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Why Psychopathy is Incurable: Nothing Can Fix a Psychopath

By Claudia Moscovici on February 15, 2011 | From psychopathyawareness.wordpress.com

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Psychopathy, along with borderline personality disorder and malignant narcissism, is an incurable personality disorder. Personality disorders are character deficiencies that are so deeply ingrained in one's personality that they are, for all practical purposes, **unchangeable.** Most websites and books on romantic relationships tell readers what steps to take to get them or improve them. By way of contrast, I tell you bluntly and in detail why and how to **disengage for good from the psychopathic bond.** If there's one kind of relationship that's not worth saving, it's one with a psychopath. **You can't change a psychopath.** Consequently, you also can't improve your relationship with him.

Psychologists call psychopathy "**pathological.**" They state that psychopaths suffer from a severe "**personality disorder,**" not just normal human flaws that can be worked on and ameliorated. Sandra L. Brown, M.A. underscores in *How to spot a dangerous man before you get involved* that "**Pathology is forever.**" (23) **It's the result of a faulty brain wiring, sometimes coupled with emotional trauma that occurs during childhood development, which can't be altered** in any significant way once the psychopath reaches adulthood. Brown doesn't mince words when she describes a psychopath as "**an emotional predator**" who represents "**the pinnacle of poisonous and pathological dating choices.**" (179) When involved with such an individual, she cautions, "**You will never change his physiology or his bad wiring. You will never love him into safety, sanity, or sanctity.**" (21)

Women involved with psychopaths have been conditioned by their partners to assume most of the blame for the problems that occur in the relationship. They're often deeply in love. They hope that the psychopath will magically improve and grow to love them more meaningfully. Often, they seek therapy, counseling or support groups. They grasp at any straw that can help them salvage the pathological relationship. As time goes on, they focus on the increasingly fewer positive aspects of the relationship. **They cherish the memories of how well they were treated in the beginning. They go into denial** so that they don't have to face the deliberate malice of the person they love, to whom they may have devoted their entire lives.

When faced with **the vast discrepancy between the psychopath's nice words and his malicious**

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actions, they feel lost, disoriented and alone. They stubbornly cling to the psychopath and to the fantasy of romantic love he initially created. They believe the psychopath has a good side, which reflects his real positive qualities, and a bad side, which they often take the blame for. Psychopaths don't have a good side. That side—made up mostly of fake charm and lies—is only a mask they put on in order to establish dominance over other human beings and use them for their selfish purposes. Because we want to believe there's some good in every human being, it's difficult to accept that psychopaths are, at core, evil. Unfortunately, that's the case. As Liane Leedom puts it, psychopaths are “driven to do evil”. Their compulsion to harm others and their predatory desires are physiologically rooted in their personality structure. This is what I'll explain next.

Since the early 1940's, when Hervey Cleckley conducted his study of psychopathy, psychologists have tried to understand the physiological basis for this dangerous personality disorder. During the nineteenth century, psychopathy used to be called “moral insanity.” It could also be called “the malady of lovelessness,” since it's caused by shallow emotions. Robert Hare shows that the root of the problem lies in the fact that for psychopaths neither side of the brain processes emotion properly. To psychopaths, emotionally charged statements such as “I love you,” “I'm sorry that I hurt you,” “I'll never do it again,” mean absolutely nothing. They're just words they use to deceive and manipulate others. Of course, they're not random words. Psychopaths see that other people attach a special meaning to them. They notice that when they say “I love you,” “I'll always be faithful to you” or “You're the woman of my life,” they get a positive reaction. These hollow phrases help them seduce others, establish their trust and use them for their own selfish purposes. Psychopaths lack the capacity, however, to experience, and thus to fully grasp, the meaning behind emotionally charged words. Hare observes:

“Like the color-blind person, the psychopath lacks an important element of experience—in this case, emotional experience—but may have learned the words that others use to describe or mimic experiences that he cannot really understand.” (*Without Conscience*, 129)

To verify these findings, Hare and his research team conducted experiments on psychopaths versus non-psychopaths. They connected their subjects to an EEG machine, which records the electrical activity of the brain. Then they flashed on a screen strings of letters. Some of them formed real words while others formed only gibberish. They asked their subjects to press a button as soon as they identified a true word. A computer measured the time it took them to make the decision. It also analyzed their brain activity during the performance of this task. They found that non-psychopathic subjects responded quicker to emotionally charged words—such as “death” or “love”—than to non-emotional ones, such as “tree.” By way of contrast, emotionally charged words had no effect whatsoever on psychopaths. Hare elaborates,

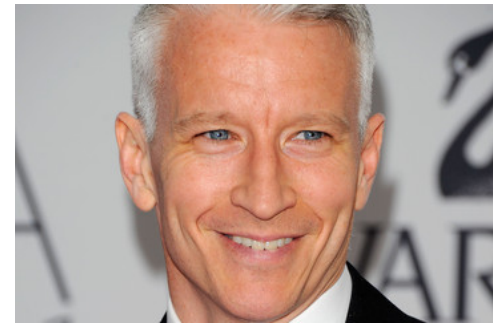
“For most of us, language has the capacity to elicit powerful emotional feelings. For example, the word ‘cancer’ evokes not only a clinical description of a disease and its symptoms but a sense of fear, apprehension, or concern, and perhaps disturbing mental images of what it might be like to have it. But to the psychopath, it's just a word.” (*Without Conscience*, 133)

