realistic appraisal of what control pressures the communists are likely to exert and what the usual human reactions are to such pressures. The trainee must learn the most effective

ways of combatting his own reactions to such pressures and he must learn reasonable expectations as to what his behaviour should be. Training has two decidedly positive effects; first, it provides the trainee with ways of combatting control; second, it provides the basis for developing an immeasurable boost in morale. Any positive action that the individual can take, even if it is only slightly effective, gives him a sense of control over a situation that is otherwise controlling him.

2. Training must provide the individual with the means of recognizing realistic goals for himself.
 - a. Delay in yielding may be the only achievement that can be hoped for. In any particular operation, the agent needs the support of knowing specifically how long he must hold out to save an operation, protect his cohorts, or gain some other goal.
 - b. The individual should be taught how to achieve the most favorable treatment and how to behave and make necessary concessions to obtain minimum penalties.
 - c. Individual behavioural responses to the various communist control pressures differ markedly. Therefore, each trainee should know his own particular assets and limitations in resisting specific pressures. He can learn these only under laboratory conditions simulating the actual pressures he may have to face.
 - d. Training must provide knowledge of the goals and the restrictions placed upon his communist interrogator. The trainee should know what controls are on his interrogator and to what extent he can manipulate the interrogator. For example, the interrogator is not permitted to fail to gain "something" from the controlled individual. The knowledge that, after the victim has proved that he is a "tough nut to crack" he can sometimes indicate that he might compromise on some little point to help the interrogator in return for more favorable treatment, may be useful indeed. Above all, the potential victim of communist control can gain a great deal of psychological support from the knowledge that the communist interrogator is not a completely free agent who can do whatever he wills with his victim.
 - e. The trainee must learn what practical cues might aid him in recognizing the specific goals of his interrogator. The strategy of defense against elicitation may differ markedly from the strategy to

prevent brainwashing. To prevent elicitation, the individual may hasten his own state of mental confusion; whereas, to prevent brainwashing, maintaining clarity of thought processes is imperative.

- f. The trainee should obtain knowledge about communist "carrots" as well as "sticks." The communists keep certain of their promises and always renege on others. For example, the demonstrable fact that "informers" receive no better treatment than other prisoners should do much to prevent this particular evil. On the other hand, certain meaningless concessions will often get a prisoner a good meal.
- g. In particular, it should be emphasized to the trainee that, although little can be done to control the pressures exerted upon him, he can learn something about controlling his personal reactions to specific pressures. The trainee can gain much from learning something about internal conflict and conflict-producing mechanisms. He should learn to recognize when someone is trying to arouse guilt feelings and what behavioural reactions can occur as a response to guilt.
- h. Finally, the training must teach some methods that can be utilized in thwarting particular communist control techniques:

Elicitation. In general, individuals who are the hardest to interrogate for information are those who have experienced previous interrogations. Practice in being the victim of interrogation is a sound training device.

Torture. The trainee should learn something about the principles of pain and shock. There is a maximum to the amount of pain that can actually be felt. Any amount of pain can be tolerated for a limited period of time. In addition, the trainee can be fortified by the knowledge that there are legal limitations upon the amount of torture that can be inflicted by communist jailors.

Isolation. The psychological effects of isolation can probably be thwarted best by mental gymnastics and systematic efforts on the part of the isolate to obtain stimulation for his neural end organs.

Controls on Food and Tobacco. Foods given by the communists will always be enough to maintain survival. Sometimes the victim gets unexpected opportunities to supplement his diet with special minerals, vitamins and other nutrients (e.g., "iron" from the rust of prison bars). In some instances, experience has shown that individuals could exploit refusal to eat. Such refusal usually resulted in the transfer of the individual to a hospital where he received vitamin injections and

nutritious food. Evidently attempts of this kind to commit suicide arouse the greatest concern in communist officials. If deprivation of tobacco is the control being exerted, the victim can gain moral satisfaction from "giving up" tobacco. He can't lose since he is not likely to get any anyway.

