

Sadism in Sadistic and Narcissistic Personality Disorders

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Received date: February 05, 2021; Accepted date: February 19, 2021; Published date: February 26, 2021

Citation: Vaknin S (2021) Department of Psychology, Southern Federal University, Geneva, Switzerland. Ann of Behave Sci Vol.7 No.1: 01.

Abstract

Narcissists rarely enjoy inflicting pain for no reason as do sexual sadists. Narcissists act sadistically when behaving this way generates or yields Narcissistic Supply and in order to punish sources of narcissistic supply who are perceived by the narcissist to be intentionally frustrating and withholding. Sadists are masters of abuse by proxy and ambient abuse. They terrorize and intimidate even their nearest and dearest into doing their bidding. They create an aura and atmosphere of unmitigated yet diffuse dread and consternation. This they achieve by promulgating complex "rules of the house" that restrict the autonomy of their dependants (spouses, children, employees, patients, clients, etc.). They have the final word and are the ultimate law. They must be obeyed, no matter how arbitrary and senseless are their rulings and decisions. Most sadists are fascinated by gore and violence. They are vicarious serial killers: they channel their homicidal urges in socially acceptable ways by "studying" and admiring historical figures such as Hitler, for instance. They love guns and other weapons, are fascinated by death, torture, and martial arts in all their forms.

Keywords: Behavioral therapy; Behavioral Counselling; Personality psychopathology; Adolescent psychopathology; Clinical depression

Introduction

Paper

Sadistic Personality Disorder made its last appearance in the DSM III-TR and was removed from the DSM IV and from its text revision, the DSM IV-TR. Some scholars, notably Theodore Millon, regard its removal as a mistake and lobby for its reinstatement in future editions of the DSM.

The Sadistic Personality disorder is characterized by a pattern of gratuitous cruelty, aggression, and demeaning behaviors which indicate the existence of deep-seated contempt for other people and an utter lack of empathy. Some sadists are "utilitarian": They leverage their explosive violence to establish a position of unchallenged dominance within a relationship. Unlike psychopaths, they rarely use physical force in the commission of crimes. Rather, their aggressiveness is embedded

in an interpersonal context and is expressed in social settings, such as the family or the workplace.

This narcissistic need for an audience manifests itself in other circumstances. Sadists strive to humiliate people in front of witnesses. This makes them feel omnipotent. Power plays are important to them and they are likely to treat people under their control or entrusted to their care harshly: a subordinate, a child, a student, a prisoner, a patient, or a spouse are all liable to suffer the consequences of the sadist's "control freakery" and exacting "disciplinary" measures [1].

Sadists like to inflict pain because they find suffering, corporeal and psychological, amusing. They torture animals and people because, to them, the sights and sounds of a creature writhing in agony are hilarious and pleasurable. Sadists go to great lengths to hurt others: they lie, deceive, commit crimes, and even make personal sacrifices merely so as to enjoy the cathartic moment of witnessing someone else's misery.

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The Monk-Sadist

In broad strokes, there are two types of sadists: the Monster and the Monk.

We are all acquainted with the first type, the habitué protagonist of horror films, as described above, in this article.

Far less known and acknowledged is the Monk-sadist. He tortures people by confronting them with a personal example of unparalleled and unsurpassed morality, rectitude, virtue, asceticism, and righteousness. His saintly conduct is intended solely to inflict pain by allowing him to criticize, berate, and

chastise from a position of high moral ground. His soapbox is his weapon as he poses and imposes impossible demands and untenable standards of behavior, setting up his victims to failure and humiliation.

Having thus secured their fall from grace, he then proceeds to harp on their shortcomings, errors, peccadilloes, and vulnerabilities, labelling them "moral turpitude" and "decadence". He dispenses punishment with relish and basks in the agony and writhing of his flock, charges, or interlocutors.

The Sexual Sadist

There is an almighty confusion, even among mental health practitioners and in diagnostic bibles, such as ICD-10, between the dom in BDSM (with hyperdominant sexuality) and the sexual sadist.

The dom (top) seeks to please his submissive (bottom) partner by subjecting her to pain, humiliation, and degradation. His arousal crucially depends on the power he exercises over her and on her overt excitement at the wielding of his dominance. The sadist is turned on only by the evident suffering and repulsion of his counterparty during the intercourse [4,5].

