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## **Understanding Narcissism**

**Guest: Dr Keith Campbell**

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**[00:00:09] Alex Howard**

Welcome everyone to this interview where I'm really happy to be talking to Dr W. Keith Campbell.

Firstly, Keith, welcome and thank you for joining me.

**Dr Keith Campbell**

Oh, thanks for having me Alex, appreciate it.

**Alex Howard**

I was just saying to Keith before we started recording that I don't think you can do a Relationship Conference in 2021 and not talk about the issue we're going to talk about today, which is the issue of narcissism and how it can show up in different ways, but particularly in the context of relationship.

And some of the ways that we can spot that in others, I guess, in ourselves, I'm not sure how much narcissists reflect on these things, but reflecting themselves. And also some of the ways we can navigate some of the challenges that can come up with narcissists in our life.

Just to give people a bit of Keith's background. Dr W. Keith Campbell is a professor of psychology at the University of Georgia. He's the author of *The Narcissism Epidemic, When You Love A Man Who Loves Himself*, it's a great title by the way. And his most recent book, *The New Science of Narcissism: Understanding one of the greatest psychological challenges of our time and what you can do about it*. He's also the author of more than 120 peer-reviewed articles. And Dr Campbell lives in Athens in Georgia.

So, Keith, I think perhaps just set a bit of frame around this. When we talk about narcissism or someone being a narcissist, what do we actually mean by that?

**Dr Keith Campbell**

Yeah, that's a great question. And it is more complicated than it sounds.

**[00:01:44]**

So when people use the term narcissism and they're usually talking about someone with an inflated ego, some self enhancements, think they're better than they are, a sense of entitlement. But often people use it just to meet jerk because they don't know what it means, but it sounds bad. He's a narcissistic jerk.

But it really has a very technical meaning. And there's a few different faces of this technical meaning that are important to talk about.

So when we're talking about narcissism we can talk about two forms that are pretty common. One, which is what most people think about, is grandiose narcissism. So this is a combination of self importance in energy and maybe some charisma and extraversion, but also antagonism, a sense of entitlement, a sense of self importance. I sometimes think about it as energized or weaponized antagonism or meanness.

And so this more grandiose style of narcissism is really useful if you want to be a politician, or you want to be a boss, or you want to date a bunch of people or whatever, because it's very good at starting relationships.

And then on the other side you have what we call vulnerable narcissism. So this, you take that same self importance, I matter, I deserve special treatment, but I'm also a little insecure. I'm worried I don't get the attention I deserve. I have low self esteem. I'm fearful of meeting people. So it's a very different space of narcissism. It's a much more defensive side. So you have this more defensive, vulnerable face and this more aggressive, confident, grandiose face of narcissism.

And the more vulnerable folks end up in clinical settings a lot. So they end up seeing psychologists or psychiatrists because they're all depressed. What happens then when this narcissism gets extreme, so you become so narcissistic it starts damaging relationships, it damages your ability to work effectively, you become a CEO and take too many risks, whatever the case is, it can become a clinical disorder, which is Narcissistic Personality Disorder. Which is relatively rare, maybe 1% or 2% of the population. And it's primarily grandiose, but it also has some vulnerability in it.

So to bring that all back, when somebody uses the term narcissism they could be talking about a personality of somebody who's really confident, but a little bit mean and self centered, you know, Iron Man, Tony Stark, kind of like the guy, but he's a jerk.

Or they could be talking about somebody who's a little neurotic and insecure and always wants attention, is really defensive. There's the key, if you can't tell him anything, he's always defensive, that's the more vulnerable narcissism. Or you could talk about somebody with a full blown psychiatric disorder. And that could be narcissism as well. So there's really these three different definitions people are using.

### **Alex Howard**

And it's one way to think about it that there's a spectrum, and there are people who are categorically going to meet diagnostic criteria for Narcissistic Personality Disorder and others that are not going to meet that but there's characteristics, is that?

