



ROLLOVER TO LEARN MORE



FDA approved to help improve blood sugar control



What is Toujeo® (insulin glargine injection) 300 Units/mL?

Prescription Toujeo® is a long-acting insulin used to control blood sugar in adults with diabetes mellitus.

- Toujeo® contains 3 times as much insulin

[Click Here for Full Prescribing Information](#)

US, GLT, 15, 10, 114 © 2002-2015 sanofi-aventis U.S. LLC. All rights reserved.



Susan Krauss Whitbourne Ph.D.
Fulfillment at Any Age

Shedding Light on Psychology's Dark Triad

A dirty dozen test to detect narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy






567

Posted Jan 26, 2013



Lurking beneath the surface of people who use others to their own advantage is psychology's "Dark Triad." Defined as a set of traits that include the tendency to seek admiration and special treatment (otherwise known as narcissism), to be callous and insensitive (psychopathy) and to manipulate others (Machiavellianism), the Dark Triad is rapidly becoming a new focus of personality psychology.

Most Popular

-  **All Work and No Play Make the Baining the "Dullest Culture"**
-  **5 Sex/Relationship Myths Therapists Should Stop Believing**
-  **The Two Things That Make a Breakup**

Researchers are finding that the Dark Triad underlies a host of undesirable behaviors including aggressiveness, sexual opportunism, and impulsivity. Until recently, the only way to capture the Dark Triad in the lab was to administer lengthy tests measuring each personality trait separately. With the development of the “Dirty Dozen” scale, however, psychologists Peter Jonason and Gregory Webster (2010) are now making it possible to spot these potentially troublesome traits with a simple 12-item rating scale.

The technical definition of the Dark Triad, as stated in Jonason and Webster’s article, is rather daunting: “the Dark Triad as a whole can be thought of as a short-term, agentic, exploitative social strategy...” (p. 420). This means, in simpler terms, that people who show these qualities are trying to get away with acting out against others in order to achieve their own ends. Each of the individual qualities alone can make life difficult for those who know people like this. Combined, the Dark Triad traits in another person close to you can be detrimental to your mental health.

People who score high on the traditional Dark Triad measures that test each of the three qualities separately show a pattern of behavior that in fact combines the worst of all worlds. They seek out multiple, casual sex partners. When someone gets in their way, they act out aggressively to take what they want. Oddly enough, although their self-esteem doesn’t seem to be either higher or lower than others, people who score high on the Dark Triad qualities have an unstable view of themselves. Perhaps reflecting the aggressiveness inherent in the Dark Triad, these tendencies are more likely to be shown by men, particularly those who are high on psychopathy and Machiavellianism.

Psychologists are just beginning to discover the darkest sides of the Dark Triad, and there will certainly be more that we learn about the problems they create for others (and themselves) in the very near future. In the meantime, Jonason and Webster’s Dirty Dozen scale can give you a quick way to spot the Dark Triad individual in your midst. Rate each item

3



[Devastating](#)

4



[The Trouble With Bright Girls](#)

5



[Are You With the Right Person? Here Are 4 Ways to Find Out](#)

**Long-term
recovery
is possible.**

Get help now.

[Learn More](#)



on a 7-point scale as you think it applies to this person. Of course, you can also rate yourself on these qualities to see how you measure up:

1. I tend to manipulate others to get my way.
2. I tend to lack remorse.
3. I tend to want others to admire me.
4. I tend to be unconcerned with the morality of my actions.
5. I have used deceit or lied to get my way.
6. I tend to be callous or insensitive.
7. I have used flattery to get my way.
8. I tend to seek prestige or status.
9. I tend to be cynical.
10. I tend to exploit others toward my own end.
11. I tend to expect special favors from others.
12. I want others to pay attention to me.

The total score can range from 12 to 84, but you can also break down the scales into the three traits as follows: Machiavellianism= 1, 5, 7, 10; Psychopathy= 2, 4, 6, 9; Narcissism= 3, 8, 11, 12.

Among the college students tested in a later, validation, study Webster and Jonason (2013) report an average of about 36, with most people scoring between 33 and 39, meaning that anyone scoring upwards of 45 would be considered very high on the Dark Triad total.



