

LECTURE IN SISTINA HOSPITAL

October 1, 2024

Thanks

Available for lectures, seminars

This is the introductory lecture to the one day seminar in Zagreb

My YouTube channel

(<https://www.youtube.com/samvaknin>)

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE

1950 years before the DSM:

“2 Timothy 3 3 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. 2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people. 6 They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over gullible women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, 7 always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth”

PHENOMENOLOGY

Shame and grief: vulnerability and fragility

9 clinical features and trait domains of narcissism:

The above enumerated impairments should be "stable across time and consistent across situations ... not better understood as normative for the [individual's developmental stage](#) or socio-cultural environment ... are not solely due to the direct [physiological effects of a substance](#) (e.g., a drug of abuse, medication) or a general medical condition (e.g., [severe head trauma](#))."

Lack of affective/emotional empathy

Impaired ability to recognize or identify with the feelings and needs of others; excessively attuned to reactions of others, but only if perceived as relevant to self; over- or underestimation of own effects on others.

Fear of intimacy (insecure, usually dismissive-avoidant attachment style)

Relationships largely superficial and exist to serve self-esteem regulation; mutuality constrained by little genuine interest in

others' experiences and predominance of a need for personal gain.

Disturbed or diffuse identity

Excessive reference to others for self-definition and self-esteem regulation ([narcissistic supply](#)); exaggerated self-appraisal inflated or deflated, or vacillating between extremes ([grandiosity](#), a cognitive distortion); [emotional regulation mirrors fluctuations in self-esteem](#).

Attention seeking behaviors (narcissistic supply or self-supply)

Excessive attempts to attract and be the centre of attention of others; admiration seeking.

Goal-setting based on gaining approval from others; personal standards unreasonably high in order to see oneself as exceptional, or too low based on a sense of entitlement; often unaware of own motivations.

Grandiosity (cognitive distortion) and Entitlement

Feelings of entitlement, either overt or covert; self-centredness; firmly holding to the belief that one is better than others; condescension towards others.

Anankastia

Negative affectivity, including **fragility (bad object)**

Dissociality (antisocial behaviors)

Antagonism

Only the last 2 traits **mellow with age**, not owing to learning from experience (the narcissist is incapable of that), but probably for biological reasons. The same mellowing is observed in psychopaths and borderlines.

AETIOLOGY

Disruption in formation, constellation, integration of **Self**
owing to **ACEs, trauma, and abuse (DEFINE ABUSE)**

Empty schizoid core

Black hole in autistic children first suggest by Frances Tustin in 1972.

We are all born with empty schizoid core, compensate by introjecting Mommy (**symbiosis and primary narcissism**).

Narcissism is compensatory and infantile: object inconstancy, ceaseless introjection and incorporation of internal object
MASK the emptiness, compensate for it (introjective personality).

Dissociation, confabulation

Introjection of external objects (**Othering failure**)

Failure of **separation-individuation**

Fantasy defense, especially in interpersonal relationships
(shared fantasy):

Idealization-devaluation-discard-replacement-hoovering

Hall of mirrors

Dual motherhood

**Covert vs. Overt narcissism: injury, collapse,
decompensation-mortification**

Primitive-infantile Defenses:

Splitting

Projection

Projective Identification

Rationalization

Narcissistic Rage (Frustration-[aggression](#) hypothesis)

I. ***Explosive*** – The narcissist flares up, attacks everyone in his immediate vicinity, causes damage to objects or people, and is verbally and psychologically abusive.

II. ***Pernicious or Passive-Aggressive (P/A)*** – The narcissist sulks, gives the silent treatment, and is plotting how to punish the transgressor and put her in her proper place. These narcissists are [vindictive](#) and often become [stalkers](#). They harass and haunt the objects of their frustration. They sabotage and damage the work and possessions of people whom they regard to be the sources of their mounting wrath.

SEMINAR

7 Stages of shared fantasy:

1. **Co-Idealization (lovebombing, introject and narcissist all good because he owns object)**
2. **Dual motherhood** in a shared fantasy (recreation of childhood)
3. Need to **reenact separation** leads to **mental discard** which results in **narcissistic injury** (narcissist not omniscient, his judgment was wrong)
4. **Devaluation of external object to restore grandiosity** (make ego-congruent sense of the discard of an hitherto idealized object).
5. **Devaluation of introject via splitting defense** (introject now all-bad, narcissist grandiosely all-good)
6. **Real life discard:** projection of introject to you in an attempt to integrate it with external object. Projection-integration fails owing to abandonment anxiety triggered by introject inconstancy and your refusal to own split, all-bad introject. Devalued, split, all-bad introject remains as internal object, in narcissist's mind. This creates anxiety (bad object internalization-introjection)

7. The only way to reintegrate this internal object and reduce anxiety is by **re-idealizing the external object** and the corresponding introject. This is impossible if the narcissist has been mortified. He then departs from his previous version and reinvents himself which allows for self-idealization (grandiosity restored).