Fatigue. The trainee should learn reactions to fatigue and how to overcome them insofar as possible. For example, mild physical exercise "clears the head" in a fatigue state.

Writing Personal Accounts and Self-Criticism. Experience has indicated that one of the most effective ways of combatting these pressures is to enter into the spirit with an overabundance of enthusiasm. Endless written accounts of inconsequential material have virtually "smothered" some eager interrogators. In the same spirit, sober, detailed self-criticisms of the most minute "sins" has sometimes brought good results.

Guidance as to the priority of positions he should defend. Perfectly compatible responsibilities in the normal execution of an individual's duties may become mutually incompatible in this situation. Take the example of a senior grade military officer. He has the knowledge of sensitive strategic intelligence which it is his duty to protect. He has the responsibility of maintaining the physical fitness of his men and serving as a model example for their behaviour. The officer may go to the camp commandant to protest the treatment of the POWs and the commandant assures him that treatment could be improved if he will swap something for it. Thus to satisfy one responsibility he must compromise another. The officer, in short, is in a constant state of internal conflict. But if the officer is given the relative priority of his different responsibilities, he is supported by the knowledge that he won't be held accountable for any other behaviour if he does his utmost to carry out his highest priority responsibility. There is considerable evidence that many individuals tried to evaluate the priority of their responsibilities on their own, but were in conflict over whether others would subsequently accept their evaluations. More than one individual was probably brainwashed while he was trying to protect himself against elicitation.

CONCLUSIONS

The application of known psychological principles can lead to an understanding of brainwashing.

1. There is nothing mysterious about personality changes resulting from the

brainwashing process.

2. Brainwashing is a complex process. Principles of motivation, perception, learning, and physiological deprivation are needed to account for the results achieved in brainwashing.
3. Brainwashing is an involuntary re-education of the fundamental beliefs of the individual. To attack the problem successfully, the brainwashing process must be differentiated clearly from general education methods for thought-control or mass indoctrination, and elicitation.
4. It appears possible for the individual, through training, to develop limited defensive techniques against brainwashing. Such defensive measures are likely to be most effective if directed toward thwarting individual emotional reactions to brainwashing techniques rather than toward thwarting the techniques themselves.

15 August 1955

(note Declassified)

SECRET

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

19 JUN 1964

(Commission No. 1131)

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. J. Lee Rankin
General Counsel

President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy

SUBJECT: Soviet Brainwashing Techniques

1. Reference is made to your memorandum of 19 May 1964, requesting that materials relative to Soviet techniques in mind conditioning and brainwashing be made available to the Commission.
2. At my request, experts on these subjects within the CIA have prepared a brief survey of Soviet research in the direction and control of human behavior, a copy of which is attached. The Commission may retain this document. Please note that the use of certain sensitive materials requires that a sensitivity indicator be affixed.
3. In the immediate future, this Agency will make available to you a collection of overt and classified materials on these subjects, which the Commission may retain.
4. I hope that these documents will be responsive to the Commission's needs.

(SIGNED)

(DECLASSIFIED) Richard Helms
(By C.I.A.) Deputy Director for Plans
(letter of _____)
(_____)

Attachment

CD 1131 SECRET

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Soviet Research and Development in the Field of Direction and Control of Human Behavior.

1. There are two major methods of altering or controlling human behavior, and the Soviets are interested in both. The first is psychological; the second, pharmacological. The two may be used as individual methods or for mutual reinforcement. For long-term control of large numbers of people, the former method is more promising than the latter. In dealing with individuals, the U.S. experience suggests the pharmacological approach (assisted by psychological techniques) would be the only effective method. Neither method would be very effective for single individuals on a long term basis.
2. Soviet research on the pharmacological agents producing behavioral effects has consistently lagged about five years behind Western research. They have been interested in such research, however, and are now pursuing research on such chemicals as LSD-25, amphetamines, tranquilizers, hypnotics, and similar materials. There is no present evidence that the Soviets have any singular, new, potent drugs to force a course of action on an individual. They are aware, however, of the tremendous drive produced by drug addiction, and PERHAPS could couple this with psychological direction to achieve control of an individual.
3. The psychological aspects of behavior control would include not only conditioning by repetition and training, but such things as hypnosis, deprivation, isolation, manipulation of guilt feelings, subtle or overt threats, social pressure, and so on. Some of the newer trends in the USSR are as follows:
 - a. The adoption of a multidisciplinary approach integrating biological, social and physical-mathematical research in attempts better to understand, and eventually, to control human behavior in a manner consonant with national plans.
 - b. The outstanding feature, in addition to the interdisciplinary approach, is a new concern for mathematical approaches to an understanding of

