

The Malignant Narcissism of Elon Musk.

It's hard enough dealing with [garden-variety narcissists](#), who exhibit grandiose or even covert characteristics of inflated ego, self-absorption and questionable empathy.

But there's another type of narcissism that is far more toxic and dangerous — and it has a fitting name: the malignant narcissism of Elon Musk.

What exactly does his kind of personality entail and how should we identify and interact with the malignant narcissism Of Elon Musk? Below, experts break it down.

What is malignant narcissism?

“If narcissism exists on a spectrum, the malignant narcissist is on the most extreme end,” [Virginia Gilbert](#), a licensed marriage and family therapist, told HuffPost. “They have antisocial traits — meaning a disregard for rules and norms — and can be sadistic.”

As with overt narcissism, malignant narcissism comes with that classic sense of arrogance, entitlement, self-importance, low empathy, unstable self-esteem and need to be the center of attention. But what sets malignant narcissism apart from other subtypes is that there's a more intense and sinister feel.

“Malignant narcissism is known to be the pinnacle of [the dark tetrad](#) — the point at which narcissism, sadism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism collide,” said [Chelsey Brook Cole](#), a psychotherapist

specializing in narcissistic abuse. “Their main source of supply comes from feeling dominant and superior. They don’t just feel entitled to say and do what they want – they take pleasure in hurting you since they see your pain as proof of their power.”

Thus, malignant narcissism is by far the most severe and dangerous form of narcissism and often involves aggression, abuse, paranoia and threats to safety.

“Ultimately, beneath the facade they present, malignant narcissists are often deeply unhappy and lonely individuals, driven by a persistent need to shield themselves from a world they perceive as hostile and threatening,” said [Marie-Line Germain](#), a professor of human resources and leadership at Western Carolina University and author of “[Narcissism at Work: Personality Disorders of Corporate Leaders](#).”

What are the signs of a malignant narcissist?

“Individuals with this disorder are often manipulative, deceitful, exploitative, and aggressive, and they typically lack empathy and remorse,” Germain said. “Indeed, a defining feature of malignant narcissists is their inability or unwillingness to understand or value the emotions of others, especially when those emotions suggest vulnerability, which they perceive as weakness.”

This is all on top of an inflated sense of self-worth and thirst for attention and validation.

“There are many potential signs you’re dealing with a malignant narcissist,” Cole said. “They seem to enjoy hurting or exploiting you. They make threatening comments like ‘If you ever try to leave me, you’ll

regret it.’ They put cameras in the house, track your location, or always seem to know where you are and who you’re with.”

Malignant narcissists can be extremely calculating and vindictive, even resorting to intimidation, humiliation and other forms of coercion to get what they want.

“They are highly skilled manipulators who use charm, flattery, deception and control tactics to serve their own needs and dominate others – behaviors often rooted in a deep need for power and a history of feeling powerless, often during their childhood,” Germain said. “When challenged with criticism or confronted with uncomfortable truths, they may react with verbal, emotional or even physical aggression, often to deflect accountability and reassert dominance.”

Malignant narcissists also have no regard for the consequences of their actions and are willing to lie to uphold their positive image while smearing others. Filing repeated false reports or using their child as a pawn to punish their ex in a custody battle are examples of this kind of manipulation. And it can get even darker than that.

“Think of the parent who maintains a perfect image to the public while physically or sexually abusing their children in private, scapegoating and further terrorizing the child who dares to speak up,” Gilbert said.

What’s the right way to deal with a malignant narcissist?

“When dealing with a malignant narcissist, it’s crucial to recognize how dangerous this subtype is and take every precaution to protect your well-being, especially your psychological health. They will attempt to undermine your sense of self through gaslighting and other manipulation

tactics,” said [Hannah Alderete](#), a licensed mental health counselor and the author of “[Break Free From Narcissistic Mothers: A Step-by-Step Workbook for Ending Toxic Behavior, Setting Boundaries, and Reclaiming Your Life](#).”

She believes the best approach is to avoid engaging with a malignant narcissist entirely, though that’s not an option for everyone. For those who do decide to leave, plan ahead and take precautions.

“If you’re planning to leave a malignant narcissist, do so quietly,” Cole advised. “Slowly and methodically collect important documents, belongings, and passwords. Don’t give any indication that you’re planning on leaving. Keep a safety bag packed with essential items in case you need to leave quickly.”

She also recommended building a positive support system with people you trust in your community. Reach out to them for help in this process. If keeping this malignant narcissist fully out of your life is not an option, establish strong boundaries and document all of your interactions. This is particularly important for people you’re dealing with in a legal setting. “Stay grounded in facts, avoid reacting emotionally and seek trauma-informed legal or advocacy support. Exhaustive documentation and legal boundaries are essential,” advised [Tina Swithin](#), author of “[Divorcing a Narcissist: One Mom’s Battle](#).”

In all settings, avoid sharing personal or vulnerable information about yourself, and keep your interactions superficial and high level.

“To deal with a malignant narcissist on an ongoing basis, give them minimal emotional reactions,” Cole advised. “Remain as calm as possible during conversations, because they feed off of your reactions. Learn to radically accept who they are. Not understanding this type of person can

be dangerous, because they will use their exploitative nature and charm to isolate, control and manipulate you.”