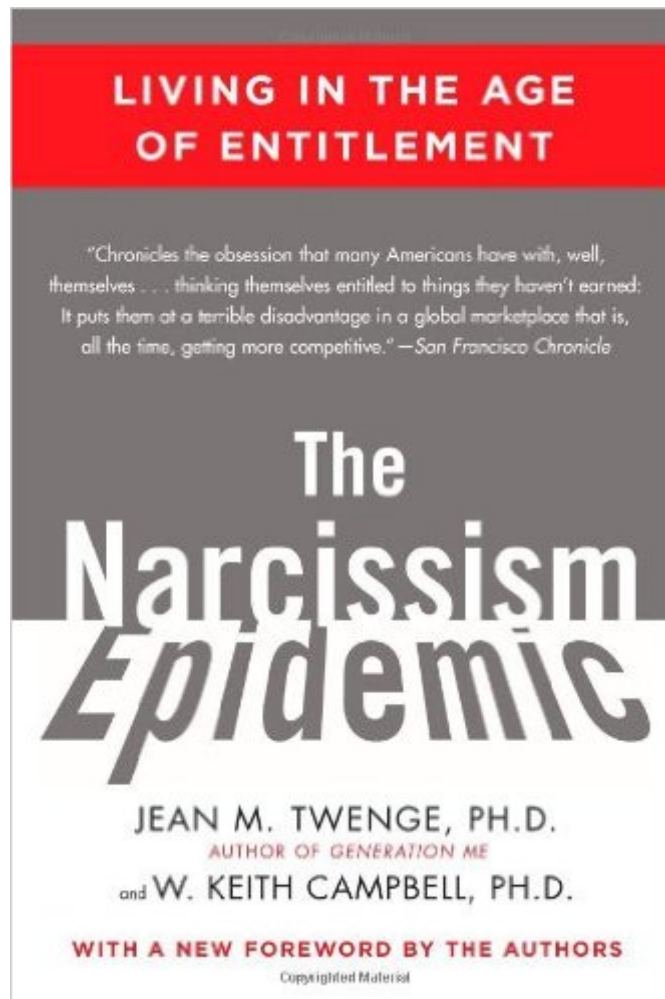


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The Narcissism Epidemic: Living In The Age Of Entitlement



Synopsis

Narcissism "an inflated view of the self" is everywhere. Public figures say it's what makes them stray from their wives. Parents teach it by dressing children in T-shirts that say "Princess." Teenagers and young adults hone it on Facebook, and celebrity newsmakers have elevated it to an art form. And it's what's making people depressed, lonely, and buried under piles of debt. Jean Twenge's influential first book, *Generation Me*, spurred a national debate with its depiction of the challenges twenty- and thirty-somethings face in today's world "and the fallout these issues create for educators and employers. Now, Dr. Twenge turns her focus to the pernicious spread of narcissism in today's culture, which has repercussions for every age group and class. Dr. Twenge joins forces with W. Keith Campbell, Ph.D., a nationally recognized expert on narcissism, to explore this new plague in *The Narcissism Epidemic*, their eye-opening exposition of the alarming rise of narcissism and its catastrophic effects at every level of society. Even the world economy has been damaged by risky, unrealistic overconfidence. Drawing on their own extensive research as well as decades of other experts' studies, Drs. Twenge and Campbell show us how to identify narcissism, minimize the forces that sustain and transmit it, and treat it or manage it where we find it. Filled with arresting, alarming, and even amusing stories of vanity gone off the tracks (would you like to hire your own personal paparazzi?), *The Narcissism Epidemic* is at once a riveting window into the consequences of narcissism, a prescription to combat the widespread problems it causes, and a probing analysis of the culture at large.

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Customer Reviews

"The Narcissism Epidemic" is an often thought-provoking critique of modern American culture. We're definitely more obsessed with ourselves than decades ago, and it's certainly an uncomfortable experience to read the many examples here and recognize family members, friends, and loved ones. Yet despite the fact that both authors are academic research psychologists, there's an awful lot less psychology in this book than meets the eye. Truth be told, while there are a lot of good research studies on narcissism, both Twenge and Campbell are willing to go far beyond the data to extend their hypotheses to such areas as MySpace, online flammers, and dating websites. A wealth of social psychology and evolutionary psychology research explains these areas far better than Twenge and Campbell's thesis, yet this research is all but ignored by the authors. Many of the chapters rely on the tried-and-true anecdotal approach used in academic critiques of pop culture, often implying empirical support by associating them with unrelated research articles. I'm also annoyed at the almost total lack of chapter references; instead we are given a website to download this information from. The book ignores much of the social structure that supports narcissism and allows it to flourish. Yes, the parental and educational influences are clearly labelled. But codependency isn't probed. Nor is the general lack of assertiveness among many people. Narcissists can't run rampant within a society unless they are allowed to. In the chapter on the cult of celebrity, for example, the role of gossip mags as reinforcement for the celebrity narcissist is mentioned. But what about the consumer of such magazines?

For some time I've been wondering what the attraction of social networks such as MySpace and Facebook and dozens of imitators are all about. My children and most of their friends spend hours and hours on these "tell-all" websites. If I wish to know what my kids are up to, I can check their websites and the websites of their girl friends. My daughter ended up with some stalker problems and wisely cancelled her Facebook listing. I don't check my son's social sites often because I know I may not like what I find posted. Most of it is harmless news, but some of it is too personal for dear old Dad and Mom to want to know. Much of what is shown on many social sites may come back to bite the subject of the material on their rear ends. Employers often check the listings about potential employees. Some of my peers spend more time updating their social website listings than improving their business websites. I know that the number of so-call "friends" pictured on their social sites must require them to spend several hours a day corresponding. The business friends justify it as networking and self-promotion for their businesses. I have my doubts. I suspect those friendships are miles wide and a fraction of an inch deep. This book is about the fact that the Narcissism Epidemic has hooked millions of people into becoming "Me Addicts." These youngsters are the

product of our American culture that glorifies wealth, beauty, glamour and fame and who have been told by their parents and teachers that they are truly outstanding individuals despite any flaws. The "Love Yourself" educational programs they have been brainwashed with throughout their school careers have gone amuck. The students have been protected from reality and turned into spoiled, entitled, and lazy adults.

"Narcissism is the fast food of the soul. It tastes great in the short term, has negative, even dire, consequences in the long term, and yet continues to have widespread appeal." (p. 259) For all intents and purposes, *The Narcissism Epidemic* is something of a sequel to Jean Twenge's previous book, *Generation Me*. Whereas that book focused on the younger generation's (and gen y's) increase in narcissistic behavior, this book focuses on the same trend as a nation- and worldwide phenomenon. From our ever-increasing obsession with fawning over the lives of the rich and glamorous (*Real Housewives of Orange County*, anyone?) to our rampant consumerism, this book tells the tale of a nation in a very strange state of decline. In a sense, we are loving ourselves to death. The first few chapters start off with the hard numbers. Twenge and Campbell have administered, and chased down, several experimental studies which demonstrate a very clear trend towards a more narcissistic attitude in the population. Young people list "being famous" as an important life goal far more frequently than their predecessors, the rise of plastic surgery has increased FIVEFOLD in the past ten years (which COULD be explained by the fact that it has become more affordable, but the increase is so large that this explanation is unlikely to be the MAIN one). More and more newspaper articles and tv shows focus on narcissistic themes than in years past. Infinitely more people, when given the Narcissistic Personality Inventory, yield results consistent with narcissism than in years past. In other words, the rise in narcissism is thoroughly documented here.

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