

# Glossary of terms

To learn how to identify which individuals are narcissistic, you will first need to understand the following set of traits. To help you memorise these terms, imagine a person—in your past or even in movies or TV—that you feel epitomises each trait.

Trait	Description
Key personality traits	
Antagonism—also called low agreeableness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expresses contempt or distrust towards other people</li><li>• Seldom displays compassion, sympathy, or understanding</li><li>• Selfish rather than cooperative or accommodating.</li><li>• Disobeys rules</li></ul>
Neuroticism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prone to unpleasant emotions, such as anxiety or hostility</li><li>• Acts impulsively and emotionally in response to challenges</li></ul>
Extraversion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gregarious and sociable</li><li>• Assertive</li><li>• Seeks excitement.</li></ul>
Variations of narcissism	
Entitlement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Believes they are special—and thus entitled to admiration, praise, positions of leadership, and other privileges</li><li>• Narcissism tends to combine antagonism and entitlement</li></ul>
Grandiose narcissism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A blend of extraversion, antagonism, and entitlement</li><li>• Exaggerates skills and contributions</li><li>• Craves attention, admiration, or leadership</li></ul>
Vulnerable narcissism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A blend of neuroticism, antagonism, and entitlement</li><li>• Directs rage or contempt towards critics</li><li>• Undermines or mocks other people subtly</li><li>• Portray themselves as victims of injustice, inflating their pain</li></ul>

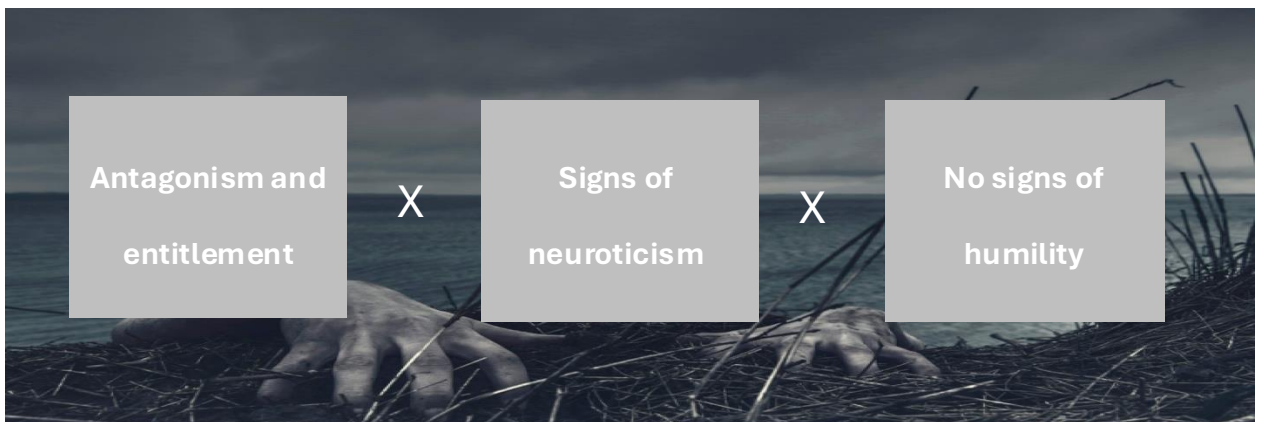


## When is narcissism especially detrimental

People who exhibit the signs of narcissism can, sometimes, be effective leaders or members of staff. However, narcissism is especially likely to be detrimental if

- the individual also exhibits the signs of neuroticism and
- the individual demonstrates no signs of humility (e.g., Rong & Hu, 2023)

The following infographic represents which individuals may be most destructive.



## Psychometric testing

Organisations can use psychometric testing to assess these traits, such as



adapt standard tools; for example, organisations can identify low agreeableness and high neuroticism from most personality tests

develop their own measures of narcissism and humility from existing scales and public instruments

measure the attributes that diminish narcissism and foster humility, such as future self-continuity, a growth mindset, and self-compassion.

