



How Much of This Is About Me?

Understanding selfishness, self-centeredness, and the spectrum we all live on

No one is 100% selfish or 100% self-centered, and no one is completely free of either. We all fall somewhere on a spectrum, and where we fall can change depending on the situation. I may be generous and thoughtful in one part of my life while becoming highly self-focused when I am afraid, angry, hurt, insecure, or not getting what I want.

The point is not to decide whether I am a selfish person. The point is to notice the moments when my perspective narrows and other people's needs, feelings, limits, or realities become harder for me to see.

Two Different Things

SELFISHNESS

Selfishness is mainly about what I want. In a selfish moment, I am focused on getting my own needs, wants, comfort, or desires met, with little consideration for how that affects someone else.

SELF-CENTEREDNESS

Self-centeredness is mainly about how I see the world. I experience people and situations mostly in terms of how they affect me, and I may expect others to behave the way I think they should.

The Goal Is Not to Erase Myself



Where do I tend to move on this spectrum when I am stressed, hurt, or afraid?

Awareness is not a verdict about my character. It is information about where I can grow.



How Much of This Is About Me?

Recognizing the less obvious ways self-centeredness can show up

Self-centeredness does not always look selfish from the outside. I can be generous, helpful, responsible, or deeply concerned about other people and still be viewing the situation mainly through the lens of what I need from them.

When Self-Centeredness Does Not Look Selfish

CONTROL

I need other people to make choices that help me feel secure, comfortable, or in control.

RESENTMENT

I keep track of what others should have done differently and stay focused on how their behavior affected me.

APPROVAL-SEEKING

I help, perform, please, or over-give because I need a particular response in return.

PERSONALIZATION

I assume another person's mood, boundary, choice, or distance is primarily about me.

SCOREKEEPING

I compare what I give with what I receive and become resentful when the exchange does not feel even.

FIXING

I become preoccupied with changing someone else's behavior because I cannot tolerate what their choices stir up in me.

Where Does This Show Up for Me?

Which of these patterns is easiest for me to recognize in myself?

Which one is hardest for me to admit?

Where do I give, help, or care but still expect a particular response in return?

A person can look generous on the outside and still be centered on what they need the other person to do.



How Much of This Is About Me?

Widening the lens in one real situation

Self-centeredness narrows the field of view. I know what I wanted, how I felt, and what I think should have happened. Widening the lens does not mean deciding the other person is right. It means remembering that their experience is real too.

One Situation, Two Separate Realities

What happened?

MY REALITY

What did I want?

What did I expect them to do?

What did I make their choice mean about me?

THEIR SEPARATE REALITY

What might they have wanted or needed?

What limits, feelings, or priorities might they have had?

What if their choice was not mainly about me?

What Belongs to Whom?

WHAT IS MINE TO OWN?

WHAT IS THEIRS TO OWN?

Would I see this situation differently if I were not the one disappointed?

Other people are not here to play the role I have assigned them in my life.



How Much of This Is About Me?

Moving toward an others-centered way of seeing without abandoning myself

Being others-centered does not mean making myself unimportant. It means remembering that I am not the only person in the room whose needs and perspective matter. I can care about what I want while also making room for someone else's reality.

Widen the Lens

The opposite of self-centeredness is not self-neglect. It is perspective. Others-centered means I can recognize that another person's needs, feelings, priorities, limits, and point of view are just as real to them as mine are to me.

1. WHAT DO I WANT?

Name it honestly without pretending I do not have needs.

2. WHAT MIGHT THEY WANT?

Make room for the possibility that their priorities are different from mine.

3. WHAT IS MINE TO OWN?

My behavior, communication, boundaries, expectations, and choices.

4. WHAT IS THEIRS TO OWN?

Their feelings, decisions, limits, reactions, and consequences.

5. WHAT WOULD AN ESTEEMABLE ACTION LOOK LIKE?

Choose something that respects both realities, even if I do not get the outcome I want.

One Place I Can Practice Being More Others-Centered

A person or situation where I tend to make everything about me:

One question I can ask myself before I react:

My needs matter, and so do yours. Growth is learning to hold both realities at the same time.



How Much of This Is About Me?

Examining the invisible contracts I may write for other people

Self-centeredness often hides inside expectations. I may never say the rule out loud, but I still expect another person to follow it: if I care about you, you should appreciate me; if I explain myself, you should understand me; if I change, you should notice; if I apologize, you should respond the way I hope. The problem begins when I treat an expectation like an agreement the other person never made.

