


Narcissism: Is there a bright side to this dark trait?



Presented by Jacqui Bergman



“Research reveals upside of CEO narcissism”

A new study shows self-centered CEOs who “crave acclaim and applause” are more likely to keep their companies at the forefront of technological innovation. Additionally, the desire for attention from self-absorbed CEOs fuels the willingness to make daring decisions that less confident counterparts might shy away from, especially during a period of radical change.

Lausanne, Switzerland, November 17, 2011 / PRNewswire



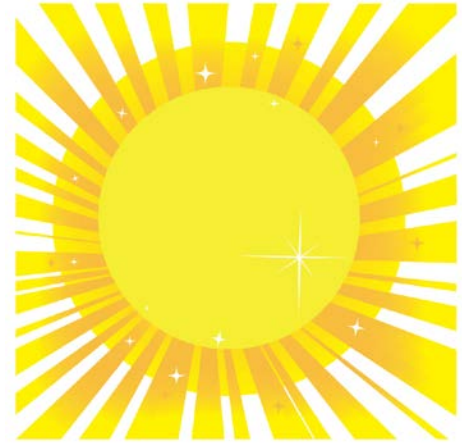
Other researchers have discussed:

- ◆ “Constructive” narcissism (Sosik, Chun, & Zhu, 2014)
- ◆ “Healthy” narcissism (Bentley, 2005)
- ◆ “Productive” narcissism (Maccoby, 2003)



The bright side?

- ✓ Confidence
- ✓ Self-esteem
- ✓ Charisma
- ✓ Extraversion
 - Sociability
 - Assertiveness



Narcissism at a glance

A pervasive pattern of activities, behaviors, or experiences that serve to maintain or enhance a grandiose, yet vulnerable self

- Exaggerated feelings of self-importance
- Sense of entitlement
- Grandiosity in beliefs and behavior
- Excessive need for admiration
- Lack of empathy

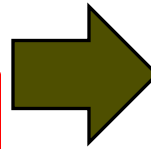


Looking a little more closely...



✓ A clinical personality disorder

✓ A subclinical personality trait



- Difference is essentially one of degree
- Subclinical narcissism is most often measured using the NPI – designed to assess subclinical narcissism, but based directly on the DSM-III criteria

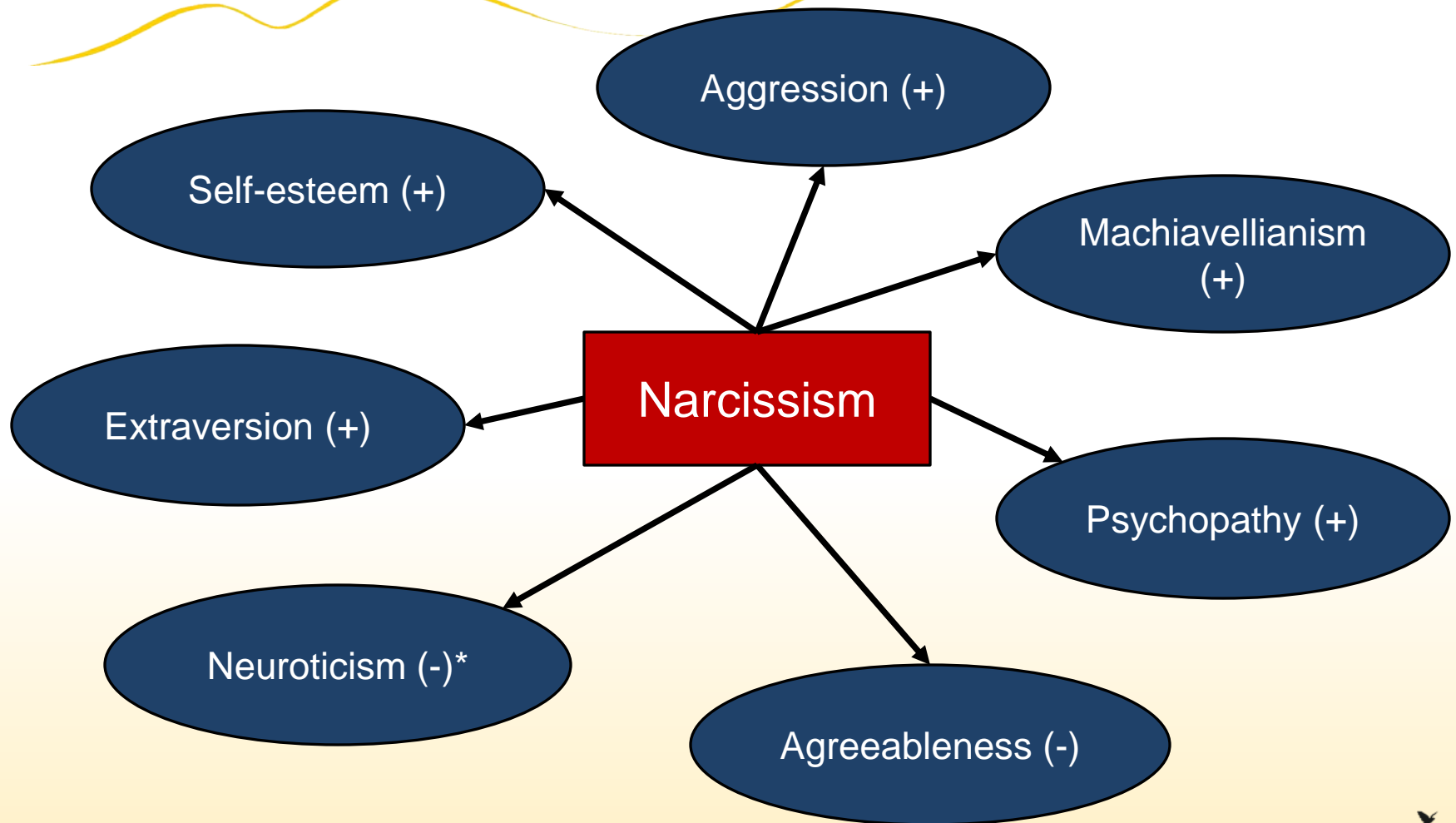
Narcissism and the DSM-III (1980)