behavior. Particularly notable are attempts to use modern information theory, automata theory, and feedback concepts in interpreting the mechanisms by which the "second signal system," i.e., speech and associated phenomena, affect human behavior. Implied by this "second signal system," using INFORMATION inputs as causative agents rather than chemical agents, electrodes or other more exotic techniques applicable, perhaps, to individuals rather than groups.

- c. This new trend, observed in the early Post-Stalin Period, continues. By 1960 the word "cybernetics" was used by the Soviets to designate this new trend. This new science is considered by some as the key to understanding the human brain and the product of its functioning—psychic activity and personality — to the development of means for controlling it and to ways for molding the character of the "New Communist Man". As one Soviet author puts it: Cybernetics can be used in "molding of a child's character, the inculcation of knowledge and techniques, the amassing of experience, the establishment of social behavior patterns ... all functions which can be summarized as 'control' of the growth process of the individual." 1/Students of particular disciplines in the USSR, such as psychologist and social scientists, also support the general cybernetic trend. 2/ [Blanked by CIA]
4. In summary, therefore, there is no evidence that the Soviets have any techniques or agents capable of producing particular behavioral patterns which are not available in the West. Current research indicates that the Soviets are attempting to develop a technology for controlling the development of behavioral patterns among the citizenry of the USSR in accordance with politically determined requirements of the system. Furthermore, the same technology can be applied to more sophisticated approaches to the "coding" of information for transmittal to population targets in the "battle for the minds of men." Some of the more esoteric techniques such as ESP or, as the Soviets call it, "biological radio-communication," and psychogenic agents such as LSD, are receiving some overt attention with, possibly, applications in mind for individual behavior control under clandestine conditions. However, we require more information than is currently available in order to establish or disprove planned or actual applications of various methodologies by Soviet scientists to the control of actions of articular individuals.

References

1. Itelson, Lev, "Pedagogy: An Exact Science?" USSR October 1963, p. 10.
2. Borzek, Joseph, "Recent Developments in Soviet Psychology," Annual Review of Psychology, Vol. 15, 1964, p. 493-594.

Index

A page number indicates where the section starts that contains the referenced information. So, the information you want could be on a following page.

- A -

absolute power 220, 262, 265
 absorption 155
 abuse 72, 78, 149, 152, 225, 230, 316, 320, 324, 443
 of children 164, 192
 addiction 149
 affectivity 63
 agent provocateur 269
 Ali (Mohammed) 28
 alien mentality 144, 168, 171, 443
 allowing the narcissist to get away with it 248
 always on 214
 American Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 56
 American Psychiatric Association 103, 106, 110
 anger 208, 451
 anti-Americanism 220
 Antisocial Personality Disorder 44, 48, 72
 APA 103, 106, 110
 APD 44, 48, 72
 Ark of the Covenant 268
 arrested child development 21
 art 296
 Ashmun (Joanna) 64, 97, 126, 155, 248, 352
 atrocity story 371
 attention 16, 18, 21, 23, 35, 92, 132, 135, 149, 292
 attention-seeking behavior 97
 hijacking 135