You Might Also Like

[The Dark Triad and Impulsivity](#)

[The Pros and Cons of Having a Dark Side](#)

[Personality's Big One Revisited: The Allure of the Dark Side](#)

[13 of Psychology's Newest and Coolest Ideas](#)

[8 of Psychology's Greatest Books from the Classics to Today](#)

What does it mean, then, to possess high levels of the Dark Triad qualities? In an investigation of how others perceive the Dark Triad traits, Austrian psychologists John Rauthmann and Gerald Kolar (2010) asked non-university adults ranging from 18 to 75 years of age to judge the perceived “darkness” of each Dark Triad quality.

Of the three, narcissism was judged to be the “brightest.” People who are high on psychopathy and Machiavellianism can cause you harm but many narcissists only harm themselves. The argument can even be made that narcissists possess qualities that others find desirable, such as being more physically attractive, charming, conscientious, and achievement-oriented. Rauthmann and Kolar suggest that perhaps narcissism should be seen as distinct from the other, which they renamed the “Malicious Two.” However, other studies suggest that over time, the initial glow of the narcissist’s bright qualities does tend to fade. People who interact with narcissists like them less and less the more time they spend with them.

It may be difficult for us to rate ourselves on the Dark Triad traits and to see how our behavior affects those of the people we know. Rauthmann and Kolar found that people rated the consequences for *others* of these qualities to be worse when committed by others than by oneself. In other words, we don’t see the harmful results of our own harmful behavior when directed at others. We are able to see the harm that others inflict by their own hurtful actions.

As we know from other research, psychopathy and narcissism aren’t single, unitary traits. It may not even be possible to the self-ratings of people on psychopathy scales, given the propensity of psychopaths to lie. Furthermore, there’s more than one kind of narcissist- the grandiose and the vulnerable. The Dirty Dozen scale clearly doesn’t capture these subtleties.

To sum up, the Dirty Dozen scale is – just that— a little dirty. It's main advantage is that it's

quick and easy to complete. If you sense that someone (or you) might have the Dark Triad traits, consider yourself warned.

Follow me on [Twitter @swhitbo](#) for daily updates on psychology, health, and [aging](#). Feel free to join my [Facebook group](#), "[Fulfillment at Any Age](#)," to discuss today's blog, or to ask further questions about this posting.

Copyright Susan Krauss Whitbourne, Ph.D. 2013

Jonason, P. K., & Webster, G. D. (2010). The dirty dozen: A concise measure of the dark triad. *Psychological Assessment*, 22(2), 420-432. doi:10.1037/a0019265

Rauthmann, J. F., & Kolar, G. P. (2012). How "dark" are the Dark Triad traits? Examining the perceived darkness of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. *Personality And Individual Differences*, 53(7), 884-889. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2012.06.020

Webster, G. D., & Jonason, P. K. (2013). Putting the 'irt' in 'dirty': Item response theory analyses of the dark triad dirty dozen—an efficient measure of narcissism, psychopathy, and machiavellianism. *Personality And Individual Differences*, 54(2), 302-306. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2012.08.027

7 foods to
avoid with
asthma

Bladder
problems can
affect your
mental health



23 Comments

Fulfillment at Any Age

How to remain productive and healthy into your later years



Susan Krauss Whitbourne, Ph.D., is a professor of psychology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Her latest book is *The Search for Fulfillment*.

 FACEBOOK

 TWITTER

Most Recent Posts from Fulfillment at Any Age



Do You, or Your Partner, Have Relationship Blindness?

Learn the warning signs of relationship blindness



The Best Way to Provide Unsolicited (and Difficult) Advice

Frame it right, and you can provide difficult feedback to anyone.



How Naked Would You Get to Get Attention?

The real factors at play in public exhibitionism

See More Posts



Psychology Today HealthProfes.com

Psychology Today © 1991-2016 Sussex Publishers, LLC | HealthProfes.com © 2002-2016 Sussex Directories, Inc.

[About](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms](#)

FIND A THERAPIST

Go



Psychology Today Verified