

DIFFERENTIATING NPD FROM JERKS

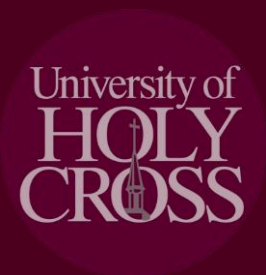
DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS OF
NARCISSISTIC PERSONALITY DISORDER

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GUIDING QUESTIONS

- **What is Narcissism? What are the popular notions of Narcissism?**
 - **Is it developmental and adaptive at times?**
 - **Why has labeling others as Narcissistic become so popular? What are the problems with this?**
 - **Clinically and Diagnostically, what is NPD, and how is the disorder different than the expression of narcissistic behaviors?**
 - **Ethically, what are the issues with using the popular notion of “narcissism” in a clinical setting?**
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ACTIVITY: THE CLIENT'S PERSPECTIVE

TAKE OUT YOUR PHONE...

- Open google or your Internet browser
- Begin a search by typing in "Is my boyfriend a"
 - What terms auto-populate?
- Now, select "Is my boyfriend a narcissist?"
 - How many search results appear?
- Browse the headlines of the top results.
 - What do you notice?
- Repeat, swapping "boyfriend" for other partner terms

DIAGNOSING ONE'S PARTNER IS A BIG BUSINESS!

WHAT IS NARCISSISM?

CLASSICALLY, LOVE OF SELF

From Greek mythology, Narcissus saw his reflection and fell in love with his own image, jilting Echo, leaving her to wander alone wilting into a whisper, while Narcissus became ultimately preoccupied with himself, dying alone

WHAT IS NARCISSISM? CONTINUED...

DSM-5 Diagnostic Criteria for Narcissistic Personality Disorder 301.81

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).

WHAT IS NARCISSISM?

CONTINUED...

DSM-5 Diagnostic Criteria for Narcissistic Personality Disorder 301.81

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:

- 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.

WHAT IS NARCISSISM?

CONTINUED...

DSM-5 Diagnostic Criteria for Narcissistic Personality Disorder 301.81

Traditionally, in psychology, all these criteria were thought of as strategies to bolster one's flagging self-esteem.

THE MOTIVATION IS A COVER-UP.

Kids/teens/people often display the criteria, but for different purposes and motivations.

PREVALENCE OF DIAGNOSTIC NPD



THE DATA VARIES...

- 0.5-6% of the general population
- Higher in clinical populations (~13%)
- Much more frequently diagnosed among men

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NPD & A JERK

TAKE OUT YOUR PHONE...AGAIN...

- Open google or your Internet browser
- Find an AI chat generator (an easy way to aggregate web sources
 - ChatGPT (chat.openai.com) or similar
- Ask, "What's the difference between NPD and being a jerk?"

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NPD & A JERK

[Chat.openai.com](https://chat.openai.com) (ChatGPT)

"Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) is a clinical condition characterized by an inflated sense of self-importance, a lack of empathy, and a need for admiration. On the other hand, being a jerk refers to someone who is unkind, inconsiderate, or behaves in a mean-spirited way. While a person with NPD may exhibit jerky behavior, not all jerks have NPD. A person with NPD will have a more severe manifestation of the traits of narcissism, and it will cause significant impairment in their daily functioning and relationships."

WHAT IS BEING A JERK?

Criteria for "My Ex Is a Jerk" Disorder

A **transient pattern** beginning at some point in our relationship and most evident when we are struggling, as indicated by three (or more) of the following:

- Partner pulls away and ghosts, or becomes excessively clingy or vacillates between the two.
- Partner deceives and lies, particularly about hurtful things.
- Partner seems entitled and focused on getting their needs met.
- Partner seems to lack empathy for the needs and complaints of their partner.
- Partner seeks validation from others, especially when the relationship is conflictual.
- Often becomes sweet and loving again once reconciliation is initiated.

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- An uptick in content creators pushing 'narcissism' content
 - In social media, NPD is frequently used synonymously with narcissism
 - 'Narcissism', 'Love-Bombing', 'Trauma Bonds', and 'Gaslighting' all appear frequently together in online articles. (500K+ search results)
 - Who/What is inserting these words into our clients' mouths, generally to label their partner?
 - And what's the therapeutic value of the label?
 - Have content creators successfully vilified narcissists, inhibiting both partners from making improvements?
 - Are therapists giving up on narcissists?
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THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

ASSOCIATED HASHTAGS HAVE DOUBLED IN JUST LESS THAN A YEAR.

