

The Path Back To Self

Recovery Of The Soul

The Covert Narcissist

Posted on [September 14, 2011](#) by [admin](#)

The Covert Narcissist – by [Sparkster](#)

The Covert / Stealth Narcissist

NOTE: Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) is strongly characterized by complete self-centeredness and outright denial that forms an invisible and indestructible protective psychological barrier in order to defend the sufferer's true emotions.

What Is A Covert Narcissist?



Undoubtedly the most damaging form of Narcissistic Personality Disorder is covert narcissism. Covert narcissists can seem highly defensive and extremely hostile whilst masking beneath their facade an insecure sense of emotional vulnerability, a vulnerability they will do anything to prevent exposing. Although a covert narcissist generally possesses the same traits as an overt narcissist (need for attention, approval, adulation and grandiose fantasies) these are not commonly expressed in overt behavior making covert or stealth narcissists much more difficult to recognize. Some people go decades before recognizing the narcissist in their life.

How Is Covert Narcissism Different?

In addition to the standard symptoms of Narcissistic Personality Disorder, the covert narcissist is also susceptible to stress and worry. They tend to operate inefficiently and their expectations remain unfulfilled. They repress awareness of their narcissistic traits due to inner conflict, deep down inside they find their fantasies embarrassing and unacceptable. Deep down inside they realize that their fantasies are self-centered and solicit goodness and power to one's self, to put one's self up on a pedestal above all others.

What Are The Symptoms Of Covert Narcissism?

Covert narcissists are too afraid to exhibit their accomplishments to others and commonly underestimate their own capabilities. Their overt behavior usually projects an innocent angel-like 'good as gold' persona which builds them a credible reputation yet they fail to reach their true potential due to their own self-doubt. Some of them go on to become almost seemingly zombified and gradually lose all interests in their hobbies and decide to do nothing with their lives.

Why Is Covert Narcissism So Bad?

The most damaging aspect of covert narcissism is the controlling and manipulative behaviour they impose on

people closest to them. If in a relationship this is usually solely their partner. They show a lack of empathy towards them and in many cases also towards their children if they have any. A female covert narcissist may have children with their partner in order to tie them down and to secure them as sources of narcissistic supply, they may even manipulate the children out of him by failing to use or purposely damaging contraception or even committing paternity fraud. A male covert narcissist may try to tie their partner down in the same way by purposely not using or damaging contraception and exploiting the emotional bond between mother and child.

What Makes Covert Narcissism So Damaging?

In a typical case the only person who realizes there is a problem is the person closest to the covert/stealth narcissist, who is forced to suffer covert narcissistic abuse (very subtle emotional blackmail, mental abuse and psychological manipulation). Narcissists twist literally every little detail back round onto the victim. This abuse is so well hidden within communication dynamics that the partner often doesn't pick up on it and is left scratching their head wondering 'is it me?' When the victim of this abuse eventually begins to develop awareness of the manipulation it gradually dawns on them that they have already been ostracized long before they anticipated and the people that they turn to for help have already been made to believe it's them who has issues – they've already been turned against the victim. The covert narcissist makes their partner feel like they are the one with the problem whilst projecting an innocent angel-like persona to everyone around them. They will make their partner look bad and completely destroy their reputation in order to protect their false sense of self. The narcissist has already attained the trust and belief of everyone around them and anyone close to their partner that they are likely to turn to for help. The partner feels like they are suffering alone, no-one around them can see what the covert narcissist is really up to.

Covert narcissists use cleverly hidden emotional blackmail, mental abuse and manipulative linguistic patterns to force their partner to question their own sanity, behaviors which people that know them would never ever dream of them even being capable of. They have everybody around them fooled by their pathological self whilst wearing down at the psyche and soul of their partner who, over time, becomes depressed, loses self-esteem and feels like their soul is being worn down until they eventually seemingly become devoid of emotion themselves – this then further backs up the narcissists claims that their partner is the one with the problem.

When arguing with a covert narcissist, a partner will usually be left at a dead-end. Their logic appears to be incompatible with that of the narcissist and they always get outwitted. The narcissist will go on to state how they took the partner into their life and 'saved' them when they needed it and make the partner feel that they are forever indebted to them. They make them believe that anything bad was all in their imagination and that they are paranoid.

Covert narcissists are the sort of people who have multiple partners, secret affairs (sometimes within the family) or even a complete secret life with someone else. They recruit friends and family who are fooled by the innocent persona they project to defend their false self by convincing them that their discovered secrets are just a result of paranoia or suspicion yet they will use special occasions such as valentines day or even funerals to get away with their infidelity, times when the victim least expects it.

