

Personality Disorders: The Controllers, Abusers, Manipulators, and Users in Relationships, Page 2

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Chances are, you're dealing with an individual with a personality disorder somewhere in your life — whether it's your spouse, your parent, your co-worker...even your child. Dr Carver's introduction to personality disorders in relationships puts the reality in plain English; more than just a list of diagnostic criteria, this explanation describes what it's really like to be dealing with a personality disorder and offers tips for victims.

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Core Features of Personality Disorders

Mental health professionals have identified ten personality disorders, each with their own pattern of behaviors, emotionality, and symptoms. However, in my observation, all Cluster B Personality Disorders have core personality features that serve as the foundation for their specific personality disorder. Some of those core personality features are:

Self-Centered

We often hear the phrase "It's All About Me". When making decisions, a healthy person weighs the needs and concerns of others as well as their own. A Personality Disorder weighs only their needs and concerns. A Personality Disorder may use money to feed their family for their own purpose. A brother with a Personality Disorder may intimidate an elderly parent for money or

manipulate a legal situation to eliminate siblings from an inheritance. In most situations, if we are contacted by a Personality Disorder, the contact is for their purpose, not ours.

Refusal to Accept Personal Responsibility for Their Behavior

Individuals with a Personality Disorder almost never accept personal responsibility for their behavior. They blame others, use excuses, claim misunderstandings, and then depict themselves as the victim in the situation. Those that are physically abusive actually blame the victims of their abuse for the assault. Victims often hear "This is your fault! Why did you make me angry?" This aspect of a Personality Disorder is very damaging when the Personality Disorder is a parent. They blame the children for their abusive, neglectful, or dysfunctional behavior. Children are told they are responsible for the temper tantrums, alcohol/substance abuse, unemployment, poverty, unhappiness, etc. of their parent. During a divorce, a Personality Disorder parent often blames the children.

Self-Justification

Individuals with a Personality Disorder don't think, reason, feel, and behave normally. However, they typically justify all of their behaviors. Their justification often comes from their view that they have been victims of society or others and are therefore justified in their manipulative, controlling, criminal or abusive behaviors. A common justification in criminals is to blame the victim for the crime as when hearing "It's his fault (the victim) that he got shot. He should have given me the money faster." Healthy adults find it impossible to reason with a Personality Disorder, finding their justifications impossible to understand.

Entitlement

Individuals with a Personality Disorder have a tremendous sense of entitlement, a sense that they deserve respect, money, fame, power, authority, attention, etc. Some feel they are entitled to be the center of attention and when that doesn't happen, they are entitled to create a scene or uproar to gain that attention. Entitlement also creates a justification to punish others in the Personality Disorder. If you violate one of their rules or demands, they feel entitled to punish you in some way.

Shallow Emotions

Healthy people are always amazed and astonished that a person with a Personality Disorder can quickly detach from a partner, move on, and exhibit very little in the way of remorse or distress. A Personality Disorder can find another partner following a breakup, often within days. These same individuals can also quickly detach from their family and children. They can become angry with their parents and not contact them for years. A Personality Disorder can abandon their children while blaming the spouse/partner for their lack of support and interest. Their ability to behave in this manner is related to their "Shallow Emotions". The best way to think of Shallow Emotions is to have a great \$300.00

automobile (192 euros). You have a limited investment in the automobile, and when it's running great you have no complaints. You take the effort to maintain the vehicle as long as the costs are low. If it develops costly mechanical difficulties, it's cheaper to dispose of it and get another \$300.00 automobile that will run well. Also, if you move a large distance, you leave it behind because it's more costly to transport it. A Personality Disorder has shallow emotions and often views those around them as \$300.00 autos. Their emotional investment in others is minimal. If their partner is too troublesome, they quickly move on. If parents criticize their behavior, they end their relationship with them...until they need something.

Situational Morality

A Personality Disorder takes pride in being able to "do what I gotta do" to have their demands/needs met. They have few personal or social boundaries and in the severe cases, do not feel bound by laws of the land and quickly engage in criminal activity if needed. The motto of a Personality Disorder is "the end justifies the means". Situational morality creates rather extreme behaviors and many Personality Disorders have no hesitation to harm themselves or others to meet their needs. Activities often seen as manipulative are tools of the trade for a Personality Disorder and include lying, dishonesty, conning behavior, intimidation, scheming, and acting. Many Personality Disorders are "social chameleons" and after evaluating a potential victim/partner, alter their presentation to be the most effective. Severe Personality Disorders have no hesitation about self-injury and will cut themselves, overdose, threaten suicide, or otherwise injure themselves with the goal of retaining their partner using guilt and obligation.

