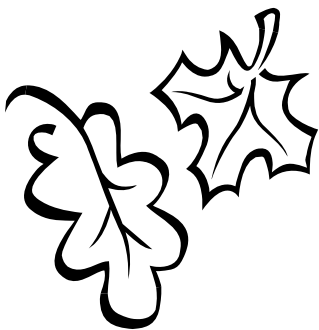


FOCUS



Routines, Rituals, and Relationships

The lazy, laid back pace of summer days are now gone. The school year requires a different regimen that includes earlier bedtimes and wake-up times. Routines are how families organize themselves to get things done, spend time together, and have fun. They help family members to know what, when, in what order, and how often. Yet, there's more to it than eliminating chaos and bringing organization. Routines also let children know what's important to your family. Meaningful routines are sometimes referred to as rituals. They help to build and strengthen family's shared beliefs, values, and goals, and encourage a sense of belonging. Routines benefit children in many ways. They can be a way of teaching healthy habits by making mundane tasks automatic, such as brushing teeth, or feeding pets. A well organized home with predictable activities fosters a sense of safety and security in children. Relationships between parents

and children can be strengthened when they are built around fun and spending time together, like regular bedtime stories or after school snacks. Daily routines are also helpful in setting our body's "clocks." For example routine bedtimes tell our bodies when to sleep. Routines can assist our memories to recall important details of our day and to teach a sense of responsibility, basic work skills, and time management. Maintaining normal routines can be helpful when children are faced with stressful events, such as the death of a family member, divorce, or transferring to a new city. Routines can be difficult to develop, but once in place they offer many benefits to parents:

- they free up your time
- they can help you feel like you're doing a good job as a parent
- they lower your stress when things become hectic
- they can help you complete your tasks

more efficiently

- over time, you will need to give fewer instructions and do less reminding
- they can free you from constantly making decisions or solving disputes.

Perhaps it's time to create some new routines for your family? Consider the following: What do you do regularly with your family? Would life be more enjoyable if these things ran more smoothly? Could children be more involved? How could they be included? Are there activities that you would like to be doing but aren't? Can you include some of them in the family regular routine?



**"A child wants some kind of routine or rhythm.
A child seems to want a predictable, orderly world."
Abraham Maslow, psychologist**

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Six Bad Reasons to Date Someone

Of all the endeavors you can pursue, dating can be one of the most enjoyable. It's entertaining, it provides companionship, and it can lead to lasting love and partnership. But as you decide whether you're ready to date, make sure you are doing it for the right reasons: You have a full life that you would like to share with another person. With that in mind, here are a few bad reasons to date someone...

- **Your friends want you paired off.**

Just because your friends are married or coupled up doesn't mean you have to find "your other half." If they are pressuring you to date, be firm. You need to

want to, not because everyone else in your life thinks it's the right thing to do.

- **You can't stand to be alone.**

If you approach dating with the desperation of a person who is uncomfortable spending any time alone, you might not choose a suitable partner. Learn to enjoy your own company and that of your friends and family before embarking on a new romantic relationship.

- **Well, he/she *did* ask me out...**

It's wonderfully flattering to be asked out on a date, but you don't owe anyone a thing. Remember you'll have a more satisfying romantic life if you choose whom and when to date. Don't just say yes to the

next person who comes along because it's less work that way.

- **You're "that age."**

Who knows what "that age" even means these days, but sometimes we feel pressured to date because others (and the youth-obsessed media) are telling us that time is slipping away for finding a mate. Pshaw! You can fall in love at any time in your life, and the experience will be that much richer if you're emotionally ready. Whether you're 25 or 75, there is no "right age" for dating or commitment. Listen to your heart and date when you feel ready.

- **You want someone to fix your life.**

You've heard it a million times before, but that's because it's true: *you* are in

charge of your own happiness and your life's circumstances.

Please don't date someone as motivation to quit smoking, pay the bills on time, get out of the house, etc. Take care of yourself now in order to be a good partner later.

- **You want to further your career.**

Try not to mix business with pleasure by using dating as a way to make professional contacts. People might get hurt and your reputation could be compromised. Be honest with yourself about your goals. If you're much more concerned with work than with being a good partner perhaps you should put your love life on hold for a few months.

Source: Laura Schafer is the author of *Man with Farm Seeks Woman with Tractor: The Best and Worst Personal Ads of All Time*

What Makes a Narcissist Tick?

Do you know someone who is narcissistic? This can be a real challenge. While narcissists can be fun, witty and outgoing in public, they slowly destroy the relationships with those closest to them. Never-ending streams of demands for attention—and punishment when that attention is not given—make life an emotional roller coaster for those who love a narcissist. For these devoted people, the challenge becomes how to maintain their own sense of self in a world where they are required to

focus fully on someone else.

WHERE DOES NARCISSISM COME FROM?

While narcissism is hardly unique to the 21st-century lifestyles, there's much about the way we live today that nurtures this tendency. Contributing factors include indulgent parenting styles...technology that allows immediate gratification of every whim...a culture built on fame for its own sake...and, now, social networks that enable people to issue news reports on everything from what they ate for

breakfast to their opinion in some celebrity's marital spat. On the one hand, a recent survey from Flagler College and Western Kentucky University points to online self-promotional behavior as fuel for a growing legion of narcissists...on the other, the newest version of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (the 5th edition, due out in 2013) has eliminated it as an official personality disorder. Narcissism, it seems, is thriving, and is well on its way to becoming "normal." I spoke recently with Karyl McBride, PhD, author of the book

Will I Ever Be Good Enough? Healing the Daughters of Narcissistic Mothers

(NeverGoodEnough.com), who shared her insights into how you can best maintain your well-being if you live with a narcissist.

