

Are These Narcissistic Abuse Warning Signs?

A Checklist for Recognizing Harmful Patterns

Important: These lists are not intended as a diagnosis and do not constitute a complete account of a person's traits, behaviours, or personality. They are signposts, markers, red flags, and warning signs that may help you notice patterns, challenge self-denial, stop dismissing your intuition, and begin trusting your inner voice. No single behaviour, observation, or warning sign on its own indicates narcissism or abuse. What matters is the broader pattern, frequency, context, and impact over time. Use your own judgement and seek qualified professional support if you are considering leaving a dangerous, toxic, or high-conflict relationship.

Check all that apply:

Early in the relationship, he:

- ☐ Seemed completely, intensely in love with me.
- ☐ Shared my interests and values.
- ☐ Proclaimed that I was his soulmate.
- ☐ Called and texted constantly, frequently, excessively, or on a rigid schedule or routine.
- ☐ Wanted to be with me or spend nearly every waking moment with me.
- ☐ Showered me with affection.
- ☐ Promised to care for and protect me, or to make my dreams come true.
- ☐ Evoked empathy or sympathy from me.
- ☐ Enveloped me in a whirlwind romance.
- ☐ Sped up the relationship or increased pressure to move the relationship forward quickly.

He exhibited the following:

- ☐ Charming or charismatic.
- ☐ Magnetic energy that drew me in.
- ☐ Glibness or an ability to always have something to say.
- ☐ Discussed his knowledge, beliefs, or opinions at considerable length.
- ☐ Intensely sexual or sexually magnetic, including demanding or expecting sex early.
- ☐ Sought excitement, became easily bored, or pushed the boundaries of what felt comfortable.
- ☐ Was irresponsible with himself and/or others regarding money, sex, health, or safety.
- ☐ Displayed an obvious or extreme sense of entitlement.
- ☐ Showed resentful or vindictive tendencies.
- ☐ Demonstrated a lack of integrity.

I observed the following behaviours:

- ☐ Lied about significant matters or small, seemingly insignificant things.
- ☐ Had gaps or inconsistencies in his stories.

- ☐ Rarely or never apologized sincerely.
- ☐ Avoided accountability or responsibility for his behaviour, actions, or words.
- ☐ Made disparaging comments about previous relationships or former partners.
- ☐ Blamed others, including me, for his problems.
- ☐ Kept his past secret or avoided discussing places he had lived, jobs he had held, his private life, or his childhood.
- ☐ Engaged in reckless behaviour involving sex, alcohol, drugs, or driving.
- ☐ Made future promises that repeatedly failed to materialize.
- ☐ Acted impulsively.

Signs observed by other women:

- ☐ He did not have close friendships, or his friendships appeared superficial.
- ☐ Made frequent excuses when confronted about his behaviour.
- ☐ Disappeared for days or months and returned as though nothing had happened.
- ☐ Refused to discuss his behaviour or why he acted a certain way.
- ☐ Displayed a pronounced Jekyll-and-Hyde pattern between public and private behaviour.
- ☐ Seemed able to turn affection or love on and off.
- ☐ Punished me when he disliked something I did or said.
- ☐ Showed little empathy, or appeared to express only cognitive empathy.
- ☐ Hurt me and then behaved as though nothing had happened.
- ☐ Cheated or crossed relationship boundaries while denying wrongdoing or minimizing the relationship as “just friends.”
- ☐ Showed little or no remorse.
- ☐ Struggled to show genuine affection.
- ☐ Used childhood adversity, past relationships, or former partners to excuse harmful behaviour.
- ☐ Had habits or behaviours that seemed markedly immature or incongruent with his age.
- ☐ Was frequently without money despite having a well-paying job or stable income.
- ☐ Frequently made impulsive purchases of unnecessary items.

I felt:

- ☐ Like I was walking on eggshells.
- ☐ As though my feelings did not matter.
- ☐ That love was conditional.
- ☐ That the expectations or “goalposts” for what I was responsible for were continually moved.
- ☐ That I had to prepare myself before bringing something up.
- ☐ Tentative, anxious, or afraid to express my feelings.
- ☐ That arguments were never truly resolved.
- ☐ Responsible for his emotions.
- ☐ As though I was the only person actively participating in the relationship.
- ☐ As though I was always the one apologizing.
- ☐ Pressure to suppress who I was, including my interests, ideas, thoughts, and feelings.

Definitions

Cognitive empathy: The intellectual ability to understand and recognize another person's thoughts, feelings, and perspective without necessarily feeling or sharing those emotions.

Gaslighting: Denying, deflecting, distorting, or dismissing another person's account of reality, including when evidence is provided.

Integrity: The quality of being honest and consistently guided by strong moral or ethical principles. Integrity means acting in ways that align with one's stated values, including when no one is watching, rather than changing those values for convenience or advantage.

Remember: A checklist cannot diagnose narcissism or determine whether abuse is present. Pay attention to repeated patterns of control, manipulation, entitlement, lack of accountability, and the effect the relationship has on your safety, autonomy, identity, and wellbeing.