Proposed Amended Criteria for the Narcissistic Personality Disorder

- **Feels grandiose and self-important (e.g., exaggerates accomplishments, talents, *skills, contacts, and personality traits to the point of lying, demands to be recognised as superior without commensurate achievements*);**
- **Is *obsessed* with fantasies of unlimited success, *fame, fearsome power or omnipotence, unequalled brilliance (the cerebral narcissist), bodily beauty or sexual performance (the somatic narcissist), or ideal, everlasting, all-conquering love or passion*;**
- **Firmly convinced that he or she is unique and, being special, can only be understood by, *should only be treated by*, or associate with, other special or unique, or high-status people (or institutions);**

- Requires excessive admiration, *adulation, attention and affirmation – or, failing that, wishes to be feared and to be notorious (Narcissistic Supply)*;
- Feels entitled. *Demands automatic and full compliance* with his or her unreasonable expectations for special and *favourable priority* treatment;
- Is "interpersonally exploitative", i.e., *uses* others to achieve his or her own ends;
- *Devoid* of empathy. Is *unable* or unwilling to identify with, *acknowledge, or accept* the feelings, needs, *preferences, priorities, and choices* of others;
- Constantly envious of others *and seeks to hurt or destroy the objects of his or her frustration. Suffers from persecutory (paranoid) delusions as he or she believes that they feel the same about him or her and are likely to act similarly*;
- Behaves arrogantly and haughtily. *Feels superior, omnipotent, omniscient, invincible, immune, "above the law", and omnipresent (magical thinking). Rages when frustrated, contradicted, or confronted* by people he or she considers inferior to him or her and unworthy.

According to the Alternative DSM V-TR Model for Personality Disorders (2022, p.881), the following criteria must be met to

diagnose Narcissistic Personality Disorder (in parentheses my comments):

Moderate or greater impairment in personality functioning, manifested by characteristic difficulties in two or more of the following areas:

Identity

Excessive reference to others for self-definition and self-esteem regulation ([narcissistic supply](#)); exaggerated self-appraisal inflated or deflated, or vacillating between extremes ([grandiosity](#), a cognitive distortion); [emotional regulation mirrors fluctuations in self-esteem](#).

The narcissist keeps referring to others excessively in order to regulate his self-esteem (really, sense of self-worth) and for "self-definition" (to define his identity.) His self-appraisal is exaggerated, whether it is inflated, deflated, or fluctuating between these two poles and his emotional regulation reflects these vacillations.

(Finally, the DSM V-TR accepted what I have been saying for decades: that narcissists can have an "inferiority complex" and feel worthless and bad; that they go through [cycles of ups and downs](#) in their self-evaluation; and that this cycling influences their [mood and affect](#); that they are emotionally exogenously dysregulated).

Self-direction

Goal-setting based on gaining approval from others; personal standards unreasonably high in order to see oneself as exceptional, or too low based on a sense of entitlement; often unaware of own motivations.

The narcissist sets goals in order to gain approval from others ([narcissistic supply](#); the DSM V ignores the fact that the narcissist finds disapproval equally rewarding as long as it places him firmly in the limelight.) The narcissist [lacks self-awareness](#) as far as his motivation goes (and as far as everything else besides.)

The narcissist's personal standards and benchmarks are either too high (which supports his [grandiosity](#)), or too low (buttresses his sense of [entitlement](#), which is incommensurate with his real-life performance.)

Impairments in interpersonal functioning in either [empathy](#) or [intimacy](#) (should be: in both.)

[Empathy](#)

Impaired ability to recognize or identify with the feelings and needs of others; excessively attuned to reactions of others, but only if perceived as relevant to self; over- or underestimation of own effects on others.

The narcissist finds it difficult to identify with the emotions and needs of others, but is very attuned to their reactions when they are relevant to himself ([cold empathy](#).) Consequently, he [overestimates the effect he has on others or underestimates](#)

[it](#) (the classic narcissist never underestimates the effect he has on others - but the inverted narcissist does.)

[Intimacy](#)

Relationships largely superficial and exist to serve self-esteem regulation; mutuality constrained by little genuine interest in others' experiences and predominance of a need for personal gain.

