

# The Magnetism of Narcissists

Narcissists are magnetic and highly skilled at attracting people. The seductive traits are the ones that block our ability to detect red flags. They play into our vulnerabilities and egos and we end up being pulled so deep in.

## The magnetic traits commonly characteristic of a narcissist are:

- Charismatic, charming, confident
- Intelligent
- Attractive
- Passionate
- Articulate
- Visionary
- Experts at winning the game

## Playing Hard to Get

A narcissist loves to win. Narcissists are typically attracted to women who play “hard to get.” Having to work for it means a win and the focus on their desire is to chase and conquer. Narcissists can usually afford to pay for expensive restaurants, and gifts, and can show up in the right car making them desirable and charming.

This game forces the narcissist to play at being nice for longer than they would usually do. They can't ignore you easily as they are trying to win you over, they are focused on the win, and they may not seem initially neglectful or uncommitted because they are committed to the game. Making him “work for it” means that you don't clearly observe the neglectful narcissistic patterns early enough and may find yourself in too deep to easily escape once you recognise these patterns.

The harder you are to capture, the harder the narcissist will work for you. If you perpetuate that the early phase of your relationship is a game, and if that becomes your bait, you won't catch commitment or you will ignore the warning bells of a narcissist.

## Signs you may be a narcissistic man magnet:

1. Only I can tame the bad boy
2. My love is like no other
3. I can fix anything and anyone
4. Waiting for Prince Charming
5. Lonely girl's last chance at love
6. I feel sorry for him
7. Not trusting your initial gut reactions
8. Addicted to high drama
9. Paralysed by fear
10. His anger shows me he really cares

## Only I can tame the bad boy

Women with this syndrome think they can be ‘the one’ to finally tame the ‘bad boy’ or change his toxic ways. This woman naively thinks that the bad boy will eventually realise how special she is, and she is therefore worth changing his behaviour for. Sadly, she is mistaken. No matter how unique, beautiful, clever, or special this woman thinks she is, she will never be able to change him.

Even if you cater to his every whim, nothing will change or tame them. It is an illusion if you believe you can change them. Why would anyone want to be with such a toxic man? Does wealth, power and fame blind these women, or did they actually think that they would be that special one who could tame him? The bottom line is that no woman can ever tame a man with a history of alleged abuse toward women.

## **My love is like no other**

Other women believe that their love is so great that the narcissistic man has no choice but to change his bad ways. They too, are mistaken. Some women think that their feelings are deeper and stronger than other women's and that no-one can reach the same depth of emotion that they can feel for their man.

## **I can fix anything and anyone**

There is another group of women who try to fix men – the changers. They are usually high-powered, successful women who have moved mountains in their professional life and think they can do the same in their personal life. After all, they make their living fixing people, so they think it can work in their personal relationships as well. You can only fix someone in your personal life if they want to be fixed, not if you want them fixed.

## **Waiting for Prince Charming**

The syndrome highlights the power of imprinting. It is based on how little girls have been conditioned throughout their childhoods with stories of Cinderella, Snow White and Sleeping Beauty. Each of these characters is rescued by Prince Charming and as a result ends up living "happily ever after." Written in the 1800s, these stories are simply not relevant in today's world. When these stories were firstly created, women didn't have many rights and little girls certainly did not have many dreams, with the exception of finding a man who would determine their fate in life.

No little girl in any part of the world should be told that her fate, her future, and her worth depends on finding any man, no matter how handsome or charming he may be. Unfortunately, these imprinted myths have remained in the minds of too many grown women, who still believe in the notion that there is a Prince Charming out there waiting to rescue and take care of them.

Too many women have been conditioned to think that they are a failure if they have not found their Prince Charming. Their self-worth depends not only on them being married, but on also being married to a certain kind of man. That is why so many women are willing to put up with a man's narcissism because he has money, position, or power to take care of them.

## **Lonely girl's last chance of love**

Too many women are so desperate for a man that they will, put up with anything to have a man, even if he is a narcissist. Unfortunately, lonely women with low self-esteem will put up with emotional and or physical torture by remaining with a narcissist, just to have a man in their life.

They feel that it is better to have somebody, no matter how toxic, than to have no-one. They believe since it took so long to find a man, they will never find one again. They have convinced themselves that this is as good as it gets. This is why they stay in a relationship for so long no matter how miserable they are. A lack of self-love stops you from seeking out a healthy, happy, relationship with someone else.

## **I feel sorry for him**

Most women tend to be nurturers, it is easy for them to become prey to a narcissist who is looking to use them for a place to live, or financial gain. The trick of this narcissist is to tell you one woe after another until he taps into something that strikes you emotionally.

Giving any money to a man under any circumstance is unacceptable, especially in the courting stages. While it may keep him there for a while, it definitely won't last. He'll take your money, but he usually won't take you in the long term. Never fall for his challenge to be the one who rescues him from his lack-of-money problem. This is not your responsibility – and ironically, it will only cause him to disrespect you for being dumb enough to fall for his con.

