



How to Spot a Sociopath

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A sociopath can be defined as a person who has Antisocial Personality Disorder. This disorder is characterized by a disregard for the feelings of others, a lack of remorse or shame, manipulative behavior, unchecked egocentricity, and the ability to lie in order to achieve one's goals. Sociopaths can be dangerous at worst or simply very difficult to deal with, and it's important to know if you have found yourself with a sociopath, whether it's someone you're dating or an impossible coworker. If you want to know how to spot a sociopath, then you have to pay careful attention to what the person says or does.^[1]

Part
1

Part 1 of 2:

Reading the Signs

- 1 Look for a lack of shame.** Most sociopaths can commit vile actions and not feel the least bit of remorse. Such actions may include physical abuse or the public humiliation of others. If the person is a true sociopath, then he or she will feel no remorse about hurting others, lying, manipulating people or just acting in an unacceptable way.^[2]
 - When a sociopath does something wrong, he or she is likely to accept none of the blame, blaming others instead.^[3]
 - Sociopaths are willing to hurt whomever whenever if it means that they will achieve their goals. This is why many sociopaths tend to be highly successful people. However, keep in mind that, although many people

think sociopaths hunt people for sport, this is often not true; They simply do as they please without caring about how it affects others.^[4]

- Sociopaths may be cruel to animals and will show absolutely no remorse for that, either.^[5]

2 See if the person lies constantly. Sociopaths are perfectly comfortable going through their lives telling a series of lies. In fact, true sociopaths are uncomfortable when they are telling the truth. If they are caught lying, they will back pedal and continue to lie to cover it up. If they are on the verge of being caught lying in a major way, they may then confess everything wildly in order to maintain your loyalty.

- For example, they may promise to seek help and then never follow it through, or they may make changes for a short time and then return to their old ways.
- Sociopaths love to lie about their pasts, too, so look for inconsistencies in their stories. Also, pay attention if someone else, who is familiar with the sociopath's past, grossly disagrees with the sociopath's version of events or unknowingly discloses important information that the sociopath withheld.
- Some sociopaths will go to great lengths to make you believe their lies. For example, a sociopath may pretend to leave home "to go to work" every day even if they are unemployed.^[6]
- Many sociopaths are delusional to the point where they believe that their lies are the truth. For example, Charles Manson once said, "I've never killed anyone! I don't need to kill anyone!" (He said this in reference to the fact that his followers killed someone and not he himself.)

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3 See if they are able to stay eerily calm in spite of their circumstances. A sociopath can experience an event that triggers high emotions in others without feeling any emotion themselves.^[7] Sociopaths don't register events in the same way as non-sociopaths, and may barely react in dangerous or scary situations. If they forget to act, they may respond to any good or bad news with a cold blank stare.^[8]

- If you find yourself flustered or panicked and the person you're with doesn't look perturbed, then he or she may not register an event as seriously as you do and this may be a sign of impaired empathy on their part. Sociopaths lack the ability to empathise with emotions of others.
- Check to see if the person has ever seemed anxious or nervous, especially in situations that should

naturally cause this behavior. Even though some people are more even-keeled than others, most people eventually display some form of anxiety.

- Also, consider if the person has ever responded with strong emotions in a situation where it seemed unwarranted. This could have been a fabricated (fake) emotion, or it may have been part of a defense mechanism.
- Studies show that sociopaths do not display anxiety when shown images that would disturb others or when expecting to receive small electrical shocks. In those situations, non-sociopaths do register anxiety and fear.^[9]

4 Consider if they are extremely charming and generous, at least at first. Sociopaths are adept at charming people and making grand, generous gestures because they know how to get what they want. Charming people know how to make people feel special, to ask people the right questions about themselves, and to generally be perceived as fun, likable, and interesting. Truly charming people possess the ability to charm almost anyone, from little kids to old ladies. If the person is incredibly charming and generous at first, while his or her later behavior scares or confuses you, then you may have a sociopath on your hands.^[10]

- The person might go out of their way to help strangers or be incredibly generous with people they hardly know. However, they might be the total opposite with family and close friends.
- You can think of sociopaths as con artists who always have a secret agenda. They need to know how to charm people in order to get what they want. To advance their goals, they first have to blend in with the crowd, which means they need to know how to smile, greet people, and make people feel comfortable.
- Although many sociopaths can be extremely charming, they harbor strong anti-social inclinations. They can be extremely charming, and then cold and distant. They are also not quite genuine in the interactions either. When someone has very polarized behavior, ranging from antisocial to extremely charming, it is a marker of disintegration in their psyche - and that is a red flag. It can also be an attempt to elicit rejection and wounding, to control others with. It is always accompanied with a lack of compassion or basic consideration of another's life. If it doesn't feel genuine from within them, it could very well be a person with sociopathic tendencies.^[11]

Notice if the person is manipulative. Sociopaths understand human weakness and exploit it maximally.

