

Publication: Newsweek Online

Date: 24 July 2020

Headline: Narcissists Don't Think They Make Mistakes, So Don't Learn From Them: Study

Narcissists Don't Think They Make Mistakes, So Don't Learn From Them: Study



A recent study suggests that narcissists may be incapable of learning from their mistakes because they don't think that they make any.

The study, co-authored by researchers in Oregon, Texas, Chile and Singapore, was published last month in the *Journal of Management*. It involved four experiments that surveyed different groups of people with psychological tests before the results were analyzed.

A narcissist is usually defined as a person who lacks empathy for others while maintaining a very inflated sense of their own importance. Narcissists believe themselves to be superior and more deserving of success, but demand excessive attention and admiration from others.

Unlike most people, narcissists do not engage in "should counterfactual thinking," the process of analyzing past mistakes and imagining what should have been done to avoid them. Instead, they assume that any mistakes were unavoidable because they don't believe they could have been at fault.

Mental processes that protect self-interest, such as taking credit for successes and blaming failures on outside forces, are used by all people to some extent. However, narcissists rarely, if ever, think in any other way.

"Narcissists do this way more because they think they're better than others," Satoris Howes, a researcher at Oregon State University and one of the study's authors, said in a university news release.

"They don't take advice from other people; they don't trust others' opinions," Howes added. "You can flat-out ask, 'What should you have done differently?' And it might be, 'Nothing, it turned out; it was good.'"

Publication: Newsweek Online

Date: 24 July 2020

Headline: Narcissists Don't Think They Make Mistakes, So Don't Learn From Them: Study



Foresight bias, the psychological tendency to overestimate your ability to predict things after the fact, is also common among narcissists. Researchers cited President Donald Trump as an example of someone who frequently appears to engage in foresight bias.

"A good current example appears to be Donald Trump, who often claims that he 'knew it all along,' such as when he stated in 2016 that in 2004 he had 'predicted the Iraq war better than anybody,'" the study noted.

While narcissists may engage in foresight bias frequently, when it does not serve their own self-interest they sometimes employ reverse hindsight bias. The study's authors again cited an example featuring Trump, who they note "has been labelled a narcissist," to illustrate this point.

"President Trump, after initially predicting that he could easily make a deal on health care, when he later failed to do so stated: 'Nobody knew health care could be so complicated,'" the authors wrote.

Regardless of how narcissists assess their own failed or successful predictions after the fact, they are left convinced that they have no reason to change their behavior and therefore do not learn from their experiences.

"They're falling prey to the hindsight bias, and they're not learning from it when they make mistakes. And when they get things right, they're still not learning," said Howes.

Howes added that narcissists often achieve leadership roles in organizations because they exude confidence and are able to take credit for the success of others and deflect blame for their failures. However, organizations are eventually damaged due to continued poor decision making from the narcissist and low morale from others.