Whenever the partner questions the abuse, lies or secrets that have been discovered then literally everything little details gets twisted back round on to them, they are then the one being accused of the abuse, lies and cheating. It's a plain and simple defense mechanism which offers no logic or information on the subject and has

to be kept secret in order to uphold the covert narcissists pathological self. Narcissists come up with one-line defense mechanisms rather than offering any logical explanation for their behaviour (it's all in your head, that didn't happen, I don't know what you're talking about, I never said that). Statements like these are an instant sign of fear and guilt and make it clear that they're not willing to even talk about it, they are not willing to take the risk of slipping up. However, in private the narcissist's attitude towards their partner will be 'either let me get away with it or get out of my life'. They make it clear that everything is about them whilst their partner's feelings, needs, wants and desires are completely disregarded and they will totally discard their partner in the process with no empathy whatsoever, seemingly being cold-hearted and sadistic. Anyone who knows about the covert narcissist's secret life is sure to be blackmailed or manipulated into keeping quiet, sometimes through proxy. Even when a narcissist does slip up, they claim that they have a communication problem and didn't mean to say it, they will deny their secrets until the day they die even if they've already been discovered.

It's important at this point to understand that the covert narcissist is also a sufferer. Although on some level they must be conscious of their abuse, mind-games and manipulation or they wouldn't hide it from everyone, it has become their way of getting through life and is deep-rooted in their subconscious. However, they still know the difference between right and wrong and good and evil but deep down inside they just don't care – protecting their true (and self-denied) emotions is more important. The covert narcissist will make it clear to the person closest to them that they understand they have a problem, that they simply don't care and are not willing to do anything about it even if that means losing the people closest to them in their life. Narcissists have no empathy.

How Do I Recognize Narcissistic Abuse?

Covert narcissists can be extremely flirtatious in party settings, though they often use occasional shock tactics whilst any further promiscuity is kept under cover – they pretend that they were too drunk and not in control and blame it on the drink. They make further arrangements in private and keep their affairs secret in order to uphold their false self-image.

A covert narcissist tries to tie their primary source of narcissistic supply (their partner) down early on in the relationship. They suck up all the finances within the relationship, cut off their partner's contact with family and friends and damage or lose their partner's official forms of identification claiming it was an accident leaving them without money or proof of who they are. They manipulate them into a situation whereby they don't have the resources to leave the relationship or have any control.

Narcissistic ideology shines through the relationship solely to the narcissist's partner, they are usually the only person that recognizes the problem though are left with no escape route – when seeking help, family and friends accuse them of twisting around everything that the covert narcissist has already told them back on to them in the process of ostracizing their partner – it's a double-blind.

Covert narcissists attempt to make their partner believe that they have mental health issues and that they are insane, they will misbehave and tell their partner it was all in their head, they imagined it, it wasn't real. Tell them that you are not willing to be manipulated and they will tell you there's no relationship then. Of course, This is what everyone around them already believes, the narcissist has already built their army of support forcing the partner to question their own sanity.

What Problems Does Narcissistic Abuse Cause victims?

Ultimately victims of long-term covert narcissistic abuse can experience mild post-traumatic stress disorder – they experience nightmares and flashbacks subconsciously piecing the parts of the puzzle together. This is the brain’s way of healing itself and it can be decades before this realization happens. When this happens the partner usually begins to figure out just what has been happening all these years though they still have to suffer the consequences of the abuse alone – their friends and family still believe it’s them that’s the problem.

When the narcissistic person can see that their victim is tired and worn down and in a weak vulnerable state it offers a chance for more emotional and mental abuse and the narcissist will inevitably kick the victim while they’re down. Narcissistic abuse feels cruel, cold-hearted and twisted for the victim. The most significant aspect of this disorder is that people in these type of relationships are twice as likely to suffer with stress-related medical problems such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, heart attacks and strokes.

article written by Sparkster

<http://sparkster.hubpages.com/>

This entry was posted in [Personal & Spiritual Growth](#). Bookmark the [permalink](#).

11 Responses to *The Covert Narcissist*



Alastair says:

November 9, 2011 at 8:41 pm

The “note” at the top of this article says that the wall of defenses that constitutes covert narcissistic personality disorder is an “indestructible psychological barrier” behind which lie the sufferer’s true emotions. Well, indestructible almost. CN’s are more likely (than overt counterparts) to wind up in the doctor’s office, when (and if) personal circumstances shatter their unrealistic ideas of themselves and the world. With a therapist’s help, defences can be broken through. Don’t put up with narcissistic abuse!



