

WHAT IS ENTITLEMENT *Mentality?*

*Discover the psychological effects
of a childhood with no limitations*

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The dopamine release in the brain, caused by hard work being paid off as you achieve a monumental goal, is a powerful sensation.

Your mind is rewarded with satisfaction and pride, and you may even earn a material prize, depending on the accomplishment. The result is more motivation to repeat these efforts in the future. But what happens when you are given something you didn't work for?

Some people have a higher sense of entitlement than others. Everyone needs to feel entitled to something, as this quality helps a person fight for their human rights and equal resources. But this trait can also make a person think they deserve unearned privileges. Depending on the extremity of this behaviour, they may always expect to be rewarded, reacting with negative emotions if they aren't. Entitlement usually accompanies high self-confidence, fuelling their views that they are more deserving of life's benefits.

The roots of entitlement

Entitlement stems from environmental and biological factors. One of the greatest environmental influences is overindulgence from parents in early life. Many parents want to spoil their children to provide optimum happiness. However, one of the kindest things you can do for a child is to teach them the value of items and rewards. If given anything they want, without much reason, they grow up without understanding the concept of luxuries being earned.



“THE KINDEST THING YOU CAN DO FOR A CHILD IS TO TEACH THEM THE VALUE OF ITEMS”

Another parental cause is not setting clear boundaries. Without consequences for misbehaviour from early childhood, a person starts to believe they are exempt from the rules others abide by. The same applies to those who grow up in affluent families. More care needs to be taken not to spoil when the parents have the facilities to provide.

Adult attitudes

Signs of entitlement include egocentricity, impatience, blame-placing and ungratefulness. Entitled minds rank themselves above others. Regardless of what they already have, they are likely to always think they need or deserve more. To achieve this, they may expect the service of everyone around them.

When someone views themselves as elite, not meeting their demands can cause chaos. An entitled person is more likely to have drastic mood swings. They often play the victim in situations and overreact to the natural troughs of life's course. Sometimes they may even blame the people around them unjustifiably for misfortunes. This shows their inability to accept adversity and an absence of respect for others.

These traits can present themselves in public environments. Examples include a restaurant customer demanding better seats or a faster service, line cutting in shop queues, or expecting an instant response to online queries or text messages.

Do personality traits foster entitlement?

Entitlement isn't always taught. Sometimes it is part of an individual's personality. Some disorders that cause such traits are narcissistic personality disorder and antisocial personality disorder.

Narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) is a mental health disorder that gives people an extreme, elevated sense of importance. While a typical person can still get a thrill from gaining attention, the level needed for someone with NPD to feel the same is much higher. They strive to be accepted and admired in unreasonable measures. Those with NPD may be misunderstood as overly confident. However, they mostly doubt their self-worth, so seek positive attention. Criticism of their actions or personality can cause great upset. To feel valued, someone with NPD may

exaggerate their achievements, belittle people, take advantage of others and insist on obtaining the best in every situation. This could include the flashiest car or best room in a shared accommodation.

Antisocial personality disorder (ASPD) alters how a person's brain thinks about and relates to others. This makes it more difficult for them to consider another person's feelings, and naturally heightens selfish behaviours and entitled traits.

The lasting impacts

A person showcasing high levels of entitlement is unable to balance their needs with others'. Without this ability, an entitled mind can't form intimate, healthy and rewarding relationships.

Seeking companionship is in human nature, but with entitled thought processes, a person has unrealistic expectations of their partner and lacks the empathy required for close connections. Relationship attempts may fail due to entitlement – showing a lack of gratitude, manipulative behaviour or an inability to resolve conflicts if they're not used to being challenged.

Combatting entitlement

Recognising feelings of entitlement in yourself is the first step to changing your behaviours. First, try to pinpoint a deeper feeling, such as insecurity, that has caused your entitlement.

It may help to write down the things that you are grateful for in life. This shifts your brain away from focusing on what you want and more towards what you already have. You should make a forced effort to thank others for the positive things they give you in order to develop the habit of acknowledging others.

If you are struggling to interact with others with an entitlement mentality, you should try to set limitations using clear communication. Someone focused on themselves is probably unaware of the impact they are having on others, so subtle clues need to be replaced with blunt boundaries. Make sure you stay calm and respectful while doing this, focusing on how it is impacting you. You could also encourage them to take responsibility for their actions. For example, if they haven't contributed to something in a team setting, don't give them an equal reward.

Entitlement is often an inbuilt attribute, strengthened through long-term behaviours. The mentality isn't always easy to break. To unpick entitled thought processes, seek professional help. Therapists can introduce exercises to give you a healthier and more empathetic approach to situations. ■

OPERATION VARSITY BLUES

In 2019, a scandal was investigated after it came to light that wealthy families in the US were paying huge sums, up to millions of dollars, to bribe elite colleges and universities to accept their children. The investigation became known as Operation Varsity Blues and also included cases of parents falsifying athletic profiles so that their children could gain a place as high-achieving athletes, and faking test scores. The message that these upper-class individuals are portraying is that they believe their child should be given a place at high-achieving schools over those more academically deserving.

This entitlement comes from a lifestyle whereby the families have become used to splashing their cash to get whatever they want or need. The standard is set higher for richer individuals, meaning that optimal treatment sometimes becomes expected. Not only is this an example of adults showing their entitlement and selfish behaviours, but the children involved in the scandal are being taught from a young age that they should expect to be offered the best rewards without having to put in any effort of the deserving standard. Psychologically, the child's brain is more likely to develop entitled behaviours.