## **Not trusting initial gut reactions**

If your intuition tells you something is not right pay attention to it. It is your body giving you a warning signal that something is wrong. Often, your intuition will come in the form of an anxiety-provoking feeling. You may feel on edge or restless. You may feel like your heart is racing harder, but not in a good way. Do not ignore the signals. Don't second-guess yourself.

## **Addicted to high drama**

Countless women knowingly or unknowingly put themselves in positions where they are exposed to unstable, violent men simply for the sake of drama. For them, it is like being in a real-life action movie where there is danger. While it may be thrilling for the moment, the high-drama addiction to the wrong man is serious and could cost you your life.

Many women seek the dramatic thrill because there is something missing in their lives. They may even walk around feeling nothing but boredom. The thrill of danger makes their endorphins flow. It makes them feel alive. They mistake the red-alert feeling of danger for excitement and happiness.

Too many women mistake this reaction for love and a feeling that someone cares about them. Why else, they think, would a man act so emotionally or violently toward a woman if he didn't have intense feelings toward her? These women are severely misguided. A man's mistreatment towards you is not the measure of how strongly he feels about you or how much he loves you. It is the complete opposite. Thrill-seeking women are playing with fire. Love shouldn't be painful, and the thrill they feel is in reality their instincts telling them that something is very wrong.

## **Paralysed by fear**

One of the main reasons women become narcissistic men magnets is because of fear and intimidation. If they are confronted with an overly persistent man, they may innately be afraid of what will happen if they don't do what that man says. Even if they don't want to do it they will oblige. These women live in fear – fear of not being liked, or fear of not hurting anyone's feelings. With little or no regard of their own feelings, they end up severely hurting themselves. They don't know how to speak up, say no, and mean it.

Because they don't know how to stick up for themselves, they usually turn a blind eye to a man's toxic behaviour. This further diminishes their already low self-esteem because they are upset at themselves for continuing to accept this behaviour. Because of their fear of fighting back and sticking up for themselves, these emotional doormats are significant targets for the toxic man's cycle of mistreatment.

If these women are mistreated long enough, they will often develop a numbness, not only toward the abuse but to everything else going on around them. This is caused by the overproduction of certain chemicals in the brain that block sensation during extreme stress. So when there is a prolonged period of fear due to prolonged emotional abuse and trauma, the body produces opiates, which produce emotional and physical numbness, thereby affecting the ability to think and act clearly.

Most of us are familiar with Stockholm Syndrome, where the abused victim has positive feelings of adulation toward or identifies with his or her abuser, out of extreme fear. The victim ends up numbly complying with everything the abuser says. Essentially, the same thing occurs in situations when a woman is emotionally,

mentally, and physically abused over time. As a result of her extreme fear, she becomes numb to her environment and what is really going on around her.

## **His anger shows me he really cares**

You must have zero tolerance for a man who hits you under any circumstance. If a man behaves like this, it does not mean that he cares about you and loves you. It means that he does not love you. You must never accept this treatment. You need to extract yourself from the relationship and never look back. Don't delude yourself into thinking that he is going to change or that it won't happen again. Rest assured that it will happen again, and the next time it may even be more brutal. Brutality is not love. Love is not supposed to hurt and give you pain. You need the support of level-headed people who can teach you that this abuse is not normal behaviour from a man and should not be tolerated.

You must set limits as to what you will and will not accept. Don't bend to his wishes just to keep someone happy, while your own needs are not getting met. This type of relationship will never work in the long run.

## **How a narcissist snares his victims**

Damsels in distress are prey for narcissistic men. Perhaps it is your broken heart from a last boyfriend, the death of a family member, a narcissistic man can read your insecurity and lack of confidence. A narcissist knows exactly what to say to reel you in.

This is often a vehicle that they use in order to help build up their own damaged ego. They cannot accept defeat. If a past woman in his life left him standing there, his ego will need a boost.

A narcissist may want you around because you are the key to giving him something he could never get on his own. He tries to exercise control so that he can reap the rewards.

You may be the perfect punching bag for the narcissist, he takes out the aggression onto you. The more weak, vulnerable, insecure and emotional a woman gets, often the crueler and more hostile they get. It is because he has the power over his subject. He loves the position he has put you in. Your weakness and emotional dependence on him gives him a false sense of strength. The truth is that although he may be in a position of power, deep down he is not strong, but rather weak and fragile. He is hiding behind a position of power because in reality he has no real power of his own, and he doesn't face his issues head on.

When you are in a vulnerable place in your life, your judgement is skewed. Through vulnerable eyes, every man may look like Prince Charming.

## **Charismatic, charming, confident**

People with narcissistic personalities were taught at an early age that perception may actually be more important than reality, so all of their energy goes into developing the traits and qualities that others see, rather than developing a sense of self.

Charm can be seductive, charisma can light up a room, and confidence can be comforting. These traits draw us in for good reason, but a new relationship requires walking that challenging tightrope between being open and also remaining aware. Narcissists are smart, which is why they are so skilled at getting what they want. Intelligence is initially alluring, and it can be exciting to be with someone who is smart and talented with a good career who will be able to contribute financially, and carry on intellectual conversations. Unfortunately, those conversations may be few and far between once you really get to know a narcissist.

