

Self-awareness and Introspection in Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD)

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Short Communication

Abstract

With severe emotional deficits, the narcissist may be self-aware and knowledgeable about Narcissistic Personality Disorder, but these do not lead to healing, merely to behaviour modification. Narcissists balance a sadistic superego and a demanding and fantastic False Self. Narcissists describe themselves as machines or automata. When they do gain self-awareness and engage in soul-searching it is in order to enhance their skills at attracting and maintaining their sources of narcissistic supply. Self-awareness and self-acceptance in narcissism: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" (Jeremiah 13:23) If the narcissist becomes self-aware, if he accepts that he is a narcissist, isn't this the first, important step, towards healing? Narcissism defines the narcissist's waking moments and his nocturnal dreams. It is all-pervasive. Everything the narcissist does is motivated by it. Everything he avoids is its result. Every utterance, decision, his very body language - are all manifestations of narcissism. It is rather like being abducted by an alien and ruthlessly indoctrinated ever since. The alien is the narcissist's False Self - a defence mechanism constructed in order to shield his True Self from hurt and inevitable abandonment. Cognitive understanding of the disorder does not constitute a transforming INSIGHT. In other words, it has no emotional correlate. The narcissist does not INTERNALIZE what he understands and learns about his disorder. This new gained knowledge does not become a motivating part of the narcissist. It remains an inert and indifferent piece of knowledge, with minor influence on the narcissist's psyche.

Biography

Sam Vaknin is the author of "Malignant Self-love: Narcissism Revisited" and other books about personality disorders. His work is cited in hundreds of books and dozens of academic papers: He spent the past 6 years developing a treatment modality for Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD). Over the years, with volunteers, it was found to be effective with clients suffering from a major depressive episode as well.

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