- B -

backwards reactions 92

bad faith 44, 48, 50
 bank examiner con 265
 batterers 173, 208
 Bauer (Yahuda) 389
 believing known lies 64
 benefactors 220
 Berne (Eric) 149
 blaming the victim 365, 389
 blocking the kick 78, 245
 boundaries 94, 402, 403, 407, 409, 410, 411, 412, 414, 416, 418, 420, 422
 brainwashing 380, 402, 480
 breaking people 380
 Bruckner (Pascal) 385
 bullying 164, 230, 269, 345, 371, 374, 377, 380, 387
 Bundy (Ted) 63, 72, 120, 200, 345
 bystanders 334, 368, 389, 393, 398

- C -

calling the police 211
 calumny 245
 caricatures 371
 Carroll (Lewis) 202, 250, 340
 carrots and sticks 265, 269, 422
 case study 78, 81, 177, 179, 190, 192, 285
 cause of NPD 21, 118, 120, 192, 445
 character assassination 88, 246, 334
 character disorder 62, 459
 characteristics of NPD 64
 chattel 410
 chemical imbalance in brain 118
 child abuse 152
 child molestation 345
 childishness 21
 childish thinking patterns 64, 250
 children of narcissists 324, 445
 choice of victim 220
 classification of NPD 58
 closed environment 368, 371
 co-dependence 365, 428, 443
 cognition 63
 cognitive dysfunction 214
 communication blocking 256
 co-morbidity 106, 110

compartmentalization 159
 complex (psychological) 56
 con artistry 78, 200, 262, 263, 265, 268, 269, 275
 conflicted feelings 454
 conscience 72
 conspiracy theory 371
 control freak 94
 controlling borders 402, 403, 407, 409, 410, 411, 412, 414, 416, 418, 420, 422
 cycle of abuse 402, 429

- D -

Dahmer (Jeffrey) 200, 345
 danger of narcissism 40, 41, 44, 48, 50
 Dante 326
 darkness within 32
 definition of NPD 70
 dehumanization 92
 delusion 256
 denial 377, 435
 denying attention 140
 diagnosing NPD 58, 64, 70
 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 56, 103, 106, 110
 diffamatio 374
 difference between narcissism and psychopathy 72
 disorders 62, 63

- character 62, 63
- mental 63
- personality 62, 63

 dissimulation 81, 88
 doting narcissist 160, 167
 DSM 103, 106, 110
 DSM-IV-TR 56
 dual diagnosis 106, 110

- E -

Echo 18
 effects on children 445
 Ekleberry (Sharon) 23, 35, 64, 81, 94
 Eliot (T.S.) 81
 emotion 147, 160

empathy 35, 64, 140, 144, 147
 entitlement 64
 exhibitionism 292
 expectations 353
 eye contact 347

- F -

false modesty 293
 fantasy 64, 340
 fear of exposure 78, 368
 feelings 451
 female narcissists 110
 filtering information 155, 157, 160
 Fitzgerald (F. Scott) 81, 200
 foot servant and king 132
 forgiveness 455

- G -

Games People Play (The) 149
 gamesmanship 362
 gang instinct 368
 ganging up 374
 Garvin (David) 208
 gaslighting 237, 248
 Gein (Ed) 200, 345
 genetic theory of inheritance 118
 glutton for punishment 365
 God Complex 35, 94, 130
 Grail Legend 414, 422
 grandiosity 28, 64, 70, 126, 149, 293
 gratitude 132, 353
 Great Gatsby (The) 81, 200
 groupthink 385
 guilt 120, 155
 gullibility 256

- H -

Hamilton (Lee) 44
 Hamlet 88
 Hare (Dr. Robert) 44, 72, 147
 Harpur (Timothy) 72
 Hart (Steven) 72

healthy narcissism 440
 helping the abused 444
 Henry VIII 377
 Hercz (Robert) 147
 hijacking attention 135
 Histrionic Personality Disorder 97
 Hitler (Adolf) 63, 64, 200, 220, 371, 374, 377
 Holy Grail 414, 422
 hostility 347
 how a narcissist is made 192
 humanity 35, 140, 144, 147, 171
 Hussein (Saddam) 63, 64, 72, 200, 220, 371, 377
 hypnotic state 155