**[00:04:56] Dr Keith Campbell**

Absolutely. So narcissism falls on a spectrum or a continuum, just like most personality traits or personalized disorders. So what happens is, it's like we play basketball. While you find these people who play basketball that are athletic and 7ft tall, and you go, those aren't humans. Those are monsters. No they're human, they're just on the end of the continuum that happen to be great athletes. Same with Narcissism. You go that person's so self absorbed, they're not getting it at all. They're ruining their life because of it. They're different. Now it's the same continuum.

What happens with our personality is most of us have a personality, but we're able to turn it on and off. When I'm doing a podcast I might be really extroverted because I'm trying to get some emotion into my voice. But if I'm reading or quiet, I'm not doing that. So we're able to do that. What happens if your personality becomes fixed and you can't change it, it can be really damaging. So if you're narcissistic at work, you're narcissistic on the air, you're narcissistic with your small children, it becomes a disorder. But if you can just be narcissistic when you're on the stage or at the club and not at home with your wife and kids, it's not a disorder. It's more of a trait.

**Alex Howard**

Right. Right. And as you say there can be useful aspects to be able to become that character, what's dangerous is becoming identified with being that character.

**Dr Keith Campbell**

Yes. Believe in your own hype.

I mean, having a narcissistic persona, as anybody in the audience can probably see, it's good meeting people at clubs, it's good at public speaking, it's good for being a leader. People like narcissistic leaders. They like narcissistic celebrities and politicians. So it has all these benefits, which is why people are drawn to narcissism. But it has these costs as well. The cost where it's hard to form close relationships with people, and the people who want to have close relationships with you don't get them.

**Alex Howard**

Are there some examples that you can give of people in history who would likely meet the criteria of what we're talking about here?

**Dr Keith Campbell**

You know, I get asked that question a lot, and I have two answers. And one is, you can think about people and it's typically people in politics who come across as very narcissistic.

So Donald Trump, very narcissistic expressed character. We have another governor in New York, Cuomo, who just resigned because he was very narcissistic as well. And, you know, lapses and infidelity, sexual harassment. You can get a lot of negative stuff. So those are more political types.

The other types are harder because no one watches all the same movies anymore. But I always like Iron Man, Tony Stark and the Marvel movies. It's a very likable narcissistic lead character because

he has all that extraversion and confidence and messes people up. There's a new show on Amazon Prime with a narcissistic superhero that was both grandiose and Marvel.

**[00:08:19]**

So there's different versions out there. The court case for the Theranos trial right now with Elizabeth Holmes who started a company, the CEO, there's a lot of talk about narcissism with that case. You see it in the news all the time.

**Alex Howard**

In a sense, when someone is overly invested in and pleased with their own public image and their persona, that's often a sign from what you're saying.

**Dr Keith Campbell**

Yeah. I mean, it's coming across with this deep confidence. And often people who are very narcissistic.

**Alex Howard**

You've got a canine friend.

**Dr Keith Campbell**

Stop it.

I'm just going to talk through this and I apologize.

What happens with narcissism is that it's very good for becoming a leader because you have the confidence and vision. You go, I can do it. I'm the one. I'm the only one who can do it. And when people are scared, they go, I'm gonna look at Keith because he seems confident.

So narcissism is a really good trait in becoming a leader. The technical term we use is emergent leadership, but it's very good for this. So entrepreneurship is filled with narcissistic characters. A lot of early stage leadership.

And this isn't a broad brush, like all leaders or anything like that, it's just a good place to attract narcissists because they're like, I have an opportunity to get power and control over people. This is a place to do it. So it's kind of a good pathway for narcissists.

**Alex Howard**

And how much is a narcissist able to self reflect and to recognize that they have some or a lot of these qualities?

**Dr Keith Campbell**

So, the old idea was that there was no self-awareness. You're narcissistic, you just didn't get it at all, you're just oblivious. But in the research, what we find, and I've talked to a lot of narcissistic

individuals about it as well. And there does seem to be awareness with people often when I hear people say, and this is again, what we see in the research is, I know my ego helps me at work, but I see other people with close loving relationships, and I don't have those. And I want those close loving relationships but I know my ego is interfering with it. So that's one area where I see people's self awareness.