BDSM is consensual and, often, compassionate and considerate. Sadism in bed is exercised either without consent or with coerced consent which is extorted reluctantly and, usually, under explicit or implicit threat of abandonment.

The sadist dehumanizes his partner and reduces her to body parts. To him, she is not a human being, let alone a woman or even a sexual entity. He is out to spoil, dismantle, and corrupt her, as children do with toys. His main desire is to witness her unbelieving horror at what is being done to her, at her psychological or physical mutilation, and at the cheer and gratification on her tormentor's face as he proceeds with his gruesome business. Her nauseating disgust, extreme discomfort, and palpable hurt, debasement, and agony are his aphrodisiacs. Conventional vanilla sex actually turns him off.

BDSM (Bondage, Discipline, Dominance, Submission, Sadism, and Masochism) is both a sexual preference and a lifestyle. Many monogamous couples are into BDSM and it requires lots of trust in the partner and good communication skills to negotiate pitfalls and preferences.

One common mistake is that the submissive (or bottom) partner is a masochist. It is utter nonsense engendered by grossly inaccurate renditions of the scene by the likes of "Fifty Shades of Grey". In reality, many submissives are also dominant with other people or in different circumstances.

Masochism revolves around self-sabotage and self-destruction.

The Narcissist as a Sadist

In the narcissist's own words:

"Whenever I am mean and nasty (which is often), someone writes with an air of knowing sympathy: "What did you expect? He is a narcissist!" This nonsensical type of commentary just

serves to show to what extent the field has been corrupted by a tsunami of trashy misinformation promulgated by self-styled "narcissistic abuse experts" flying by the seat of their badly frayed pants.

I am nasty and mean not because I am a narcissist but because I am a sadist. I enjoy it orgasmically when I make other people squirm and writhe in extreme discomfort bordering on agony. I am brutally, unflinchingly honest and I give my interlocutors no hope and no quarter. Words are my favoured torture implements. I hone them religiously.

This is also why I am into nonviolent BDSM (sado-maso) and group sex: I derive sexual gratification from mildly hurting my intimate partner (ritualistically) and from humiliating and objectifying her or watching her being violated by others [6].

By and large, narcissists are not sadists (though, of course, some narcissists are sadists and some sadists are narcissists). They do not derive pleasure from the pain and discomfort that they cause others. They do not attempt to torture or hurt anyone for the sake of doing so. They are goal-oriented. They seek narcissistic supply. Whoever gets in the way and frustrates or obstructs them in this sempiternal quest gets trampled on: not with glee or joy but with rage or, more likely, absentmindedly and offhandedly, as an afterthought.

I get a high-like rush from rejecting the sexual advances of women or from teasing them to the point of agonizing distraction. Shocking women this way is so potent that I prefer it to actual sex: the gratification I get from frustrating women, wounding them to the quick, disempowering them, and hurtfully undermining their self-esteem is more than orgasmic.

Richard von Kraft-Ebbing was the first to suggest (in his seminal tome, "Psychopathia Sexualis", published in 1886) that sadism amounts to deviant sexuality. There is sado-masochism as a sexual practice, of course. In actual sex, I am mostly a sadist, though I avoid any physical injury to my female partner, I just force her to perform humiliating acts, thus objectifying her maximally. But sadism can also be a form of sublimated (socially acceptable, diverted and channeled) psychosexuality. Devastating women by rejecting them is both sadistic and erotic and, on the surface at least, conforms to social behavioral conventions and mores.

According to the recent mega study "A Billion Wicked Thoughts", women cannot resist men who find them irresistible and treat them with affection regardless of any other quality in the man or lack thereof. A man can be an ugly junkie loser dimwit and still bed a woman if he treats her as a princess and perseveres in passionate courtship. I make sure to deny women precisely these elements and then observe their disintegration, decompensation, and acting out with unmitigated sex-like pleasure.

I do the same to men and get the same high out of it, but, being heterosexual, with men it is merely a power trip: my ability to deny their most fervid wishes and humiliate them in the processes buttresses my grandiose omnipotence". Formed by a sadistic mother, the male narcissist seeks to recreate this nefarious maternal presence in all his future relationships: he

coerces his women to become mother figures. But the narcissist doesn't seek unconditional love from the women in his life, he is not trying to resolve childhood conflicts through them, or to fix their brokenness and ameliorate their pains. He is not intent on saving them.