5 Once determined, they can manipulate individuals to do just about anything. Sociopaths prey on weak people and often stay away from people of equal strength to them ; they look for people who are sad, insecure or looking for a meaning in life because they know that these people are 'soft' targets. In other words, a person with unmet needs is a person that can be more easily manipulated through those unmet needs. Check to see if the person is great at getting other people to do what he or she wants.^[12]

- Sociopaths will slowly gain dominance and control over a person without the other person realizing it. Sociopaths like to be in control of every situation and are uncomfortable being around other people who are strong. They will often offer to do everything under the guise of being helpful, but actually they want to be in control of everything. They are always worried about being exposed.^[13]
- When strong people are around, sociopaths are afraid of getting caught out. They will keep their distance and, from a distance, make small contact with the 'strong' person, to see if they are noticed. However, sociopaths like to prey on the strongest people they can deceive, remain unseen, or exposed from. Once they feel exposed, they will play their trump cards, or get out... always using an excuse that doesn't make sense.
- They gain much of their dominance through psychological warfare, creating dependency in other person. Like venom, their game plan is to weaken people over time. They think that if they can remain unseen, they can stay out of harm's way.
- See if the person is completely comfortable deceiving people and blatantly telling lies to get what he or she wants. In the same way they have little to no empathy, their integrity will be low or deficient. However, onlookers may think this person has an excellent moral character.^[14]

6 Look for them having instigated violence. As children, some sociopaths torture defenseless people and animals. This violence is always instigated, not defensive. They will create drama out of thin air, or twist what others say. They will often overreact strongly to minor or perceived offenses. If they are challenged or confronted about it, they will attempt to divert attention away from themselves, counting on the empathic person's empathy and consideration of people to protect them, as long as they can remain undetected. Their attempt to point the finger the other way, is both a smokescreen to being detected, and an attempt to confuse the situation.^[15]

- If you have the sense that, while the person is outwardly calm, he or she can snap and get violent at any moment, yet become calm again soon after, then he or she may be demonstrating sociopathic tendencies.

7 See if the person has a huge ego. Sociopaths often have delusions of grandeur and think they are the greatest people in the world. They will be completely unresponsive to criticism and have an extremely inflated sense of self. They don't care about others, wishing only to use them. They will also have a huge sense of entitlement, thinking that they deserve amazing things to be created for them without consideration for others' well being whilst doing so. ^[16]

- They may also have a completely unrealistic view of their own abilities; for example, they may think that they are extremely talented at singing or dancing when, in reality, they possess almost no skills in these fields. They are either delusional, which is often true, and/ or say such things to add to the facade/mask are wearing/creating in their agenda of deception.
- The person may also think they are better than everyone else, without any evidence of their superiority.
- The person may also be narcissistic, far more interested in talking about themselves than in hearing what others have to say. Sociopaths can take any person's struggle or suffering and make it about them. The person, in general, doesn't want to hear what anyone else has to say. Also, the person spends a great deal of time staring in the mirror rather than observing others in the world.

8 Notice if the person has any deep friendships. Although not everyone is lucky in the friends lottery, your guard should go up if someone has few real friends. He or she may have lackeys (people who hang around them just to get bossed around), or people who hover around to try and 'mooch off' them, but try to see if they have any meaningful connections with people. If they have almost no friends, then there's a high chance that there's something wrong with them, unless they are very shy or for another compelling reason. ^[17]

- Consider family members, too. If the person isn't in touch with any members of their family and never talks about them, there may be a problem. Of course, the person may have other reasons for not talking to them, such as having had a difficult childhood. ^[18]
- Look for a lack of connection with the past. If the person has virtually no friends from high school, college or any part of their past life, then they may be a sociopath as well. Take note if the person gives you stories

of repeated betrayals throughout their life and uses this to explain their lack of friends or history of failed relationships. Once exposed, they move on to find a better target or victim, their wish being to wreak havoc in other people's lives.

9 Consider if the person likes to isolate you.^[19] Sociopaths like to meet people, move fast and come in close. This is so the other person doesn't have a chance to pull back or time to change their mind. You may find that, after just a few weeks, the sociopath is acting very intensely around you if you're romantically involved with them. They may even make you feel like you're soul mates because they are so good at reading people that they can say exactly what you want to hear. The sociopath is likely to have determined that you have an unmet need or dream to be in a close relationship, and they consider it a good opportunity to wear a mask that fits that need or dream. Ultimately, the sociopath will want to have you all to themselves instead of "sharing" you with the world.^[20]