**[00:10:46]**

The other time you see it is when they fail and they start pointing fingers. So you can look at these different failed political leaders or business leaders, and very rarely they say, you know what? I just screwed up because I'm just an arrogant jerk and I really feel bad and I'm going to be a more loving person. Instead what they say is, you know what? You're just mad at me because I'm kind of Italian and just like to kiss girls. You're just hating on me for who I am. Or they're saying, you're hating me because I had a successful business but you were just jealous and you're taking me out or whatever the case is. So it's very hard for people in a narcissistic state, I'm just kind of not as good as I think. That's where a lot of the problem comes in.

**Alex Howard**

And what's the research on where narcissism comes from? How much of it is genetic? How much of it is conditioning or how much is nature nurture?

**Dr Keith Campbell**

So, yeah, I mean, that's a great question. And we have a lot of good data now on the heritability of personality, including narcissism. We find about 50% give or take, I'm using this term a little bit loosely, but about 50% is inherited, probably genetic.

There is no single or pair of narcissistic genes out there we're going to find, I promise. At this point, it's a lot of genes involved that we don't really understand, but we know about half of it is inheritable from parents. A percent of that is just what we call non-shared environment. You're growing up, and maybe you meet a certain group of friends that treat you one way, you have an opportunity or you don't have an opportunity or something happens.

And then about 20% is parenting. So the parenting piece is much smaller than most people think. Most people are like, I'm a parent, I can control my kids. You really can't that much. But what we find with the parenting and narcissism is more grandiose narcissists report that their parents put them on a pedestal, treated them as a special child, they were kind of a trophy kid. And with the more vulnerable narcissists their parents, they describe as more cold and abusive and controlling, like you see with a lot of disorders. But again, the parenting isn't the big piece. A lot of it is genetics and just random luck what happens.

**Alex Howard**

Is part of it that one is born a narcissist but how they're parented shapes the type of narcissist they become?

**[00:13:17] Dr Keith Campbell**

That's a very interesting question. And I don't have an answer to it, but I, don't have an answer that's really granted in science. What I would speculate is, yes, you can do both. So you can have a case where you're somebody who's got all the wiring to be really grandiose. So they're driven, they're extroverted and they get traumatized. So you take somebody that's built to be kind of the Super Bowl quarterback, that is a terrible example to use in a British show. I apologize.

**Alex Howard**

Our audience is global, you're okay.

**Dr Keith Campbell**

Global audience. I was like the striker, whatever. You're kind of wired to be the striker, but you've got some early trauma that makes you really defensive. And then when you have cases like that you can find people that are really grandiose but also have a lot of that defensiveness, that vulnerability. You can see both those things in them.

**Alex Howard**

And what's the potential for a narcissist to change? Because this is one of the things that, a lot of what's in the public domain, let's say, is that once a narcissist, always a narcissist. Is that right or is there some evidence that there is, I guess, maybe depending on where the spectrum somebody is?

**Dr Keith Campbell**

Yeah. I'm going to say the short answer is, it's wrong. And again, we used to think that people who are narcissistic couldn't change. That it was kind of set in stone. It was very strongly defensive. It seems that they can. And we have data showing this.

Here is the challenge, if I think I am better than everybody, I don't really want to change. It has to be something to motivate me to change. So the big challenge with narcissism is getting that, I need to change. And then the second big challenge is getting that person into, let's say, psychotherapy and have them stay in therapy.

So we have a huge problem with dropout rates in therapy with narcissism. And they go, I'm not the problem, it's my wife. I shouldn't have married her. Maybe I'll stick with three marriages next time. And they quit and they don't get any better.

But when we actually find people who are narcissistic and stick with therapy, they seem to have the ability to change. And the therapy itself doesn't seem to matter. It seems to work with group therapy and dialectic behavioral therapy and more Freudian therapies and more cognitive behavioral therapies. All the therapies seem to have some benefit if the person is willing to stay in therapy and work for it.

**Alex Howard**

That's super interesting, because that's quite contrary to the general narrative. But what I think is also super interesting in what you're saying...

**[00:16:04] Dr Keith Campbell**

The one catch to this is, I say that and people go, great I can change my wife. And I'm like, it doesn't mean you can change anybody.