# CVs and profiles



To some extent, CVs, social media profiles, and other similar documents can offer some insight into whether individuals may be narcissistic or entitled. Here are some examples of features or properties of these documents to consider.

Feature	Implication
Demographics	
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• People who have completed degrees—especially in two fields—are more likely to be humble (see Liu et al., 2024)</li><li>• However, people who have been educated at the most prestigious institutions are less likely to be humble</li></ul>
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Narcissism tends to diminish with age (Orth et al., 2024)</li></ul>
Experience	
Diverse challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• People who have been exposed to diverse challenges, such as worked in other nations or fields, develop integrative complexity: they recognise and integrate diverse perspectives—a sign of humility (Maddux et al., 2013)</li><li>• Even working in multi-disciplinary teams or an interest in ambiguous art can promote integrative complexity (see Hagtvedt &amp; Vohs, 2022; Solomon &amp; Hall, 2023).</li></ul>
Social media	
LinkedIn profiles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some features of social media profiles, especially in LinkedIn are more common in narcissistic people</li><li>• These features include multiple images of the person in background photos, biographies that exceed 300 words, over 15 jobs, and more than 50 skills (Junge et al., 2024).</li></ul>

# Interviews

During interviews, you are more likely to recognise narcissism if you ask the right questions and learn the main signs of this trait. Here are some questions that have been shown to elicit some of the signs of narcissism (see Eschleman et al., 2024)



Do you consider yourself a natural born leader or someone who has had to learn how to lead? Provide an example of your leadership approach

Imagine that other members of your team have agreed upon a plan. However, you disagree with this plan. How do you proceed?

Imagine you lead a team. One member publicly questions one of your decisions. How would you respond if you discover you were correct?

Why do you feel some teams are more effective than other teams?

How would you respond if uncertain on how to improve a team?



## Signs of narcissism



Assumes they are invariably right and certain, such as “I always reach the best decisions”



Expresses frustration if questioned, such as “My team needs to trust that I reach decisions carefully”



Perceived events as opportunities to validate their status, such as “This outcome would demonstrate I am in charge for a reason”



Believes people should always respect their authority, such as “I would remind the team I am the leader for a reason”

Describes themselves more favourably than other people.  
Perceives other people as good or bad and unlikely to change.

Nevertheless, if individuals also display some humility, their narcissistic tendencies are not as likely to be detrimental in the workplace (Rong & Hu, 2023). Here are some potential signs of humility you might extract from answers to the previous questions.



### Signs of humility



Perceives challenges as opportunities to improve and to develop, such as “I could learn something from their comments”



Encourages open, honest communication between staff and leaders, such as “Leaders should always enable staff to voice opinions, even if these opinions are not entirely correct”.



Displays empathy and respect to other people, even during conflicts, such as “I would check they are feeling okay about the disagreement and remind everyone their opinion always matters”

Refers to the qualities and strengths of other people.



### Words

Here are some phrases that suggest humility rather than narcissism (Hanel et al. 2023)