- If you are dating one, the sociopath will quickly try to get you to stop seeing your friends, because the sociopath will feel threatened by them. The sociopath will make excuses for not being around your friends, saying things like, "They don't really get you like I do," or "They never give me a chance," or "They are just turning you against me because they don't like me." The sociopath will play the victim to the extreme in an attempt to elicit empathic protection from their target. This is an attempt to make their target feel as if they are the sociopath's only saviour, and that they should spend all of their time with and listening only to the sociopath.^[21]

10 See if the person is immature. Sociopaths do not learn from their mistakes and repeat the same ones again and again. Therefore, they do not grow or develop as much as other people do. Look for immature behavior that may be hidden underneath the person's veneer of charisma and charm. Here is some behavior to look for:

- Extreme selfishness. The person may want everything for him or herself at any cost. With this comes an unwillingness to share.
- A huge ego. The person may be so obsessed with him or herself that he or she doesn't care for others at all.

- **Neediness.** The person may want you to be there for them whenever they want you.
- **Unready for responsibilities.** The person may not be prepared for, able to deal with or be given any form of meaningful responsibility. They will either pass any work to others, take credit whilst excusing failure, or will avoid responsibility entirely.

11 Look for 'gaslighting'. Since sociopaths lie and deceive, they tend to make the victim look and feel as though they are the problem that the sociopath is causing. The medical terminology is 'projection', and is a calling card of the sociopath.

- **Blaming you for what they have done to you.** If the person is lying and accuses you of being a liar, then you could be dealing with a sociopath.
- **Making you feel crazy.** If the person is doing something that is driving you nuts, and making it seem as though you are crazy, then you are likely dealing with a sociopath.

12 Observe if they use an intense, manipulative stare to attempt to intimidate you. A sociopath's ego is fuelled by a victim's discomfort.

- If the person uses a cold, blank stare to intimidate you, and shows no remorse for your nervousness, you are probably dealing with a sociopath.

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**Part
2**

Part 2 of 2:
Getting Away

1 Don't give them anything they want from you. When dealing with sociopaths be as boring as possible to not feed the sociopath's need for excitement. Sociopaths are easily bored.^[22] This includes not giving them emotional entertainment. Remain calm when talking to them. Don't get excited or argue with them. Feel free to ignore their attempts to engage you! Silence is the best response to a sociopath. Also pretend that you have nothing that the sociopath may want. Pretend that you lost your money, had your things already stolen, etc. Whatever it is that you provide for them, find an excuse - in a non-emotional, non-confrontational way - to not be able to provide it anymore.

2 Stay away if you can.^[23] Once you've confirmed that the person is a full-blown sociopath, then it's best to avoid that person as much as you can. If that person is a co-worker or in your friend group, then you may not be able to completely avoid him or her, but try to steer clear as much as humanly possible. Remember that a sociopath may be able to detect that you're trying to distance yourself and may want to reel you in even more as a result; stay strong and be determined to spend as little time with this person as possible.

- This doesn't mean you should be openly mean or hostile; this can actually put you in a dangerous situation.
- Don't tell the person, "I know you're a sociopath." This can enrage the person or make him or her even more determined to win you over. You don't want the person to know that you're onto him or her; just stay as removed as possible without being rude.

3 Be immune to the sociopath's charms. The sociopath may want to charm you and to win you over with gifts, compliments, or stories meant to cast him or her in a favorable light. But remember that once you've determined that this person is a full-on sociopath, there's no turning back. No amount of charming behavior or lies can win you back over to the dark side. Don't let the person flatter you into giving him or her a second chance.^[24]

- However, keep in mind that it is normal to experience self-doubt during this process because the sociopath knows how to make you question yourself with their altered version of reality.
- Don't give in. The sociopath may even trick you into feeling sorry for him or her, talking about how alone he or she feels, or how important you are to him or her. But if this person is really as lying and manipulative as you determined him or her to be, then there's no way you can have true sympathy for him or her, beyond being sorry that this person is suffering from a mental disorder. ^[25]

4 Get out as quickly as possible if you're dating the person. If you happen to be dating the person who is a sociopath, then you have to get out as quickly and safely as you can. The longer you wait, the worse things will be, and the more likely you'll be to get sucked into that person's line of thinking. If you need to end the relationship, then you have to tell the person as soon and as quickly as you can; there's no need to say you want to end the relationship because you think the person is sociopathic.

- Keep your reason vague to avoid providing them with ammunition to manipulate you. Be firm about your decision because you will likely have to repeat and reinforce your decision many times.
- Remember that there's a difference between a person being really careless and being a sociopath. You may call someone a sociopath just because he's treated you poorly or acts really selfish, but this may just be a sign of poor character. A full-on sociopath really does not care about what anyone thinks or feels -- whatsoever.
- If you're in a truly controlling or manipulative relationship, then you may not want to end it by yourself. You may need to do it over the phone or have a friend there to help you if you need to pick up your belongings. A sociopath may not take no for an answer. If you try to end the relationship, the sociopath may go to desperate and even violent measures to get you to stay.

