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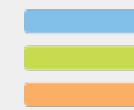
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THE BRAIN

# The "Dark Triad" Of Personality Traits Will Help You Get Ahead In Your Career

December 23, 2015 | by Robin Andrews



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photo credit: Fear leads to anger, anger leads to hatred, hatred leads to suffering – or does it? Tom Simpson/Flickr; CC BY-NC-ND 2.0



Are you a manipulative person? Can you switch off your empathy? Are you completely obsessed with yourself? Well, science has some good news for you: These supposedly [malignant traits](#) may help you go places in your career, get a raise, and find your way into leadership positions, according to some fresh research. The new study in the journal [Social Psychological and Personality Science](#) reveals that your promotion chances may be hindered, however, if you are a psychopath.

These traits have been described as the “[dark triad](#)” by several psychologists, and for good reason as they can be used to willfully deceive people for personal gain. [Narcissism](#) describes how self-obsessed, selfish and self-centered someone can be. [Machiavellianism](#) relates to the desire to manipulate people and situations, and the ability to maintain [power](#).

[Psychopathy](#) has perhaps the most nebulous definition, as what constitutes a psychopath is still heavily debated. Generally speaking, it describes someone who is able to switch off their ability to feel remorse or empathy. Psychopaths are also impulsive and exhibit bold social behaviors. Like the other two traits, psychopathy is not synonymous with being morally bankrupt.

Although often associated with [lying, cheating, and recklessness](#), this triad is often found in those that are excellent negotiators, those with charm, and those with ambition. Whether they are used for the greater good or for personal gain is highly dependent on the individual in question.

With this in mind, the team of psychologists for this study, led by Daniel Spurr of the

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University of Bern, decided to see how the prevalence of these traits in a group of 793 working adults between the ages of 25 and 34 helped these people out in their own careers. They were all shown a series of statements relating to each of the three traits, and asked to say how much they agreed or disagreed with them.

□  
*Image credit: Would you use your powers for good or evil? SvetaZi/Shutterstock*

“I tend to manipulate others to get my way” was a typical Machiavellian statement, whereas “I want others to pay attention to me” was a narcissistic statement. As it turns out, both these traits proved beneficial to people’s career paths.

When other factors were considered, such as the type of organization and pay, the study showed that Machiavellianism was positively correlated to leadership positions and job satisfaction, and narcissism was strongly related to higher salaries. Clearly, the ability to manipulate and the obsession over a good public image [pays dividends](#).


Psychopaths, however, didn’t fare so well. Although they can be charismatic, intelligent and creative, they tend not be good team players, which seems to inhibit them from advancing quickly through the workplace. It does imply that they may work very well on their own, however.

A recent review on “[successful psychopathy](#)” notes that there are many psychopaths in leadership positions, so clearly they can advance through the workplace on occasion. It suggests that the more successful psychopaths are more moderate and conscientious than others. In addition to this, successful psychopaths may be able to use their ability to not feel remorse or empathy as protective measures against other antisocial people.

There are, of course, those with a combination of the three treacherous traits – and interestingly these seem to climb the career ladder most ruthlessly. After all, these “[triadic](#)” people are those that seem to end up as CEOs at the end of the day.

*Main image: [Tom Simpson/Flickr](#); CC BY-NC-ND 2.0*

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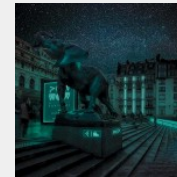
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**Dash Riprock** · 3 months ago

I would posit that this behavior is the core reason for almost all human suffering. We predatory behavior as a global civilization and history shows again and again, it always it becomes an accepted characteristic of a culture (which this article seems to promote) outnumber prey. And in their myopic drive to take ever more, consume everything, flourish in perpetuity, we need to identify this compulsion as the dangerous disease and manage the people who have it instead of promoting it by allowing them to rise to

4 ^ | v · Share ›

**NatureofBelief** → Dash Riprock · 3 months ago

An upswing in predatory behaviour?

That really depends on what time line you're looking at.

Look at the entirety of human history and the most notable thing about right now is hurting each other.

We're blinking lovely to one another at the moment.

The nukes scare us so much that we're letting things that would have led to annihilation with little more than a few angry words.

