

THE AUTOIMMUNE DISEASE-NARCISSISTIC AGGRESSION CONNECTION

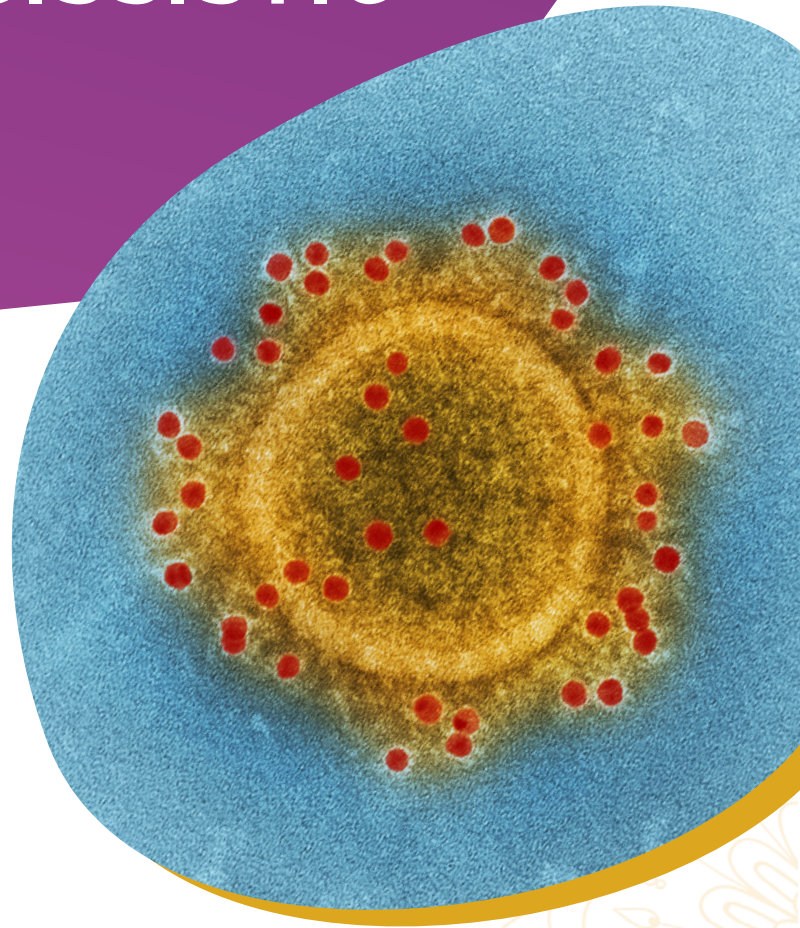


Autoimmune disease

is aggression turned on oneself.

When you are at war with yourself there can be no winner. Several thousand years ago in the Ayurvedic medical paradigm, the rishis, or sages, of India identified undigested anger as a root cause of autoimmunity and cancer.

There is modern scientific evidence to support this claim. If you look at a statistical analysis of the span of years between 1950 and current day society, you will find that autoimmunity is on the rise. The same rise is seen in narcissism and deaths of despair. The rise of narcissism in our society has been going on in the background for most of us. It's much like a frog in boiling water that doesn't notice the water is heating up.



Many people do not identify with the word narcissism when it comes to self-identity. However, there are many different kinds of narcissism, and this behavior and perceptual pattern occurs on a spectrum of intensity and frequency. I have noticed that many of my patients with autoimmune disease self-identify as “highly sensitive people (HSP)”, “empaths”, and “empathetic.” In fact, being a perfectionist and a people pleaser are two of the “4 Ps” of autoimmunity (Ayurvedic pitta dosha and holding onto the poison of past pain being the other two).

There is a common attraction between HSPs, empaths, and empathic people and narcissists. In fact, much has been written of this and there are quizzes you can take to see if you are a HSP, empath, and where you fall on the empathy spectrum. This dichotomization between the more commonly recognized form of narcissism and HSPs has not been helpful in reversing autoimmunity. In fact, from what I have observed, it has locked the pattern in more concretely by validating the experience of the HSP and empath and creating virtue signaling in the community for those who do not have the stereotypical pattern of overt narcissism. I can say that this was certainly the case for me!



What I began to notice is those of us who attract overt narcissists into our lives have what I was calling a form of “inverse narcissism” present in the way we run our energy and patterns of perception and behavior as a result of past trauma. This magnet like attraction is linked to being a victim of adverse childhood experiences and adopting adaptive behavioral strategies that include being able to “read the room with exceptional skill”, having a high degree of emotional intelligence, tuning into patterns and frequencies of energy and behavior, using kindness and compassion as a personality definition, and perfectionism and/or caregiving to feel self-worth. In other words, an HSP, empath, intuitive, etc. This form of inverse narcissism that attracts overt narcissists to us is called **Maladaptive Covert Narcissism**.



