



## Can a Narcissist Fall in Love?

*That depends on your definition of love.*

Helen E. Fisher is an American anthropologist (Rutgers University) and human behavior researcher of the biology of love and attraction. She was hired as the chief scientific advisor to the Internet dating site, Chemistry.com, a division of Match.com. Fisher has conducted extensive research and written five books on the evolution and future of human sexuality, monogamy, adultery and divorce, gender differences in the brain, and the chemistry of romantic love.

Fisher maintains that humans have evolved three core brain systems for mating and reproduction:

- Lust — the sex drive or libido
- Romantic attraction — romantic love
- Attachment — deep feelings of union with a long-term partner.

Each of these three systems is triggered as powerful chemicals flood the body, and their interplay can be tricky and complex.

According to Fisher, each of the three systems triggered by these chemicals evolved to serve a different function, and together enable mating, pair-bonding and parenting:

1. The sex drive evolved to encourage us to seek a range of partners.
2. Romantic love evolved to enable us to focus our mating energy on just one at a time. This is a refinement of mere lust that allows people to hone in on a mate. Characterized by feelings of exhilaration, and intrusive, obsessive thoughts about the object of one's affection, this mental state may share neurochemical characteristics with the manic phase of manic depression. Dr Fisher suggests that the actual behavioral patterns of those in love (such as attempting to evoke reciprocal responses in one's loved one) can even resemble obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD).
3. Given that romantic love is not sufficiently stable and anchoring for long-term, cooperative child-rearing, attachment evolved to enable us to feel deep union to this person long enough to do so. This state, according to Fisher, is characterized by feelings of calm, security, social comfort and emotional union.

Narcissists' need for admiration and praise often leads them to be charming and charismatic—which can quickly spark sex and even romance. But the failure to understand the inner world of their partner person—to experience empathy—makes it impossible for many people with narcissistic personality disorder to truly fall in love at the attachment level, it's not sufficiently stable and anchoring enough for long-term, cooperative child-rearing. Attachment evolved to enable us to feel that deep union to this person long enough to build a trusting, equal partnership.

Why Don't Narcissists Fall in Love? Narcissists may show passion and charm in the early stages of dating. But for most narcissists, relationships are transactional. They provide positive attention and sexual satisfaction to bolster a narcissist's ego and self-esteem. The objective is to enjoy uncommitted pleasure, and most narcissists lose interest in the relationship as the expectation for intimacy increases or they feel that they've conquered the challenge of securing a relationship.