Preface

It is widely acknowledged that having a positive self-attitude, being self-confident, and having high self-esteem are worthwhile attributes in both work and personal life. To the chagrin of others, some people take these positive attributes to the extreme and become self-absorbed, self-adoring, self-centered, and show little empathy for the problems and concerns of others. In brief, they are narcissists.

A healthy dose of narcissism can facilitate career success, because reasonable concern with the self helps a person think of achieving important goals and being admired as a leader. The moderately narcissistic person often appears to be self-confident and charismatic. Yet extreme narcissism can hamper success because the narcissist irritates and alienates others in the workplace as well as in personal life. It is natural for work associates to want others to show some concern for them rather than being totally self-preoccupied.

PURPOSE AND GOALS OF THE BOOK

The purpose of *Narcissism in the Workplace: Research, Opinion, and Practice* is to describe both the positive and negative features of narcissism, and also present strategies and tactics for dealing constructively with narcissistic traits and behaviors in oneself and others. Ideally, this book would serve as a workplace guide to capitalizing on the positive aspects of narcissism, and minimizing its potential negative effects.

Another key purpose of this book is to present information about narcissism in the workplace that is based on empirical research when possible, as well as opinion derived from systematic observation. Our aim is to take an objective look at the positive and negative aspects of narcissism within members of the workforce. In contrast, considerable writing about narcissism is simply a rant about the self-centeredness, lack of consideration, and low empathy of narcissists. Our emphasis with respect to the negative features of narcissism is to present coping tactics and strategies rather than simply condemning workers with strong narcissistic tendencies.

To help illustrate the presence of workplace narcissism, we present many examples and case histories of people whose activities are presented in the

media, such as Donald Trump and Martha Stewart. Our labeling of these public figures as having narcissistic tendencies is based on their characteristics as reported in the media and occasionally by bloggers. In no instance do we pretend to have diagnosed the public figure based on a personal interview.

As a consequence of the purposes and goals of this book, it has several potential audiences. First among these are organizational professionals and managers curious about narcissism and its impact on work relationships and career advancement. Included in this group are people who are interested in learning more about factually based information on the subject of narcissism as this subject grows in interest. Second are students in such subjects as organizational behavior, organizational psychology, human relations, and leadership who would like in-depth knowledge about narcissism – a topic probably given no more than a passing reference in the subject fields just mentioned.

Third, scholars in the field of narcissism, self-esteem and leadership might find the integration of research and opinion about narcissism useful for their research. At the same time, some of the suggestions made in the book might serve as hypotheses for conducting more research. One example among dozens of possibilities is whether an optimum degree of narcissism predicts leadership effectiveness and career success.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

To achieve its purposes and goals the book is divided into ten chapters. Chapter 1 explains the meaning of narcissism as a personality trait, including its components and associated behaviors. Also included is a discussion of the narcissistic personality disorder. (Although it is now dropped as an official personality disorder by the American Psychiatric Association, the disorder is still widely recognized by mental health professionals.) Chapter 2 closely examines the behaviors and demands of workplace narcissists, such as uncivil treatment of others, arrogance, and a feeling of entitlement. Also explained is how strongly narcissistic workers attempt to manipulate others to accomplish their ends. Chapter 3 examines the roots of workplace narcissism, and therefore focuses more on personal life and early-life influences than do other chapters. The chapter includes a discussion of how generational values and personal branding contribute to narcissism.

Chapter 4 shifts attention to the healthy, productive narcissist – a category of worker that seems to have gone under-recognized in writings about narcissists. The role of healthy self-esteem in contributing to productive narcissism is emphasized, as well as the contribution of narcissism to workplace creativity. Chapter 5 again emphasizes the positive side of narcissism with an explanation of how this personality trait contributes to leadership effectiveness. For

example, narcissism often contributes to vision formation. Chapter 6 shifts to how narcissism can often contribute to dysfunctional leadership through such means as an excessive desire for power, wealth, and admiration. Also, the narcissistic leader will sometimes promote a vision that fits his or her need for grandiosity.

Chapter 7 describes strategies and tactics for dealing with the many potential problems created by narcissistic coworkers. Emphasis is placed on such communication tactics as giving ample feedback and offering constructive criticism. Chapter 8 is about the delicate problem of dealing with a narcissistic manager, including the technique of using good emotional intelligence, maintaining your professionalism, and flattering him or her. Chapter 9 describes tactics and strategies for dealing with the narcissistic subordinate, including focusing on the relationship with the subordinate as well as the tasks performed. This chapter also explores the issue of how a narcissistic organization can trigger workers into behaving narcissistically.

Chapter 10 describes how social media, mobile phones, and email are forces for encouraging narcissistic behavior among their users. Emphasis is placed on how negative mobile phone behavior often includes an element of narcissism, such as accepting a call during a work conversation.

All chapters include several features in addition to a description of the subject material: a checklist in the form of a self-quiz; a chapter summary; a section about guidelines for application and practice in relation to the chapter topic; and a case history of a workplace narcissist that includes a brief analysis of the narcissism displayed.

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