Narcissists are usually extremely attractive, they use their clothes, bodies, faces, and hair to maximise their assets and make sure they are noticed. They may have not been blessed with genetic good looks, but they will take what they have and enhance it. For a narcissist vanity goes beyond simply looking good, it is one more

symptom of their general denial of their real lives, their real feelings. Beauty can draw us in, but it is also a trait that should be carefully considered as it gives us little insight into what is underneath it. Narcissists are incredibly engaging and they have an ability to captivate you with conversations that can leave you wanting more.

Over time, all the beauty in the world will not compensate for the cold reality of being in a relationship with a narcissist, yet as an early hook, it is incredibly powerful, and most people will acknowledge it was the trait that drew them in. The brilliant conversations initially will undoubtedly over time leave you empty as the narcissist excludes and ignores you.

## **Chemistry**

Chemistry not only explains why people get into these relationships initially but also why they last. The thing we call chemistry may actually be familiarity. We are in fact wired to prefer the familiar rather than the unfamiliar. It is for this reason that we often continue making the same relationship mistakes over and over again. Long term relationships are about patterns. If a relationship is healthy and involves partners who listen and empathise, then most of these long-term patterns are healthy and continue to promote and sustain the wellbeing of the people in the relationship over time. The mutually beneficial pattern is not going to take place if you have a narcissistic partner. Just like in any relationship, the interaction patterns repeat over time, but in this case, the broken patterns repeat. These broken and dysfunctional patterns are familiar patterns, even though they may be hurting your core.

People in these dysfunctional relationship cycles with narcissists become aware that their relationships are not healthy. Chemistry is often a reason why people stay with narcissists. The so-called chemistry is likely familiarity, not just the familiarity of the relationship but also the familiarity of being treated badly in a relationship, which resembles early patterns in our lives.

Narcissists also make you feel a chronic sense of rejection by them. The sense that they will break up with you at any given time. The dynamic of having to please all the time or to get them to notice you, or never feeling like you are enough. When this familiarity gets turned on in adulthood by a rejecting partner – it is strangely comforting. It is irrational and the irrationality gets romanticised.

Another common way to get trapped by a narcissist is via their victim stories. Narcissists know how to tell a story that will elicit your sympathy, make you want to help them, and also make it harder for you to criticise them or express your disapproval regarding certain behaviours.

Narcissists have a face that they show to the world – cool, happy, successful and then the irritable, moody guy who makes you walk on eggshells when you are alone. The dynamic then becomes figuring ways to please them, praise, appease, soothe, and have the happy partner at home too. What is even more destabilising is that everyone sees your partner as a great, exciting, fun person, because they are getting that different version. It may make it hard to drum up support and empathic listeners but can also leave you doubting yourself because you cannot be the only one who sees the mean partner.

## **When you are with a narcissistic partner these feelings commonly emerge:**

- Feeling not good enough
- Self-doubt and second guessing
- Chronically apologetic
- Helplessness and hopelessness
- Feelings of depression
- Feeling anxious and worried
- Feeling unsettled
- Feelings of shame
- Mental and emotional exhaustion

- Walking On Eggshells

We are socialised to believe that if we work harder at anything, we will succeed. This is not the case when you are with a narcissistic partner. If you keep trying harder and harder to please someone and never really can, or can only succeed for a short time, it can leave you feeling frustrated. Narcissists are not easily pleased and are essentially unpleasable.

Not feeling good enough is a feeling that plagues many people from childhood. If you had a narcissistic or distracted parent, you are left with the question of “how can I win them over.” If the child can’t win over the parent, the script of not being good enough can get stuck into adulthood. Then you set yourself up for a lifetime of hoop jumping in order to prove that you are indeed good enough.

This surfaces in the belief that if you were good enough your partner would be satisfied. Basically this will result in doing things to satisfy your unsatisfiable partner, in hopes of getting over the hump and feeling as though you are good enough. Many people in narcissistic relationships will say that they literally gave everything they had to the point they could not try anymore. This carries a tremendous toll for the giver, who will often give of themselves to the point of exhaustion, physical health problems, loss of friends and family, and even their own sense of self. Many will recall turning into someone who they no longer recognise in order to cater to the endless needs of their partner.

Always remember, because the narcissist is empty, it will never be enough. It’s not that you are not enough – nothing is enough.

The narcissist works from the inside out and that is why over time your confidence erodes and doubt creeps in. When you are attempting to relate to someone who rarely listens or feels or cares and who regularly questions you, you begin to question yourself. If you work hard at something and get no result, it is easy to believe that it is because of something that you are doing.

The emptiness of the narcissist often means that they are only focused on what is useful to them at the moment. If at that moment it is interesting for them to tell you they love you, they do. It’s not really a long game to them, and when the next interesting issue comes up, they attend to that.

