

## Attention Seekers: We all know at least one.

An emotionally immature person has low levels of self-esteem and self-confidence and consequently feels insecure; to counter these feelings of insecurity they will spend a large proportion of their lives creating situations in which they become the center of attention. It may be that the need for attention is inversely proportional to emotional maturity, therefore anyone indulging in attention-seeking behaviors is telling you how emotionally immature they are.

Attention-seeking behavior is surprisingly common. Being the center of attention alleviates feelings of insecurity and inadequacy but the relief is temporary as the underlying problem remains unaddressed: low self-confidence and low self-esteem, and consequent low levels of self-worth and self-love.

**The sufferer:** This might include feigning or exaggerating illness, playing on an injury, or perhaps causing or inviting injury. The attention-seeker excels in manipulating people through their emotions, especially that of guilt. It's very difficult not to feel sorry for someone who relates a plausible tale of suffering in a sob story or "poor me" drama.

**The rescuer:** She's the one who will dash in and "rescue" people whenever the moment is opportune - to herself, that is. She then gains gratification from basking in the glory of her humanitarian actions. She will prey on any person suffering misfortune, infirmity, illness, injury, or anyone who has a

vulnerability. The act of rescue and thus the opportunities for gaining attention can be enhanced if others are excluded from the act of rescue; this helps create a dependency relationship between the rescuer and rescued which can be exploited for further acts of rescue (and attention) later.

**The organizer:** She may present herself as the one in charge, the one organizing everything, the one who is reliable and dependable, the one people can always turn to. However, the objective is not to assist people (this is only a means to an end) but to always be the center of attention.

**The manipulator:** She may exploit family relationships, manipulating others with guilt and distorting perceptions; although she may not harm people physically, she causes everyone to suffer from an emotional injury. A common attention-seeking ploy is to claim she is being persecuted, victimized, excluded, isolated or ignored.

**The drama queen:** Every incident or opportunity, no matter how insignificant, is exploited, exaggerated and if necessary distorted to become an event of dramatic proportions. Everything is elevated to crisis proportions.

**The busy bee:** This individual is the busiest person in the world if her constant retelling of her life is to be believed. Everyday events which are regarded as normal by normal people take on epic proportions as everyone is invited to simultaneously admire and commiserate with this oh-so-busy person who never has a moment to herself, never has time to sit down, etc. She's never too busy, though, to tell you how busy she is.

**The feigner:** When called to account and outwitted, the person instinctively uses the denial - counterattack - feigning victimhood strategy to manipulate everyone present, especially bystanders and those in authority. The most effective method of feigning victimhood is to burst into tears, for most people's instinct is to feel sorry for them, to put their arm round them or offer them a tissue.

**The false confessor:** this person confesses to crimes they haven't committed in order to gain attention from the police and the media. In some cases people have confessed to being serial killers, even though they cannot provide any substantive evidence of their crimes. Often they will confess to crimes which have just been reported in the

media. Some individuals are known to the police as serial confessors. The false confessor is different from a person who makes a false confession and admits to a crime of which they are accused because of emotional pressure and inappropriate interrogation tactics.

**The abused:** a person claims they are the victim of abuse, sexual abuse, rape, etc. as a way of gaining attention for themselves. Crimes like abuse and rape are difficult to prove at the best of times and their incidence is so common that it is easy to make a plausible claim as a way of gaining attention.

**The victim:** she may intentionally create acts of harassment against herself, for example; send herself hate mail or damage her own possessions in an attempt to incriminate a fellow employee, a family member, neighbor, etc. Scheming, cunning, devious, deceptive and manipulative, she will identify her "harasser" and produce circumstantial evidence in support of her claim. She will revel in the attention she gains and use her glib charm to plausibly dismiss any suggestion that she herself may be responsible. However, a background check may reveal that this is not the first time she has had this happen to her.

What can you do? Don't feed the behavior by participating in the drama. Be aware when you're getting sucked in and nip it in the bud. A mental health professional can offer longer-term guidance and help.



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