Thing I find sad is that I think we're soon going to go back to business as usual torturing one another again.

Sooner or later someone is going to go into a period of mass expansionism and acquire a tech advantage.

2 ^ | v · Share ›

**WorkerBee** · 3 months ago

I am actually struggling in my stagnating career exactly due to fact that I do not have what you do and be a decent person, but at times you need to practice as

a dick move. It is a skill and who we see as narcissists, are usually normal folks pr varying degrees of failure and success

^ | v · Share ›

**Ms Myriad** · 3 months ago

Just because you CAN use these traits to get ahead in business does not mean it you do so.

3 ^ | v · Share ›

**Angel** · 3 months ago

Not sure how this is 'new'... pretty sure various psychology texts have covered this Eysenck first identify this type of personality in his EPQ test? The 'dark triad' here a 'P' scorer.

1 ^ | v · Share ›

**Pifer** · 3 months ago

"Whether they are used for the greater good or for personal gain is highly dependent. Am I a psychopath for thinking this sentence is fundamentally wrong? Why is individual be opposed to something greater and supposedly "good"? Am I a psychopath for thinking happiness/success/personal gain is actually the good thing? There is no. evil in pursuing a common/shared goal. It is in fact in our most innate nature as humans. Stop the es

^ | v · Share ›

**NatureofBelief** → Pifer · 3 months ago

It was just a commonly used example dichotomy.

You're reading too much into it

1 ^ | v · Share ›

**mr\_bandit** → Pifer · 3 months ago

There is a point where greed over helping others advance is wrong. If one h

include house/car/savings/investments) and then fights for more to the dire wrong.

I never thought I would praise Uncle Billy Gates, but he is using his wealth to help others. Zuckerman - 99% of his wealth now directed at others. Yes, they are founders. Yes, they may stumble about and cause damage (Gates and schools being in that class, too. They have enough to create self-sustaining foundations that help with malaria is a great example.

The Koches and the Waldren children (I don't see them acting as adults) are acting to the direct detriment of others. As an example, 50% of Walmart employees are not paid a living wage, and they pass the "savings" off to the tax authorities.

The Koches want bigger tax breaks for the rich and corporations. They want to keep the poor and hungry - yes, that is greed and their actions are wrong.

1 ^ | v · Share ›

**Fix** → Pifer · 3 months ago

I think it is more attempting to imply that it can be used for personal gain, not for others, meaning others above oneself. Like if you were given \$5k and you could give it to yourself or you could give it to the local orphanage. But no, in general putting yourself first and what should happen. Assuming anyone should be put before yourself is wrong (aside from children or other beings under your care as they are in a vulnerable situation).

1 ^ | v · Share ›

**Dennis Turbolencia Arguelles** · 3 months ago

Don't be evil - Google

^ | v · Share ›

**Kris Cravener** · 3 months ago

I don't care, I'll pay people to love me.





**Kris Cravener** → Kris Cravener · 3 months ago

(joking)

Share >



**Efrain Rivera** · 3 months ago

I'd rather die poor and loved, than successful and hated.

3 ^ | v · Share >

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**Efrain Rivera** → Guest · 3 months ago

Wealth, weather social or financial is an ephemeral construct. Being advanced humanity and kept my concious clear is the greatest, tru

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**NatureofBelief** → Guest · 3 months ago

You may be underestimating the number of people who wou  
another human without falling victim to their own conscience  
think they could kill if need be but it's a relatively rare person

19 out of 20 of us have too much empathy to kill another hur  
personal pain.

I've seen the effects of violating ones own empathy to such a  
schoolmate of mine joined the army, saw action and killed tv

And that's killing opposing combatants in war. Casual murder "soul".

However, having said that, yes, millions of people would kill \ murder was legalised. It wouldn't be the law change that ma

1 ^ | v · Share ›



**Billy Steven Raffaelli** → Efrain Rivera · 3 months ago

I'd rather not give a fuck

^ | v · Share ›



**disqus\_m4cKFUvziq** → Efrain Rivera · 3 months ago

I'd rather die doing a flip off a cliff and looking really cool.