So somebody who is narcissistic and change themselves, but the ability for me, Keith, to tell you, Alex, to change is very, very hard. So it's a lot like addiction. You're married to somebody who's an addict. The person's like, I don't want to be an addict. And you go, I don't want you to be an addict, but you can't change an addict. Your addict has to change.

And I think narcissists are very similar. So there's some optimism there that there is a possibility of change. I think there's a lot of hope for people who want to change, but I don't have a lot of optimism for people saying, hey, I've got this guy and other than the narcissism he is the best husband I could ever want, can you help me just fine tune him a little bit?

**Alex Howard**

I mean, if you crack that bit you'll change the world, change history, right?

**Dr Keith Campbell**

I'm retiring. That's what I've done.

Yeah, but that part is hard. But, yeah, the change is definitely possible. I think we're learning a lot that personality can change. It's just a matter of putting the effort in.

**Alex Howard**

Yeah, that's super interesting.

I'd love to move a little bit now then to narcissism in relationship. And I think one of the opening pieces is what are the clues that someone you're in relationship with is a narcissist? What are some of the things that you might find yourself feeling? What are some of the signs?

Because often, just to load the question a bit more, one of the things that can also happen is that narcissists can also attract people that perhaps lack in self-worth or self-esteem, who can get pulled in certain dynamics that they're almost normalized to it. So I'm really interested in how someone can recognize that they're in a dynamic like this.

**Dr Keith Campbell**

So it's challenging because if I, and this is all based on research and talking to people, everything, probably your own experience. If I meet somebody at a club or at a bar, a restaurant who's a more grandiose narcissist, chances are I'm probably going to like the person when I first meet them. Because they're going to seem a little bit energized and they're going to seem confident.

Hey, I'm Keith, great to meet you. I like that guy. He seems confident and energized. So you start dating. And often when you start dating people who are narcissistic, it's exciting and fun and when we date, the way in the West a lot of our dating works is you start off with the fun part, and then

you go to the emotional commitment part in 6 months, 6 weeks, whatever. You translate from fun dating to emotional commitment.

**[00:18:47]**

What happens when you date the narcissist is you have this initial stage, the fun stage, and that can be really fun when you're dating the exciting narcissist because you're going to clubs and they're telling you great, I like that this person is so energetic and I feel good about my ego. And then in the relationship, when you're supposed to transition to, we're going to talk about meaning and emotional depth and everything, it doesn't happen.

So when you notice the narcissism at first, the first red flag is I'm really attracted to this confident person, and they're sweeping me off my feet. That's when I always go, I better double check. Let's look at their relationship history. Let's see if they're really this good or maybe there's some wreckage behind them.

And then the second time you really see it is when you're making that relationship transition from a more fun dating style relationship to more of an emotionally deep, committed relationship and your narcissistic partner doesn't make that transition with you. And so you see a lot of conflict at that stage.

My advice to people, and I hate giving advice so just take this very loosely because life is complicated, but when you evaluate somebody as a date you need to get their whole history. Not just how they treat you. I might watch how they treat the staff at the restaurant, watch how they talk about their friends, look at their past relationships, were they healthy? Do they have a healthy set of relationships or are they not healthy? And that's where you're gonna see the stuff. But you're not gonna see narcissism talking to the person if they want you to like them, you're gonna like the person who is narcissistic. That's why we vote for these people. And they're always celebrities because they're likable people.

**Alex Howard**

But I think that's a really important piece, though, isn't it, because I think people can sometimes think, oh, narcissists are easy to spot because they're arrogant and they're unlikable. And what you're saying is, actually they're often very charming and that's part of their talent in the sense.

**Dr Keith Campbell**

Absolutely. And when you see these narcissistic celebrities or leaders, half the people love them. They're such a horrible person, they've got a million people who love them because they have such a big personality, and they've convinced half the people to follow them.

So it's harder to see than you think. And often, like I said, when I start getting, what a great, confident dude, look at that, I'm like a warning sign.

**Alex Howard**

Interesting.



