

Narcissists' behavior is driven by the pursuit of social status

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To have success and be respected; isn't that what everybody wants? Narcissists, however, take it a step further. Their motivation of pursuing social status is so strong that it can overshadow other motives for

behavior, such as the motive to maintain close relationships. Narcissists make every effort to achieve and maintain their desired social status. When successful, they turn to self-glorifying. When their social status is threatened, they may flinch, blame others, or resort to threats and intimidation. In our performance-oriented society, the search for status is deeply rooted. This can fuel and reinforce narcissistic behavior from childhood. When people learn to narrowly focus on their status gains and losses, a possible consequence is that they treat the world as an arena for ruthless status competition.

This is what developmental psychologist Stathis Grapsas states in his Ph.D. research at Tilburg University. He captured narcissists' motivations and behaviors in the Status Pursuit in Narcissism (SPIN) model, which outlines how narcissists approach [social situations](#), how they find the desired status, and how they behave to achieve it. Roughly speaking, two strategies can be distinguished: glorifying oneself or putting others down. The research also shows that on their way to the top, narcissists often put self-interest first at the expense of the interest of the group.

The insights from the SPIN model provide starting points for further research into motivation and self-regulatory processes of narcissists. The pursuit of status is promoted everywhere in society; from parents who praise their children for their achievements to sports teams that derive status from competition and companies in which the pursuit of a top position is the highest goal. Stathis' empirical research showed that both in childhood and young adulthood, narcissism is linked with a relatively strong tendency to experience pleasure from status gains and displeasure from status losses. Future research may shed light on the implications of this affective dependency on [status](#) and help understand why some people become more narcissistic than others.

Stathis Grapsas defends his dissertation, titled Motivational

Underpinnings of Narcissism on September 2 on 1:30 PM at Tilburg University. Promotor is Prof. Dr. Jaap Denissen, copromotor is Dr. Eddie Brummelman. The promotion can be followed via [livestream](#).

Provided by Tilburg University

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