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# How narcissism destroys

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**The development of the relation between the child and the parent is extremely important. This relationship is what forms the child's personality. In order for this development be successful for the child, some important criteria must be met. Lets look at 10 of these traits.**

## First

**Aggressive impulses** from the infant child, must be neutralized by the adult, so that they don't upset the child. The adult must be able to be a "container" for the child's frustration and needs. At this stage the child's communication can be described as *projective identification*! The child try to make the adult act in a preferable way.

The child project its own frustration over in the adult, and *identifies* with this frustration in the adults processed expression of these traits. If the outcome of this processing is, in a form the child can not handle, then the adult has failed its role as container for the child's aggression and frustration.

An example would be fear projected in an adult, the adult reaction to this projected fear decides the child's developmental brain structure. If the adult's reaction to the projected fear is comfort, the child develop security in the relation with the adult and others.

If the adult's reaction is insecurity and frustration, then that's what the child will experience. That's what is mirrored back at the child. That's what

the child's brain be exposed to and formed to handle.

If this response pattern repeats itself over time, then that's what the child's brain will be built on, for the future. Where the focus go, energy flow!

In a healthy development the adult is able to absorb the child's frustration. It does not represent a threat to the adult. Empathy absorbs any threat to the adult's self esteem from the child. And the adult is able to reflect an age appropriate dose of frustration back at the child.

In an unhealthy development, the adult, with its own unresolved issues, are not able to contain the child's frustrations and return them to the child, unprocessed.

In the healthy setting, the child does not upset the confidence and self esteem of the adult. So what is returned to the child is positive emotions and expressions, combined with age appropriate frustration

In an unhealthy setting, what is returned to the child is the adult's own frustration and aggression. This upsets the child, and the child develops primitive defenses, to cope with the adult's behavior.

Primitive defenses develop when the child is not able to cope with the adult's expectation and behavior.

The way the child's aggressive impulses are *mirrored* back into the child, determines the child's development of safety and self-esteem.

## Second

If this **strivings towards autonomy** are met by the adult's understanding, and acceptance, the child develops healthy autonomy.

If this striving for autonomy, is met by resistance and aggression from the adult, which we typically see from the narcissistic personality, then the child does not develop healthy autonomy.

Instead the child develops *dependency* of the narcissistic adult! And this dependency is the beginning of the end for a healthy life for the child. A dependent child is a vulnerable child.

Typically we see this in divorces where a narcissistic parent is in danger of getting reduced time with the child. That's when you see the adult's narcissistic dependency of the child, and not the other way around.

That's when you see narcissistic rage in action in the form of for example, *parental alienation syndrome*! Where the adult programs the child either to hate the other parent, or to be afraid of the other parent.

Either way, the outcome is to destroy the child's connection to the healthier parent. This is a way to make the child more dependent on the alienating parent.

This is done by the alienating parents programming of the child, until the child itself becomes the alienator. And it's important for the alienating parent, in this dynamics, that the child **MUST** be a victim to allow the alienating parent to be the PROTECTOR!

The combination of shame, envy, hate and dependency of the child, gives us this kind of psychological child abuse and destructive behavior.

Experts, psychologists, judges and child welfare, without knowledge of this narcissistic dynamics, often just take the *face value* of their observations as facts. That's a guaranteed destruction of a child's quality of life.

### Third

A child allowed to experience and express '**ordinary**' impulses (such as jealousy, rage, defiance) because the adult did not require it to be 'special', for instance to represent his/her own ethical attitudes, will develop healthy ways to deal with this kind of frustrations.

A child who is not allowed to experience and express "**ordinary impulses**" will develop a primitive and adverse defense against expressions of frustration.

Either frustration goes out in the form of undesirable behavior, or it goes inward, and creates inner psychological problems. Either way it is negative for the child.

Again, the importance of the adult's ability to absorb, to be a container for the child's projection, can not be overestimated. It is therefore absolute vital for a child to have a parent able to mirror the child's projections in a way

adapted to the child's developmental stage. A narcissist cannot do this, due to their lack of emotional development.

Narcissists don't have this ability. That's the basic problem with this kind of personalities in relation to children. That's why they are so harmful to children.

They lack the necessary empathy.

When a child is waiting for the reflection of its own projection, it's important for the adult to be an age appropriate filter for that projection and not projecting the adult's own aggression and frustration.

#### Fourth

With a healthy parent there is no need for the child, to please anybody (under optimal conditions) and the child would develop and **exhibit** whatever is active in him/her during each developmental phase.

It's when the child understands that it has to put restriction on its projections on the adult, that problems occur. This does not mean the child is not held responsible for its actions, this just means that the parent's response on the child's projections must be in a way so that the child learns from this interaction.

#### Fifth

When the child can use his parents because they are perceived to be **independent** of him, is when a healthy personality develops in the child.

If the child perceives itself as a part of the adult's self, no autonomy is developed.

#### Sixth

These preconditions enable the child to separate self- and object-representations successfully. When the narcissistic parent perceives the child as a part of its own self, that's when the problem starts.

That's when the child gets dependent and loses its *self* in the parent's *self*.

