



PSYCHOPATHS:

Camouflaged Charming Cheaters

Psychopaths are often depicted in the media as murderers and criminals, but these are the less functional psychopaths. Functional psychopaths use charm and charisma to manipulate others in pursuit of self-serving goals. Behind the charm, they are ruthless and chameleon-like, thriving on risk and chaos, to exploit others, to achieve their goals.

It is estimated almost four percent of adults have features of *antisocial personality disorder (APD)*, otherwise known as *sociopathy* or *psychopathy*. Three percent of men and one percent of woman are psychopaths. We will all encounter them in our life.

If you have been unfortunate enough to work with a psychopath or worse, live with one, you will have ultimately suffered.

More functional psychopaths tend to 'succeed' in organisations where they charm and manipulate their way up the corporate ladder. Generally, psychopaths gravitate towards positions of power over others. A higher proportion of psychopaths are found in areas such as: business, politics, law enforcement agencies, law firms, religious organisations and the media. This is because attributes like aggressiveness, ambition, manipulation and goal achievement are considered strengths. Advertisements for management positions often unknowingly list desirable criteria that match, and therefore attract, psychopaths.

What are the signs of a Psychopath?

Psychopaths are often highly engaging, witty, charming, and fun to be around, but they are also deceitful and exploit others. They lack empathy, have no regard for the rights of others and act to serve their own purposes. They can act impulsively, be destructive and harm others without guilt or remorse.

What motivates psychopaths?

Psychopaths lack a social and moral conscience and are unable to form empathic emotional attachments. They are not interested in forming emotional bonds with others unless it serves their needs. They form relationships only to serve their objectives.

People who are lured and seduced by psychopaths unknowingly serve them, enabling them to achieve their goals. Once exploited and no longer useful, these individuals are abandoned and left damaged.



The Dynamics of a Psychopath

Psychopaths work through manipulating others. Rarely do they act directly. They maintain a clean image. Manipulating others comes naturally to psychopaths for whom it is like a game. Psychopaths tend to cast people into four main roles: *pawns, patrons, police and patsy*.

Pawns are individuals who hold little social or political power. They are manipulated to serve the psychopath and advance their agenda. Like pawns in a game of chess they are readily available, easily manipulated and readily discarded.

Patrons, in contrast, hold social and political power and influence. The objective of the psychopath is to groom these individuals to exploit their power and influence for protection and personal gain. They groom them with techniques such as giving compliments, doing them favours, giving presents, and even compromising them as a means of maintaining control over them. When no longer needed, they too are betrayed and left damaged.

Police are individuals that can potentially obstruct or impede a psychopath's agenda. These individuals are targeted to neutralising the threat they pose.

Lastly, there is the patsy, the victim. The individual might have been a pawn or a patron but is now no longer needed and becomes a patsy. The psychopath has played their moves and the individual is now superfluous. The patsy is left deceived, exploited, abused, betrayed, cheated, blamed, ridiculed and psychologically damaged.

How to deal with psychopaths in the workplace

Psychopaths believe they are superior to others. They perceive others are only present to serve their needs. Their charm and manipulation optimises their ability to achieve their objectives so they are likely to be fast tracked through organisations. They maintain tight control over their team, who learn to comply. Any dissidents are singled-out and targeted like the sacrificial lamb. Psychopaths tend to be micromanagers and workplace bullies. They engage in splitting behaviour using their patrons for protection and their pawns loyalty to carry out their deeds. Those that try to expose, or 'police', them are

also targeted with the intent of neutralising the threat they pose.

When psychopaths are employed as managers, research has found that their staff are twice as likely to take sick leave than employees working under a manager who is not a psychopath. Furthermore, their staff are likely to have lower productivity. The higher the psychopath climbs, the more damage they inflict. More competent managers will leave or be targeted if they are perceived as competition. The psychopath's impact is like a contagion.

In organisations, the solution is to promote a culture of transparency and honesty. Encourage open communication, reward honesty, establish independent and capable human resources and ensure independent staff support through, such as through an independent Counselling Psychologist.

One method that has been developed to identify workplace psychopaths is the 360-degree assessment. It uses questionnaires completed by an employee's: immediate supervisor, subordinates, former boss, peers and other internal stakeholders. The data is then reviewed according to various categories and sub-categories including: 'insincere' (for example, 'makes a well-packaged slick presentation', 'difficult to pin down on personal details'), untrustworthy ('will say or do anything to get his own way', 'tells a larger than usual number of white lies'), manipulative, arrogant, insensitive, remorseless, shallow, blaming, impatient, erratic, unreliable, unfocused, parasitic, dramatic, unethical and bullying.

Like cheaters, laying camouflaged in the scrub you will often not see the psychopath and only become aware of them when you fall victim.

Need Help?

If you are dealing with a psychopath or have fallen victim to their exploits, then we are here to assist you.

To book an appointment, visit our website at:

www.iflowpsychology.com.au

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