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BY **DR PRAVEENA RAJENDRA**

**IF** you have ever had the misfortune of working for a narcissist, then you already know how challenging it can be to work for one. While everyone has had bad bosses from time to time, a narcissist is someone who tends to abuse his power and position to get exactly what he wants out of life, including control over other people.

It can be difficult to determine if your employer is a narcissist. However, there are some telltale signs that will give you an idea of whether he may be suffering from this disorder:

### **Narcissists often demand praise**

They have no problem publicly praising others but expect those around them to do so too. When this happens, it creates feelings of insecurity among others who may feel as though they are not being appreciated on the job.

Many narcissists also use threats and intimidation to force others to comply with their demands. This tactic makes the narcissist seem powerful, even when he is not.

A narcissist will usually hire employees who are willing to flatter him constantly. If you feel like you are going to lose your job because the narcissist does not like you, you should listen carefully.

You may hear remarks such as “I don’t understand why I hired you”, while never realising that these words were directed towards you.

A narcissist tends to be extremely demanding. Because of this, he can make many demands without giving much thought to how he will affect the lives of those around him. This means that you will likely find yourself spending more hours than necessary on something that is not essential to your job.

### **Narcissism comes in all shapes and sizes**

Narcissists come in all shapes and sizes. Some are manipulative and cunning while others exhibit dominance through sheer willpower alone. Regardless of which type you are dealing with, understanding the traits associated with narcissism will help you see the warning signs, and avoid getting drawn into a relationship with someone who does not care about anyone else but himself.

A common trait shared by many narcissists is grandiosity. These individuals believe they deserve respect simply due to the fact that they exist. As a result, they tend to think they are above the law, able to do anything they wish without consequences. Other traits include entitlement, superiority and lack of empathy.

### **Managing your narcissistic boss**

Unfortunately, not everyone knows how to deal with a narcissistic manager. Most people who try to confront the problem only end up harming themselves. Instead, learn how to manage a narcissist at work through these tips:

**Take Responsibility.** Do not allow your fear of losing your job to cause you to become a victim. Take responsibility for your actions and admit any mistakes you make. Doing so will make you appear more professional and competent.

**Learn to set boundaries.** Set clear guidelines regarding what you will and will not tolerate. Make sure that these rules are clearly understood. Ask for clarification when you need it, so there are no misunderstandings.

**Stop listening to gossip.** Most of the time, rumours about other people are nothing more than idle speculation. Even if you know that the information you are hearing has been exaggerated, ignore it. It will not help you get ahead in life.

**Do not allow yourself to get sucked into arguments.** The worst thing you can do is argue with a narcissist for the sake of arguing. It is best to ignore him as long as possible until you are forced to confront the issue. Keep in mind that confrontation just gives the narcissist additional ammunition.

**If you want to escape a toxic personality, take control of the situation.** Remember that you have a choice whether or not to stay in a situation. By taking the initiative to leave.

**Do not give a narcissist power over you.** Do not let the narcissist use threats, guilt trips or manipulation to control you. Know that if the narcissist gains enough ground in your life, he or she may threaten to ruin your career, family, finances or reputation.

**Be vigilant**

If you find yourself in an abusive environment, remember that you have options:

**Leave.** The best option is to leave immediately. However, if you wait until you feel safer, you could end up being trapped by the narcissist's behaviour. You may also lose wages or benefits during this time.

**Get legal counsel.** Talk to a lawyer about your rights and responsibilities. A good lawyer can guide you through the process, so you do not make costly mistakes.

**Contact Human Resources.** If you know someone is harassing you, contact the human resources office immediately. This will ensure no one gets hurt because of your inaction.

**Be prepared for retaliation.** If you confront a narcissist at work, you may receive poor performance reviews or even termination. Be ready for this possibility and protect yourself accordingly.

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