According to both psychological and physiological research, psychopaths function far below the emotional poverty line. They're much shallower than what we generally call “superficial” people. This has a lot to do with the faulty wiring in their brains. Hare explains that in most people the right side of the brain plays a central role in processing emotion. By way of contrast,

“Recent laboratory evidence indicates that in psychopaths neither side of the brain is proficient in the processes of emotion. Why this is so is still a mystery. But an intriguing implication is that the brain processes that control the psychopath's emotions are divided and unfocused, resulting in a shallow and colorless emotional life.” (*Without Conscience*, 134)

The shallowness of their emotions explains why psychopaths are so callous as to use and abuse even those closest to them: their partners, their children, their parents, their lovers and their so-called friends. It also clarifies why they can't see anything wrong with their mistreatment of others. Even when they rape and murder, psychopaths feel no remorse. Their theatrical apologies and promises to reform are as empty as their vows of love. When they cry in court after having been sentenced to prison for their crimes, they either feign emotion to gain sympathy or cry about the fact they got caught. While research shows that psychopaths are incapable of real emotional bonding with others, this doesn't imply that they're out of touch with reality. When they harm others, even when it's opportunistically and in the heat of the moment,

in Other Languages



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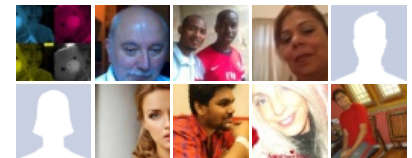


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they're cold-blooded and deliberate about their actions. They're also aware of the fact that their misdeeds are considered morally wrong by society. But, fundamentally, they don't care. In fact, breaking the rules (without suffering any consequences) is the name of their game. As Hare clarifies:

"As I mentioned earlier, **psychopaths do meet current legal and psychiatric standards for sanity. They understand the rules of society and the conventional meanings of right and wrong. They are capable of controlling their behavior and realize the potential consequences of their acts. The problem is that this knowledge frequently fails to deter them from antisocial behavior.**"
(*Without Conscience*, 143)

Whenever any discussion of criminal or deviant behavior takes place, the age-old debate between nature versus nurture tends to come up. The question thus arises: are psychopaths bad because of their social environment or are they born that way? The simple answer to this question is: they're born that way and they can be made worse by a bad environment. Unfortunately, they can't be made significantly better by anything at all. Psychological and sociological research shows that, in fact, psychopaths are much *less* influenced by their environment than non-psychopaths. This conforms with **the general finding that psychopaths have rock solid egos, which are more or less immune to negative input. As we've seen, although they enjoy affirmation and praise, as all narcissists do, they don't care when they're criticized or punished.** While a corrupt environment and abuse is unlikely to cause psychopathy, it can lead a psychopath to express his constitutive emotional callousness through violence. (*Without Conscience*, 175)

Martha Stout seconds Robert Hare's conclusions that nature—or the physiological incapacity to experience and process emotion properly—has much more to do with psychopathy than nurture. Stout observes, "In fact, **there's evidence that sociopaths are influenced less by their early experience than are nonsociopaths.**" (*The Sociopath Next Door*, 134). She elaborates,

"The sociopaths who have been studied reveal a significant aberration in their ability to process emotional information at the level of the cerebral cortex. And from examining heritability studies, we can speculate that the neurobiological underpinnings of the core personality features of sociopathy are as much as 50 percent heritable. The remaining causes, the other 50 percent, are much foggier. Neither childhood maltreatment nor attachment disorder seems to account for the environmental contribution to the loveless, manipulative, and guiltless existence that psychologists call psychopathy." (*The Sociopath Next Door*, 134)

In other words, **psychopathy constitutes a physiological deficiency that causes shallowness of emotions** and all the negative implications which stem from it that we've explored so far. This deficiency is genetically inherited only half of the time. The other half of the time it may be caused by accidents, brain damage, drugs or other, unknown causes. The saddest implication of the scientific research on psychopathy is the fact that **there's no cure for it. No medication or treatment has yet been discovered that can give a psychopath the neurological capacity to process emotion properly.** Consequently, nothing can turn him into a functioning, caring human being. In other words, **nothing can transform a psychopath into a non-psychopath.**

You can see for yourself how a psychopath initially disguises his personality disorder to manipulate and poison the lives of two women in my new novel about psychopathic seduction, *The Seducer*, which is promotionally previewed on **Neatorama's Bitlit**, on the link below:

<http://www.neatorama.com/bitlit/category/the-seducer/>

You can also watch **video previews** of *The Seducer* on youtube, by cutting and pasting the following links:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/ClaudiaMoscovici?feature=mm#p/a/u/0/1aZj4bceDpE>

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