Narcissism and Ineffective Lives

A Personality Disorder has a strong influence on the life and lifestyle of the individual. Cluster B personality disorders often have two lives — their "real life" and the imaginary life they present to others that is full of excuses, half-truths, deceptions, cons, lies, fantasies, and stories prepared for a specific purpose. Physical abusers who were forcibly and legally removed from their children and spouse develop a story that the in-laws conspired with the police to separate them from the children they love so deeply. Jail time is often reinterpreted as "I took the blame for my friend so he could continue to work and support his family". A major finding in a Personality Disorder is an ineffective life — reports of tremendous talent and potential but very little in the way of social or occupational success. It's a life of excuses and deceptions. Narcissistic and Antisocial "losers" often promise romantic cruises that never take place or have a reason that their partner needs to place an automobile in his/her name. Their lives are often accompanied by financial irresponsibility, chronic unemployment, legal difficulties, and unstable living situations in the community. Their behavior

often emotionally exhausts those around them — something the Personality Disorder explains with “My family and I have had a falling out.” We can be assured that no matter what “real life” situation is present in the life of the Personality Disorder, there will be a justification and excuse for it.

Social Disruption

There is never a calm, peaceful, and stable relationship with a Cluster B Personality Disorder! Their need to be the center of attention and control those around them ensures a near-constant state of drama, turmoil, discord, and distress. An individual with a Personality Disorder creates drama and turmoil in almost every social situation. Holidays, family reunions, outings in the community, travel, and even grocery shopping are often turned into a social nightmare. The Personality Disorder also creates disruption in their family system. They are the focus of feuds, grudges, bad feelings, jealousy, and turmoil. If you have a member of your family that you hate to see arrive at a family reunion or holiday dinner — he or she probably has a Personality Disorder.

Manipulation As A Way of Life

To obtain our daily personal, social, and emotional needs, a healthy individual has a variety of strategies to use including taking personal action, politely asking someone, making deals, being honest, etc. Healthy individuals also use manipulation as one of many social skills — buying someone a gift to cheer them up, making comments and giving hints that something is desired, etc. For the Personality Disorder, despite the many social strategies available, manipulation is their preferred method of obtaining their wants and needs. The manipulations of a Personality Disorder -when combined with shallow emotions, entitlement, and being self-centered — can be extreme. To obtain their goals, an Antisocial Personality may physically threaten, harass, intimidate, and assault those around them. Histrionic Personalities may create dramatic situations, threaten self-harm, or create social embarrassment. Narcissistic Personalities may send police and an ambulance to your home if you don't answer their phone calls, using the excuse that they were concerned about you. Their real goal is to ensure you that their phone calls must be answered or you will pay the consequences. Borderline Personalities may self-injure in your physical presence. In a relationship with a Personality Disorder, we are constantly faced with a collection of schemes, situations, manipulations, and interactions that have a hidden agenda...their agenda.

The Talk and Behavior Gap

We know how people are by two samples of their personality — their talk and their behavior. A person who is honest has talk/conversation/promises that match their behavior almost 100%. If he/she borrows money and tells you they will repay you Friday, and then pays you Friday, you have an honest person. When we observe these matches frequently, then we can give more trust to that individual in the future. The wider the gap between what a person says/promises and what they do — the more they are considered dishonest, unreliable,

irresponsible, etc. Due to the shallow emotions and situational morality often found in a Personality Disorder, the gap between talk and behavior can be very wide. A Personality Disorder can often assure their spouse that they love them while having an extramarital affair, borrow money with no intention of paying it back, promise anything with no intention of fulfilling that promise, and assure you of their friendship while spreading nasty rumors about you. A rule: Judge a person by their behavior more than their talk or promises.

Dysfunctional Parents

Individuals with a Personality Disorder are frequently parents. However, they are frequently dysfunctional parents. Personality Disorder parents often see their children as a burden to their personal goals, are often jealous of the attention their children receive, often feel competitive with their older children, and often attempt to obtain their personal goals through their children. Personality Disorder parents control their children through manipulation, with little concern for how their parenting behavior will later influence the lives or the personality of the child. Personality Disorder parents are often hypercritical, leaving the child with the feeling that they are incompetent or unworthy. In extreme cases, Antisocial parents criminally neglect, abuse, or exploit their children — often teaching them to become criminals. Criminal parents often use their children to steal or carry drugs to avoid criminal charges as an adult, allowing the children to face the legal charges. Spouses with a Personality Disorder are often jealous of the attention their partner provides to children in the home, frequently targeting the child for verbal abuse in their jealousy. The narcissism and shallow emotions in a Personality Disorder parent leave the c