5 Warn others. Though you don't need to go around broadcasting the fact that the person is sociopath to all of the world (unless the person is really a danger to others), you should consider warning people in that person's circle. Definitely, warn others who are considering dating 'the person'. Don't anger 'the person' by telling everyone he or she is a sociopath. However, if a situation presents itself where a potential victim really needs to be warned, don't be afraid to say what you think.

- Take this on a case-by-case basis. If the person is a higher up at your company, then yeah, you probably shouldn't go around warning people. But you *should* stay away as much as you can.

6 Think for yourself. Sociopaths prey on people who have trouble thinking for themselves or who are looking for too much guidance. The best way you can make yourself immune to the sociopath's charms or to not be susceptible to meeting future sociopaths is to make sure that you know who you are and are able to develop your own ideas and to see the world through your own eyes. Sociopaths stay away from strong-minded people and original thinkers because they know they'll have a hard time controlling them.^[26]

- Though it can take a lifetime to truly think for yourself, making an effort to be informed about current events, to understand multiple perspectives of any situation, and to spend time with people whose beliefs are different from yours can go a long way in helping you become a truly original thinker.
- Part of it has to do with confidence. If you're confident in yourself, you'll have more confidence in your

ideas. And you'll be much more likely to scare away any sociopaths who come your way!

7 Give up fear of the sociopath. Instead, use your own thinking skills (as previously noted) and use reason and calmness to respond. For starters, a sociopath can fake everything, so if this person is pretending, there is little point playing up to a hollow cut-out. Second, sociopaths are intelligent and this may well be a source of your own distress, trying to keep up or make a pretense at being as clever or as knowing, or more likely, dodging their overwhelming need to make their own intelligence or cleverness the center of everything.

- If you give up fearing the sociopath, and stop trying to be better than or at the same level as the sociopath, but rather, become far more accepting of your own self and appreciate what makes you worthy and valuable, a sociopath will have a hard time manipulating you. The majority of sociopaths are not killers, sadists or monsters; they're human beings who need to be handled with care. They do not choose to be a sociopath just as you don't choose to be a victim of their wiles. However, you can make it harder or easier for a sociopath to manipulate your weaker self, so the choice lies with you. Educate yourself about the means through which human beings manipulate and mistreat one another and arm yourself with the methods by which you undermine such treatment and get on with your own life.
- This is not to say the sociopath will appreciate you showing your strong self and refusing to be taken in. However, the sociopath will stop expending energy on you and making further attempts to manipulate you because he or she will know you will call them out on it, every single time. That gets to be boring, and no sociopath likes boredom.

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Tips

- If a person is "too good to be true", they probably are. This is the case for any DSM diagnosis, including sociopathy, borderline, and narcissism.^[27]
- Sociopaths will go lot further than the general population to achieve their goals and stay on course longer.

- Sociopaths often know how to make others believe they are the victim while actually being the aggressor.
- This type of person will tell you things to get you to forgive them and then say they never told you. This is a tactic to play mind games.
- Some scientists believe that sociopaths suffer from damage to the prefrontal cortex which regulates emotions and morality, etc.
- Sociopaths tend to blame the victim for their shortcomings. They can never admit to fault and instead attack the victim. Key factor in any DSM diagnosis.
- Most are aware of their need to hide cold traits, and are good actors (have adapted to being different) so most of this based on overt behavior is only true for unintelligent, young, or low functioning sociopaths (who do not conceal cruel traits/grossly anti-social behavior).
- Some experts say that a great number of sociopaths were also child abuse sufferers.
- Sociopathic behavior is strongly inherited, so look at problems in the family as a clue to a person's real personality.
- You know that sociopaths are going to lie about their past, so take most of what they say with a grain of salt. Instead, look for any consistencies in any of their stories. Generally, there will be one or two details among all their fabrications that generally remain the same. This could either be the truth, or something they've said so often they think it's the truth.

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Warnings

- Sociopaths are less prone to emotion and so can use your emotion against you. It is most effective to deal with people in terms they understand; so, if you must deal with a sociopath, leave your emotions/feelings at the door or they will control you.
- Don't let them know that you're on to them. While this could go different ways depending on the sociopath, it's still best that they don't know that you know.
- Be immune to their charm. This just goes without saying.
- Although not all sociopaths are violent, it is best to distance yourself from these people on any emotional, friendship level.
- Sociopaths are great liars because they have no conscience. So they will use all excuses for their actions in order to avoid being discovered for who they really are.
- Sociopathic tendencies can often be confused with that of conditions such as autism or vice versa. The key difference is that sociopaths lack conscience, whereas autistic people do care, but may be clueless how to respond, and guess wrong.

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