

The History of Narcissus

According to Greek mythology, Narcissus was a hunter who was known for his beauty. He was also known for his exorbitant amount of self-love, and for how much he disdained and mistreated the people in his life who loved him. Nemesis was the goddess who was responsible for giving out divine punishment to those who yielded to their fatal flaws. Nemesis paid close attention to how horrifically Narcissus treated other people, especially the ones who loved him the most. One day, Nemesis brought Narcissus to a crystal clear pool where he was stunned by the beautiful reflection that he saw of himself. He fell head over heels in love with his own reflection.

From this point, there are a few variations as to how the story ends. One version of this myth tells that Narcissus, being so completely mesmerized with his own image, was unable to move away from it. He stared at his reflection until he died of starvation and thirst.⁶ Another version conveys that when Narcissus's image was not able to reciprocate the love back to him (since it was just a reflection), out of disdain for not being sought after as he "deserved," he committed suicide.⁷

Regardless of the details of the endings, the core of the message remains the same. Narcissus was driven mad by the love of the *image* of himself, and was sentenced to die alone. After rejecting and mistreating everyone who loved him, Narcissus was never able to give or to find true love outside himself. He was consumed only with the love of himself and was forced to die miserable and alone.

These days, a narcissist is also someone who is completely fixated on the *image* of him or herself. This obsession can revolve around their own physical appearance, the image they have of their false self, and the public's perception of who they are. Indeed, at the core, it is the *IMAGE* of *themselves* that the narcissist is truly in love with. This image has been a lifelong project that they have carefully crafted and will protect at all costs. This image is perfect, unrealistic, fraudulent, and delusional.

There are no flaws in the image they have created of themselves. Therefore, a narcissist is someone who is not able to love and accept their true self, which of course is imperfect and does have shortcomings. They only love this “false” image that they reflect to others and to themselves. Truly, no one is as wonderful, deserving, or as all-important as the *image* that a narcissist has of themselves. Much like Narcissus, many narcissists will treat those who are the closest to them with cruelty and disdain.

I wonder if the course of narcissism through the ages would have been different had Narcissus peered into a cesspool. He probably did.⁸

—Frank O’Hara

What Is Narcissistic Abuse?

Whenever you are in close relationship with a narcissist, inevitably you will suffer from narcissistic abuse. The effects are devastating and it is almost inconceivable as to how they can treat you with such inhumanity and cruelty. Narcissistic abuse can cause victims to feel anxious, worthless, and even suicidal due to the chronic devaluation and manipulation they experience. Unfortunately many narcissists are not held accountable for their cruelty because of their deceptive and charming mask that the rest of the world sees.

So You Married A Narcissist is designed to educate you about narcissists, to give you ways to heal from the experience of being in a close relationship with one, and how to live an empowered life long after they are out of your life.