

The Covert (Closet/Stealth) Narcissist - Malignant Self-Love/Covert Narcissism (Narcissistic Personality Disorder - NPD)

by [sparkster](#)
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Covert/Closet Narcissism

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



What Is A Covert Narcissist?

Absolutely undoubtedly the most damaging and severe form of Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) is *covert narcissism*. Covert narcissists can seem highly defensive and extremely hostile whilst masking beneath their facade a highly insecure sense of emotional vulnerability; a vulnerability they will do absolutely anything within their power to prevent being exposed.

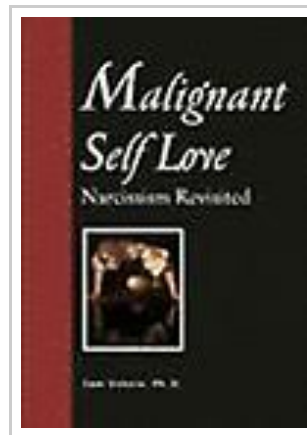
Although a covert narcissist generally possesses the same traits as an overt narcissist (the need for attention, approval, adulation and grandiose fantasies), these are not commonly expressed in their overt behavior which makes covert/closet or stealth narcissists all the more difficult to be able to recognize.

For some people it can be decades before they recognize the narcissist in their lives.

How Is Covert Narcissism Different?

In addition to the standard symptoms

On eBay



[Malignant Self Love: Narcissism Revisited, Sam Vaknin, Acceptable Book](#)

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of Narcissistic Personality Disorder, the covert narcissist is also **susceptible to stress and worry**. They have a tendency to **function inefficiently** (ie they are dysfunctional) whilst their **inner expectations remain unfulfilled**.

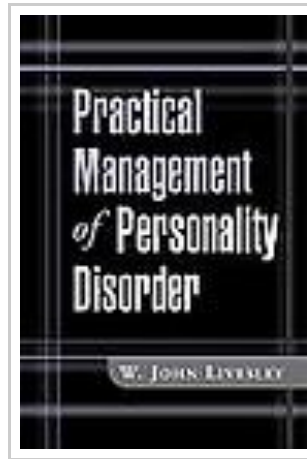
Closet/stealth narcissists repress **awareness** of their narcissistic traits due to their inner conflict, deep down inside they find their fantasies embarrassing and unacceptable. Deep down inside they realize that their fantasies are ultimately self-centered and are to solicit goodness and power to 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 usually too afraid to exhibit any of their accomplishments to others and they commonly underestimate their own capabilities. Their overt behavior projects an innocent, angel-like, good as gold persona which builds them a credible and faultless reputation yet they fail to reach their true potential due to their own self-doubt. Some covert narcissists end up losing all interest in their hobbies and desires and end up deciding to do nothing with their lives - they **seem to have no real interests** - yet they are **extremely self-entitled and expect other people to do everything for them.**

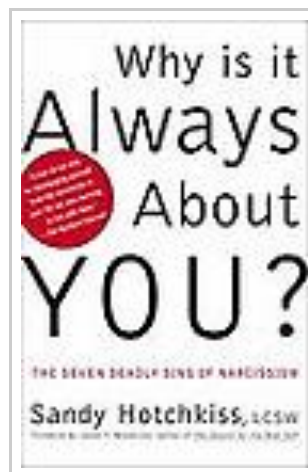
Why Is Covert Narcissism So Bad?

The most damaging aspect of covert narcissism is **the controlling and manipulative behavior** that covert, or stealth, narcissists impose on the people closest to them. If in a relationship this is often solely their partner (though this is not always the case). They show a very real lack of empathy towards their partner and in



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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 nothing more than sources of narcissistic supply, they may even manipulate the children out of him by failing to adequately use or intentionally damaging contraception or perhaps even by 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 that there is a problem is the person who is closest to the covert/stealth narcissist, who is usually unwillingly forced to suffer covert narcissistic abuse (very subtle emotional blackmail, mental abuse and psychological manipulation). Narcissists end up obscuring the truth and twisting literally every little detail back round onto the victim. They expertly mix the truth with a lie in order to distort the truth in their favour.

