

# Are You a Victim of Narcissistic Abuse?

## Objective

To identify if you are a victim of narcissistic abuse and whether you suffer from narcissistic abuse syndrome.

## What to Know

Narcissistic abuse is a pattern of emotionally, psychologically, and sometimes even physically harmful behavior exhibited by individuals with narcissistic personality traits or narcissistic personality disorder (NPD). It involves manipulation, exploitation, and a profound lack of empathy for the victim. Below are the signs of narcissistic abuse.

- 1. Narcissistic Personality Traits.** Narcissism is characterized by an excessive preoccupation with oneself, a grandiose sense of self-importance, a need for excessive attention and admiration, and a lack of empathy for others. People with narcissistic traits may display an inflated self-image and an intense desire for control and admiration from others.
- 2. Emotional Manipulation.** Various tactics are used to emotionally manipulate others, including gaslighting, withholding affection or approval, giving the silent treatment, and emotional blackmail.
- 3. Devaluation and Idealization.** Narcissists often engage in a cycle of idealization and devaluation. Initially, they may idealize their victim, showering them with affection and attention to gain their trust and loyalty. Over time, they devalue the person, criticizing, belittling, and undermining their self-esteem.
- 4. Exploitative Behavior.** Narcissistic abusers exploit others for their own gain, often without regard for the well-being of the victim. This may include using the victim's resources, financial manipulation, or emotional exploitation.
- 5. Blame-Shifting.** Narcissistic abusers rarely take responsibility for their actions or admit fault. Instead, they tend to shift blame and responsibility onto others.
- 6. Isolation.** Victims are isolated from friends and family to maintain control. Abusers do this by creating conflict with the victim's support system or by making the victim feel guilty for spending time with others.
- 7. Projection.** Narcissists often project their own negative qualities onto their victims. They accuse their victims of the very behaviors or traits they possess, deflecting attention away from their own shortcomings.
- 8. Manipulative Charm.** Narcissists can be charming and charismatic, especially in the early stages of a relationship.
- 9. Inconsistent Behavior.** Narcissistic abusers exhibit erratic and unpredictable behavior, switching between being loving and caring one moment and angry or hostile the next. This creates confusion and emotional turmoil for the victim.

Narcissistic abuse can have severe and long-lasting emotional and psychological effects on victims, including:

- anxiety
- depression
- low self-esteem
- sacrificing one's own needs
- complex post-traumatic stress disorder (C-PTSD)
- difficulty forming healthy relationships

Long-term abuse can change the victim's brain, resulting in cognitive decline and memory loss. These brain changes can increase the risk for chronic stress and self-sabotage.

Not everyone with narcissistic traits is an abuser, and not all relationships involving narcissistic people are abusive. But when narcissistic traits are combined with abusive behavior patterns, it can be highly damaging.

**Narcissistic Abuse Syndrome**, or narcissistic victim syndrome, is an unofficial diagnosis used to assess the severity of narcissistic abuse. Symptoms significantly impact a person's life, whether the abuse occurred in a romantic, familial, platonic, or professional relationship.

The symptoms of narcissistic abuse syndrome often mimic those of other mental health conditions. Survivors might display signs of trauma bonding or C-PTSD following continued exposure. Effects can be long-lasting if the victim cannot distance themselves from the narcissist.

Symptoms of narcissistic abuse syndrome may include the following:

- anger
- confusion
- loss of identity
- feeling isolated
- flashbacks
- intrusive thoughts
- feeling on edge or restless
- difficulty making decisions
- dissociation
- self-harm
- irritability
- hypervigilance
- insomnia or trouble sleeping
- self-doubt
- physical symptoms such as digestive problems, headaches, or aches and pains

Another common reaction is **self-gaslighting** or denying one's own reality. Self-gaslighting may include distrust of self by questioning if a situation was as "bad" as one remembers it being. Or a person may believe they are "exaggerating" or overreacting to their own experiences.

Circle any of the symptoms above that you experience. On the lines below, provide more details about the abusive relationship.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Narcissistic abuse is emotionally and psychologically damaging. This worksheet is designed to help you reflect on your experiences and assess whether you are the victim of narcissistic abuse.

### **What to Do**

Read each question carefully and mark the appropriate response for each question.

Have you ever felt consistently belittled or demeaned by someone close to you?  Yes  No

Do you often feel like you're walking on eggshells around this person, afraid of their reactions or anger?  Yes  No

Have you experienced manipulation, deceit, or dishonesty from this person?  Yes  No

Do they often dismiss your feelings, needs, or concerns?  Yes  No

Have they exhibited a lack of empathy for your emotional pain or struggles?  Yes  No

Is this person overly self-centered, often making conversations and interactions primarily about themselves?  Yes  No

Have they used gaslighting techniques to make you doubt your own perception of reality?  
 Yes  No

Have you felt isolated or cut off from friends and family because of this person?  Yes  No

Has your self-esteem and self-worth deteriorated because of your interactions with them?  
 Yes  No

Do you find it challenging to set boundaries with this person, or do they consistently violate the boundaries you set?  Yes  No

Have they engaged in acts of verbal, emotional, or psychological abuse toward you? [ ] Yes [ ] No

Are you often blamed for their actions or problems? [ ] Yes [ ] No

Scoring:

Count the number of "Yes" responses you marked: \_\_\_\_\_

0-2 Yes responses: It's less likely that you are a victim of narcissistic abuse.

3-6 Yes responses: There may be signs of narcissistic abuse in your relationship.

7-12 Yes responses: There is a higher likelihood that you are a victim of narcissistic abuse, and it is important to seek support and professional help.

This worksheet is not a diagnostic tool but a self-assessment to help you better understand your experiences. If you suspect you are a victim of narcissistic abuse, seek help from a therapist or counselor who specializes in trauma and abusive relationships to further explore your situation and develop strategies for healing and recovery.

**Reflections on This Exercise**

How helpful was this exercise? \_\_\_\_\_

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

---

---

---