## **A Mental Prison**

Being with a narcissist can create “mental prisons” that can lead us to accept our situation, or that nothing we do will ever improve.

When the helplessness persists, it can descend into the far darker place of hopelessness. This can be associated with many unhealthy and even dangerous behaviours and feelings, including depression and anxiety, withdrawal from responsibilities, unhealthy behaviours including eating badly, cutting back on exercise, irregular sleep patterns, dangerous coping methods including drugs and alcohol, and in extreme cases suicidal thoughts and behaviours. Narcissistic relationships destroy people from the inside out, and these outcomes can ruin people’s lives.

## **Some of the common ways people have developed over time to help survive the relationship with a narcissist are:**

- Making excuses, including lying because you are ashamed but also are protecting your partner.
- Difficulties in decision making
- Frequently apologising
- Chronic fear of disappointment
- Social withdrawal, avoiding other people and sources of support
- Numbing your emotions which can include eating, drinking, using drugs and over-exercising.

- The rescue fantasy

The rescue fantasy is what keeps narcissist relationships alive year after year. When love is not met with reciprocity, it can be exhausting and demoralising. The rescue fantasy is embedded in the public consciousness. If you grew up with parents who needed rescuing or if you found yourself in an early caregiving role then it is easy to think that giving more love is better. If you do more, if you care more, if you love more, then you will get more back. It's not that linear, and while you may apply this rule in a factory, it does not work in relationships.

When you remove that option, the option of "try harder and your partner will notice," it can leave you angry, confused, and frustrated. Something about close relationships keeps us in even after all of the evidence tells us to run.

The rescue fantasy is in our DNA, and the rescue fantasy allows the narcissist in our lives to get away with too much. Although this relationship may have eroded away at your self-esteem, your self-worth, your decision making abilities, and filled you with a lifetime of doubt, you still keep chipping away at it. Love is a redemptive experience, and when experienced by healthy people, it can open them up to possibilities within themselves, facilitate growth, and provide strength at times of adversity. The challenge arises when you are in a relationship and are enduring all the unhealthy patterns we have been discussing. If you hold true to the belief that your love, giving, and support will change your pathological narcissistic partner, guess again. Personality patterns tend to be entrenched – and the rules of rescue don't apply. Holding out for a partner to change is not achievable.

Narcissists can be quite vulnerable. When a narcissist feels threatened, and then vulnerable, at that moment you may actually feel useful. The narcissist will often draw you closer at those times, relying on you for reassurance and support, and it may even feel normal and connected for a while. Then in weeks, months, and sometimes years they slide back into their usual dynamics. Vulnerability is a part of the complex and nuanced clinical picture of narcissism, and it can be those episodes of vulnerability that often keep partners in the game for years and even decades longer.

The idea of having to win over the unwinnable narcissistic partner can be initially embraced as a challenge. If you would win over this detached person, it would be a testament about you as a winner or saviour. You will be the one that will rescue them. Obviously this is an unhealthy stance to take in an intimate close relationship. The concept of a challenge may be initially appealing, but this will work over time only if your hard work actually results in consistent and mutual regard. It can sometimes take years or even decades of trying to please the narcissistic partner before in dawns on you that this is a one way street. It can be harmful to let the challenge of winning him over keep you invested in the relationship. You will find yourself feeling endlessly frustrated and will begin to experience those feelings of depression, anxiety, and self-doubt.

## **Freedom from love obsessions**

For many women, choosing a partner is more related to finding a solution to flagging self-esteem. Rather than enjoying the simple elements relationships can realistically provide, some women become obsessed with the heady thrill of challenge involved in romantic encounters, hence the attraction of narcissistic men.

Love addiction differs from a normal, healthy desire when the accompanying feelings are greatly exaggerated, distorted, and fleeting. The love addict lives and breathes the fantasy of finding the man who will make her whole, who will provide everything that is lacking in her life. No matter what her life is like – whether she has a job she enjoys, friendships, talents, or accomplishments – she feels that nothing matters as much as romance. Perhaps the mistakable characteristic of the love addict is her compulsion to repeat and repeat again the same pattern. It is this endless repetition that makes love addiction so destructive. The love addict sincerely believes she wants a lasting relationship with a man when in fact she really does not.

## **Hooked on longing**

Early in life, men and women come to associate a specific feeling with the word love. The definitions of love that they form are very personal and very specific to each of them. If the love provided a child by her parents is warm, giving, and consistent, the child's definition of love will reflect that contentment and become stamped firmly in place. In essence the child learns, "I feel love when I am nurtured, when I have someone."

Many other children, conversely, experience parental love that is inconsistent, conditional, and unpredictable. The child yearns for her parent's love – longs for it. It is precisely this experience of "longing" that sometimes becomes the child's primitive concept of love. The definition says, "I feel love when I want someone." When this child becomes an adult, she continues to confuse love and longing, and the pattern becomes hunt, conquer and discard.

