

THE MUSLIM *NARCISSIST*



An Islamic guide to understanding, surviving and
healing from narcissistic and spiritual abuse

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Acknowledgments



This book is for my 18-year old self who would have loved to have read it, understood and known what I know today. I'm so grateful to God for giving me the time, experiences and knowledge to write this book that I pray will help many people. I thank my incredible mother Dr. Samira Zaidan, who encouraged me to pursue a doctorate in this field and start writing and who made me aware of narcissism when I was a victim of it, as it greatly empowered me and made me stronger at the time. I'm also grateful to my friends who were there for me, especially Selma, who gave me endless counselling when I needed it and helped me to understand myself and everything I had been through. You're an absolute gem Selma. I'm also thankful for all the wonderful Muslim scholars like Sheikh Hamza Yusuf, Sheikh Mohammed Al-Nabulsi, Imam Omar Suleiman, Sheikh Mufti Menk and Ustadha Yasmin Mogahed who were a source of valuable and very beautiful Islamic knowledge that kept me going and made me feel very blessed to be a Muslim. I also appreciate the videos made by the Supernova Empath YouTubers who educate us about narcissism and who supported me and so many other people in their healing journeys.

I dedicate this book to all my Muslim brothers and sisters who need to be set free from their egos, pains, societal pressures, false guilt, abuse and traumas that have caused their colours to fade. I pray that I can inspire you to pick up your brushes and paint your lives with bright colours, and most importantly re-connect with God on a deeper level, reclaim your faith and find yourselves in this book.

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1. Introduction



It's the 1st of November 2020 and Prime Minister Boris Johnson has just announced that England will go into its second lockdown on the 5th of November for four weeks. As everyone has been ordered to 'stay at home' I thought now would be the best time to start writing this book that has been delayed for quite some time. As I sit on my bed in front of a blank MS Word page, I remember the words that inspired me to write about the plight of Muslims in the world we live in today.

"There aren't any nice and genuine practicing Muslims to marry anymore, looks like we are destined to stay single forever", "Every Muslim guy I have met is a playboy, it's hard to find someone who is serious about getting married", "The beautiful Muslim women are all asking for high dowries" and "I'm struggling to find a hijabi who is attractive and compatible with me". These are lines I hear in almost every phone call, discussion, counselling session or gathering of single Muslims over the age of twenty-five who are struggling to meet someone they can marry and start a family with.

Many people often question why it has become so difficult to find a suitable marriage partner despite the large number of single Muslims in our communities. Muslim marriage app CEOs proudly claim that they have

hundreds and thousands of single Muslims registered on their databases, especially in countries like the USA and the UK. So, what's going on? It can be argued that finding a partner is more difficult for Muslim women, as social statistics show there's a greater number of single women than there are single men (on the apps too), so why do we still have so many young single men despite the increasing number of modern apps and services to help them connect with potential partners? One of the reasons why there are more single Muslim women than men in this generation is because according to Islamic law, Muslim women can only marry Muslim men. There are several reasons behind this, the primary one being that Muslim men are followers of the same mindset, values and lifestyle and can therefore be role models for their children who will be raised with the same beliefs and life goals too (to do well in life while pleasing God and earn a place in Paradise). However, the rapidly decreasing pool of suitable, practicing and morally sound Muslim men is causing a crisis for the Muslim women in our societies who wish to get married. They either end up marrying narcissists and abusers (knowingly and un-knowingly), because they ignore early red flags, marry non-Muslims, go through difficult trials to remain patient and chaste, which can cause depression, loneliness and mental health disorders and/or slip into a non-Islamic lifestyle if or when they lose their patience and faith. You may ask what causes the decrease in the number of suitable Muslim men these days? Well, to begin with, women who have qualities, such as being financially independent, educated, beautiful and belonging to a good family often have standards that many men are either unable to meet or are unwilling to make efforts to reach or exceed. Women complain that the men they meet both online and offline are not eligible because they're not practicing and don't pray, are secretly married, are separated and not yet divorced, are single fathers with a complex parenting routine or problematic ex-wife, belong to a very different ethnic background

and culture, belong to a different Muslim sect, are gay or bisexual, are narcissistic, are just looking for Muslim girlfriends, aren't able to decide who and what they want, have difficult parents, are uneducated and/or unemployed, are mummy's boys, have a criminal record, have a bad reputation, are immature, are unattractive, are too old or too young, aren't financially stable enough, aren't intellectual, ambitious or interesting, are after citizenship and other personal benefits, are too western and liberal, are too strict and religious, are drinkers, womanizers and drug users, are looking for casual sexual encounters or are too feminine and not manly enough. On the other hand, great Muslim men are struggling to find Muslim women who possess a joint combination of these five traits: being beautiful, practicing, educated, kind and interesting. It was found during my research that men are more likely to compromise on education if the other four traits are present and if the woman isn't excessively feminist. Many men have complained that some impressive women have put them off pursuing them for marriage because their feminist views were too strong. A Muslim man with the correct understanding of Islam will know and accept the rights that women are entitled to, but when he feels that a woman is too western in her understanding and practicing of feminism that may go against his cultural values or teachings of Islam, he loses interest. Good men are attracted to feminine women who know their rights but allow men to thrive as leaders, protectors and providers. However, good men can also fall into the trap of getting involved with narcissistic women who harbour an abyss of mental health issues that they haven't healed or recovered from.