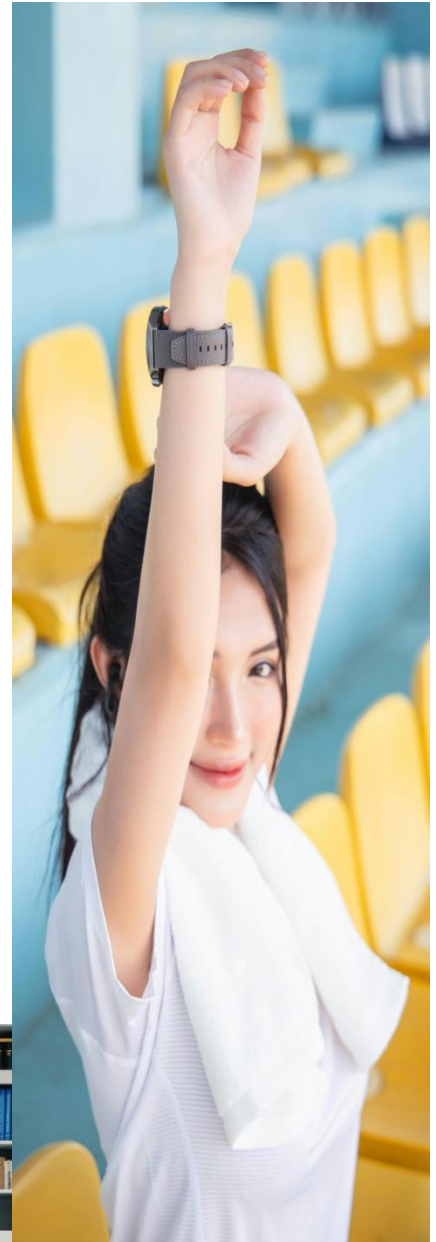
- “I feel that...” or “I wonder that...” rather than “I am sure” or “definitely”
- “Sometimes” rather than “always” or “never”
- “Possible” rather than “of course”, “obviously”, or “the fact is”

# Special tasks

## The overclaiming effect

Organisations may also arrange special tasks that have been shown to uncover some of the signs of narcissism or conceit. One practical example is the overclaiming effect. For example,

- you could ask participants to indicate the concepts they understand that are relevant to this role,
- about a third of the concepts should be fictitious,
- individuals who contend they are familiar with more than two or three of these fictitious concepts are more likely to be narcissistic, entitled, or conceited (Grosz et al., 2017).





An example of over-claiming

Here is an example of a test you could administer to people who should understand financial concepts. The benefit is this test can

- identify people who inflate their knowledge—common in people who are narcissistic
- simultaneously assess the familiarity of individuals with these concepts.