CLV says:

November 5, 2011 at 9:10 pm

I’ve read so many books and articles on this subject and just finished a class on DV trying to cope through my divorce. Nothing has pointed out quite as well exactly what has happened in my home and to me in my marriage for the past 15 years. And yes! With all the crazy-making episodes there are tons of examples to use for court and among my children, our family and friends that I am the one who is crazy. None of those people saw my life in context. They didn’t sleep in my bed, see how out of place conversations were and how off balance I was kept so that I could easily be made emotional. I have responsibility for sure! But over time there is a wearing away. Many books and articles say women like the pain. I didn’t leave because little by little as the article said, every resource was taken. Getting out is psychological and financial war! With babies. And the courts. It’s no easy feat. No woman should be told to leave- without being told how to prepare! And help to prepare. She will need a good attorney. A safety plan. A source of income. A place to stay. Copies of all important papers. She should try and stay in the home if possible. Possibly enough saved up to get through at least six months. A support group. Know where a shelter is. Have emergency numbers. Love and light to all you beautiful, courageous, strong, talented people! Remember who you are!



Roca says:

October 30, 2011 at 3:39 pm

Hello Everyone!

I don't know how to start here but, I will give it a try... I am very happy I found this website. After 5yrs of enduring emotional, mental and verbal abuse and almost getting married to my boyfriend the end finally came. We had broke up a billion times throughout that relationship all because he constantly put me down for everything even for the color of my socks. He would take any situation and turn it around on me like everything was always my fault. I should have seen the warning signs but, I thought I was in love with this man. He told me early on he had cheated on all his previous girlfriends and a few times on this ex-wife he is 30 now and was married at 21. Divorced at 25 when I met him. He is lazy and never has done anything for me not even bought a birthday gift for me throughout this entire relationship. We use to work at the same place before he got fired and he went to all my close friends here at work and got them to believe I was paranoid and that he did not do any of the things I told them he had done to me cause I am just crazy and I always over exaggerate and lie about everything even though that went against everything my friends knew about me for the past 12yrs to not be true they still believed what he said, He made everyone believe he was such a good father and husband in his marriage until I I knocked him off that block early on because I did not like how he treated me I told the co-workers that we both knew that thought that about him that you don't live with him he is lazy plays video games all day and does not do anything in the house not even help pay the bills he is worthless. I take care of his children he does not... he wants to be around them but, not take care of them. I would come home after a 12hr day at work on a Saturday or Sunday and his children still were not fed anything but, goldfish and I use to get so upset and that was when he started telling people that I had a mental problem and everyone believed him !!!! I knew something was wrong because I got to the point where I had to check his phone and bank account constantly because he thought it was ok when we had a disagreement to go out and find what he says are "potential partners" in case we break up and then he can call them later and give them a shot. This last time he had gotten a new job and put me through the ringer with his phone and all the sexual text messages to other women at his job telling me not to get all worked up when he described things to them he didn't even do with me!! I was so depressed I went through counseling and asked him to and he promised he would but, always backed out. He finally lost his phone and this time I did not replace it. But there was one particular female he had been talking to since May 2011 , yeah we just broke up end of Sept 2011. She is a 48year old ugly woman to say the least that really hit me hard because through searching I found that he had been planning this for over 2 months before hand waiting for me to complain about something anything so he could drop me and he did and never even said anything. He called on a sat and told me he loved me then nothing for a week I had to track him down and he told me he was just tired. Then I heard nothing for about a week until I finally went to see him and he was very nasty to me like I had done something telling me he needed his space... What did that mean??? I asked him are you interested in someone else he said no but, I tracked him to a females house that he had been spending the night at for over a week and that was the 48yr old. I concluded he did not want me anymore and it broke my heart until I found this website I was in great despair.

Everyone thought I was crazy and that he was so innocent I had no support..... I was devastated trying to call him constantly and talk to him disturbing him at work , tracking him down at his home and balling my eyes out that had no effect on him..... I finally got to this website in my despair thankfully because I was writing my final letter to exit my life and for some reason I opened my laptop mid letter and found this website and now I know what I am feeling and that he has no capacity to love and is just using everyone. It still hurts though and I was so hurt to know what this other girl is getting was what I received in the beginningBut, I know he has already started to do to her what he did to me and that made me sad for her so now I pray everyday that she will be strong enough to ward off his attack because she is at a weak moment in her life where he sniffed it out and was able to infiltrate just like I was.....I will take back my soul and the pieces he stole as well as my heart because they do NOT belong to him!!



