



Narcissistic Rage

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Narcissistic rage was supposedly a term first used by psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut in 1972. It refers to a sudden and powerful outburst from a narcissist which can include verbal and physical abuse as well as acts of aggression and damage to persons or property. It occurs because something has happened to damage the ego of the narcissist. Remember narcissists see themselves as better than others, as more important, and anything that shows them they are not, will be a psychic injury to them and they are likely to lash out. Sometimes the response is irritation and rage is avoided. Other times the narcissist engages in direct verbal and/or physical attacks.

Narcissists have low self-esteem. Their ego is easily threatened. They need people around them who will constantly tell them how great and wonderful they are. If that doesn't happen, the narcissist will be wounded and respond with various levels of anger and aggression. We refer to it as a narcissistic injury which occurs when a narcissist thinks their self-esteem or self-worth are threatened. The narcissist perceives that the false self they have created as someone exceptional and grand has now been attacked and they are exposed, and that is too much for them to deal with. So, they lash out at whoever they think is challenging their worth. Not all narcissists will show overt rage. Some may resort to manipulation and tears which also form part of the narcissist's arsenal. Narcissists can be dangerous so be careful. This is another reason to have as little to do with someone narcissistic.

The narcissist, because they have such low self-esteem, creates a false self. The false identity they create is of themselves as this amazing, wonderful, brilliant person. With real self-esteem you know you are worthwhile and have value, you don't need others to keep telling you how wonderful you are. When the false self the narcissist has created is threatened or exposed the narcissist will blow up. The narcissist at their core is usually a frightened, probably shamed, person who feels inadequate often – and hence their need to create a grandiose image.

Signs of narcissistic rage:

Mostly, underneath everything is shame, dressed up as anger, which can be revealed as anger, rage, irritation, anxiety, and even tears. Anger, because some situation or someone has poked holes in their brilliant, grand, exceptional (false self) persona they have created. The anger or other responses the narcissist demonstrates is way out of proportion to the event that occurred. Anger is a normal reaction in some circumstances. Narcissistic rage is totally out of proportion to the incident.

The anger displayed by the narcissist can be:

- Anger that results in verbal abuse or even physical abuse towards another person or persons.
- Anger that results in damage to property – that of the narcissist or other people.
- Intense hatred for a person or persons that is also inappropriate to the situation.
- Anger that results in self-harm. The narcissist can be so angry they physically harm themselves. A lot of their behaviour is self-harming indirectly because they can engage in actions that get them into trouble with the law.

Because the levels of anger displayed by the narcissist can be so extreme and out of proportion to a normal response, the angry behaviour of the narcissist can be quite scary and also quite bizarre to onlookers.

Triggers for narcissistic rage:

1. Narcissists believe they are more important than others. They have grandiose beliefs about themselves. When the narcissist is confronted with evidence contrary to their beliefs of self-importance, they feel slighted, angry, and can respond with rage. If you are on the receiving end of this rage you can feel anything from anxiety to pure terror.
2. Even a mild disagreement or negative comment can trigger a feeling in the narcissist that they are being mocked. Feelings of rejection also trigger a reaction.
3. If the narcissist doesn't get their way, even if what they want is unreasonable, they will get angry.
4. If the narcissist feels they have been criticised, even if it has been done constructively or kindly, they get angry.
5. If they are not the centre of attention the narcissist can resort to rage.
6. If the narcissist feels they are not getting enough appreciation and praise they can also lash out.
7. If they are caught breaking rules and chided for this the narcissist will get defensive and vengeful.
8. If they are called out for not respecting boundaries, narcissists get angry.
9. When they are held accountable for their actions, narcissists get angry because they need to put the blame on others.
10. If they feel out of control in their surroundings, the narcissist can lash out.
11. If the narcissist has been caught lying, they feel trapped and lash out in anger.

Examples:

1. The narcissist throwing cups against the wall if someone doesn't praise their home.
2. The narcissist verbally abusing their spouse because the dinner was not cooked up to their standard.
3. The narcissist screaming at their child because the child did not finish first in school.
4. The narcissist hitting his wife because some rooms in the house have not been cleaned properly.
5. The narcissist standing up and screaming in the face of the server because he or she waited a long time to get their meal and it was the wrong meal.
6. The narcissist damaging some property of a person they hate and think is making their life difficult.
7. The narcissist hitting their spouse or child because they feel they were not being attentive enough to them.

Narcissistic rage is not always observed in public. Sometimes the narcissist has good control over themselves, and so it only happens in private and with family members. The consequence is that those around the narcissist find themselves "walking on eggshells", never knowing when the person will lash out again. The victims of narcissists often go around with almost constant anxiety. They are on alert all the time for any signs that the narcissist may attack them verbally or physically. This is not a way to live. If you find you are in such a situation then leave. It is not your fault. The narcissist is 100% responsible for their own behaviour, as all adults are.