3 ^ | v · Share ›



**Isley** → Efrain Rivera · 3 months ago

You can be evil and still be successful and hated ;)

^ | v · Share ›

won't try to kill you?

caps... Definition of v

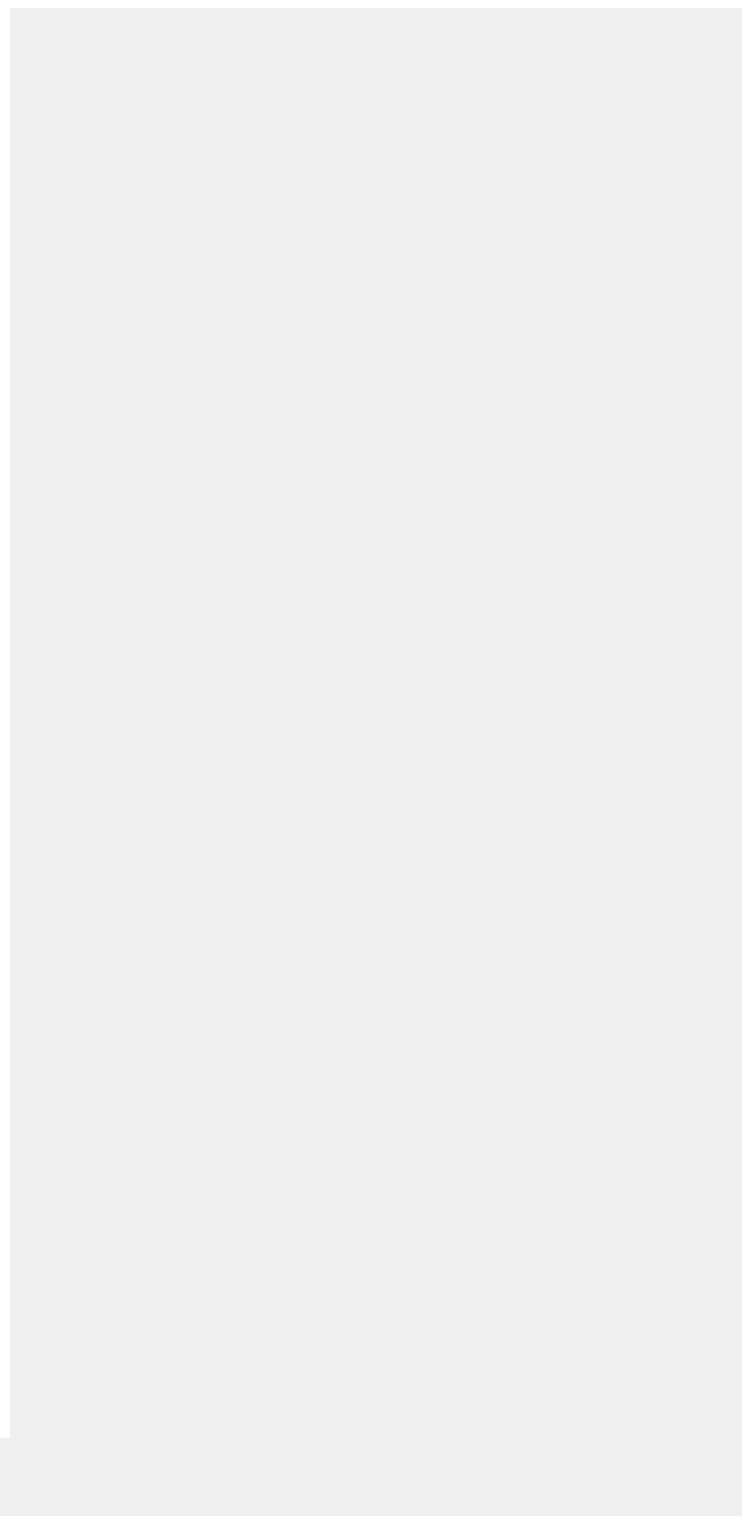


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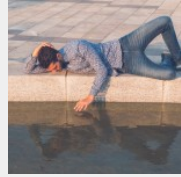


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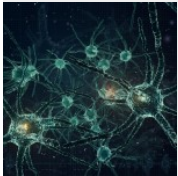
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