

NARCISSISM IN TEACHING: A POSITIVE INFLUENCE IN EDUCATION

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Annotation: *This article explores the often-misunderstood trait of narcissism in teaching, highlighting its potential benefits when applied in a healthy way. It differentiates between healthy and unhealthy narcissism, debunking common misconceptions and showcasing how confidence, charisma, and self-promotion can enhance classroom dynamics. The discussion also addresses potential drawbacks and offers strategies for teachers to balance self-assurance with humility.*

Key words: *education, healthy narcissism, narcissism, students, teaching, teacher.*

Аннотация: *Эта статья рассматривает часто неправильно понимаемую черту нарциссизма в преподавании, подчеркивая ее потенциальные преимущества при здоровом применении. В ней проводится различие между здоровым и нездоровым нарциссизмом, развеиваются распространенные мифы и показывается, как уверенность в себе, харизма и самореклама могут улучшить динамику в классе. Также обсуждаются возможные недостатки и предлагаются стратегии для учителей по балансированию самоуверенности и скромности.*

Ключевые слова: *образование, здоровый нарциссизм, нарциссизм, ученики, обучение, учитель.*

Annotatsiya: *Ushbu maqolada o'qitish jarayonida ko'pincha noto'g'ri tushuniladigan nartsissizm xususiyati o'rganilib, uning to'g'ri qo'llanganda foydali bo'lishi mumkinligi ta'kidlanadi. Unda sog'lom va nosog'lom nartsissizm o'rtasidagi farq tushuntiriladi, keng tarqalgan noto'g'ri tushunchalar inkor etiladi va o'ziga ishonch, joziba hamda o'zini targ'ib qilish sinf muhitini qanday yaxshilashi mumkinligi ko'rsatiladi. Shuningdek, nartsissizmning salbiy tomonlari va o'qituvchilarning o'ziga ishonch bilan kamtarlik o'rtasida muvozanat topish strategiyalari muhokama qilinadi.*

Kalit so'zlar: *ta'lim, sog'lom nartsissizm, nartsissizm, talabalar, o'qituvchi, o'qituvchi.*

Introduction

One of the most negatively perceived personality traits in psychology is narcissism. By definition Cambridge Dictionary describes it as “too much interest in and admiration for your own physical appearance and/or your own abilities”. Being around people with narcissistic traits can sometimes lead to misunderstandings, as narcissists tend to prioritize their own feelings over others. Sure, narcissism has a bad reputation since it is often seen as a flaw, but could it actually make someone a better teacher?

Healthy vs. Unhealthy narcissism

Before diving into how narcissism can have positive applications in the teaching area, we will discuss more about the word “narcissism” itself according to Campbell (2007). Basically, there are two types of narcissism: healthy and unhealthy (Jenkins, 2019).

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Unhealthy Narcissism, also referred to as pathological narcissism, is best explained through the lens of the word “narcissist,” which is how most individuals categorically recognize the term. It involves:

- Self-importance – thinking that one is better than others.
- Lack of empathy – not being able to recognize nor care for other people’s feelings.
- Manipulative behavior – taking advantage of other people for selfish reasons.
- Fragile self-esteem – being overly sensitive to criticism, despite being emotionally aloof.

For example, a teacher suffering from unhealthy narcissism may take over all classroom conversations, ignore the student's contributions, or focus largely on his/her image instead of doing his/her best to ensure that the students progress. This type of unhealthy narcissism can result in a psychologically damaging learning environment in which students do not feel listened to and appreciated.

Having Healthy narcissism towards self, on the other hand, tends to differ from the negative form of narcissism based on self-preservation. The term “healthy narcissism” was coined by Paul Federn (Jenkins, 2019). Traits commonly associated with healthy narcissism are:

- Self-confidence – being assured in a person’s capabilities without degrading others.
- Resilience – treating criticism as an avenue for growth instead of being defensive.
- Charismatic leadership – through passion, being able to encourage and guide students better and excel.
- Strong boundaries – remaining professional and approachable at the same time.

A teacher who exhibits healthy narcissism can make the classroom lively and interesting. Their leadership abilities may create an organized and motivating learning environment, and their self-assurance can inspire students to believe in themselves.