If you are familiar with the enneagram, you might notice that what I am describing fits the pattern of enneagram types 1, 2, 4, and 9. If you know the character styles and survival patterns as outlined by Wilhelm Reich, Stephen M. Johnson, Steven Kessler (and others), you will note the Leaving Pattern, the Merging Pattern, the Enduring Pattern, and the Rigid Pattern energy systems described in different ways here. If you have studied Tibetan Bon, Dzogchen, or Tantra you will notice the shadow sides of the elements of air, water, fire, and earth described.

In fact, it's the shadow aspect of our early "adaptive" meanings, beliefs, and behavioral responses to early trauma that create these patterns of survival that then become "maladaptive" in adulthood and eventually lead to disease as they

armor in the physical body, reflected in our musculoskeletal structure, genetic expression, hormonal cascade, adrenal response, gut health, immune function, and organ health.

The good news is you can change it all if you are just willing to engage in the compassionate curiosity needed to patiently self-confront your own thoughts, beliefs, behaviors, and patterns of perception that create your reality and health. In other words, if you are willing to heal your trauma and then set about changing the survival patterns that you created as a result of that trauma. Remember, there is also a gift in your patterns. You will be highly skilled in the gift, and we do NOT want to eliminate that... just shine light into the shadow aspect that is creating drama and trauma in your relationships, life, and body.



The Types of Narcissism

There are five kinds of narcissism described in psychology. Again, narcissism is a way of perceiving and behaving and occurs on a spectrum of frequency and intensity from person to person. At the far end of the spectrum will be Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD), which has specific diagnostic criteria. It's important to make this distinction as the word "narcissism" is thrown about a lot these days without clear definitions.

Five types of narcissism are:



Overt or Agentic
Narcissism



Covert
Narcissism



Antagonistic
Narcissism



Communal
Narcissism



Malignant
Narcissism

Let's look at what the difference is between these types.





Overt or Agentic Narcissism

Overt narcissism, also called agentic narcissism, is what you might think of as the “classic” and most obvious form of narcissism. Someone experiencing overt narcissism is excessively preoccupied with how others see them.

They're often overly focused on status, wealth, flattery, and power due to their grandiosity and sense of entitlement. Many overt narcissists are high-achieving and deeply sensitive to criticism, no matter how slight.



Covert Narcissism

Covert narcissism, also known as closet narcissism or vulnerable narcissism, isn't as obvious as overt narcissism. Like other people with narcissism, someone with covert narcissism has an inflated sense of self-importance and craves admiration from others.

However, someone living with covert

narcissism might display more subtle and passive negative behaviors. Rather than bragging about themselves or demanding respect, they might engage in blaming, shaming, manipulation, or emotional neglect to get what they want and keep the focus on themselves. They also might see themselves as a victim.



Antagonistic Narcissism

While all people with narcissistic traits might be overly concerned with how they appear to others, antagonistic narcissists are particularly concerned with coming out “on top.” Antagonistic narcissism is defined by a sense of competitiveness, arrogance, and rivalry.

Someone with antagonistic narcissism might try to exploit others to get ahead. They might also put others down or start arguments in an attempt to gain the upper hand or appear dominant.



Communal Narcissism

Like someone living with covert narcissism, someone experiencing communal narcissism might not appear to be ego-driven at all.

They might initially come across as selfless or even as a martyr. But their internal motivation is to earn praise and admiration, not help others.

To that end, these people often place themselves at the forefront of social causes or communities, usually as the leader or the face of a movement.

People with communal narcissism see themselves as more empathetic, caring, or selfless than others and often display moral outrage.



Malignant Narcissism

Malignant narcissism is often seen as the most severe or potentially abusive form of NPD. Someone with malignant narcissism has the same egocentric self-absorption and sense of superiority as other

narcissists. They also have traits associated with antisocial personality disorder like aggression, paranoia, and a lack of empathy. They might even have a sadistic streak.



Those of us who have been in the classic “Empath-Narcissist” love, parent, work relationship will recognize the narcissistic abuse cycle:



However, do we recognize what got us there? Do we recognize that the same trauma and subsequent survival pattern also creates the autoimmune disease and cancer in our own bodies?

Take a look at the following quiz and see if you carry any of the Maladaptive Covert Narcissism being tested here within the shadow of your own personality structure. If so, it shows up inside your physical structure too...as well as in your relationships.

MALADAPTIVE COVERT NARCISSISM QUIZ

Please answer the following questions by deciding to what extent each item is characteristic of your feelings and behavior. Be honest!