The Invisible Contract

- "If I do a lot for you, you should do the same for me."
- "If I am upset, you should know what I need."
- "If I say I am sorry, you should forgive me now."
- "If I explain myself well enough, you should agree with me."
- "If I have changed, you should stop reacting to who I used to be."

One Contract I May Be Writing

WHAT I EXPECT	DID THEY AGREE?	WHEN THEY DO NOT	WHAT I CAN ACCEPT

What resentment makes more sense when I look at the invisible contract underneath it?

An expectation becomes dangerous when I start treating it like an agreement the other person never made.



How Much of This Is About Me?

Using the actor and director idea to see the scripts I hand other people

In the Big Book discussion around pages 60 to 63, self-centeredness is pictured as an actor who wants to run the whole show. The problem is not that I have hopes, preferences, or ideas about how life should go. The problem begins when I act as though I am also the director and the people around me are supposed to follow the parts I have written for them.

The Script I Hand Out

I am one actor in the scene. Self-centeredness shows up when I decide that I should also direct the scene, assign everyone a role, and become angry when they improvise.

THE ROLE I ASSIGNED THEM

Who did I expect this person to be for me? Supportive? Agreeable? Grateful? Available? Understanding?

THE SCRIPT I WROTE

What did I expect them to say, do, feel, understand, forgive, or prioritize?

THEIR OWN SCRIPT

What might they be expecting from me? What role might they have assigned me?

Did this person ever agree to the role or script I gave them?

What happens in me when they go off script?

The people in my life did not audition for the roles I assigned them. They are living their own lives, often carrying scripts of their own.

Can I participate in the scene without needing to direct everyone in it?



How Much of This Is About Me?

Looking at what happens in me when reality does not cooperate

Self-centeredness becomes easier to see when I do not get the outcome I wanted. Disappointment is normal. The deeper question is what I do with it. Do I let myself be disappointed, or do I turn the other person's choice into evidence that they are wrong, selfish, uncaring, disrespectful, or against me?

What Happens When I Don't Get My Way?

RESENT

I replay what they should have done and focus on how unfair it feels.

WITHDRAW

I go quiet, distance myself, or stop giving because I did not get the response I wanted.

PUSH HARDER

I argue, explain, persuade, or repeat myself because I still want the outcome to change.

PERSONALIZE

I turn their choice into a statement about my value, importance, or place in their life.

CONTROL

I try to manage the person, the situation, or the consequences so I can feel okay again.

BECOME THE VICTIM

I focus only on what was done to me and lose sight of my expectations, behavior, or part.

Follow One Disappointment

WHAT DID I WANT?

What did I want to happen?

WHAT HAPPENED?

What actually happened?

WHAT DID I FEEL?

What feeling showed up when I did not get my way?

WHAT DID I MAKE IT MEAN?

What did I make their choice mean about me?

HOW DID I RESPOND?

What did I do with the disappointment?

CAN I LET IT BE?

Could I be disappointed without making them wrong?

Not getting my way does not automatically mean I was mistreated.



How Much of This Is About Me?

Practicing life with people who are separate from me

Others-centeredness requires more than being kind. It asks me to remember that other people are separate human beings with their own histories, priorities, fears, limits, values, and choices. They are not supporting characters in my life, and I am not the author of theirs.

Can I Let Other People Be Separate People?

THEY ARE ALLOWED TO

Disagree with me

THEY ARE ALLOWED TO

Say no

THEY ARE ALLOWED TO

Have different priorities

THEY ARE ALLOWED TO

Be disappointed in me

THEY ARE ALLOWED TO

Not understand me

THEY ARE ALLOWED TO

Change their mind

THEY ARE ALLOWED TO

Make choices I dislike

THEY ARE ALLOWED TO

Need something different than I do

What Happens in Me When They Do?

Which of these is hardest for me to tolerate?

What role do I tend to assign people in my life?

How do I react when they stop playing that role?

Do I punish, withdraw, control, argue, rescue, over-explain, or become resentful?

What would acceptance of their separateness look like without abandoning my own boundaries?

Others-centeredness means remembering that other people have lives that are not organized around me. I can care about them and set limits with them without needing to control who they are.

Other people can be separate from me without being against me.