For those who don't know, Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) is a psychological and spiritual disorder in which the ego and its evil desires rule over an individual at the expense of their faith, morals and values,

instead of the other way around (as Muslims, we're meant to be in control of our ego and desires). Narcissism is usually rooted in childhood and the unhealthy family environment in which a child has been raised. People with this disorder are known to be selfish, arrogant, destructive, liars and manipulative. Human beings all possess narcissistic traits, but there are different levels of narcissism. Those in the lowest level have negative thoughts, but don't act upon or express them to others. For example, they may secretly feel resentment towards someone or believe they're much better or more pious than others. If left untreated, this can escalate to thoughts turning into actions, such as revenge, lies, verbal abuse and disrespect. On the most extreme and dangerous end of the scale, narcissism, with time, can turn people into sociopaths and psychopaths and cause them to commit horrific crimes, such as physical violence and even murder.

Narcissism often gets confused with self-love, self-confidence and self-admiration, but there's a big difference between healthy self-love and toxic self-centeredness. Self-love is all about loving and caring for yourself, which leads to a healthy mindset and environment to live in, while narcissism consists of highly toxic traits that fuel a negative mindset and environment for narcissists and those who come into contact with them. The core difference between a narcissist and someone who just has some narcissistic traits is the presence of empathy. A narcissist's personality is void of empathy and is developed around strong narcissistic traits so he or she can survive in the social world, whereas others hold a level of empathy that allows them to be aware of their negative behaviour and the feelings of others. Narcissists are very attracted to people who have high levels of empathy, as they know or assume that they will be able to manipulate them emotionally. These people are often co-dependents who are impressed by the narcissist's exterior (good looks, wealth and/or

status) and hope to fix and save them from their emotional brokenness. Co-dependency is another personality disorder that is developed from childhood and causes an individual to completely depend on a narcissist for validation, love, self-worth, admiration and other egoistic needs. They obtain their value as human beings by attempting to be 'the heroes' who change the narcissists and their lives for the better. However, when the two come together, they create a highly toxic and turbulent relationship, as they feed of each other's issues and insecurities. A typical scenario would be a co-dependent making the efforts to heal and love a narcissist who has recently been through a difficult divorce and the narcissist using him or her as a convenient distraction and re-bound in return. Unfortunately, the millennial generation is witnessing a fast rise in the number of young Muslims with narcissistic personalities and co-dependent needs. I truly believe that the strong and *normalised* emergence of disorders among us is a primary reason behind the decrease of marriages, dysfunctional families and increase in divorces.

My deep interest in Islamic psychology and personality disorders in Muslim communities stemmed from my doctorate study at Kingston University (London), entitled "*British Muslim Converts: An Investigation into Conversion and De-Conversion Processes to and from Islam*" that was published in 2016. The study is about why some British converts leave Islam after experiencing life as a Muslim and why the behaviour, faith and identity of Muslims has drastically changed over the last few decades, as our countries and societies become more secular. Many women claimed that the reason they wanted to leave Islam was the abuse they received from their outwardly practicing Muslim husbands, whom they expected to find help, support and knowledge from during their conversion journeys. Instead, the men used misinterpreted Qur'an verses and quotes by The

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to justify their possessiveness, control and unwarranted authority, which caused these women to experience not only disappointment, anxiety and depression, but many doubts that led to a loss of faith in the religion they fell in love with. A narcissist who presents himself as being religious will often target women whom he assumes don't have much knowledge about Islam and their rights. He will ask various questions to test their level of knowledge before he chooses who to pursue and who to leave alone. Many new and young Muslim women, in particular, are impressed by the charm and religious façade of these men whom they meet online, in mosques and at Islamic events. However, they're often abused and taken advantage of because they're isolated from unsupportive non-Muslim family members and don't have a Muslim community to turn to for help, counselling, guidance and authentic Islamic knowledge. These men always distort religious teachings to their advantage and become very obsessive and controlling. They find ways to avoid fulfilling the Islamic financial rights of wives too, such as expecting financial contribution from working western women who have normalised the sharing of financial responsibilities with men in their culture. Some men, however, may do the opposite and insist that their wives don't work, as they wish to be the main breadwinner and control them with finances.