This abuse is so well hidden within the communication dynamics that the victim often doesn't pick up on it and is left scratching their head wondering 'is it me?'

When a victim of this type of 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



The new book about covert narcissists - available to download now at Lulu.com
Source: [Know Your Enemy: Reflections Of NPD](#)

Question 1

Have you ever had the misfortune to deal with a covert narcissist?

[See results without voting](#)

Question 2

If yes, how long did it take you to realize they were a narcissist?

[See results without voting](#)

Question 3

After you found out they were a narcissist, how much longer did it take you to escape?

[See results without voting](#)

that they turn to for help have already been made to believe it's them who is the problem - they've already been turned against the victim. The victim has been ostracized.

The covert narcissist makes their victim feel like they are the one with the problem whilst projecting an innocent angel-like persona to everyone around them. They make their victim look bad and do their best to destroy their reputation in order to protect their deluded false sense of self and their distorted viewpoint of the world.

Narcissists have no empathy and therefore have an invisible secret, an advantage over every around them.

The narcissist attains the trust, respect and belief of everyone around them and anyone close to their victim who they are likely to turn to for help. The victim feels like they are suffering alone, no-one around them can see what the deceitful, deceptive, manipulative and controlling covert narcissist is really up to.

Covert narcissists use very cleverly hidden emotional blackmail, mental abuse, suggestive techniques 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 of ever being capable of. They have everybody around them fooled by their pathological self whilst wearing down at the psyche and soul of their victim 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 victim is the one with the problem. If the victim of a narcissist does happen to discover the truth it will



Covert narcissism is all about reflection, projection, denial and suppression.
Source: [WikiMedia Commons](#)

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always be denied by most people around them and they often end up going into a state of cognitive dissonance.

- [Social Psychology: Cognitive Dissonance](#)
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When arguing with a covert narcissist, a victim will usually be left at a dead-end. Their logic appears to be incompatible with that of the narcissist and they always get outwitted. If a relationship partner, then the narcissist will go on to state how they took that partner into their life and 'saved' them when they needed it and will make the partner feel like they are forever indebted to them. The narcissist makes the victim believe that anything bad that happened was all in their imagination and that they are paranoid; it wasn't real.

Covert narcissists are the sort of people who have multiple partners, secret affairs (sometimes within their own family) or sometimes 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 use special occasions such as valentines day or even while their partner is away at funerals in order to get away with their infidelity; times when the victim least expects it.

When a narcissist's deceit has been discovered literally every little detail gets twisted back round on to the true victim. They are then the one being accused of the abuse, lies and/or 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 narcissist's pathological self.

Narcissists come up with one-line defense mechanisms rather than offering any logical explanation for their behavior (e.g. "it's all in your head", "you're paranoid", "that didn't happen", "I think you need to see a doctor", "I don't know what you're talking about", "I never said that").

Statements like these are an instant sign of 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, on certain occasions (in private) the narcissist's attitude towards their partner may change to "either let me get away with it or get out of my life" although this is usually short-lived and denial and repression kicks back in. They make it clear, intermittently, that everything is about them whilst their partner's feelings, needs, wants and desires are completely disregarded and they will discard their partner in the process with no empathy whatsoever, seemingly being heartless and sadistic. However, covert narcissists are usually nowhere near as sadistic as malignant narcissists who have a very nasty sadistic streak.

Anyone who knows about a covert narcissist's secret life is sure to be blackmailed or manipulated into keeping quiet, often by-proxy. Even when a narcissist does slip up, they may claim that they have a communication problem and that they didn't mean to use those words, they will deny their secrets until the day they die even if they've already been discovered, even if you present them with 100% factual evidence and even if you know for a fact - they will attempt to make you question the evidence.

It's also important to understand that a covert narcissist also suffers. Although on some level they must be aware of some 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 ultimately deep-rooted in their subconscious - it's pathological.