Alastair says:

October 14, 2011 at 7:47 am

My mother has, and will always have, closet/covert N disorder. My father is exhibitionist and also narcissistically "defended". I can't change them. Can only change myself. My mother had a mum who was abusive towards her. Born in London in 1940, before the "blitz", she wasn't wanted, and not named for six weeks, and only then by the doctor. Mum endured abuse from her mum from the beginning: not good enough, ridicule, subtle put-downs, flirting with her boyfriends. She was at the receiving end of so much dirt. Her two brothers (my uncles) were invited to join in, and they've kept it up all their lives. Poor mum! 😞 Narcissistic pathology has it's origins in the child-parent (usu. mum) relationship. There's a very good chapter on this in a book by British academic and author Stephen Frosh called "Identity Crisis: Modernity, Psychoanalysis and The Self" (1991). For a very young infant, mother is not distinguished from the self, but feels more like part of the self. The process of

separation from mum is the formation of the infant's "self", the beginnings of his or her "I" or ego. Disruption of separation is where the disorder originates.



Roberta Boulton says:

October 13, 2011 at 9:21 am

I'm sitting here today after 30 years of Narcissistic abuse and know finally the end has come. I only discovered Narcissism in May this year after googling 'serial cheat' and I came up with Narcissism, I read the traits, the stories in total amazement, it was my husband! All these years of emotional (cheating), verbal and physical abuse now had a name – Narcissism. On the one hand it gave me power and on the other hand I had to come to terms with the knowledge I let this man abuse me for so long. I've visited many sites on the subject but Kayleigh's site is by far the best, offering knowledge and support. I'm a clinical Hypnotherapist, Reiki Master/Teacher and Psychic counsellor and I still didn't 'see' it. I always knew when he was cheating and he always liked to keep momentos of his affairs, letters and photos and being psychic I knew where to look so there was always proof, no doubt there have been many many others I missed. My life has been a round of abuse, two suicide attempts and chaos and confusion. But now he's stepped up his game and after two nasty incidents, cracked ribs and a broken soul I now know the end has come and with a little help from them upstairs the bond has finally snapped and any love I ever felt for this man has finally left me and I can let go and move on with my life, Incidentally for all the partners of Narcissists, it's not actually love you're feeling, it called traumatic bonding as advised by the Domestic Abuse Unit, you have been worn down so much you are incapable of making yourself feel better so you turn to your abuser to do that and that's why, as Kayleigh says, you need to love yourself more, look to yourself to make yourself feel better, go through the pain, feel it and then let it go. The incidents happened 4 and 2 weeks ago and normally by now I would have been back into the marriage but not this time and it's been a culture shock for him, I would liken him to looking like a fish in a bowl without water, I can physically hear his brain trying to figure out what's going on, he's tried the gifts to no avail, he's tried the bullying, to no avail and I know he doesn't know what to do next. I shall take a step back now and let him get on with it while I plan my escape. I don't believe in revenge, it serves no purpose and is very damaging to your soul, but I do believe in justice and it's justice I'll be getting, now I have knowledge, I have power. Thank you Kayleigh for this site, it's been a life saver for me.



JTR says:

October 5, 2011 at 2:01 pm

My life over the past two years has been like this article and more...I left my husband after 16 years of marriage when he broke the camels back by abusing me in front of our two teenage daughters. He flew into a rage when I was trying to defend my needs to my family after several months of strenuous changes made to better my life. I was so devastated! He was able to devalue me as wife and mother in two seconds!! And the most tragic part is how it branded this distorted ideal of me to our children. It is still scarred in them-they don't know who to trust anymore. The two loving parents they had were at war. I was defending my life and he was defending his pride.

It wasn't until a year later when I realized the extent of the damage he made by lying to and manipulating my family into believing I was the one who was sick. He tried to convince my family that I also had an problem with alcohol-so cleverly in fact-using all the tools he learned while trying to recover from his own alcoholism-to spin an elaborate story so my entire family would rally on his side to fight with him against the big, bad ex wife who "abandoned her children and left him in financial ruins unable to provide for the family on his own". All tremendous lies and attempts to persuade his new audience of his fictional life to gain sympathy and power. His entire motive was to leave me completely destitute and alone-no family-no husband-no children-no money (and no legal rights to work in the country-long story-but equally as difficult as leaving him if not more).

The craziness he created was all a smokescreen to distract everyone from seeing the real man behind the mask. He loved to charm everyone and it did not matter if he was degrading me in the process-so long as everyone liked him more. What he was not prepared to deal with was my ability to find my way out of messes-especially the ones he created leaving his family to suffer. He was not prepared to stand against the power of love-and my friends and family. He was not prepared to face the truth when it finally started to shine it's light. One lie at a time was revealed and little by little they saw a glimpse of the real man I have been living with for so long. They started to listen to me and hear what I had to say. They realized I had no choice but to let go of his crazy world and take a leap of faith in a new direction-one with hope and real love. I had to do this for my

children as well. Even if it made me look a little crazy for awhile-it was worth it.