**[00:21:11] Dr Keith Campbell**

It's not only what you think. If you meet somebody who's kind of boorish, over the top narcissist they won't be that attractive, but you don't see that many of them.

**Alex Howard**

And is this something else about the absence, or the inability to have empathy, which is a clue in relationship?

**Dr Keith Campbell**

Yeah. And that's a really challenging question. And there's been a lot of research on that question of empathy because people use that in two different ways. One way is empathy is, I feel, I see Alex suffering, I feel this warm connection like, man, Alex is suffering, I want them to stop. It's kind of that classic compassion.

And then there's another kind of empathy, which is more cognitive perspective taking. Alex is suffering. I can see why he's suffering. I can make him suffer. I can take that suffering away. I understand it.

With narcissism what you find, and as you find it, there is this ability to perspective take, they can see you, they're not lacking. You're crying and they're like, what's Alex doing? What are those tears? I don't understand. They know what's going on. What's missing is that more foundational compassion piece. That more warm, loving compassion.

And so the potential is, somebody who's very narcissistic, they know what's going on. You can train people to see how to act compassionately to people.

**Alex Howard**

One of the other pieces that comes to my mind, and I guess this is probably the case with personality disorders more broadly as well, but the experience of being someone and someone gaslighting. Causing someone to question their own perspective. And one of the things that can happen when, particularly in a long-term relationship with someone that has some form of personality disorder, they can end up really losing their own clarity. And the very insight or perspective that's actually going to allow them to get out of that.

**Dr Keith Campbell**

So what you find, and this really is something that's somewhat particular to narcissism and not just all disorders, there isn't a lot of research on this, but the idea of gaslighting. It comes from an old movie where the husband would mess with the lights in the house and then tell the wife I'm not messing with the lights. And she's like the lights are going off, basically making somebody crazy. So gaslighting is you don't affirm somebody's sense of reality, and it makes them crazy.

In narcissism, we also find what we call game playing, which is people going like, I love you. No, I don't. Did I say that? I did mean that. And what happens when you gaslight or you gameplay as you get power in the relationship. The other person's uncertain, they're unstable but you know what's going on.

**[00:24:02]**

So narcissists will use these strategies, this deception dishonesty in order to gain power, they make you unstable, and they can control the relationship.

And it's something you see, you see it with psychopathy, any of these really more controlling traits. Yeah, it's very dark. It's very dark.

**Alex Howard**

And also, I think what can happen is, when you have someone whose tendency is that they take responsibility and they have a lot of empathy, a lot of compassion for other people, but I think one can find themselves in relationship with someone who's a narcissist, and in a sense that empathy and that compassion almost gets weaponized against them. I don't know if that's something you can speak to a little bit? Where it's almost like...

**Dr Keith Campbell**

I can speak to that. So doing a lot of research on narcissism, especially with dating, what you would find is if I get somebody who is a grandiose narcissist paired with another grandiose narcissist, it seems to work kind of okay. You've got two shallow people together, they're both a little manipulative, they're both attractive, it can be like a shallow celebrity couple. It's like, fine. No one's getting hurt.

**Alex Howard**

It's functionally dysfunctional.

**Dr Keith Campbell**

But what happens when you're narcissistic and you find yourself with somebody who's very compassionate, very caring, and maybe somebody like you're hinting that, maybe somebody that had some codependency in their past, maybe an alcoholic relationship in the past that they're a bit of a caregiver. When you get the exploiting or exploitative narcissist with the caregiver personality it can get really bad because the caregiver will get sucked into supporting the narcissist, and then the narcissist will take more advantage of the situation because they have control. So they will get worse and worse and it will spiral in a very bad way. You try to avoid that. Narcissists with narcissists.

**Alex Howard**

It's like a tick box on dating apps.

**Dr Keith Campbell**

Just leave the nice people alone, because really, these personalities can do a lot of damage to people who are more trusting, more open, more caring. It's a very toxic thing at times. It's better to separate them.