On the very contrary: he wants to do to women what his mother did to him. He wants to abuse them sadistically and reject them by absenting himself and by withholding in every manner conceivable. When he does have sex with his female partner, it is exceedingly humiliating and excruciatingly painful to her.

Aware of his maltreatment and of his transgressions, the narcissist fully expects his women to hurt him and to abandon him, usually by cheating on him with other men egregiously and conspicuously, incidentally cementing his view that all women are innately sluttish and cruel. Anticipating this ineluctable punitive backlash renders the narcissist anxious: to avoid the unbearable agony in store, he withdraws coldly and detaches emotionally from his woman. He frequently pushes his women to cheat so as to get it over with and let the other shoe drop.

Question

You mention three different types of victims of the narcissist. What things would cause a narcissist to victimise a significant other sadistically versus just discarding them when no longer useful?

Answer

The narcissist simply discards people when he becomes convinced that they can no longer provide him with Narcissistic Supply. This conviction, subjective and emotionally charged, does not have to be grounded in reality. Suddenly because of boredom, disagreement, disillusion, a fight, an act, inaction, or a mood the narcissist wildly swings from idealisation to devaluation.

The narcissist then detaches immediately. He needs all the energy he can muster to obtain new Sources of Narcissistic Supply and would rather not spend these scarce resources over what he regards as human refuse, the waste left after the extraction of Narcissistic Supply. A narcissist would tend to display the sadistic aspect of his personality in one of two cases:

- That the very acts of sadism generate Narcissistic Supply to be consumed by the narcissist ("I inflict pain, therefore I am superior and omnipotent").
- That the victims of his sadism are still his only or major Sources of Narcissistic Supply but are perceived by him to be intentionally frustrating and withholding. Sadistic acts are his way of punishing them for not being docile, obedient, admiring and adoring as he expects them to be in view of his uniqueness, cosmic significance, and special entitlement.

The narcissist is not a full-fledged sadist, masochist, or paranoiac. He does not enjoy hurting his victims. He does not believe firmly that he is the focal point of persecution and the target of conspiracies. But, he does enjoy punishing himself

when it provides him with a sense of relief, exoneration and validation. This is his masochistic streak. Because of his lack of empathy and his rigid personality, he often inflicts great (physical or mental) pain on meaningful others in his life and he enjoys their writhing and suffering. In this restricted sense he is a sadist. To support his sense of uniqueness, greatness and (cosmic) significance, he is often hypervigilant. If he falls from grace – he attributes it to dark forces out to destroy him. If his sense of entitlement is not satisfied and he is ignored by others, he attributes it to the fear and inferiority that he provokes in them. So, to some extent, he is a paranoid [7,8].

The narcissist is as much an artist of pain as any sadist. The difference between them lies in their motivation. The narcissist tortures and abuses as means to punish and to reassert superiority, omnipotence, and grandiosity. The sadist does it for pure (usually, sexually-tinged) pleasure. But both are adept at finding the chinks in people's armours. Both are ruthless and venomous in the pursuit of their prey. Both are unable to empathise with their victims, self-centred, and rigid.

The narcissist abuses his victim verbally, mentally, or physically (often, in all three ways). He infiltrates her defences, shatters her self-confidence, confuses and confounds her, demeans and debases her. He invades her territory, abuses her confidence, exhausts her resources, hurts her loved ones, threatens her stability and security, enmeshes her in his paranoid state of mind, frightens her out of her wits, withholds love and sex from her, prevents satisfaction and causes frustration, humiliates and insults her privately and in public, points out her shortcomings, criticises her profusely and in a "scientific and objective" manner and this is a partial list.

Very often, the narcissist's sadistic acts are disguised as an enlightened interest in the welfare of his victim. He plays the psychiatrist to her psychopathology (totally dreamt up by him). He acts the guru, the avuncular or father figure, the teacher, the only true friend, the old and the experienced. All this in order to weaken her defences and to lay siege to her disintegrating nerves. So subtle and poisonous is the narcissistic variant of sadism that it might well be regarded as the most dangerous of all.

Luckily, the narcissist's attention span is short and his resources and energy limited. In constant, effort consuming and attention diverting pursuit of Narcissistic Supply, the narcissist lets his victim go, usually before it had suffered irreversible damage. The victim is then free to rebuild her life from ruins. Not an easy undertaking, this but far better than the total obliteration which awaits the victims of the "true" sadist.