- A. **Grandiose** sense of self-importance or uniqueness
- B. Preoccupation with **fantasies** of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty or ideal love
- C. **Exhibitionism**
- D. Cool indifference or marked feelings of rage, inferiority, shame, humiliation, or emptiness in **response to criticism**, indifference of others, or defeat
- E. At least two of the following characteristic disturbances in interpersonal relationships:
 - 1) **Entitlement**: expectation of special favors without assuming reciprocal responsibilities
 - 2) Interpersonal **exploitativeness**
 - 3) Relationships that characteristically alternate between two extremes of overidealization and devaluation
 - 4) Lack of **empathy**

Narcissism and the DSM-V (2013)

- A. Significant **impairments in personality functioning** manifest by:
1. **Impairments in self functioning** (a or b)
 - a) Identity – excessive reference to others for self-esteem; **exaggerated** self-appraisal
 - b) Self-direction – personal standards are **unreasonably high** to see oneself as exceptional, or too low based on **entitlement**
 2. **Impairments in interpersonal functioning** (a or b)
 - a) **Empathy** – impaired ability to recognize or identify with feeling and needs of others
 - b) **Intimacy** – relationships largely superficial and exist to serve self-esteem regulation
- B. Pathological **personality traits** in the following domain:
1. **Antagonism**, characterized by:
 - a) **Grandiosity** – feelings of entitlement; self-centeredness; condescending
 - b) **Attention seeking** – excessive attempts to attract the focus of attention of others

Its nomological network



So... is there a bright side?



Research indicates that narcissists:

- ✗ Need constant affirmation and adulation
- ✗ Ignore the advice of others
- ✗ Take unnecessary and excessive risks
- ✗ Are extremely sensitive to criticism or slights and cannot tolerate dissent
- ✗ Readily take credit for success and pass blame for failure
- ✗ Quickly *emerge* as leaders, but are not any more *effective* as leaders than non-narcissists

Going forward...



- ✓ Be careful and specific with conceptualizations of narcissism
 - Suggestion (Horney, 1939) – the term “narcissism” should be restricted to unrealistic self-inflation, and distinguished entirely from healthy self-esteem
- ✓ Re-examine and improve the measurement of subclinical narcissism

My recommendation



- ✓ If you want extraverted, confident, charismatic employees/leaders, then hire and promote people who are **extraverted**, **confident**, and **charismatic**.
 - Hiring/promoting a narcissistic may get you these qualities, but it will also get you a lot of negative qualities that will very likely outweigh any positive.