The more restricted a woman's sources of excitement and satisfaction are, the greater the chances that she will become highly attached to one of them. To overcome this, it is necessary to seek exhilaration and enhancements to personal identity elsewhere. The simple process of sharing thoughts with people who struggle with the same issues has a cleansing effect. In this way it is possible for a woman to see her own fears with greater perspective and see how self-defeating some of her own behaviour may be. Professional accomplishments can be an important source of excitement and gratification. No one achieves full satisfaction in life without committing to some major involvement that requires either creative expression, mastery or achievement.

## **Break old patterns**

There is probably nothing more difficult for an adult to do than change. Change requires a willingness to face the unknown, and the unknown is always frightening. It is easier to stick with what is familiar and feels safe. Change also requires adopting new modes of behaviour, which are always uncomfortable in the beginning. Often it isn't until people become extremely frightened, disgusted or angry about their own behaviour that they can summon enough motivation to carry them through those initial stages of discomfort.

One effective way of changing behaviour is to try to find the process of change itself exciting – in other words, rather than seeing change merely as a means to an end, seeing the process of change as a new challenge. Although change is never easy, it can be challenging, stimulating and ultimately rewarding. The most powerful reward for change, if the elimination of pain. Love addicts, tend to ignore the pain of their self-defeating behaviour and concentrate instead on the immediate pleasure – the thrill or the high.

In order to change, they must first confront the self-defeating aspects of their behaviour. They then must be willing to forgo short-term thrills in favour of long-term satisfactions that come from putting an end to a frustrating and repetitious behaviour pattern.

The satisfaction of experiencing change – the heightened awareness of "will," self-mastery, and personal power – can be wonderfully reinforcing. Change leads to a new more positive definition of the self and to a growing sense of being in better control. The more a woman cares and respects herself, the less compelled she is to seek validation or completion from a relationship with a man.

Ultimately, the cure for love obsessions is to develop personal acceptance and wholeness. We all deserve to believe that we are all right just being who we are – with or without a lover.

## **Hooked on validation**

Early in life, all children look to parents for approval and validation of their worth. Good parenting gradually encourages children to think and evaluate for themselves. It is through the growing trust in their own perceptions and evaluations that they learn to like themselves and to value that judgment.



But many parents don't teach this process well. The process of self-approval involves a gradual shift and transfer of power from the parents to the child. This allows the child to begin to feel that they are important, that how they think or feel about an issue or event is of value.

Some parents instead discourage the process of self-approval by communicating to the child that it is only the parents' thoughts and attitudes that are valid. This parent may sense a loss associated with this transfer of power and enjoy keeping the child tied closely to him or her as a continuing primary source of approval. Sadly, this child is taught to look solely to others for feelings of self-worth and acceptance. An inability to validate oneself leads to serious doubts and questions about self-worth. And when you can't trust yourself you usually have the feeling that you can't trust anyone. If you don't believe you are lovable, no one can tell you that you are, no matter how many people try or how hard they try.

It is this disbelief that causes the restless repetitions for the love addict. She doesn't believe she is worthy of love, because she has never learnt how to feel it herself, coming from inside herself. She is doomed to keep looking for someone else to provide the feeling of lovability.

## **Hooked on illusion**

Some women's early experiences taught them that they were vulnerable, incomplete, or worthless as separate individuals. These women were taught insecurity. Women learned that relationships meant merging with a man – finding that necessary component or autonomy, action and protection externally in a man.

## **Why some men seem exciting**

Someone who is bright, successful, and daring, someone who possesses style, charisma, and mystery can appear to be exciting. Often a man is seen as interesting my virtue of his celebrity, fame or power.

Women in general seek out states of tension, challenge and excitement in relationships because as girls we were geared to see relationships as a primary goal in life. Most men don't look to relationships for excitement and thrills. In fact, they tend to be much more cautious and apprehensive about intrigue and mystery in the opposite sex. Women are more prone to rush into dangerous emotional situations while men tend to avoid possible rejection and danger.

Some qualities in men that women find interesting don't have very interesting underpinnings. Men are self-protective in their contact with women and have a need to disguise their fears and anxiety. They may mask their self-protectiveness in attractive, even stylish ways. Another component is their aloofness and a need to appear unpredictable. Again, all of these traits are directly related to discomfort and anxiety on the part of the man but often are interpreted by the woman as intriguing. So what is in fact a limitation in the man can be seen by the woman as an asset. Gaps in specific information about men create vacuums into which women's fantasies flow. The masked or mysterious man naturally makes sure to leave plenty of gaps, because he isn't quite sure just what a woman would do, think or feel if he revealed himself to her honestly. The problem is that the qualities that translate as exciting in a man are formed more from his fears than from positive, nurturing attributes that hold up over time. The exciting man actually promises less than meets his eye.

Much of the bad boy's appeal is superficial. Although they could take chances, these were boys who had difficulty expressing emotions and feelings or acknowledging fears. But they are very apt at disguising fears with a protective mask.

Many women are drawn to the charming man, despite the inherent dangers, because they are such a conquest, a real badge of victory for the woman. These men have a highly developed understanding of women, unfortunately their basic needs mean more to them than any sense of ethics towards women.