If I had to distil my quotidian existence in two pithy sentences, I would say: I love to be hated and I hate to be loved. Hate is the complement of fear and I like being feared. It imbues me with an intoxicating sensation of omnipotence. I am veritably inebriated by the looks of horror or repulsion on people's faces. They know that I am capable of anything. Godlike, I am ruthless and devoid of scruples, capricious and unfathomable, emotion-less and asexual, omniscient, omnipotent and omni-present, a plague, devastation, an inescapable verdict. I nurture my ill-repute,

stoking it and fanning the flames of gossip. It is an enduring asset.

The English Paediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott suggested that abused children need to hate and to be hated as a defense against the false hope of ever being loved. They not only act out anti-socially but also seek to provoke hatred in parents, caregivers, and authority figures. At least in this comfort zone of mutual antagonism there is no risk of being shattered by the disappointment and frustration that are the ineluctable outcomes of hope. Of course, he who loves to be hated and hates to be loved also loves to hate and hates to love (fears intimacy). The narcissist's emotional complexity (ambivalence) towards significant others is notorious: his "love" often comes laced with bouts of vitriolic or even violent abuse and aggression.

But, the narcissist's hatred is atypical. Rempel and Burris suggested in 2005 that hate is a stable experiential state; that it is an emotion; and that it involves a goal-driven motivation to diminish or utterly eradicate the well-being of the target of hate. In contradistinction, the narcissist's hatred is not stable; it is a transformation of resentment and, therefore, an aggressive reaction to frustration; and the narcissist does not care about his victim's well-being: he just wishes to remove the fount of frustration altogether and expediently. So, by the lights on Rempel and Burris it does not qualify as hate at all.

The narcissist resents his abject dependence on his sources of narcissistic supply and by ridding himself of their constant presence he seeks to ameliorate the irritation that they cause him. Of course, even as he hatefully acts against his sources of supply, he is terrified of losing them and attempts to placate and bribe them into staying and fulfilling their function.

But, hate and fear are also sure generators of attention. It is all about Narcissistic Supply, of course the drug which we, the narcissists consume and which consumes us in return. So, I attack sadistically authority figures, institutions, my hosts and I make sure they know about my eruptions. I purvey only the truth and nothing but the truth but I tell it bluntly told in an orgy of evocative baroque English. The blind rage that this induces in the targets of my vitriolic diatribes provokes in me a surge of satisfaction and inner tranquillity not obtainable by any other means. I like to think about their pain, of course but that is the lesser part of the equation.

It is my horrid future and inescapable punishment that carries the irresistible appeal. Like some strain of alien virus, it infects my better judgement and I succumb. In general, my weapon is the truth and human propensity to avoid it. In tactless breaching of every etiquette, I chastise and berate and snub and offer vitriolic opprobrium. A self-proclaimed Jeremiah, I hector and harangue from my many self-made pulpits. I understand the prophets. I understand Torquemada.

I bask in the incomparable pleasure of being RIGHT. I derive my grandiose superiority from the contrast between my righteousness and the humanness of others.

But it is not that simple. It never is with narcissists. Fostering public revolt and the inevitable ensuing social sanctions fulfils two other psychodynamic goals.

The first one I alluded to. It is the burning desire nay, NEED to be punished.

In the grotesque mind of the narcissist, his punishment is equally his vindication.

By being permanently on trial, the narcissist claims high moral ground and the position of the martyr: misunderstood, discriminated against, unjustly roughed, outcast by his very towering genius or other outstanding qualities. To conform to the cultural stereotype of the "tormented artist" the narcissist provokes his own suffering. He is thus validated.

His grandiose fantasies acquire a modicum of substance. "If I were not so special they wouldn't have persecuted me so". The persecution of the narcissist IS his uniqueness. He must be different, for better or for worse. The streak of paranoia embedded in him, makes the outcome inevitable. He is in constant conflict with lesser beings: his spouse, his shrink, his boss, and his colleagues. Forced to stoop to their intellectual level, the narcissist feels like Gulliver: a giant strapped by Lilliputians. His life is a constant struggle against the self-contented mediocrity of his surroundings. This is his fate which he accepts, though never stoically. It is a calling, a mission and a recurrence in his stormy life.

