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### **Manual for Narcissism (and Small and Big Differences)**

#### **Narcissus – Who Was He?**

In Greek mythology, **Narcissus** was a hunter who was renowned for his beauty. He was the son of a river god named Cephissus and a nymph named Liriope. Nemesis noticed and attracted Narcissus to a pool, wherein he saw his reflection and fell in love with it, not realizing it was merely an image. Unable to leave the beauty of his reflection, Narcissus died. Narcissus is the origin of the term *narcissism*, a fixation with oneself.

#### **Narcissism – What is it?**

According to the DSM-IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Classification of Mental Disorders) narcissistic personality disorder is among other specific personality disorders. Characteristics of narcissistic personality disorder are:

exaggerated importance of personal experience, or the grand experience of self, lack of empathy, excessive sensitivity in relation to the assessment of others, inability to love and the inability of deep feelings, sexuality is reduced to physical contact and instrumental, unstable mood, a tendency towards manipulation; chronic dependency and low self-esteem.

Otto Kernberg (Buzov, 1988), as the most important theorist and practitioner in the field of narcissism, makes a clear distinction between normal and pathological narcissism. Normal narcissism implies that every man is to some extent self-absorbed, and seeks confirmation through the approval of others. However, people with narcissistic personality disorder are different from others in the stressed obsession with themselves. They actually do not love themselves and carry very low level of self-esteem. Narcissistic structured personality can not maintain a positive image of themselves without continuous "feeding" through the attention and admiration of others. They feel towards the other people because of their dependence on them. Other people are being treated as objects and have only function as fans. People with narcissistic personality disorder are charming to others if they expect their help or assistance, and/or they have been addicted to other people in some other way, but as soon as the goal was achieved, they become restless in front of these people. The relationship of narcissistic personality with other people is exploitative, although it may be masked beneath the attractive surface. These people have a great capacity to attract other people, often have certain talents and abilities, often in areas that provide their ambition to challenge the admiration and applause of others. When they are disappointed in the other or being abandoned, or when experiencing narcissistic injury, depressive

manifestations are visible on the surface, but beneath them appears anger and hatred, with prominent vengeful desires .

Two opposite forms of clinical narcissism are described. Rosenfeld's narcissi (Jovanovic, 2002) with "thick" and "thin" skin are called insensitive and hyper-sensitive according to Gabbard's terminology. Insensitive narcissus has no understanding for the feelings of others and her/his arrogant and selfish cruelty trample over corpses. They act pompous and exhibitionist. Hyper-sensitive types are shy, inhibited and self-directed in their vulnerability to criticism and rejection. According to Millon, there are four types of narcissi: unprincipled- unscrupulous (thick skin), compensatory, love, histrionic.

Compensatory variant has the essential characteristics of the psychoanalytic understanding of narcissistic personality. Early experiences with the narcissi are not too different from those of avoidant personality disorder. Unprincipled types achieve success in society, taking advantage of the legal boundaries of legality. Some are opportunistic and use other people for their own benefit. They often get the opportunity to dominate others due to their ability for vengeful gratitude, gaining the trust of others, and then (ab)using them. Their attitude is that those who can take advantage of it also deserved it. Because they are focused on their own interests, narcissi are indifferent to the truth. If they are confronted, they will likely show the justification and indicate innocence, negate the negative behavior through courtesy and politeness.

## **Why Do We Perceive Only Surface?**

Acting is usually not enough. It is necessary to act towards the people ... Sometimes (or rather, almost never) we are not aware of who is sitting in front of us. Why should we talk about narcissism in times of turmoil? Why should we talk about small and big differences? Just because they exist ... And just because we are unaware of them. Unconsciously conscious and unconsciously consciously, it is better to say. They are there, in us, and every time you look at your reflection you can be threaten by some danger. It is not enough to stare at the creek in order to love what we see. But it is necessary to stare into the deep ocean in order to realize how much exists under the surface.

Unprincipled-unscrupulous or any surround us ... They are moving towards us, and from us everywhere... And it is not a question of small or big differences. We may question the deep gaze which compels us to stay in the same place for all time or to move to other depths. Sometimes instincts help. And sometimes things should be left to gaze. And psychology ... At least for a moment ... We should close our eyes beneath the surface.