As a young boy, they may have had an emotionally distant mother. This mother stimulated a yearning in him for closeness to her, coupled by fear of her because she never really provided the love he needed. Because he had

to study her to know how and when to get the comfort and affection he needed, he developed a heightened perfectiveness and sensitivity to women. Unfortunately, the narcissist knows more about women than most nice guys do. He knows how to please a woman, to make her feel special and beautiful. He can make her feel fascinating. He knows how to stimulate and flatter. Like a good salesman, he is a great listener. Remember, he must succeed. This is a high-stakes game and he is playing and he is going to win – regardless.

These men don't fall for women, but they are falling for the ecstasy of the moment. The woman and her reactions are merely a mirror for himself. The more she responds, the more his worth and attractiveness are validated. Once he has drained a woman, used up the novelty of her response to him, he must move on. He may say he loves her, but he doesn't care about the long-term consequences of his actions on his partner. She is slowly but surely being taken in by his ritualistic conquest. And she thinks she is winning, that she has captured her prize.

What kind of woman falls for this? She is a woman who has allowed her emotional hunger to cloud her perceptions. He plays into her secret wish for the perfect man. He becomes that man, and then he promises, dangles, and suggests that he will love her. Here is the magic combination – the perfect man promising his perfect, romantic, intense love. Her need to believe creates a fatal flaw. She ignores the fact that he never delivers.

It is a bit of a paradox that the woman who is highly selective and cautious is often the one who gets involved with such a man. Because of her long-standing wariness, she has pent-up needs for closeness and affection. The powerful chemistry with this type of man can be overwhelming. She is extremely vulnerable to his seduction. Some women thrive on a dangerous combination of needs – longing, mystery, and adventure. These compelling emotional forces lead women to involvement with men who are un giving but not uninteresting. They are seen as “the prize.” His image is attractive. He is the personification of power, charm, and tenderness. He appears to be everything a woman wants.

His attraction stems from the women's misguided wishes to find and believe in the attributes he promises. Such wishes become so strongly attached to these men that women will frequently disregard indications that they are not only less than perfect but actually hurtful to them. Afraid to give up the wish for perfection and face the resulting disillusionment, some women cling to their pursuit, secretly knowing they are leading with their blind side forward.

The woman who wants to hold onto a narcissist must learn how to make him as crazy as he makes her – maybe even crazier. She must set aside her feelings of loving and wanting. She must successfully disguise her needs, wishes and dreams. Never showing need, she must make herself appear somewhat distant, aloof, and unobtainable. This will drive them into a frenzied battle plan designed to break down her defences and capture her heart. The difficulty in this strategy is not that it doesn't work, because it doesn't, but that it is so tiring over any length of time. Nothing is quite exhausting as living a lie, which is exactly what this relationship with this man must be. Remember to hold onto this type of man, a woman can never let on how much his lack of commitment hurts her, or how much she really cares.

Another problem in dealing with a narcissist is that the woman who does so must actively diminish her emotional expression and assume an elusive posture. She must forget about having an equal give-and-take relationship. She cannot freely express anger or indignation for ways in which he hurts, betrays, and disappoints her.

## **Whirlwind Courtships**

When a romance moves too swiftly there is an underlying sense of danger in the air. The danger may actually add to the excitement and stimulation. Part of that thrill is the knowledge that something unexpected might happen. It is fast, it's exciting and it feels risky. Once the element of sexual intimacy has been added, the speed and intensity of the emotions become even greater. Your new partner has many qualities that are going to affect your life, qualities that cannot be seen immediately. A whirlwind courtship, thrilling as it may be, tends to provide only pseudo-intimacy, which is then mistaken for genuine closeness. In order to see who your new

partner truly is, the relationship has to move more slowly. In a whirlwind courtship the emotional currents are so swift and strong that they overwhelm both partners' perceptions. Anything that interferes with the picture of the new love as 'ideal' is ignored or blocked out. We become intensely focused on how the other person is making us feel rather than on who the other person really is.

Many women divide the emotional landscape of their relationships into a foreground and a background. In the foreground are all the wonderful characteristics and these can be idealised. Any hint of trouble gets pushed to the background. An extreme example of foreground and background manipulation is the case of a woman who falls in love with a criminal. She will tell you he is the most wonderful man in the world. The criminal has fallen into the unimportant while the murderer's surface charm takes centre stage. Blinders serve the function of eliminating from your vision any information that might cloud or spoil your romantic picture.

## **Desperation and urgency**

A recurring theme in the early stages of a narcissistic relationship is the sense of desperation in both partners, each of which wish to frantically bind themselves with one another. The separate sense of self become secondary to the relationship. They begin to feel each other's feelings. Every change of mood is contagious. A tremendous amount of energy now goes into loving, being loved, gaining approval, and psychologically meshing into one another.