1 very uncharacteristic or untrue, strongly disagree

2 uncharacteristic

3 neutral

4 characteristic

5 very characteristic or true, strongly agree

- ☐ **1.** I can become entirely absorbed in thinking about my personal affairs, my health, my cares or my relations to others.
- ☐ **2.** My feelings are easily hurt by ridicule or the slighting remarks of others.
- ☐ **3.** When I enter a room, I often become self-conscious and feel that the eyes of others are upon me.
- ☐ **4.** I dislike sharing the credit of an achievement with others.
- ☐ **5.** I feel that I have enough on my hands without worrying about other people's troubles.
- ☐ **6.** I feel that I am temperamentally different from most people.
- ☐ **7.** I often interpret the remarks of others in a personal way.
- ☐ **8.** I easily become wrapped up in my own interests and forget the existence of others.

MALADAPTIVE COVERT NARCISSISM QUIZ

- ☐ 9. I dislike being with a group unless I know that I am appreciated by at least one of those present.
- ☐ 10. I am secretly "put out" or annoyed when other people come to me with their troubles, asking me for time and sympathy.
- ☐ 11. I am jealous of good-looking people.
- ☐ 12. I tend to feel humiliated when criticized.
- ☐ 13. I wonder why people aren't more appreciative of my good qualities.
- ☐ 14. I tend to see other people as being either great or terrible.
- ☐ 15. I sometimes have fantasies about being violent without knowing why.
- ☐ 16. I am especially sensitive to success and failure.
- ☐ 17. I have problems that nobody else seems to understand.
- ☐ 18. I try to avoid rejection at all costs.
- ☐ 19. My secret thoughts, feelings, and actions would horrify some of my friends.
- ☐ 20. I tend to become involved in relationships in which I alternately adore and despise the other person.

MALADAPTIVE COVERT NARCISSISM QUIZ

- ☐ **21.** Even when I am in a group of friends, I often feel very alone and uneasy.
- ☐ **22.** I resent others who have what I lack.
- ☐ **23.** Defeat or disappointment usually shame or anger me, but I try not to show it.



Scoring the Maladaptive Covert Narcissism Quiz

<40 you have very little maladaptive covert narcissism

40-80 you are average for the U.S. in maladaptive covert narcissism

>81 you are high in maladaptive covert narcissism

>97 you are a covert narcissist

What was **your score?**

Remember we run these patterns for much of our early life not understanding that they are not necessarily healthy, truthful, or universal for everyone else. One of the signs we are maturing is our willingness to begin to question our own minds. Just because we think it, have thought it forever, and our community thinks it to doesn't make it an absolute TRUTH. It just makes it a common pattern within our tribe.

Does your pattern serve you, create happiness within, foster freedom and health in your body, mind, heart, and spirit? If not, you can transform it and reverse your autoimmunity at the same time.*



*Therapies offered in packages in Dr. Keesha's practice include EMDR therapy, Brain Spotting, Somatic therapy, Attachment-Informed methods, Cognitive therapy, Internal Family Systems/Parts work, the Enneagram, MDMA Assisted/plant medicine assisted psychotherapy, and Expressive methods to help you experience relief. Alternatively or additionally, you can begin by engaging in the online healing program called [Healing Trauma Through the Chakra System.](#)



Dr. Keesha Ewers

Dr. Keesha Ewers is board certified in functional medicine and Ayurvedic medicine, a Doctor of Sexology, a trauma informed psychotherapist, family practice advanced registered nurse practitioner with a specialty in integrative medicine, a MAPS certified MDMA assisted psychotherapy therapist, a conscious dying doula, and the founder and medical director of the Academy for Integrative Medicine Health Coach Certification Program.

Keesha has been in the medical field for over 30 years. After conducting the HURT Study in 2013 (Healing Un-Resolved Trauma), she developed the HURT Model for understanding how past childhood trauma impacts adult health. This led to the creation of the Freedom Framework that she used to reverse her own autoimmune disease and now has used to help hundreds of her patients do the same. She created the *Healing Trauma Through the Chakra System* online program and the *You Unbroken* online program for patients to heal their own trauma and the Mystic Medicine deep immersion healing retreats she leads at her home outside of Seattle, WA.



Dr. Ewers is a popular speaker, including at Harvard and from the TEDx stage, and the best-selling author of *Solving the Autoimmune Puzzle: The Woman's Guide to Reclaiming Emotional Freedom and Vibrant Health*, *The Quick and Easy Autoimmune Paleo Cookbook: Anti-Inflammatory Recipes with 7 Ingredients or Less for Busy People*, and *Your Libido Story: A workbook for women who want to find, fix, and free their sexual desire*. You can listen to her Mystic Medicine Radio Show and find her programs at

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