However, narcissists ultimately still know the difference between right and wrong and good and evil but deep down inside they just simply don't care - protecting their true (and self-denied) emotions is essential.

A covert narcissist may make it clear to the person closest to them that they understand they have a problem, that they simply don't care that they have a problem and that they are not willing to do anything about it even if that means losing the people closest to them in their life. Again, this is usually an intermittent behaviour. Narcissists have no empathy but seem to go through intermittent (but rare) phases of self-reflection and self-acknowledgement - these phases are also short-lived.

How Do I Recognize Narcissistic Abuse?

Covert narcissists can be extremely flirtatious if in a party setting, though they often use occasional shock tactics whilst any further promiscuity is kept under cover - they pretend that they were too drunk to know what they were doing and were not in control and then blame their behavior on the alcohol. They make further arrangements in private and keep their sexual endeavors and 'love' affairs secret in order to uphold their angelic false self-image.

A covert narcissist attempts to tie their primary source of narcissistic supply (their partner) down early on in a relationship. They ultimately 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 over their situation before then going on to wear down their partner's sense of self-identity - there can be very serious health consequences for the victim.

Narcissistic ideology shines clearly through such a relationship to the narcissist's partner, they are usually the only person that recognizes the problem (eventually) though they are left with no escape route - when attempting to seek 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 consisting of nothing more than projection and reflection.

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. Show them that you are not willing to be manipulated and they will discard you as though you mean nothing. Of course, this is what everyone around them already believes, the narcissist has already built their army of support forcing the victim to repeatedly keep questioning their own sanity.

What Problems Does Narcissistic Abuse Cause victims?

Ultimately victims of long-term covert narcissistic abuse can experience severe bad health symptoms such as post-traumatic stress disorder - they experience nightmares and flashbacks whilst their mind is subconsciously piecing the parts of the puzzle together. This is the brain's way of healing itself and, in extreme cases, it can be decades before this realization happens.

When this happens the victim may begin to figure out just what has been happening for all the years (or decades), though they usually still have to suffer the consequences of the abuse alone - their friends and family still believe it's them that's the problem, their life may have fallen apart and they have probably been left devastated and as feeling as though their soul has been worn down to it's very core.

In extreme cases the victim may have even been left with physical health symptoms such as a heart murmur or an anxiety disorder. Stress-related illnesses resulting from extreme narcissistic abuse can sometimes result in death of the victim (e.g. heart attack) - stress can be dangerous.

When a narcissist can see that their victim is tired, worn down and in a weak vulnerable state then they know the victim is exactly where they want them, it offers a chance for more emotional and mental abuse to be perpetrated and the narcissist will inevitably kick their victim while they're down.

Narcissistic abuse feels cruel, cold, calculated and extremely twisted for the victim. The most significant concern of this personality disorder is that victims of narcissistic abuse could be twice as likely to suffer with stress-related medical problems including [depression](#), anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, heart attacks and strokes (amongst others). Narcissistic Personality Disorder is not something to be taken lightly and can sometimes result in what I refer to as [psychological murder](#).

By [Sparkster](#)

** The author of this article was victimized by a covert narcissist for a total of 12 years and has spent the last 5 years researching the personality disorder with mental health professionals and victims of narcissistic abuse, to further understand the disorder, create awareness of (malignant) narcissism and to dispel many of the myths and misconceptions about the covert Narcissistic Personality Disorder (which is not the same as inverted or co-narcissism, despite common belief).*

Sparkster's ebook on this topic, [Know Your Enemy: Reflections Of NPD](#), is available to download now from [Lulu.com](#) - alternatively, you can show your support by liking the [Facebook page for the book](#).

Also See:

- [Borderline Personality Disorder \(BPD\): The Emotionally Unstable](#)
- [Histrionic Personality Disorder \(HPD\): The Drama Queen](#)
- [Various Types Of Narcissist \(NPD\) - Narcissistic Personality Disorder](#)

- [Covert Narcissism, Co-Narcissists \(Inverted Narcissism\) & Co-Dependents](#)
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