## **Rescuing**

Rescuing is another important ingredient in the 'crazy glue' of narcissistic relationships. It creates a particular bond that makes a woman feel both needed and heroic. The female believes she can magically transform the man through the power of her love. This belief is a strong aphrodisiac. It enables a woman to see herself as a goddess, an earth-mother, and a healer. Her love can cure him, whether his problem is financial, drug, or alcohol abuse, or unsatisfactory prior relationships. By giving, helping and providing she also creates an illusion of power and strength for herself. There is a big difference between helping and rescuing. We all need help over the rough spots in life from time to time. Rescuing on the other hand is a repetitive behaviour. This man always needs your help and is usually with difficulties. Many women bask at the glory of their partners gratitude it makes them feel truly needed and wanted.

Not all narcissists need rescuing. In fact, the more successful the narcissist is, the more he may insist that the women in his life be totally dependent on him. Many women, especially those with a career of their own, rush in all too quickly with a life preserver, only to get pulled down by the undertow themselves.

If you see signs of rescuing, a sense of panic and desperation, a too-quick bonding, and a purposeful blindness, then you may be headed for some very rough waters.

## **Rationalising Behaviour**

Rationalisation is what we do when we smooth over any insight that interferes with our good feelings. It is a way to make the unacceptable acceptable. By giving good reasons for what would otherwise distress us, we make sense out of confusing and even frightening situations. No-one is nice all the time, we shouldn't expect this of ourselves or of others. And of course there are times where we have to be understanding and to accept the fact that someone we love is under stress or is particularly sensitive to certain issues. The narcissist on the other hand will not feel any remorse for his tantrums. In addition, the woman in his life will find herself justifying and trying to explain away his nasty outbursts more and more frequently. As his outbursts become more and more frequent, you will need increasingly to rationalise just to be able to cope.

## **Jekyll and Hyde-ing**

If the narcissist was angry and critical all the time, any woman's rationalisations would wear thin. But between his outbursts he is liable to be as charming and loveable as he was when you first met. Unfortunately, the good times support your mistaken belief that the ugly times are somehow just a bad dream, not the real him. There is no way knowing how he will react to anything, because his reactions are liable to be different every time. There is nothing more confusing than an emotional seesaw from switching from loving to erratic behaviour. It creates an enormous amount of tension, because you never know what to expect. But the promise of the "good stuff" keeps you hanging in there which is a hook. Interestingly, that once a woman has accepted an attack on her self-worth and permits herself to be demeaned, she has opened the door for future assaults. Once you accept this behaviour, you are setting yourself up for an even more painful phase.

## **Blaming Yourself**

The logic goes like this. If he has the capacity to be so wonderful, then it must be something I am doing that's making things go wrong. The narcissist bolsters this belief by reminding you that he would always be nice if only you would stop this, or change that, or be more of this or a little less of that. This is very dangerous thinking.

Your new attempt to make sense of the confusion in your relationship represents a giant leap in the wrong direction. You have gone from recognising that there are troublesome aspects to your partner's behaviour, to attempting to justify them or explain them away, to now internalising and accepting the responsibility for how he acts. Many women make sense of their partner's psychological abuse by blaming themselves. They were convinced that if they could just find the magic key, they could get their partners to behave more lovingly toward them. If everything is my fault and he's the person who defines what my faults are, then it follows that he's the only one who can help me become a better person. Unfortunately, his signals are always changing. What pleases him one day may not please him the next. There is no way to know what will set him off. Trying to figure out how to please him may come to dominate your life.

## **You are supposed to read his mind**

The narcissist expects his partner to know what he is thinking and feeling without ever having to state it. He expects that she will somehow anticipate his every need and that meeting his needs will take priority over everything else in her life. She is supposed to know his wishes without ever being told. They expect their partners to be a never-ending source of total, all-giving-love, adoration, concern, approval and nurturing. He enters into a relationship with a woman very much as a hungry, demanding infant does with the unspoken expectation that she will be totally giving and will meet all his needs.

Idealisation is a double-edged sword. It feels wonderful and flattering, but it also binds a woman to the fact that she's doomed to fail. It is impossible to live on the pedestal the narcissist places her on, because there is no margin for error. If she is in a bad mood or displays any behaviour that he doesn't like, he views this as a sign of her deficiency. He hired a goddess and she isn't living up to the job requirements. His contempt and disillusionment with her is all the permission he needs to stop expressing his love for her and to begin criticising, accusing and blaming.

The early indications of the narcissist's quick temper are sporadic. The explosions don't become a way of life until some kind of commitment has been made. This can be a verbal commitment, moving in together, an engagement or a marriage. Then once he's sure he has her, the situation changes rapidly.

## **How he gains control**

There is a great deal of testing going on early in the relationship. The narcissist is defining for himself just how far he can go. Unfortunately, his partner believes that by not confronting or questioning his behaviour when he hurts her feelings, she is expressing her love for him. Many women fall into this trap. Much of that comes from emotional security dependant on their love, and to get this they will be compliant and renounce their own needs and wishes.

