

I was on the train to Dublin recently and happened to be sitting close to someone who decided to conduct a considerable amount of business via his mobile phone. Not only did he conduct his business but also he did so in such a manner as to ensure that just about everyone on the carriage could hear him. Rather than becoming too irritated, I began to think about narcissistic personalities, of which he appeared to be one. The narcissistic personality is familiar to most of you as the kind of person who has a grandiose sense of their own importance, thinks the world revolves around them, and are self-absorbed. They tend to be arrogant about themselves and dismissive of others.

On the train my co-passenger displayed these traits: He had no regard for the people around him or for the sign on his window which asked that he use his phone in consideration of others, he probably had no idea that he was intensely irritating to the people around him because, in his head, what he was doing was of more importance than what anyone else might be doing. He also probably imagined that he duly impressed people around him. This is the behaviour of a narcissistic.

Though they don't realise it, these kinds of people have such little genuine self-esteem that they have to create a huge Self in order to survive and compensate. They think that everyone should recognise their special importance. The narcissist can be found in high-life or in everyday life. They are the person who walks into a room and gradually dominates a conversation or talks other people down. Or they are the politician who believes he is so important that his own wrongdoings should be tolerated.

This self-important person is typically prone to anger and rage when he/she does not get the special attention of others. When narcissists are forced to realise that they are no more important than others they are prone to flying into a temper or rage at what is being done to them. Their anger and lack of tolerance reveals their shaky self-esteem. They feel good, not in and of themselves, but only when their sense of importance is being confirmed.

In psychology, a narcissistic personality is defined by self-centeredness, grandiosity, lack of empathy, and manipulateness. While people like this often achieve the status they want their lives are not satisfying because they always want more or spend a great deal of energy comparing themselves to others. The sad thing is that they very often have little idea that the way they think and behave distorts their lives. When things do not work out for them they become "victims". They never consider that they are the cause of their own distress.

If there is someone in your life who you consider to be narcissistic consider the following checklist. A narcissistic personality will typically have at least five of the following characteristics:

1. Has a grandiose sense of self-importance (e.g. expects special attention, is always talking about what they have achieved or are going to do).
2. Believes that he or she is special and unique and can be understood only by people who realise this.
3. Requires excessive recognition, admiration, or acknowledgement.
4. Has a sense of entitlement – i.e. expects favourable treatment that others will willingly comply with their requests.

5. Forgets that other people make sacrifices for them because they feel entitled to such favours.
6. Takes advantage of others to get what they want.
7. Lacks compassion, gentleness and sensitivity and finds it very hard to identify with the feelings of others.
8. Is often envious of others and imagines that others are envious of him or her.

To get on with a narcissist two things have to happen, you must learn that their narcissism is a personality trait that they will probably take to the grave (in the best coffin around). They also need a common psychological technique prescribed sparingly but to good effect: a good kick in the arse! This technique will, from time to time, awaken them to the fact that the world does not revolve around them, and that they are no better or no more important than others. Administer assertively once monthly until symptoms ease.