I am working hard with my therapist at healing myself. I am taking the time to let the madness I was caged in slowly disappear. I know that the truth always shines through and sometimes the best thing to do is get out of the way and let the chips fall where they may. Let your imagined life shatter and fall to your feet so that real love and happiness have a chance to enter. Cry, scream, run marathons, help others, love yourself-all of you-even the parts you are not so proud of, travel, follow your dreams. And this time do it for you! Everyone deserves that.



Alastair says:

September 30, 2011 at 12:16 pm

I suggest, Vicki, that the point at which a person with a narcissistic personality disorder (“covert/closet” or otherwise) sits up and takes notice is when there is a profound shock to, or loss of, the sources of support for the individual’s “grandiose” self-image. Sickness, divorce, loss of job, some significant shock. In people with a closet N disorder, “false self” grandiosity is not on display, not exhibited, and the self-image being preserved may be one of perfection or saintliness. Loss of, or threat of loss of, the “false” self image is experienced as very frightening and the N may succumb to depression (or else devalue or destroy the threat). If so then therapy may be sought, which is the only arena in which the full extent of loss of real self, the disorder, can become known to the affected person. Don’t put up with N abuse. Those who stay in N abusive relationships must be getting something back to make it worth while. What is it? The N personality is found in relationships. Here’s a link to a paper by McWilliams and Lependorf that I think is very good called “narcissistic pathology of everyday life”:

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/narcissisticabuse/message/1091> It’s very sad that you have suffered, Vicki.



vicki barker says:

September 30, 2011 at 12:19 am

It may be unconscious as far as the narcissist is concerned, but at what point in their life do they look at themselves and see the failed relationships, the trail of destruction, etc and think that maybe... just maybe it could have something to do with them. They are not stupid. I suppose what I am trying to ask is, is there any hope of overcoming this disorder or is it hopeless. I have been married to a covert narcissist for ten years and I have suffered greatly at his hands. He has spent all of my money and made it almost impossible for me to leave him. I still intend to do so, but he has ruined my life.



admin says:

September 27, 2011 at 10:42 pm

I agree that those trapped in “false selves” are not doing it to inflict suffering. The suffering inflicted is largely unconscious for many narcissists.



Alastair says:

September 27, 2011 at 10:26 pm

I am someone who sought help with depression when I was 30, and through therapy, slowly and painfully developed awareness that “covert” or (to use James Masterton’s term) “closet” NPD was “me”. It has devastated my life, and after six years I am still only beginning to build up the void formerly concealed by my “false self”. I appeal to readers of this text on “covert narcissistic” personality disorder to reflect on two points. First, the “false self” is created in a child in a family and wider social environment and it is a total nexus of ego defense: there is no other “self” consciously operating the “false self” from behind the scenes but an inner life steeped in painful affect. It is a condition suffered by the individual and those closest to him or her. Secondly, it is a serious and devastating mental disorder visited on individuals through unempathic parenting. The proper response to it, after rage, anger and despair, is compassion. Please take care to read about this phenomenon

through primary texts (e.g. Kohut, Kernberg, Masterton, Winnicot) and not amateur sites, in which the choice of language all too often creates the impression that people trapped in “false selves”, hurting and hurting others, are doing it for no other reason than to inflict suffering.



Brenda says:

September 27, 2011 at 12:52 pm

Kaleah: I look forward to these messages you send to us each and every month. I was in a marriage for 25 years, finally left two years ago, my ex husband started the revenge. Cut me off financially, disconnected everything he could and closed every bank account and gave me not a penny. All my friends and family are cut off to me. I have been in the hospital three times. I have pernicious anemia and electrical shocks throughout my body now, no one seems to know why??? I am not mobile. My daughters wedding, I was not invited to. It was devastating. Found out my father and sister were the only representatives for my entire family at the wedding. Mif i talked to my ex nice, they said, i would have been able to go to???According to my ex, I am

nothing except for the court ordered support he has to finally give me. I feel like I have suffered enough....what more can be done to me. Even had a dead animal delivered to me in my mailbox telling me to make my will I am going to die.....live behind a locked gate with video surveillance....my advice to anyone in a narcissistic relationship, is you need to leave.....heal yourself.....work on yourself.....there is life beyond narcissism. Value you as if you do not, know one will. My farm is called Peaceful Valley.....it is truly a journey to peace.....

The Path Back To Self

Proudly powered by WordPress.