

The Work of Dr Ramani Durvasula

NARCISSISM, RELATIONSHIPS & HEALING

A summary of the books, ideas and recommendations of Ramani Durvasula, PhD – clinical psychologist and Professor Emerita

Dr Ramani is a licensed clinical psychologist whose work focuses on narcissistic and antagonistic personality styles and their impact on relationships and wellbeing. Through her books, teaching and widely followed educational content, she aims to help people recognise these patterns, stop blaming themselves, and heal.

Her Books at a Glance From food and health to narcissism and recovery

2012 You Are WHY You Eat Changing your relationship with food by understanding the attitudes behind eating.	2015 Should I Stay or Should I Go? Surviving a relationship with a narcissist – with roadmaps for staying or leaving.	2019 "Don't You Know Who I Am?" Staying sane in an era of narcissism, entitlement and incivility.	2024 It's Not You Identifying and healing from narcissistic people – a bestselling recovery guide.
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Understanding Narcissism Her core framework



Presentations She Describes Different ways narcissistic patterns can show up

 Grandiose Charming, confident, attention-seeking and openly superior.	 Vulnerable Resentful, aggrieved and easily slighted – often feeling overlooked.	 Communal Seeking admiration through being seen as generous or "the best helper".
 Self-righteous Rigid, judgemental and certain their way is the only right way.	 Neglectful Emotionally absent; relating to others mainly for what they provide.	 Malignant The most harmful – combining narcissism with exploitation and cruelty.

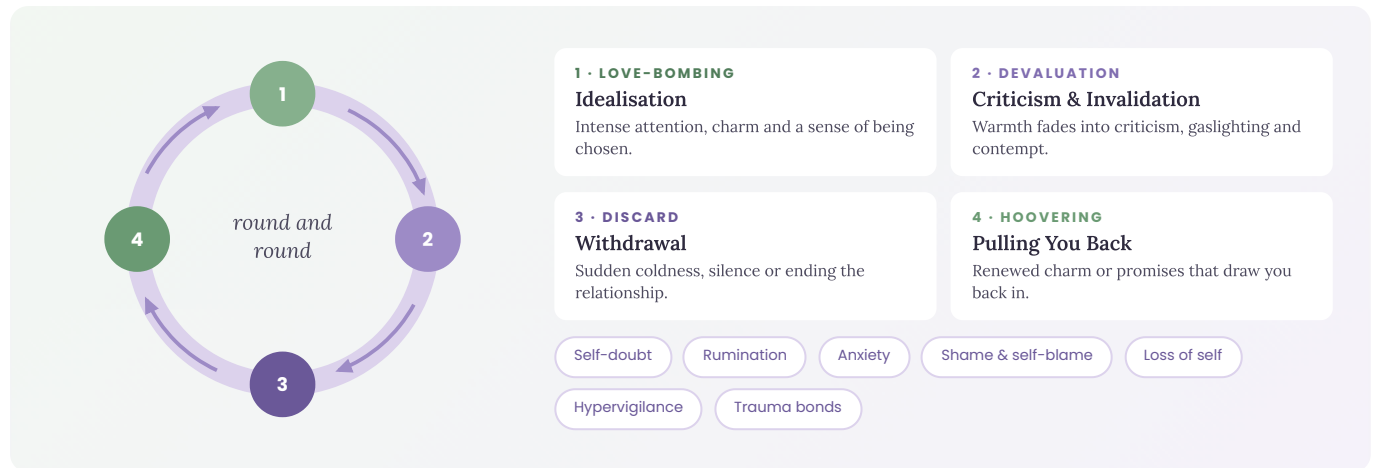
Only grandiose and vulnerable narcissism are widely established in research; the other presentations are Dr Ramani's clinical descriptions.

Where Narcissism May Come From Her view of multiple pathways

TEMPERAMENT & ENVIRONMENT Several Routes, Not One Dr Ramani describes narcissism as shaped by temperament interacting with environment. She highlights parenting as an important influence – with different routes to different presentations.	TWO PATHWAYS SHE DESCRIBES Overvaluation and Neglect Overvaluation – being treated as more special than others may be linked with grandiose patterns Neglect, chaos or inconsistency – may be linked with vulnerable or more hostile patterns
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The Relationship Cycle

A pattern she describes in narcissistic relationships



Her Key Recommendations

Drawn from *It's Not You* and her wider teaching

- 01**
It's not your fault
Their behaviour is not caused by you – and no amount of appeasing will fix it.
- 02**
Radical acceptance
Accept that deep change in the other person is unlikely, and stop waiting for it.
- 03**
Become gaslight-resistant
Trust your perceptions; notice when reality is being rewritten.
- 04**
Loosen trauma bonds
Recognise the pull of hope and intermittent warmth.
- 05**
Allow yourself to grieve
Grieve the relationship you hoped for, and what it cost you.
- 06**
Set realistic boundaries
Boundaries protect you – they are not tools to change them.
- 07**
Tell patterns from moments
Distinguish ordinary unhelpful behaviour from ongoing narcissistic patterns.
- 08**
Reclaim your self
Rediscover your needs, interests and voice after invalidation.

Should I Stay or Should I Go?

Two realistic roadmaps from her 2015 book

- IF YOU STAY**

Staying With Clear Eyes

 - Hold realistic expectations of what will change
 - Protect your self-worth and limit emotional exposure
 - Build support and a life outside the relationship
 - Keep checking in on your own wellbeing
- IF YOU GO**

Leaving With Care

 - Plan carefully, with attention to safety
 - Expect attempts to draw you back in
 - Limit contact where possible; parallel-parent if needed
 - Give yourself time and support to heal

Reading Her Work Carefully

A balanced clinical perspective

- POINTS TO HOLD IN MIND**
- Useful Insights, Held With Nuance**
- "Narcissistic abuse" is a descriptive term, not a formal diagnosis.
 - Narcissistic personality disorder can only be diagnosed by a qualified clinician after assessment.
 - Research suggests narcissistic traits tend to decline gradually with age, though meaningful change is often limited.
 - She encourages focusing on how behaviour affects you, rather than labelling others.

Reflection

For personal reflection or to explore in therapy

- 01**
WHAT PATTERNS DO I NOTICE, RATHER THAN SINGLE MOMENTS?

- 02**
WHAT AM I STILL HOPING WILL CHANGE?

- 03**
WHAT BOUNDARY WOULD PROTECT MY WELLBEING?



If you are being harmed or feel unsafe, please contact local emergency services or a domestic abuse support service. You deserve safety and support.

SOURCES

- Durvasula, R. (2012). *You Are WHY You Eat*. Post Hill Press.
- Durvasula, R. (2015). *Should I Stay or Should I Go? Surviving a Relationship with a Narcissist*. Post Hill Press.
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