Narcissism becomes a detrimental problem in society when it's associated with Islam. Those who don't know much about the beautiful and true meaning of Islam will, unfortunately, perceive it as a barbaric religion that breeds nations of patriarchal and narcissistic men who use Islamic teachings to manipulate and abuse the vulnerable people around them. Negative news and experiences with Muslim narcissists, especially those involved in domestic violence, to the disgraceful behaviour and

hypocrisy of tyrannical Muslim leaders, all fuel Islamophobia, more hatred towards outwardly practicing Muslims and an increase in Muslims who wish to disassociate themselves with Islam and a public Muslim identity. Due to a lack of knowledge about Islam, many people and victims are made to believe that abusive behaviour is normal or taught by religion, not knowing that narcissism is a separate psychological and spiritual problem found in people of all faiths. As a result, many converts who endured a string of negative experiences or failed expectations of the benefits that they had anticipated to receive from being Muslims, reverted to their previous religion, explored another religion, or became atheists and/or anti-Islam whistle-blowers. After I completed my research (I was also experiencing narcissistic abuse during that period of time in my marriage) I decided to offer counselling services to help men and women who were thinking of leaving Islam and/or had been through religious, emotional and spiritual abuse at the hands of Muslim narcissists. The more people I spoke to over the years, the more I realised how dangerous this disorder is, as some people reached a point where they felt mentally destroyed and became suicidal. It pains me to see pure-hearted, beautiful, intelligent and kind Muslims repeatedly become victims to abusers due to a lack of Islamic knowledge and awareness of narcissism or remain unmarried into their thirties and forties because they can't find suitable partners. It also saddens me to see suicidal Muslims who feel trapped by their narcissism and believe there's no hope for repentance and reform, which only makes their behaviour worse. All of these problems make narcissism a crucial subject to address, explore and find solutions to, as the consequences of it reach far and wide and are affecting our *Ummah* (global Muslim community).

This book is for anyone who wants to understand narcissism from an Islamic viewpoint, has come across Muslim narcissists in their lives,

is currently in relationships with them, or is struggling to overcome and heal from their traumatic experiences. It begins by establishing a solid foundation of essential Islamic teachings to explain what narcissism is and how it's a problematic combination with a Muslim identity that's meant to be empathic, moral and kind. All human beings suffer from spiritual and mental health issues, but some issues, such as worrying about mundane things, are considered to be minor and others, such as suicidal thoughts and harming others, are considered to be major. In this book, I will take you on an educational journey to show you how I extracted my understanding of Islam's guidance on spiritual and mental health problems and how it can be implemented in our lives. The book will also identify and differentiate patriarchal attitudes and cultures from some religious teachings Muslim narcissists misinterpret and take out of context to justify their problematic attitudes and behaviour towards others.

There are many wonderful people in our societies who are excellent examples of how Muslims should be, but due to a lack of awareness of narcissism and support from friends and family members, who may themselves be in toxic relationships, they're likely to get involved with narcissists on a personal level, because they have a moral and empathic desire to help them. Healed, healthy and spiritual Muslim empaths on the other hand who are aware of narcissists usually find partners similar to themselves within their social circles and local communities. These people are in the minority group of Muslims and tend to keep themselves busy with community work, taking care of elderly parents or advancing in their careers. They don't often find the time to register on apps and talk to multiple people for marriage, which is why they're more likely to get introduced to potential partners in an organic way via their caring family members and friends who wish to see them happily married to good

people. Therefore, it can be argued that the majority of people registered on marriage apps don't fall into this category of Muslims.

In this book, I share my personal opinions and the lessons I learned from counselling children and adult empaths, co-dependents and narcissists. I wholeheartedly believe that my own experience of being married to a narcissist opened my eyes to the disorder and has helped me to better understand those who come to me for help. Finding out why we are the way we are, why we experience repeated hardships and why we attract abusers into our lives is the first step in the healing process. This book will help you identify the traits, characteristics, body language and attitudes of Muslim narcissists from the first meeting so that you can avoid a toxic relationship and focus on thriving as free and happy human beings. If you're currently in relationships with them it will guide you to deal with them in a safe and smart manner and will teach you how to break the toxic cycle and heal from narcissism. I believe this book will also be highly beneficial to those who can find the strength to do some self-reflection and recognize the narcissism within themselves, as it will provide critical insight into where their issues are rooted and how they can work on healing and improving themselves as people and as Muslims. If every reader benefits from it, then it will have fulfilled its purpose by increasing the number of aware, healed and wonderful Muslims in our communities and decreasing the number of people with major mental health problems, divorces, domestic violence cases and children who are born and raised in toxic households.