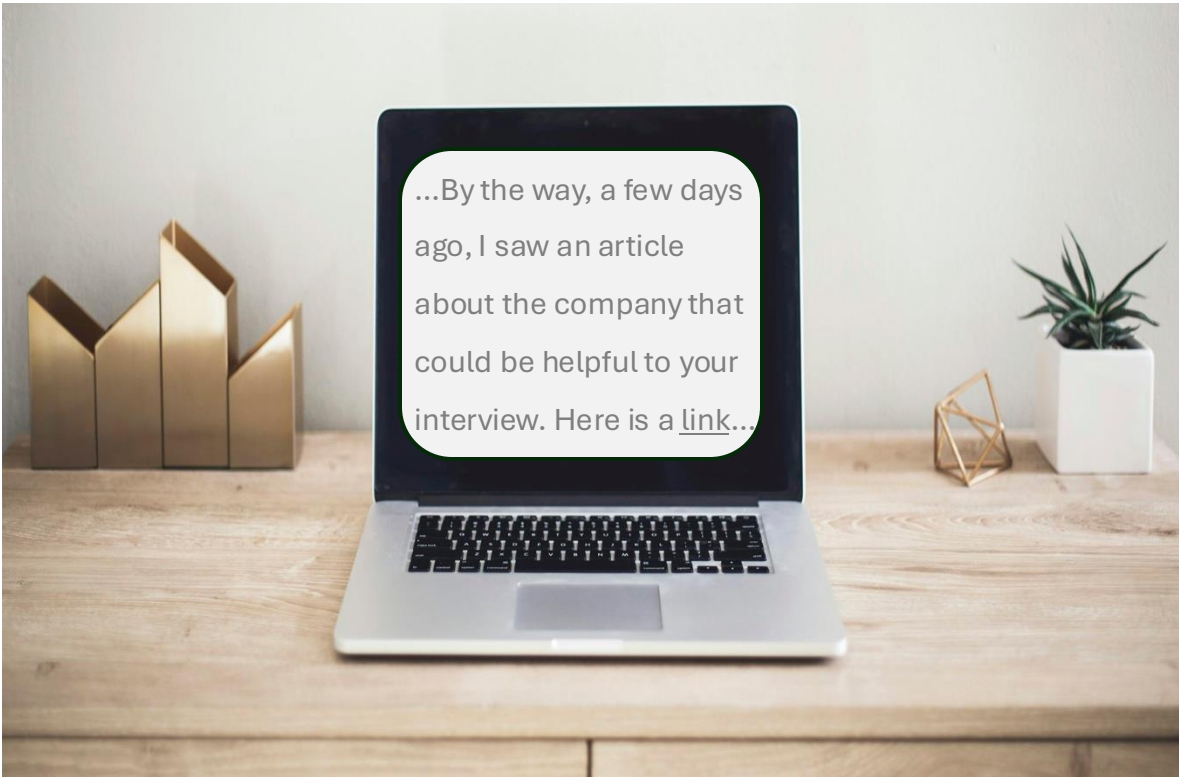


**Specify which of the concepts you feel you understand**

Quarterly earnings	Succession planning	Due diligence
Leveraged buyout	Fortunate duty	ESG
Alphabetic caps	Pre-emptive rights	A double singularity
Social licence	Noncompete agreement	Clawback provision
Hostile takeover	Zebra meetings	CSR
GZg	Golden parachute	A restructure shelf
Materiality	Maroon investments	Private equity

## Responses to advice

You can also introduce other contrived tasks to uncover narcissism, entitlement, and conceit. For example, individuals who are narcissistic often dismiss advice from other people—especially people they regard as low in status or rank. To measure this tendency, arrange an executive assistant to write something like the following email:

A photograph of a silver laptop on a light-colored wooden desk. On the desk to the left of the laptop are four gold-colored, angular, geometric blocks of varying heights. To the right of the laptop is a small potted plant with green leaves in a white square pot, and a small gold-colored geometric wireframe structure. The laptop screen is black, and a white rounded rectangle is overlaid on it, containing text.

...By the way, a few days ago, I saw an article about the company that could be helpful to your interview. Here is a link...

- The link can then open a helpful article about the organisation.
- However, use a platform, such as Qualtrics, so you can check whether the individual opened the link.
- Narcissistic individuals are more likely than humble individuals to disregard this link altogether.





## How to diminish faking

During interviews or psychometric testing, narcissists sometimes deliberately inflate their humility or conceal their conceit. Fortunately, researchers have uncovered a few strategies that might diminish the likelihood of impact of this problem.



Ask individuals “Do you perceive other people as capable or as worthy as you?” Narcissistic people, even when inflating their humility, are often unwilling to acknowledge that other people are as capable or as worthy as they are (Kruse et al., 2017).

Indicate that your interviews or psychometric tests contain some questions that are designed to assess honesty (Moon et al., 2024)

Indicate the organisation values honesty—and people who are not honest may be disqualified (Moon et al., 2024)

### Did you know about this clever strategy?



During interviews or after psychometric tests, ask individuals "How certain were you in your responses to the previous questions—from very uncertain to very certain". If they maintain that certainty is high,

- people who claimed to be honest and humble are indeed more likely to exhibit the signs of humility and honesty; for example, they seldom cheat,
- people who acknowledge they exhibit signs of narcissism, psychoticism, and Machievellianism are indeed more likely to cheat (Santos et al., 2025).

# Referees

In principle, referees are often positioned better than anyone else to ascertain whether a person is narcissistic, entitled, and conceited. In practice, however, referees are not usually especially informative because

- job applicants often choose the referees they believe will be favourable,
- organisations seldom ask the questions that tend to unearth narcissism,



### Did you know



<https://greatvineinsights.com/> is a service in which staff will contact past colleagues of an individual you are interviewing and check whether this person tends to exhibit narcissism, aggression, or similar traits.

Questions to ask referees	Interpretations of answers
Would you say people like this individual more at the beginning or after a while?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Narcissistic people tend to be liked more initially but less over time (e.g., Paulhus, 1998).</li></ul>
Would you regard this person as more confident or humble? Why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Referees may be willing to describe a narcissistic person as very confident—almost to a degree that may elicit your suspicion.</li></ul>