



# Narcissistic Parents

8 July 2023

Any sort of relationship with a narcissistic person, be it a boss, friend, or romantic partner is horrible. The narcissist is not capable of the empathy, understanding, and giving that is mutually required in a successful relationship. For adults who have been involved with narcissists, the wounds are painful and deep. But it is children who are being raised by narcissistic parents who suffer immense damage. Children, unlike adults, do not have the option to walk out of the relationship. Children, especially young children, know they will die without their parents. They have no choice but to stay, and usually love the parent. As their lives depend on their parents, children will often see themselves as the bad ones and the parents as the good ones. It is too scary for a child to believe their parent is bad. It is easier for them to think they are the bad ones and responsible for why their parents behave the way they do. If you had narcissistic parents, then you experienced a lot of harm.

Some of the ways in which narcissistic parents – which could be the father, mother, or even both – behave are:

- They use people, like all narcissists, and they use their children to get their needs met. Good parenting is the other way around. Children are dependent on their parents to have their needs met. They need the adult to take care of them, which includes providing emotional and psychological support. The narcissistic parent uses their children and often the child turns into the scapegoat for what is not going right in the parents' life. If the parent is upset the child is blamed. If the parent feels the child is not providing enough emotional support to the parent, the child is blamed. They expect their children to make them feel better. They expect the child to psychologically act like an adult and understand what they need and provide it. If the parent had a bad day at work the child is blamed or the frustration is taken out on the child. If the parent makes a mistake, often the child is at fault. Whatever the narcissistic parent needs to make them feel good, they expect the child to provide, even if it is completely age inappropriate for the child to know what to do.
- Narcissistic parents are often extremely critical of their children. And together with that they can be really short on dishing out praise and appreciation. No wonder the children of narcissists so often grow up feeling they are always the ones in the wrong, and nothing they can ever do is right.
- Narcissists believe they are superior to others. So, they will always give their children the message, in many different ways, that the children are inferior human beings. The children will grow up with low or no self-esteem and lack confidence. The children of narcissists easily

become prey for other narcissists and predators when they are grown up. Their sense of themselves will be “I am less” than other people.

- Sometimes the narcissistic parent doesn’t want to see their children grow up. They want to keep them as children. Narcissists like to be in control, they want people to do what they want them to do, and keeping your child dependent on you is one way of doing this. They sometimes see the child as an extension of themselves, and not an independent person. This makes the teenage years very difficult for children of narcissistic parents. The teenage years are about learning independence and learning to function as an adult. Narcissistic parents usually cannot bear this. Their child, no matter their age, must do what they want them to do.
- Blaming others for their own mistakes is typical narcissist behaviour and narcissistic parents do this as well. They blame their children when they, the parent behave badly, and also blame the child for the negative consequences that result from this bad behaviour.
- Because they like to show off, narcissistic parents will often brag about the achievements of their children in public and may come across as great parents on social media, for example. However, behind the scenes at home children are not acknowledged and not supported. And often the narcissistic parent can be controlling and harsh when no one else is around to see them.
- If there is more than one child, they often play favourites and compare children to one another such that one child is made to feel inferior to another.
- Narcissistic parents engage in manipulation, shaming, and guilt tripping. They can say things like: “I have done everything for you, and you are so ungrateful.” “It is your fault I am so unhappy.” “You are an embarrassment to the family.” “Why can’t you be more like your brother/sister.”
- They lack empathy. They care only about what they, the parent thinks and feels, and lack the ability to consider the thoughts and feelings of the child.
- Narcissistic parents are often aggressive, can get very angry, and even get into a rage, and engage in verbal or other forms of abuse.
- They do not apologise. Narcissistic parents, like narcissists in general, cannot say they are sorry.
- Narcissistic parents can ruin relationships just because they want to or because of jealousy or envy. They can ruin the relationships their children have between siblings, friends, and even romantic relationships.
- Narcissistic parents belittle their children, sometimes even in front of others including other family. If the child calls them out on this, they turn around and say it was a joke.
- A narcissistic parent may compete with their child or even sabotage their child’s progress, especially if they think the child is doing better than them.

If you are the child of a narcissist you will probably experience some or all of the following:

- Humiliation, shame and lots of guilt, even when you have nothing to feel guilty for.
- Poor self-esteem and lack confidence and assertiveness.
- Be an over-achiever. This comes from the criticism and the sense of never being good enough. Some children of narcissistic parents actually become under-achievers because they give up trying. Nothing is ever good enough and so they decide to give up.
- Indecisiveness. Because the child needed to do what the parent wanted, they have not learned to know and understand their own needs. They lack experience in making decisions based on what they want.
- Act invisible. Then no one can criticise you, blame you, humiliate you, or get angry with you.
- Automatically take the blame for everything.

- Tend to be jumpy and anxious and on edge. A child of a narcissist has no idea how the other person will respond or react. The narcissist is inconsistent, and the child needs to be hyper-vigilant to try and guess what behaviour will come next.

If your parents were narcissistic then they could have inflicted a lot of psychological harm that has left you less able to deal with the challenges of life. You almost always will need to work on your self-esteem, your assertiveness, and manage your life to deal with anxiety and depression. The good thing is, once you are out of the parent-child relationship you can work on yourself and overcome many of the harmful consequences of narcissistic parenting.