Common misconceptions

Many people think of narcissism as a completely bad thing, linking it to conceit, self-centeredness, and an inability to understand others' emotions. The word "narcissistic" might bring to mind someone who's only focused on themselves, ignores how others feel, or is obsessed with their own achievements. But this image isn't always accurate—and it's definitely not the whole story when it comes to teaching (Kaufman, 2019). Let's look at some of the biggest myths about narcissism in education and how some typically "narcissistic" qualities can actually be good for teachers.

Misconception #1: Narcissistic Teachers are Self-Absorbed

You might think a teacher with narcissistic tendencies is just focused on themselves, but it's not always the case. Teachers with healthy narcissism are often really proud of their work. They push themselves to be the best and truly want to light a fire in their students. Their energy and passion can make the classroom a much more exciting and inspiring place (Kaufman, 2019).

Misconception #2: Narcissistic Teachers Can't Connect with Students

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Many people believe that teachers with narcissistic traits don't care about their students and can't build real relationships with them. However, having healthy narcissism doesn't mean you don't care about others. It means having a good sense of self-worth while still caring about what students think and feel. These confident teachers can be great role models. They show students how to stand up for themselves, be proud of their work, and bounce back from setbacks (Seltzer, 2019).

Misconception #3: Narcissistic Teachers Are Overly Controlling

A common belief is that teachers with narcissistic tendencies have a dominating presence in the classroom, practically leaving no space for students to actively participate. Although this might hold true for those exhibiting unhealthy narcissism, educators who possess healthy narcissistic qualities actually leverage their innate leadership abilities to establish a structured learning environment, set forth unambiguous expectations, and foster the development of their students (Kaufman, 2019). Their assertive demeanor can be instrumental in upholding discipline and ensuring active student engagement.

Misconception #4: Narcissistic Teachers Are Inflexible and Resistant to Criticism

It's widely presumed that narcissists are unwilling to admit their errors or take feedback on board. However, teachers with a healthy dose of narcissism are generally confident yet receptive to personal growth. They're capable of receiving constructive criticism without feeling personally offended, instead utilizing it as a tool to enhance their teaching strategies and evolve into more effective educators (Seltzer, 2019).

Instead of seeing narcissism as a purely bad thing, it's important to understand that having the right mix of confidence, leadership, and self-awareness can be really helpful in the classroom. When teachers are able to use their strengths without stepping on others, they can make learning exciting, motivating, and organized.

Researches

New studies suggest narcissism has a more complex role in educational environments, as certain narcissistic traits appear to have a positive impact on the effectiveness of teaching. For example, Kaufman (2019) argues that the craving for admiration among narcissists can make teachers successful as they try to get recognition. This motivational factor may translate into greater effort and dedication towards teaching, which will, in turn, improve student learning. Kaufman suggests that where some narcissistic traits exist alongside self-awareness and compassion, they promote energetic and inspiring classroom settings.

Similarly, Papageorgiou et al. (2018) looked into the connection between teenage academic achievement and subclinical narcissism. According to the study, people who had higher degrees of narcissistic traits—like grandiosity and a sense of superiority—also showed better mental toughness and academic achievement. According to the researchers, these characteristics might promote resilience and a strong drive for success, which can be advantageous in both teaching and learning environments. They come to the conclusion that, despite their common negative connotations, narcissistic features

might serve adaptive purposes that promote academic success when they are displayed in moderation.

Possible Drawbacks and Balance

Teachers can benefit from healthy narcissism, but it's critical to identify when these qualities become excessive and possibly dangerous. A healthy learning atmosphere for pupils is ensured by striking a balance between humility and confidence.

When narcissism results in conceit, a lack of empathy, or an overemphasis on one's own achievements at the expense of students' development, it becomes problematic. Overly self-centered teachers may find it difficult to relate to their pupils, ignore criticism, or foster an atmosphere where authority takes precedence over teamwork.

How to Stay in Balance:

- Pay attention to what your coworkers and pupils have to say.
- Remain receptive to criticism.
- Put student learning ahead of individual accolades.
- To remain conscious of how actions affect other people, engage in self-reflection

(Hall, 2017).

Conclusion

Narcissism is often viewed negatively, but when practiced in a healthy way, it can be a powerful asset in teaching. Confidence, charisma, and self-promotion help educators create engaging lessons, inspire students, and advance in their careers. However, maintaining balance is key—too much self-focus can harm relationships, while humility and empathy ensure a positive learning environment.

Teachers should embrace their self-confidence and leadership qualities while staying open to growth and feedback. By finding this balance, they can not only enhance their own success but also create a classroom where students feel motivated, valued, and inspired to learn.

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