WHO ARE NARCISSISTS?

Narcissism derives its name from a character in Greek mythology—Narcissus, who was so enchanted with his own reflection in a pool of water that he was unable to stop staring at it.

(continued from page 2)
While narcissists appear strong and confident the truth is that their bravado is rooted in a deep insecurity and a need for reassurance. It is this insecurity that has them seeking constant attention, like an infant who must have attention from his/her mother because he lacks the ability to control his world. As is true with most aspects of personality, narcissistic behavior exists on a continuum. Intensely narcissistic people become deeply destructive to those around them, and few people find them tolerable to live with. But, said Dr. McBride, it is possible to live reasonably happily with someone with mild narcissism—as long as you recognize his/her behavior for what it is. *Narcissists are characterized by the following...*

- Grandiose, exaggerated sense of self-importance and belief that they're better than others.
- Preoccupation with fantasies of power, success or beauty.
- Difficulty maintaining healthy relationships.
- Need for constant praise and admiration.
- Strong sense of entitlement.
- Expectation that other people will go along with their ideas and plans.
- Tendency to take advantage of people.
- Jealousy of others and/or the belief that others are jealous of them.
- Fragile self-esteem and extreme sensitivity to criticism.

Making these characteristics even more difficult to live with is the fact that narcissists tend to not have any idea of the impact they have around them. They won't understand your complaints, and they won't change. So you can either choose to leave or must figure out how to make the most of a difficult situation. Should you choose to stay, it will require time and energy to make it work—and Dr. McBride emphasizes that this next point is critically important—preserving your own sense of self-worth. *To do this she recommends the following coping mechanisms...*

Learn more about the condition. Understanding what makes a narcissist tick and the root of how he/she got that way may help you accept the person's limitations and modify your own expectations.

Demand respect. Be clear that you will not tolerate disrespectful language such as belittling remarks...constant criticism...controlling behavior...and unreasonable rages. Any behaviors that veer into physical or emotional abuse are not acceptable—for instance, yelling and name calling, isolation from family or friends, or other possessive or manipulative behavior.

Don't blame yourself. A narcissist will value or devalue you according to what you've done for him lately, putting your own self-esteem at risk, warns Dr. McBride. If the perception is that you haven't done enough, the reaction may be to put you down—but don't accept the blame. Never lose sight of the

fact that you are a good person and that the “noise” from the narcissist is simply his distorted point of view, not reality.

Put your well-being first. Don't lose yourself while tending to the narcissist. Define your own wants and needs and figure out how to get them met. *Guard yourself at all time:* Be firm and consistent about expressing your wishes and requirements.

Build a support system. Since narcissists lack empathy, they are not going to be able to give you understanding or support. You need to have others in your life who can provide friendship and emotional connection outside of your home.

Realize you can't change a narcissist. You can encourage an individual to gain more self-awareness—e.g., see a therapist—but for the most part you need to accept him as is...or move on.

WHEN IT'S TOO MUCH TO TAKE

Sadly, it's not uncommon for narcissists to eventually behave in ways that are destructive to themselves and the people they purport to love. Changing one's personality traits—which is the challenge that faces a narcissist—is a very difficult proposition. If a person has few narcissistic traits on the continuum, psychotherapy can help by offering him a more realistic self-image. But be warned—those with a full blown narcissistic disorder will not go into therapy. And if you drag them there, they will spend their time discussing how bad you are.

For better or for worse, many of us have narcissists in our lives. If you care for a narcissistic person, be true to yourself and try to accept your partner as he is. As a last resort, keep in mind that you can always separate yourself from the situation if it becomes intolerable.

Source: Karyl McBride, PhD, LMFT, Arvada CO, author of *Will I Ever Be Good Enough? Healing the Daughters of Narcissistic Mothers* (Free Press)





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Vaccines to End Addiction



There aren't many tools to combat addiction. There are medications, like methadone, which block the drugs in the brain, plus behavioral therapy and cold turkey. But some scientists are now viewing drugs of abuse as toxic interlopers—and focusing on fighting them immunologically, like influenza.

Drugs of abuse zoom past the blood-brain barrier and stimulate the reinforcing reward centers in the brain. But hooking up an addictive substance with a foreign protein that acts as an immune stimulus, and then

turning it into a vaccine, may be a promising way to outsmart the system. The resulting antibody response clears the drug from the system before much of it reaches the brain.

Further, a vaccine for addiction could stimulate immune memory. The next time the drug enters the system, the body recognizes it even in the absence of a carrier protein, and antibodies wrangle and destroy most of it. The resulting high is weaker, and researchers find that, rather than taking more drugs to compensate, users

decrease their drug use—and many quit completely.

Daryl Shorter, a psychiatrist at Baylor College of Medicine who is currently developing a cocaine vaccine, suspects we'll see vaccines commercially available in 15 to 20 years. They might be used to kick-start rehab or to prevent relapse in those who've overcome addiction. One day, drug vaccines might even be used preventively in children.

Source: Tarah Knarensboro, *Psychology Today*, July/August 2011