## **He must be in control**

In a narcissistic relationship, negotiation and compromise are in short supply. Instead the partnership is played out on a battlefield where he has to win and she has to lose. The power imbalance is the major theme of the relationship. They must control how his partner thinks, feels, behaves, and with whom she involves herself. It is amazing how quickly even successful, competent women will disavow their own talents and power in order to gain their partners love and approval.

## **Control through psychological abuse**

They have an extensive repertoire of scare tactics, insults, denigrating comments, and other intimidating behaviour to make his partner feel inadequate and helpless. His most obvious attacks involve yelling, threatening, temper tantrums, name calling, and constant criticism. Fault-finding and criticism is often disguised as a way of teaching the woman how to be a better person.

## **How can we encourage the more loving state in a narcissist?**

Always remember that unhealthy narcissism is an attempt to conceal normal human vulnerability, especially painful feelings of insecurity, sadness, fear, loneliness, and shame. If your partner can tolerate sharing and feeling some of these emotions, then there is still hope. But you can only nudge narcissists out of hiding if you are willing to share your own feelings of fragility. As simple as that sounds it's not easy. We are all a bit squeamish about revealing our softer side, especially when we feel threatened.

The frustration of anger we feel in the face of a narcissist's insensitivity protects us. We are sad that someone who loves us has become so hurtful. We are ashamed that they have found us lacking. But instead of showing this we throw in our protective armour. Tears stream down our cheeks, and we are full of anger. Or we apologise incessantly, hiding our pain and hurt. We need to remove this protective armour to give people a chance to respond, to how we truly feel. It's by doing this that we help narcissists emerge from their emotional bunker and reach for deeper intimacy.

The people you love can't change if they are unwilling to acknowledge their problems, whether they are alcoholics, compulsive gamblers, or extreme narcissists. The goal here is to find some sort of capacity for mutual closeness and support.

## **Empathy Prompts**

Voicing the importance of your relationship to a narcissist are the kind of reassurance many narcissists don't even realise they miss. They nudge people toward thinking about the relationship, moving the focus from you and me to we. More importantly they signal your willingness to offer secure love.

Prompting helps distinguish between people who can change – and those who can't. What you are looking for is genuine empathy, that is, reaching through your own anger to share the more tender feelings you have been struggling with. Can your partner, friend or relative place the relationship ahead of their coercive attempts to feel special? Can they allow their pain to touch you and say they are sorry or comfort you and just show they understand.

If they can't, you need to view their narcissism exactly as you would any addiction. The "drug" has taken over their lives. Until they are ready to give it up, you might have to give them space. It's not your job to be anyone's therapist – only to honestly and clearly convey your own feelings.

If they are resilient enough to acknowledge their problems, you have a fighting chance. Most people, if they are capable of any feelings at all, will melt when they hear empathy prompts. And if they don't it speaks volumes about their level of addiction. If you share your feelings from a place of vulnerability and the person you care about lashes out or demeans you, consider their response a failure. View it as a sign that they can't, or won't leave the addiction behind. They are not ready to risk love. But if you do see signs of hope, if the narcissist you know seems to soften when you use empathy prompts, keep using them.

## **Narcissists don't change easily**

Narcissism often works for the narcissist. We live in a culture that supports and celebrates narcissism, social media is a hall of mirrors that provides constant validation, and wealth and grandiosity are key indicators of success.

A review of the treatment literature of pathological narcissism and narcissistic personality disorder reveals that there is little evidence of any good, consistent, sustainable treatments for the disorder. Narcissists typically resist treatment. Psychiatric Professor Elsa Ronningstam, believes that if a narcissistic person can have experiences that show that his or her usual manoeuvres of grandiosity, arrogance, and entitlement can actually be challenged by achieving excellence on his or her own, or having a consistent corrective relationship, or disillusionment experiences that allow him or her to grow some humility and let go of some of the grandiose self-concept, then there can be some significant shifts in the narcissistic persona. The main concern is that your unending love can be that corrective relationship experience. Much of this may come down to timing, entering the narcissist's life at the right time for the corrective experience to unfold.

Narcissistic personality disorder does its greatest harm in close, intimate relationships. Many people have narcissistic bosses, colleagues, siblings, friends, and neighbours. They are not easy situations, but they do not have the same impact that a romantic partner would have. The primitive and emotional nature of a close personal relationship means that the lack of empathy, the rage, the distance, the control, the inconsistency have tremendous power in shaping the life and the inner world of a person in a narcissistic relationship. Close relationships can activate the best and the worst in us, but the deep emotional demands of an intimate relationship are out of reach for a person with narcissistic personality disorder. Therapy typically cannot make a person less superficial.

People with substance abuse disorders also have high rates of narcissistic personality disorder. Since they cannot regulate their self-esteem or emotions and rely on external validation to maintain their identity, drugs and alcohol become one more external tool to do this. The poor judgment, boundary problems, and violations of trust can be even more pronounced when they are intoxicated, and it can also ramp up their rage and overall challenges in managing any of their emotions.

The lack of empathy, the chronic entitlement, the grandiosity tend to be more resistant to change, since they are linked so strongly to the core deficits of the disorders, such as an inability to regulate self-esteem.