The child becomes the parents narcissistic supply, or as Kohut called it, the child was *narcissistically cathected* to the parent. It was no longer a center of its own activity, but a part of the narcissistically parents activity. The boundaries between the child's self and the adult's self, is damaged.

This problems of self boundaries will make problems for the child later in life. They will because of this appear as egocentric, what is yours is experienced as mine! After all, they have learned that they are part of their narcissistic parent, and now they see others as part of them selves.

### Seventh

Being able to display ambivalent feelings, the child will learn to regard both it self and the object as 'both good and bad', and does not need to split off the good from the bad.

With a narcissistic parent on the other hand, this *splitting* is dominant. For them objects in the world are either good or bad, either with them or against them, there is no gray scale in their world. Either you are with them or you are against them. That's what the child learned from its narcissistic parent.

No tolerance for deviation.

Either the child is all good or it is all bad for that parent. And because this change all the time its impossible for the child to predict the parent. That create uncertainty in the child.

Again, the lack of empathy in the parent made this splitting possible.

### Eight

**Object love** was made possible because the parent also loved the child as a **separate** object. That's why narcissists have problem loving others. They can't love others for what others are, they love others for what others are doing for them, for their usefulness!

They carry with them the hate of not being loved themselves. They hate themselves for who they have become. And people who hate themselves can not love others, they are missing the necessary empathy. A child used as a narcissistic supply does not feel loved, it feel used.

### Ninth

Provided there are phase-appropriate and non-traumatic frustrations, the child is able to integrate its narcissistic needs and doesn't have to resort to repression, projection, denial or splitting. When the adults mirroring is age appropriate, the child will handle the reflection.

### Tenth

This integration made their transformation to a healthy person possible, as well as the development of a drive regulating matrix, based on the child's own trial and error experiences.

## **How does a Narcissistic disturbance come about?**

What happens if the mother not only is unable to take over the narcissistic functions for the child, but also, as very often happens, is herself in need of narcissistic supplies?

Quite unconsciously and counter to her own good intentions, the mother then tries to alleviate her own narcissistic needs through her child, i.e. she cathects it narcissistically.

This does not rule out strong affection, on the contrary, the mother often loves her child as her self-object, passionately, but not in the way the child needs to be loved.

The framework within which the child could experience *its* need, feelings and emotions are missing. It's all about the narcissist!

Instead the child develops something which the mother needs and which prevent the child throughout its life from being itself! The child ends up being the adults narcissistic supply.

Who am I? I'm my mothers need supply!

What these parents had once failed to find in their own parents, they are able to find in their own children. Lack of empathy and excessive egocentrism creates the framework for this behavior.

- Someone who loves them unconditionally,

- who can be used as an echo,
- who can be controlled,
- is completely centered around them,
- will never desert them and
- offers full attention and admiration.

These children are brought up so that they neither cry or disturb the narcissistic parent. At least the parent can make sure that they receive consideration and respect, from the child.

Parents who are humiliated as children need to be valued by their own children. The mirroring process so important for the child, goes the wrong way. The child have to mirror the adult.

As they say: *The object of my affection is in my reflection!*

Mothers and fathers like this are basically still a child in her/his relationship to their own children.

These children has the possibility to develop their intellectual capacities undisturbed, but not the world of its emotions.

For these parents, grandiosity becomes the defense for depression, and depression is the defense against the real pain over the loss of the *self*. Now they are stealing their own children's self, just as their parents stole their self.

This is why a *face value* of depression in many cases hide the exposure of an underlying narcissistic personality disturbance.

Even though this is well known knowledge, we still see psychologists not able to see this, often adviceing judges to handle over children from the normal parent to the narcissist in child custody cases. And if you expose them, they will immediately attack you.

Children of narcissists are not loved for the person they are, their own self, but for the qualities they provide for the narcissist. That's not love!

After all, they are supplies for these disturbed parents. They are "loved" in proportion to the degree to which they fulfil the demands of their narcissistic parent.

“I love you” does not mean the parent love the child, it means the child has fulfilled the adults expectations. It’s under these conditions that child abuse take place. Often with the help of child protection services and naïve psychologists.

And admiration is not the same as love either. A narcissistic parent is excessively dependent on admiration from the object, the child! No wonder these children develop mental problems.

In the narcissist the depression sometimes appear visible when grandiosity break down. When they can’t hold the mask, you see what’s behind. Some times psychoses and delusion appear.

When all the substitute mirrors are broken, and the narcissist again stay helpless and confused like the small child once did before her mother's face, in which she had not found herself but her mother's confusion, then you see the real person behind the grandiose facade.

This is the result of children not been free to experience the very earliest feelings of their own bodies.

It seems as the deeper the hole in the parents heart, the bigger the jewels in their crown needed to be.

The more narcissistically hurt a child is, the stronger is the primitive psychological defenses, i.e. grandiosity, denial, projective identification, splitting lying etc.

Whereas healthy narcissism is the full access to the true self, the unhealthy narcissism can be understood as a fixation on a false self!

A child growing up under these conditions will develop its own false mask.

A child growing up with a narcissistic parent does not develop a healthy self, but a false self.