

The micro-narcissism checklist (it is part of being human)

This checklist is an aid to developing mutual sensitivity to moments of inflated or deflated ideas or overvalued or devalued roles between ourselves and others. Each item is a prompt for an open and compassionate conversation (ideally in pairs) about fleeting moments between us of being 'up or down' on ourselves or others. Go through the items and see which resonate similarly or differently for each of you at work or more generally. You can change the words to help make an item fit your experience along more extreme or intense or milder lines. Or change the pronouns from we to I, or you, or they, to give the interaction a different direction, power or ownership. It is the conversation you have about the items that matters. The checklist does not diagnose or judge and helps only if you go away with fresh angles on the patterns of interaction that can take over our sense of self at times. Each item can be mapped out as a trap, dilemma or snag (as detailed on pages) to open up the narratives that drive them.

Tick if applies to us: never 0, rarely ✓, sometimes ✓✓, often ✓✓✓	✓
1. Stick or dither: If we don't stick to our view we will be seen as indecisive, then judged as dithery and therefore weak and without authority.	
2. Only safe if special: Our need for security can only be met if we are especially protected, unconditionally loved and caringly admired.	
3. Out of our hands: It is a temporary relief from anxiety to think our future is in the hands of forces beyond our control, so we have no responsibility, duty or agency.	
4. Antagonistic: If we sense we are being ignored, we provoke or confront people to get attention which unsettles them, and they cope by ignoring us or reluctantly obliging us.	
5. We know nothing: When others act as if we have nothing to offer, we become quiet and withdrawn which confirms to them and us we have nothing to give.	
6. Tough or tender: Either we are tough, and strong but cut off from others or soft and connected but vulnerable.	
7. Blow our own trumpet: If we do well, we must make it known or be taken for granted.	
8. Bulldozer or butterfly: Either we drive our views ahead with total commitment, or we flit from one idea to another avoiding settled commitment and exposure.	
9. Arrogance or timidity: Either we are brazen and too much but get attention or we are quiet and safe but barely get noticed at all.	
10. Our privilege is invisible to us: We are entitled to our benefits by birth, merit, occupation or position and take it as given with little sense of its absence in others.	
11. Don't look at us: We saw what was happening but had nothing to do with it.	
12. Head-to-head or never said: If we disagree, either we become too confrontational, lose the plot and miss the point or keep quiet and miss the moment.	
13. Wowing or running down: either we are singing the praises of something and someone or we are running it, or them, down with no middle ground.	
14. Safe dreams about our greatness: If faced with a challenge we could do very well but pretend to be not bothered, so don't try and remain safely but sadly great in our dreams.	
15. Us against them: It is either our way or their way. For us to win they must lose. A binary world is safer and simpler and keeps us united in our separate camps.	
16. Management by appearances: Bosses are only happy if everything looks good on paper.	
17. Cynical outsider: We hide our achievement anxiety by privately mocking people who give it their all. As safely, superior bystanders we avoid exposure.	
18. Our opinions are us: Our views of the world are so tied to our self-worth, that if they are challenged it feels like a personal and total attack that must be challenged at all costs.	
19. All in or out: Either we are anxiously and excitedly entangled with each other, or we are on our own and without real connection but at peace.	
20. Loyal servant/trooper: If serving the top dog, we feel secure, and in the game, but used	

Write a note to yourself about the insights from these questions.