

Covert Narcissism, the Insidious Disease

Annie Bennett*

Integrative Psychotherapist, Psychosexual Psychotherapist, UK

***Corresponding Author:** Annie Bennett, Integrative Psychotherapist, Psychosexual Psychotherapist, UK.

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Domestic Abuse is a highly topical subject in the UK media at the moment; coupled with the 'Me Too' movement people are becoming much more aware of the pandemic caused by narcissistic abuse in our society; love relationships, family relationships, friends and colleagues, the covert narcissist is out there. The 'Me Too' movement has highlighted covert sexual abuse by those in power or controlling situations take advantage of their prey.

What is not so recognised are the physical effects on the brain and body as a result of this insidious abuse.

I have been studying the phenomena of covert and malignant narcissism in relationships and how this insidious abuse infiltrates the very fabric of a person's reality, it not only affects the victim or target but other people who are taken in and believe the charade played out by the narcissist. Because the covert narcissist is so skilled at hiding his/her true fragmented self they seldom get caught out and they often appear to others as though they are the victim due to their masterful and calculated mask.

The victim stance and blame projecting are very good clues in identifying that you're in a relationship with a covert narcissist. Relentless blaming of others and skillful manipulation often leaves the victim her/himself feeling like they are going crazy and maybe even doubt themselves and their own sense of reality. The narcissist will surreptitiously separate their victims from family and friends leading to isolation.

The covert Narcissist will use their targets personal information to attack them, whereas healthy relationships allow for vulnerability, the narcissist will use vulnerabilities against their victim as ammunition and show no empathy to their victims as they have none.

These behaviours will wear the victim down but the skill the narcissist has in throwing just enough crumbs or plausibility to win/entrap their victim again and again is truly astonishing. The behaviours of the covert narcissist are psychopathic and waver on the verge of evident danger and covert danger which is how they get away with it for so long... until they don't when the victim finally breaks free if they are able to. Setting free from the narcissist is not easy as the covert narcissist fears abandonment and will attempt to keep the loop going as long as possible, in fact the victim is their prey and they 'own it', they are predatory and dangerous. The victims to this abuse are often left feeling like they are a shell of their former selves and shattered at what has happened, it is like experiencing a bomb and being left shell shocked. Should the narcissist fail to keep their victims they will move on to their next person or better known as narcissistic supply without so much as a look in the rear view mirror they are recklessly harmful.

The Narcissist is unlikely to be self-reflective and will not accept accountability for their own actions, this is another good clue to help identify if you're in the presence of a narcissist; they are hungry for Power, control and thrive on inflicting hurt and pain in any perverse form.

The effects of this crazy making behaviour and way of relating leave its indelible mark on their victims. This abuse can even lead to psychological trauma, PTSD and CPTSD.

The brains of Narcissists' and Psychopaths' are different to 'normal' peoples' brains and thankfully due to improved neuroscience we have more technological evidence to study the differences in brain structure. Abuse experienced by a narcissist can cause actual damage to the brain, victims may suffer a hijacked, swollen Amygdala and shrinking hippocampus effecting the short-term memory functionality and leading to increased cortisol levels.

Gaslighting and mind game often played by the Narcissist are deliberately used as a way to control and manipulate the victim and this deliberate disturbing behaviour causes cognitive dissonance to the victim and rewires the brain of the victim. Flash backs and hyper vigilance are two common features that the struggling victim suffers from. There are chemicals that keep the victim bonded to the Narcissist and this attachment is known as trauma bonding. Dr Patrick Carnes has written significantly on trauma bonding in his book 'The Betrayal Bonds'.

This kind of abuse is dangerous not only because of its insidious nature but because it is covert is sneaks up on the victim without having fully realised that something is happening. It can feel like a bolt of lighten when the victim first discovers the abuse leaving a period of shock and dismay that need psychological support. Often victims are left feeling like they have just experienced a psychological robbery, a spiritual rape by the covert narcissist.

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