The narcissist's relationships are self-serving and, therefore shallow and superficial. They are centred around and geared at the regulation of his self-esteem (obtaining narcissistic supply for the regulation of his labile sense of self-worth.)

The narcissist is not "genuinely" interested in his intimate partner's experiences (implying that he does fake such interest convincingly.) The narcissist emphasizes his need for personal gain (by using the word "need", the DSM V acknowledges the [compulsive](#) and [addictive](#) nature of narcissistic supply). These twin fixtures of the narcissist's relationships render them one-sided: no mutuality or reciprocity ([no intimacy](#)).

Pathological personality traits

Both the following pathological personality traits:

Antagonism characterized by grandiosity and attention-seeking

Grandiosity (an aspect of Antagonism)

Feelings of entitlement, either overt or covert; self-centredness; firmly holding to the belief that one is better than others; condescension towards others.

The aforementioned feeling of entitlement. The DSM V adds that it can be either overt or covert (which corresponds to my taxonomy of classic and [inverted narcissist](#).)

Grandiosity is characterized by self-centredness; a firmly-held conviction of superiority (arrogance or haughtiness); and [condescending or patronizing attitudes](#).

Attention-seeking (an aspect of Antagonism)

Excessive attempts to attract and be the centre of attention of others; admiration seeking.

The narcissist puts inordinate effort, time, and resources into attracting others (sources of narcissistic supply) and placing himself at the focus and centre of attention. He seeks admiration (the DSM V gets it completely wrong here: the narcissist does prefer to be admired and adulated, but, failing that, any kind of attention would do, even if it is negative.)

The diagnostic criteria end with disclaimers and differential diagnoses, which reflect years of accumulated research and newly-gained knowledge:

The above enumerated impairments should be *"stable across time and consistent across situations ... not better understood as normative for the [individual's developmental stage](#) or socio-cultural environment ... are not solely due to the*

direct physiological effects of a substance (e.g., a drug of abuse, medication) or a general medical condition (e.g., severe head trauma)."

Compare the classic narcissist to the covert narcissist in this table (Cooper and Akhtar, 1989):

	Arrogant/Overt	Shy/Covert
Self-Concept	Grandiosity; preoccupation with fantasies of outstanding success; undue sense of uniqueness; feelings of entitlement; seeming self-sufficiency	Inferiority; morose self-doubts; marked propensity toward feeling ashamed; fragility; relentless search for glory and power; marked sensitivity to criticism and realistic setbacks

<p>Interpersonal Relationships</p>	<p>Numerous but shallow relationships; intense need for tribute from others; scorn for others, often masked by pseudohumility; lack of empathy; inability to genuinely participate in group activities; valuing of children over spouse in family life</p>	<p>Inability to genuinely depend on others and trust them; chronic envy of others's talents, possessions, and capacity for deep object relations; lack of regard for generational boundaries; disregard for others's time; refusal to answer letters</p>
<p>Social Adaptation</p>	<p>Socially charming; often successful; consistent hard work done mainly to seek admiration (pseudo-sublimation); intense ambition; preoccupation with appearances</p>	<p>Nagging aimlessness; shallow vocational commitment; dilettante-like attitude; multiple but</p>

		superficial interests; chronic boredom; aesthetic taste often ill-informed and imitative
Ethics, Standards, and Ideals	Caricatured modesty; pretended contempt for money in real life; idiosyncratically and unevenly moral; apparent enthusiasm for sociopolitical affairs	Readiness to shift values to gain favor; pathological lying; materialistic lifestyle; delinquent tendencies; inordinate ethnic and moral relativism; irreverence toward authority

<p>Love and Sexuality</p>	<p>Marital instability; cold and greedy seductiveness; extramarital affairs and promiscuity; uninhibited sexual life</p>	<p>Inability to remain in love; impaired capacity for viewing the romantic partner as a separate individual with his or her own interests, rights, and values; inability to genuinely comprehend the incest taboo; occasional sexual perversions</p>
<p>Cognitive Style</p>	<p>Impressively knowledgeable; decisive and opinionated; often strikingly articulate; egocentric perception of reality; love of language;</p>	<p>Knowledge often limited to trivia (◀headline intelligence▶); forgetful of</p>

**fondness for shortcuts to
acquisition of knowledge**

**details,
especially
names;
impaired in the
capacity for
learning new
skills; tendency
to change
meanings of
reality when
facing a threat
to self-esteem;
language and
speaking used
for regulating
self-esteem**