Deeper still, the narcissist has an image of himself as a worthless, bad and dysfunctional extension of others. In constant need of Narcissistic Supply, he feels humiliated. The contrast between his cosmic fantasies and the reality of his dependence, neediness and, often, failure (the "Grandiosity Gap") is an emotionally harrowing experience. It is a constant background noise of devilish, demeaning laughter. The voices say: "You are a fraud", "You are a zero", "You deserve nothing", "If only they knew how worthless you are".

The narcissist attempts to silence these tormenting voices not by fighting them but by agreeing with them. Unconsciously sometimes consciously he says to them: "I do agree with you. I am bad and worthless and deserving of the most severe punishment for my rotten character, bad habits, addiction and the constant fraud that is my life. I will go out and seek my doom. Now that I have complied will you leave me be? Will you leave me alone"?

Of course, they never do.

Most narcissists enjoy an irrational and brief burst of relief after having suffered emotionally ("narcissistic injury") or after having sustained a loss. It is a sense of freedom, which comes with being unshackled. Having lost everything, the narcissist often feels that he has found himself, that he has been re-born, that he has been charged with natal energy, able to take on new challenges and to explore new territories. This elation is so addictive, that the narcissist often seeks pain, humiliation, punishment, scorn, and contempt as long as they are public and involve the attention of peers and superiors. Being punished accords with the tormenting inner voices of the narcissist which keep telling him that he is bad, corrupt, and worthy of penalty.

This is the masochistic streak in the narcissist. But the narcissist is also a sadist albeit an unusual one. The narcissist inflicts pain and abuse on others. He devalues Sources of Supply, callously and off-handedly abandons them, and discards people, places, partnerships, and friendships unhesitatingly. Some narcissists though by no means the majority actually ENJOY abusing, taunting, tormenting, and freakishly controlling others ("gaslighting"). But most of them do these things absentmindedly, automatically, and, often, even without good reason.

What is unusual about the narcissist's sadistic behaviours premeditated acts of tormenting others while enjoying their anguished reactions is that they are goal orientated. "Pure" sadists have no goal in mind except the pursuit of pleasure pain as an art form (remember the Marquis de Sade?). The narcissist, on the other hand, haunts and hunts his victims for a reason he wants them to reflect his inner state. It is all part of a mechanism called "Projective Identification".

When the narcissist is angry, unhappy, disappointed, injured, or hurt he feels unable to express his emotions sincerely and openly since to do so would be to admit his frailty, his neediness, and his weaknesses. He deplores his own humanity his emotions, his vulnerability, his susceptibility, his gullibility, his inadequacies, and his failures. So, he makes use of other people to express his pain and his frustration, his pent up anger and his aggression. He achieves this by mentally torturing other people to the point of madness, by driving them to violence, by reducing them to scar tissue in search of outlet, closure, and, sometimes, revenge. He forces people to lose their own character traits and adopt his own instead. In reaction to his constant and well-targeted abuse, they become abusive, vengeful, ruthless, lacking empathy, obsessed, and aggressive. They mirror him faithfully and thus relieve him of the need to express himself directly [9,10].

Conclusion

Having constructed this writhing hall of human mirrors, the narcissist withdraws. The goal achieved, he lets go. As opposed to the sadist, he is no in it, indefinitely, for the pleasure of it. He abuses and traumatizes, humiliates and abandons, discards and ignores, insults and provokes only for the purpose of purging his inner demons. By possessing others, he purifies himself, cathartically, and exorcises his demented self.

This accomplished, he acts almost with remorse. An episode of extreme abuse is followed by an act of great care and by mellifluous apologies. The Narcissistic Pendulum swings between the extremes of torturing others and empathically soothing the resulting pain. This incongruous behaviour, these "sudden" shifts between sadism and altruism, abuse and "love", ignoring and caring, abandoning and clinging, viciousness and remorse, the harsh and the tender are, perhaps, the most difficult to comprehend and to accept. These swings produce in people around the narcissist emotional insecurity, an eroded sense of self-worth, fear, stress, and anxiety ("walking on eggshells"). Gradually, emotional paralysis ensues and they come to occupy the same emotional wasteland inhabited by the narcissist, his prisoners and hostages in more ways than one and even when he is long out of their life.

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