

The Self-Aggrandizer Mode

When the Self-Aggrandizer mode is dominant within our personality system, it can show up in a number of different ways. In it's extreme, when we are blended with a part that's using this mode we are seen by others as a person who's entitled, overly competitive, or grandiose in the way we present our possessions and our accomplishments. This is done to seek an elevated level of status, or to get something we particularly want in a specific moment of time. From a textbook perspective, when this mode is activated, we tend to expect special treatment and believe we don't have to follow the rules that other people do. The Self Aggrandizer usually acts in self-elevating ways, building up our achievements, in an attempt to inflate our sense of worth and superiority over those around us.

This behaviour pattern is often linked to a Schema of Entitlement which is born out of the environment we grew up in and our individual childhood experiences within that environment. However, this mode can also come from a desire to compensate for strong, subconscious feelings of inferiority that lie buried deep beneath the surface. It is not always the case that the Self Aggrandizer is easy to spot, and many people push back against the notion of this behaviour mode existing in their personality system. However, it is a fact that most people have a Self Aggrandizer of some sort, so learning how to recognize its presence is important, and often takes a certain degree of humility along with a large amount of self honesty.

“When I elevate myself above those around me, seeking out their flaws, and comparing my own behaviours to theirs, I do so in an attempt to lift my own self confidence and self-esteem. This is the role of my Self-Aggrandizer.”

~Steven Morris RP

In my own journey of self-reflection, I was introduced to the purpose of the Self-Aggrandizer early on, and I instantly had a belief in my system that this part didn't apply to me. I was better than that, I didn't put myself above others, and I was generally opposed to the possibility of its existence in my personality. The irony of this self-elevating thought process, and the beliefs that go along with it, is that they very much belong to the part we call the Self-Aggrandizer. Once I began to accept this mode as an interesting and important part of my personality, I started noticing it in many different areas of my life. Every time I observed an individual not following a rule that I personally would follow, or I saw someone doing something I considered to be unacceptable, my Self-Aggrandizer would come to the forefront of my thinking. A basic sense of self-righteousness and contempt would begin to creep into my system, and I would often elevate my own level of self-esteem by internally proclaiming that “I would never do something like that.”

For me, this was the essence of my Self-Aggrandizer, and it existed in my system as a defence mechanism, counteracting my own underlying imposter complex. My Internal Critic used degrading observations, continuously pointing out the areas of my life where I was screwing up. In order to compensate for this self-perpetuating sense of failure, guilt, and shame, I developed a part of my personality that would push back with observations of its own. I am better than you, smarter than you, stronger than you, and hold my values in a way that is superior to the way that you hold yours. The problem with this behaviour was that it kept me disconnected from people, and only served to prolong my deep rooted sense of loneliness.

As previously stated, many people have a hard time accepting the existence of a Self-Aggrandizing part in their personality. Pushing back against a narrative that, for some, can represent a shameful way of thinking. Many of us have a Self-Aggrandizer, it lives within the personality system serving a very specific purpose. For some, it can be seen in behaviour that's entitled, competitive and grandiose, for others it exists only within our thoughts. This part is often status seeking to get whatever we want at that particular point in time. Living the Life you Want to Live means unconditional Self-Acceptance, and this is true, even for the parts of our personality that we may be conflicted about accepting.

Next, let's check in to see how you relate to this Mode in your own behaviours. Answer the questions below based on your personal experiences and the rating scale provided.

Never 0	Sometimes 1	50/50 2	Often 3	Always 4
Description				Score
I see myself as competitive in everything I do. I usually know the best way to do things and let people know that my way is the right way for things to be done.				
I feel like I am usually seen as being the best at whatever task I take on by people in my life, particularly when I know there is something at stake.				

Based on the scores you gave for the questions above, and the way you relate to the description provided on the previous pages, how Relevant is the Self Aggrandizer Mode to you in your life? Add the two scores together to calculate your prevalence score. On a scale of 0 – 8, 0 being not present at all, and 8 being present in my life every day, rate your experience of the Self Aggrandizer Mode.

My Self Aggrandizer Mode has a prevalence score of ___/8.

On the next page, take the time to explore your experience of the Self Aggrandizer Mode, see if you can identify how you feel when this Mode is active, how you are thinking when this Mode is active, what you do when this Mode is active, and what situations you might need to be aware of that can activate this way of thinking in your personality system.

- a. When I am in the Self Aggrandizer Mode, I experience the following feelings (List the emotions you experience in the Self Aggrandizer Mode, focus on the feelings in your system when you have beliefs that you do things better than others, when you elevate your achievements beyond what they actually were, or when you judge other people for being less than you).

- b. When I am in the Self Aggrandizer Mode, I am having the following thoughts (List the thoughts you are having when you're in the Self Aggrandizer Mode, be specific, focus on thoughts that point out how the story in your system is an accurate one, how the narrative has to be true, and how there is no alternative to what you are hearing).

- c. When I am in the Self Aggrandizer Mode, I behave in the following ways (List the things you do, the way you act, and how you react when you're in the Self Aggrandizer Mode).

- d. The following situations are likely to be involved in triggering my Self Aggrandizer Mode (List the situations you are aware of that have activated this mode of behaviour in the past).

- e. When I am in the Self Aggrandizer Mode, I can use the following skills to support me with the emotional distress I am experiencing in my personality system. List the different skills of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy you can use to manage the emotions being held by the Self Aggrandizer Mode. Try to list the skills in the order they will be effective for you to use. Start with Mindfulness, then focus on Distress Tolerance, and then look at Emotion Regulation.

- f. The ways I can practice these skills to develop them as part of my ability to cope with the emotional experience of my own Self Aggrandizer Mode are as follows: Describe the way you can practice these skills, what would it take to implement them into your daily routines?