On TikTok, as of February of 2023,

[#Narcissist](#) has 7.8 billion views

[#Narctok](#) has over 4 billion views

[#Narcissism](#) has 3.2 billion views

THE CLIENT IN FRONT OF
**WHAT IS THEIR NEED TO DIAGNOSE/LABEL
THOSE NOT IN THE ROOM?**

Receive expert validation for the
client's feelings and experiences.
Acknowledging their pain and
suffering

Deflect from one's own
therapeutic issues, providing the
client with a sense of protection
from the partner

Help accept that they cannot
change their partner because
'narcissists can't change'.

NEGATIVE IMPLICATIONS

FOR ENCOURAGING THE USE OF THE LABEL

COULD IT BE A DISTRACTION?

Clients ask, "Is my ____ a narcissist?" even when they can recognize their partner's or loved one's behavior as toxic or even abusive.

Their partner's potential narcissism is not their problem; the abusive or toxic behavior is.

It can perpetuate their need for external validation of their feelings and experiences which can distract from their own inner work regarding self-doubt or lack of self-trust



NEGATIVE IMPLICATIONS

FOR ENCOURAGING THE USE OF THE LABEL

"In the therapy world, we only give diagnoses such as these if we believe it will meaningfully guide or alter our treatment plan. In other words, unless handing out a specific diagnosis to a patient will change the way we manage their treatment, we're not going to put that label on a patient. Oftentimes, we know that such labeling can have a demonstrably negative impact on these clients as they begin to view themselves as irreparably damaged or dramatically different from the rest of the world..."

"The same is true outside therapy as well. Labeling your ex-husband or your mother a narcissist probably won't offer them a road to recovery, and it won't offer you a road to recovery, either. So ask yourself: How does labeling this person a narcissist alter the way I think or behave around this person? In what way does this label help me to better navigate the way I manage the stress and toxicity I feel around this person?" – Dr. Laura Berman

"MY HUSBAND IS A LITTLE ASPY..."

NOW WHAT?

How will a diagnosis or label like 'Aspergers' or 'narcissist' change:

- The reporting client?
- Treatment and therapy?
- The partner and the relationship?

"NOW WHAT DO WE DO?"

HOW DO WE VALIDATE OUR CLIENTS

WITHOUT VILIFYING OR "OTHERING" THE SOURCE OF THEIR PAIN

ASSESS FOR POTENTIAL TO CHANGE

Ask questions like,

- "What if s/he is a diagnosed narcissist?"
- "What would change?"
- "How will you be different? "
- "Can you make the change without the label?"

KNOW WHEN TO USE PSYCHO-EDUCATION

Some clients may need to be challenged and educated directly, while for other clients, It may be best practice to just avoid reinforcing the label more Indirectly.

KEEP CLIENTS IN THEIR FEELING & REBUILD SELF-TRUST

There is always a time for context, but with clients that lack self-trust and boundaries, It can be difficult for them to focus on how this behavior makes them feel and focus less on "why" their loved one hurt them. Their own attachment Injuries could be preventing them from communicating their boundaries and, even more difficult, upholding those boundaries.

FINAL THOUGHTS

WORDS HAVE POWER.

- How do we validate our clients' pain, experience, and feelings and increase their self-trust without needing to "other" and vilify the people who have caused the pain? How can we teach that their pain is valid and their loved ones' inability to change is enough to step back from that relationship, regardless of the reason for the pain? Switching the focus from the person to the behavior and how that behavior makes the client feel.
- By providing or reinforcing labels such as narcissism, narcissistic abuse, love-bombing, gaslighting, etc., are we giving them material to build walls instead of teaching them communication, boundaries, and self-trust?
- As counselors, what are we saying when we label someone a narcissist? Are we saying that person is self-centered? Are we emphasizing their rigidity, inability to change, or treatment resistance? Or are we simply trying to magnify toxic and hurtful behavior?

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THANK YOU!

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