- I -

identification 16, 18, 21, 23, 159
 identity switching 245
 ill wind 374
 image 16, 18, 21, 23, 152, 342
 imaginary friend 21
 imaginary self 21
 implicating others in the narcissist's wrongdoing 269
 impulsivity 63
 inability to recognize people 160
 ingratitude 353
 inhumanity 35, 140, 144
 Inquisition 371, 374, 420
 insanity 459
 intelligentsia 385
 Internet narcissists 283
 interpersonal relations 63
 introjection 312
 invasion of privacy 418, 420
 irrationality 256

- J -

Jekyll and Hyde 92, 211, 214, 293, 332
 John F Kennedy 44, 179
 judging others 362

- K -

Keep Away 64, 135, 336
 Keeping Up Appearances 63, 70
 Kennedy (John F.) 44, 179, 345
 Kennedy assassination 179
 KGB 380
 king and foot servant 132

- L -

Lee Harvey Oswald 179
 legal classification 62, 287, 459
 Lord of the Flies (The) 389, 393
 Lott (George) 126, 149
 Loyola (Ignatius) 380, 420
 lying 248, 250, 253, 256, 296

- M -

magic 78
 Magical Thinking 64, 120
 make-believe 256
 malevolence 126, 459
 malignance 32, 40
 manipulation 40, 41, 202, 208
 Manson (Charles) 200
 Mao 377
 mask switching 211
 masking 78
 maximum impact 140, 353
 McLaughlin (Jerry) 106, 110
 mental cruelty 225, 230
 mental decay 256
 mental disorders 58, 61, 63
 menticide 368
 Merloo (Joost) 368
 mind control 40, 41, 263, 380, 416, 418, 420
 mirroring 16, 18, 21, 23, 28, 149, 164
 mirrors 28, 152
 misdirection 235, 300
 Mohammed Ali 28

- N -

narcissism 56
 benign 56
 difference between narcissism and malignant narcissism 56
 healthy 440
 infantile nature of 130, 144
 narcissist attacks 220, 332
 narcissistic abuse 340
 narcissistic envy 64, 97, 235
 narcissistic malice 97
 narcissistic parent 88
 Narcissistic Personality Disorder 72
 narcissistic premises 168
 narcissistic rage 81, 92, 208, 225, 228, 230, 326, 330
 narcissistic siblings 274
 narcissist's feelings 147, 285
 narcissist's narcissistic parent 240
 narcissist's script 190
 narcissist's strategy 126, 292, 293, 300, 306, 316, 320, 324, 326, 330, 332
 narcissist's style 126
 Narcissus 16, 18, 23, 312
 Natural Learning 41, 155
 neediness 353
 negative reinforcement 316
 Nero 64, 371, 377
 non-malignant narcissism 56
 Normal Personality Disorder 371, 389
 NPD 56, 72

- O -

objectification 64, 144
 obstructionism 64
 Oswald (Lee Harvey) 179, 345
 outrage 330
 outsiders 398
 ownership rights 409, 410, 411, 414, 416, 418, 422

- P -

parents 21
 passing for normal 64, 147
 pathological envy 35, 88
 pathological lying 248, 250, 253, 256, 296
 Pathological Space 368
 pedophilia 28, 63, 97, 200, 275
 perfect crime 97, 332
 perplexing behavior 92
 persecution 374, 387
 personal boundaries 402, 403, 407, 409, 410, 411, 412, 414, 416, 418, 420, 422
 personal questions 418
 personal sovereignty 403, 407, 409, 410, 411, 412, 414, 416, 418, 420, 422
 personality disorders 58, 63
 perverted reactions to things 92, 225
 pets 275
 physical violence 345
 pieta 144
 playing God 362
 playing pretend 340
 playing the Devil with people 269
 Pol Pot 220
 power of suggestion 269, 300, 371
 power play games 431
 power plays 374
 predation 40, 44, 48, 50, 126, 144, 171, 207, 208, 214, 215, 225, 230, 275, 342, 440, 443, 459
 predatory mentality 171
 pre-emptive attacks 334
 premeditation 173
 premise 168
 President Kennedy 44, 179
 pretending 228, 250
 prevalence of NPD 103, 106, 110
 privacy 409, 410, 411, 414, 416, 418, 422
 projection 78, 81, 120, 235, 237, 245, 300, 306, 312, 387
 Projection Machine 306
 projective identification 237, 248, 312
 property rights 130
 protecting ourselves 44, 48, 50
 provoking a narcissist 215