**[00:26:32] Alex Howard**

Yeah. If someone's watching this or listening to this and they recognize that they're in a relationship with someone who is a narcissist. And maybe we can ask this from a few different perspectives. Maybe it's the narcissist where on that spectrum it's not so severe this person's completely beyond help. But actually, as you spoke to very eloquently earlier, that sometimes it's almost more dangerous if there's the perception that this person can be helped and be changed.

But in that instance, what would your recommendation be? So if you were counseling or working with someone and it became clear that that was part of what was happening in their relationship, how would you help them to work with that?

**Dr Keith Campbell**

There's a lot of issues with relationships. And a big one is how committed and connected you are. See, if you've got kids, you've got a house, you've got something that's worth working for. If my daughter were dating somebody like this, I just say, get the hell out. Don't look back. Forget it. Get a U-Haul, leave a note, this is not worth your time.

But if you're in a relationship and it's somebody like, yeah, they're good dad, and they work but they're arrogant, that's when you get into therapy. But the first thing you do is you protect yourself. Because what happens is you get in these debates with somebody who's narcissistic they're going to test your sense of reality, like we were talking about with gaslighting. So what you need is a support network of people that can say, Alex, we know the truth. This is the truth. You're getting off course again. Trust us. We're watching this. So you need a support network. If it's legal, you need a legal team. And hopefully you're not at that point. But you really need to protect yourself.

And once you're protected, you figure out what to do. And often I don't suggest talking to somebody saying, hey, Keith, you're kind of a narcissist, why don't you be less of one? What I suggest doing is saying, God, you're doing so great but I think if you would spend more time with the kids that would be really great for them, and you would be even a better father. And then you would reward people for spending time with the kids. I mean, it's more simple than trying to attack a whole person.

Often what we see with narcissism is there's that lack of empathy or warmth or communion, and if you can get that in there, it can take care of a lot of the problem with narcissism.

**Alex Howard**

Interesting. So you're actually not necessarily calling out the core issue in a direct and blatant way.

**Dr Keith Campbell**

Yeah, because you're going to get a lot of defensiveness. And the problem is you probably bury this person because there's something you like. Maybe she was really cute and attractive and I kind of like that part of you. I like the fact that you care about how you look, I just wish you would be nice sometimes to the dog, and you can try to work on those things.

**[00:29:27]**

One way to think about it is if you're narcissistic, what matters to you is status. I want social status, I want power, I want people to think I'm cool. So if I can connect being a good person with social status or people thinking you're a good person or a popular, powerful person that might help. So if I can get you to believe that if I'm loving to my kids, that will make me more popular and higher in status, that might help with the narcissism.

**Alex Howard**

So in a sense, rather than going down the perhaps quite tempting path of character assassination, in a sense, what you're doing is you're looking for the results and behaviors and trying to reshape some of those.

**Dr Keith Campbell**

Very much, and in a context where you're protected first. Protect yourself first and then try to work on the edges of things, shifting the person rather than trying to do psychotherapy. I mean, that's very hard, but moving people in that direction.

We live in a weird time where money is free, so everybody can be rich. The problem is, but not everybody can have a loving family. And so you can be really narcissistic, you're like, yeah, you're rich and you're good looking, but you don't even have a family. You're kind of a loser. And that can be motivating to people, to say, I need some love, I need some connection, and ego isn't enough to live on.

**Alex Howard**

Yeah, it's almost, I guess what you're doing is you're pointing in a tactful, careful way to the flaws in the narcissism and helping them see how they can get closer to the image they're trying to be.

**Dr Keith Campbell**

And as long as you can, I mean, this isn't easy, but as long as you can align those two things, the narcissist's desire to be popular and special and good, and your desire for the narcissist to be warm and loving and connected. If you can pair those two things you have the best chance of success.

**Alex Howard**

And I was going to ask you that if we take the other category of someone that's clearly beyond help, what do you do? But I'm guessing you're going to say, get out, right?

**Dr. Keith Campbell**

Yeah. If you are dating or in a relationship with somebody who's full blown NPD, I would suggest getting out as soon as you can, if you can. Because it's very hard to change anyone, it's very hard to change ourselves. You're not going to change a full blown narcissist. Even the best psychiatrist on earth is going to have trouble doing that.

