

## **Psychodynamics of Narcissism—A Psychological Approach**

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### **Abstract:**

Loving yourself is not a sin, but being obsessed with one's own happiness and letting others to suffer is 'Narcissism'. This disease is unique as the one who is suffering from narcissism may not realize that he is a 'Narcissist' and in some cases a narcissist fails to cure his disease as he refuses to understand the suffering caused by him to others. A narcissist is dangerous to himself and the society. He can be cured if he discovers of what he is suffering with and realizes that only he can heal himself .i.e. 'Narcissists are the cure to their own poison'.

**Keywords: Character disorder, ego-strengthening, Ego State Therapy, false self, hypnosis, hypnotic age progression, narcissism, personality**

### **Introduction:**

The word 'Narcissism' originated from Greek mythology, where the handsome young king 'Narcissus' fell in love with his own image reflected in a pool of water. Narcissism is a strange disease, it is visible to others but veiled to the deceased, a person suffering from narcissism is a threat to himself and the society. It is a psychological problem which needs attention and prevention. Except in the sense of primary narcissism or healthy self-love, narcissism is usually

considered as a problem in a person's or group's relationships with self and others. Narcissism is not the same as egocentrism.

According to K.W. Campbell and J.D Foster in an article published in PA: Psychology Press. *Frontiers in social psychology: The self. Philadelphia* (2007) opines that: ‘Narcissists tend to demonstrate a lack of interest in warm and caring interpersonal relationships. As they think they are better than others and they perceive themselves to be unique and special people and they are extremely selfish (Campbell, Foster 11-12)

The hallmark of a narcissist is the development of a superiority complex as a response to feeling inferior. This involves exaggerating his own achievements and putting down anyone that he perceives as a threat. Jeremy Holmes in his book *Ideas in psychoanalysis* (2001) described the narcissist's behavior as: “Sufficient unto himself, he becomes more and more self-absorbed- either hyper-vulnerable to every slight, or brutally bullying his way to the ‘top’ whose twin peaks are his own self- aggrandizement and the denigration of others “( Jeremy : 57 )

### **Causes of Narcissism:**

Causes of Narcissism are many but the above traits are quite common in childhood and adolescence but this does not necessarily mean that the child will go on to become a narcissist. Research has found the diagnosis of narcissism to be significantly more common among men when compared to women. The main causes include

Faulty or inadequate parenting, Permissive parents who give excessive praise to the child, thus fostering an unrealistic view of themselves

- Overindulgence and spoiling by parents
- Failing to impose adequate discipline
- Idealization of the child

A child who is spoiled or idealized will grow into an adult who expects this pattern to continue. Idealization may require the child to suppress their own self-expression to meet the desires of the parent and to gain their love and approval. To develop a realistic image of the self the child must be provided with realistic information of discipline and reasonable limits must be set by the

parents as to what the child can and cannot do. Narcissists generally feel unprepared for adulthood, having been fostered with an unrealistic view of life.

Therefore 'lack of limit setting', is believed to be a major cause, and both permissive and authoritarian styles of parenting have been found to promote and rapidly increase narcissistic symptoms.

### **Healing or Treatment for Narcissism:**

Narcissism can be treated in two ways (i) Traditional treatment (ii) Hypnotic treatment

Traditional treatment:

S.M. Johnson in his book 'Humanizing *the narcissistic style*' (1994) defines the therapeutic objectives as the discovery and enhancement of natural self-expression. The patient must learn and feel how he/she has sacrificed him/herself, then mourn his/her losses, rediscover his/her own deeply buried needs, and attempt to meet them. He defines character transformation as maturation that involves the development of creativity, the acceptance of transience, and development of the capacities for empathy, a sense of humor, and wisdom.

The therapist needs to provide empathy, regard, and a safe place for the patient to experience his or her pain. Interpretation or reframing can emphasize pain as a signal in such a way as to enhance internal exploration. Interpretation can relate current injuries, anger, and disappointments to earlier failures of the environment to meet the person's legitimate needs, while also providing support for the person's innate capabilities combined with realistic assessment of abilities, resources, weaknesses, and limitations.

Trust is especially important because the narcissistic person needs most to be understood. It is important to access his/her real need for others and to provide training in how to become a more social being within a support system that will help the person find himself or herself. The patient ultimately makes the decision to grow up, to accept his or her humanity, and finally let in the love and acceptance that others can provide (Johnson, 1994). Johnson mentions ways in which

he believes that hypnosis can be helpful in the working-through process by facilitating the discovery of the origins of symptoms. He also suggests that hypnosis may be helpful in speeding up the process of discovering and developing the real self. However, Johnson does not give examples of how he has used hypnosis in treatment.

### **Hypnotic Treatment:**

Baker in his article *'Hypnotherapeutic approach to enhance object relatedness in psychotic patients'* (1981) has developed hypnotic techniques for use in the treatment of patients with narcissistic and borderline personality disorders. He utilized concepts from object relations and self psychology based in the work of Mahler (1968) that are helpful in working with seriously disturbed patients. Baker's hypnotic exercises allow patients to have corrective experiences in the present within the framework of the psychotherapeutic session. His fifth, sixth, and seventh exercises in particular, address stages of therapy with a patient with narcissistic character disorder in which the goal is object constancy.

The exercises enhance psychoanalysis of the therapist as a "good object" and the self as "good me". Then imagery can be created for the purpose of getting rid of the "bad object". The seventh step addresses integrating positive and negative experiences. Imagery can also address how some things stay the same across changes, such as the color of one's skin and eyes and going from one place to another in the same clothes. It also emphasizes imagery for mending what has been broken, with visualizations of fixing, blending, putting together, etc.

Baker also promotes imagery for management of affect and management of splitting as a defense. He recommends using Mc Neal imagery and fantasy rather than relaxation for the narcissistic patient. This helps to create transitional objects that are experienced through symbols of safety, security, and comfort. Baker also emphasizes the importance of empathy as well as the need for the therapist to help the patient build an observing ego. Murray-Jobsis (1990a,

1990b,1990c) also has developed imagery that involves moving through developmental stages—from discovering the physical body and boundaries, to dealing with the external world, as well as accepting an imperfect world, and enjoying separateness.

These authors have focused on hypnotic imagery that helps to negotiate incomplete developmental tasks. Their techniques are especially valuable in working with patients who are diagnosed with psychosis, borderline personality disorder, and with seriously disturbed narcissistic personality disorders. However, other hypnotic methods may also be useful in working with patients with milder narcissistic disorders or narcissistic styles.

Apart from the above treatments a Narcissist must be able to accept that he needs to heal his broken relationships with self and society.

### **Conclusion:**

Many people, including many psychologists, believe that narcissism is a product of our times and our system of values. With the accelerated growth of social media we are constantly bombarded by images of the ideal through the media, this may contribute to the rapid growth of narcissism in society. In extreme cases, narcissism may be linked to invocation whereby an individual's normal personality is replaced by another. For example : By using advanced modern techniques, One may highlight one's own image on social media entirely different from reality tending to race with each other in the section of praises, likes and comments. This does not only give birth to envy, hatred and jealousy with others well being, but also produces 'dangerous narcissists' who can hurt themselves and others on social and personal grounds when faced with reality.

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