



MONTHLY MENTAL HEALTH NEWSLETTER

Presented by the Gwinnett County Sheriff's Office Mental Health Task Force

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Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD)



What is Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD)

Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) is a personality disorder that is mostly known for persons presenting as grandiose, self-serving and lacking in real empathy. Their maladaptive self-concept causes disruption and even chaos in their personal and work lives as well as in the lives of others. However, there is much more to this disorder than the stereotypical self-admiration.

Greek mythology tells the story of "Narcissus", a hunter known for his beauty. He rejected all romantic partners because he had fallen so in love with himself. He eventually drowned in pool of water while admiring his own image. It is from this myth that the word *narcissism* derives.

Characteristics of NPD

An exaggerated sense of self-importance and sense of entitlement. Requires constant, excessive admiration.

Expect to be recognized as superior without achievements that warrant such recognition

Exaggerate their achievements and talents. Preoccupied with fantasies of success, power, brilliance, beauty and/or ideal love

Believe they are superior and can only associate with equally special people, they may be big "name droppers"

Monopolize conversations, belittles or looks down on others they perceive as inferior, may hold grudges for a lifetime over minor perceived slights

Expect special favors and unquestioning compliance with their expectations

Takes advantage of others to get what they want. Have an inability or unwillingness to recognize the needs and feelings of others. Lacks empathy

Envious of others and believe others envy them. May behave in an arrogant or haughty manner, coming across as conceited, boastful and pretentious. Superficial items of stature are important to their self-image

NPD Risk Factors and Behaviors

Statistically it appears to present in more males than females, though there certainly are female NPDs. The exact cause is not known. Like most personality disorders, it's likely due to a complex combination of factors including Genes, Environment, (including parent-child relationships), Neurobiology (the connection between your behavior and your nervous system).

Other theories include; people whose parents put them on a pedestal and showered them with endless praise may be at a higher risk for NPD. Some studies show the opposite, whereby children who are ignored or abused may develop NPD almost as a survival instinct.

Recognition and praise will always be more important to the NPD than substance and integrity.

They will become very impatient or angry when they don't receive special treatment though they have not paid the "dues" to warrant special treatment. This behavior presents in their work environment and in their personal relationships, including family and children.

Have significant interpersonal problems and easily feel slighted due to their insecurities. They are constantly in fear of being seen for who and what they really are, whether it be at work or in relationships.

Have difficulty regulating emotions and behavior especially when they feel their status or image is threatened, critiqued or challenged in any way.

They often "shoot themselves in the foot" by ruining their employment, relationships and futures due to the rigidity of their maladaptive self-concept. (Sort of like Narcissus in the Greek Myth...drowned while admiring himself.)

To Help a Family or Friend with NPD

As with personality disorders like Borderline P.D., the NPD is among the most difficult to treat in a clinical setting due to their being uncomfortable with anyone that sees past their façade.

NPD can make relationships very difficult. Asking an NPD to seek help may trigger negative reactions. Most people living with NPD don't feel the need to change. It is part of their personality disorder to consider everyone else to be the problem.

Unfortunately, living with NPD does cause other mental health effects, including anxiety, depression, and substance use. Sometimes when these issues present the NPD will feel their impact and reach out for help.

If an NPD chooses to seek professional help, there is potential for growth and improved mental health. As with Borderline P.D., Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is effective, but they must commit to the process. Committing to the truth will be their biggest challenge and fear.

REFERENCES

The following sources were used in the creation of this Mental Health Newsletter. The G.C.S.O. Mental Health Tasks Force encourages you to utilize these and other sources such as the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) to learn more about this and other important mental health topics.

Diagnostic Statistical Manual –V, American Psychiatric Association, June 2013

National Institute of Mental Health (2018). *Narcissistic Personality Disorder*. Retrieved December 15, 2021 from <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/narcissistic-personality-disorder>

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