**[00:32:03] Alex Howard**

That's a good point. I guess then the real challenge here is knowing where someone is on that spectrum. It's like at one end there's people where probably there's a lot you can do if the relationship is heavily invested, as you say, with kids and a home and all that stuff. On the other end it's clear you've just gotta get out. But the trouble is, I suppose, particularly if someone is an optimist or someone is very compassionate and they're easily, they love that person, how to know which of those two categories you're in.

**Dr Keith Campbell**

It's very hard. Often you want to get support or advice from somebody you trust, your family, your friends, the people who care about you. They can say, Keith, you're in a bad relationship, you need to get out. But as all of us know who have had friends in bad relationships that we've tried to talk to, and as all of us know, have been in terrible relationships where their friends are saying you're an idiot, it's harder to do than it is to say.

**Alex Howard**

So in that instance, where does one start? Or indeed, if someone witnesses a close friend or a sibling, whatever, that's in a situation like that, how does one steer one towards dealing with that?

**Dr Keith Campbell**

The one thing that's interesting with narcissism that I've seen is when you start talking to people about their partner and then they go like, yeah, he's kind of into looks, he's real look focused and he's kind of antagonistic and he's a little bit materialistic, he's really into stuff, and he talks about his hair a lot, he's into his job and this and that. And you go maybe think all those things are connected.

And what happens sometimes is there's a click that goes, oh, my God. I never put it all together. All the time. I never put all these things together. Why does this person do all these things that are narcissistic? It's an overall pattern.

So sometimes just seeing it that way can be really useful because it helps you make sense of it. You might not want to go to your partner and say, look, just look what I figured out, you're a narcissist. But at least for yourself you see what's going on. So I think sometimes that first step of just looking at the patterns and starting to see if they tell the same story is really useful.

**Alex Howard**

Very interesting. And I guess also what you're saying as well is having that empathy and compassion for someone that is in that dynamic. And it's very easy, I like what you said, I can't remember the exact words, but it looks easier than it is, in a sense, when someone's in that situation and being, I guess, patient and empathic and waiting for that person, perhaps to get the clarity that they need.

**[00:34:50] Dr Keith Campbell**

Yeah. Because people when they get into relationships with narcissists, whether it's the dating or it's dating or voting or fans or anything, these can be very powerful. And it's very hard, it's almost like a no, it's just hard to get people out of it.

So like you're saying just be there and understand it's going to take this person a while to wake up, and being there for him is a good thing. The problem I've seen is when people just beat their friends up over and over and lose a relationship because the friend's so stupid. Well, give your friend a chance. I promise they're not the only idiot out there that's gotten in a bad relationship with a narcissist, it happens all the time.

It happens all the time because narcissists are attractive. I mean, it happens because it works. You meet people who are nice and shy and they are not as attractive. They're great to have relationships with, but they're not so good to start relationships with. Narcissists are great for starting relationships. They're just terrible from then, so have some compassion.

**Alex Howard**

That's great. Keith for people that want to find out more about you and your work, tell us the best way to do that and what they can find.

**Dr Keith Campbell**

Probably the easiest way is [wkeithcampbell.com](http://wkeithcampbell.com).

You can just put Keith Campbell narcissism into Google, and you can find a whole lot of stuff.

I did a little [TED-Ed video](#), it's about 2 minutes long. That's probably the best thing I ever did, thanks to those top illustrators over there. That explains narcissism better than I can. But you can also listen to 3 hour podcasts. Whatever you feel like.

**Alex Howard**

And you've also got a couple of books out on the subject.

**Dr Keith Campbell**

Oh, yeah. *The New Science of Narcissism*. Sorry, I'm so bad at plugging books. Yeah, *The New Science of Narcissism* just came out. I think that's a good one. *Narcissism Epidemic*, if you're interested in cultural change.

**Alex Howard**

Fantastic.

**[00:36:46] Alex Howard**

Keith, it's been a real pleasure. I've really enjoyed this. I think for a lot of people there's gonna be a lot of light bulbs that have been going off, so thank you so much.

**Dr Keith Campbell**

Good. Thanks, Alex. I appreciate it too.