psychological abuse 225, 230
psychological warfare 362
psychopathy 44, 48, 70, 72, 144, 147, 202
putting make-up on the image 126

- R -

rage 64, 92
Raiders of the Lost Ark 268
rape 28, 63, 200, 345, 411, 414
rape of the mind 368
rapist mentality 56
Rat Game 362, 365
red flags 87, 88, 91, 92, 94, 95, 97
reduction to a state of victimhood 262
refusal to greet people 347
reign of terror 368, 371, 374, 377, 380, 385, 387
relationship with the narcissistic parent 88
repentance 278
repression of thoughts and feelings 56, 155
responsibility 287, 459
right to pursue happiness 262
risk taking 72
Ritual Hunt 35
rules of engagement 220

- S -

sadism 72, 81
sanctimony 88
scapegoat discipline 190
scapegoating 387
script 228
scrutinizing narcissist 167
self absorption 95, 155, 214
self awareness 56
self esteem 56
self loathing 56
serial bullying 269
serial killers 28, 200, 345
seriousness of NPD 97
sexual predators 40
shame 120
shamelessness 56
shock treatment 326, 330

signs of bad faith 44, 48, 50
Sin of Sodom 262
slander 88, 235, 237, 243, 245, 246, 300, 334
slander that affects the status of employment 269
smear campaign of the abuser 334
Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs 64
sociopathy 72
Spielberg (Steven) 268
Stalin (Josef) 63, 64, 200, 220, 371, 377
stalking mode 214
statistics 103, 106, 110
strategic behavior 208
strategic information 214
subconscious 237
suicide 278
symptoms of NPD 70

- T -

Taming of the Shrew 64
target of opportunity 214
Teeter Totter Game 340, 342, 347, 349, 352, 353, 358, 359
temper tantrums 202, 253, 316, 320, 342
temptation 440
terrorism 155, 208, 377
Three Little Piggies and the Big Bad Wolf 445
Through the Looking Glass 202, 250, 340
Tilden (Bill) 126, 149
torture 28
total disinterest in significant others 160
transfiguration 208, 293
triggers 215
trust 44, 48, 50
tuning people out 157
Twain (Mark) 144
Twilight Zone 92, 171

- U -

unblemished victim 243
unreasonable doubting 256

- V -

Vaknin (Sam) 35, 72, 97, 149, 164
vampires 220
ventriloquist dummy 35
victim 243
victim's self-respect 451
Virgil 326
Voltaire 389
voodoo 245

- W -

wantonness 377
Waterhouse (John William) 18
wife beater 345
wise apes 389
withholding 336
 attention 140, 292
workplace bullying 269

- Z -

Zetnik (K) 398



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Operation Doubles: Tennis Strategy & Tactics

www.operationdoubles.com

Free online tennis instruction and a strategy guide.

What Makes Narcissists Tick: Understanding Narcissistic Personality Disorder

www.operationdoubles.com/narc/

Popular website and blog about malignant narcissism.

The Lighthouse

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Writing Tips blog and home page of Kathy's writing and editing service.

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www.operationdoubles.com/lm_site/

Documentation for the Literary Machine software.

Gigi's Page: The Terrific Heart of a Great Cairn Terrier

www.operationdoubles.com/gigi/

Dedicated to the Great Jeej, this site tells about Cairn terriers, today's descendants of the no-nonsense stock that gave rise to Scottish terriers, West Highland White Terriers, and Skye Terriers. You know -- Toto!

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