



SA Federation for
Mental Health

PERSONALITY DISORDERS

NARCISSISTIC PERSONALITY DISORDER

What it is:

Narcissistic personality disorder is characterised by the individual exhibiting a grandiose sense of self-importance, a constant need for admiration and praise of their accomplishments, and a lack of empathy for others. These behaviours typically begin to manifest in early adulthood. Individuals with this disorder typically feel that they are superior to others in their capabilities and accomplishments, and expect to be recognised and praised for their perceived superiority. They may view themselves as being “unique” or “special” in comparison with other people, and expect to be treated as such. Individuals with this disorder have a strong sense of entitlement, and may feel that they are entitled to praise, recognition or other rewards even when their behaviour or accomplishments do not in fact warrant this.

Individuals with narcissistic personality disorder can be exploitive in personal relationships, and may only form relationships if they feel there is something for them to gain from it. They may also seek out people who are highly qualified or accomplished to associate with, as the individual feels that they can only relate to, or be understood by, someone who they perceive to be on their level. Individuals with this disorder typically lack empathy for others, and are unable to recognise the feelings or needs of those around them. They may appear haughty, arrogant or even cruel in their interactions with others. However, they themselves will often have vulnerable self-esteem, and be very sensitive to any form of criticism.

Common Symptoms:

1. A grandiose or inflated sense of self-importance. For example, the individual exaggerates their capabilities and achievements, or expects to be recognised as being superior without appropriate achievements
2. The individual believes that they are “special” or “unique” compared to others
3. The individual believes they should only associate with, or can only be understood by, special or high status people
4. The individual has a need for excessive admiration and praise
5. The individual has a strong sense of entitlement
6. The individual takes advantage of others to achieve their own goals

7. The individual lacks empathy for the needs or feelings of others
8. The individual is often envious of others, or believes that others are envious of them
9. The individual exhibits arrogant, haughty or cruel attitudes or behaviours towards others



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Causes:

Narcissistic personality disorder has been associated with anorexia nervosa, substance use disorders, as well as histrionic, borderline, paranoid and antisocial personality disorders. Narcissistic personality disorder is also diagnosed more frequently in men than in women.