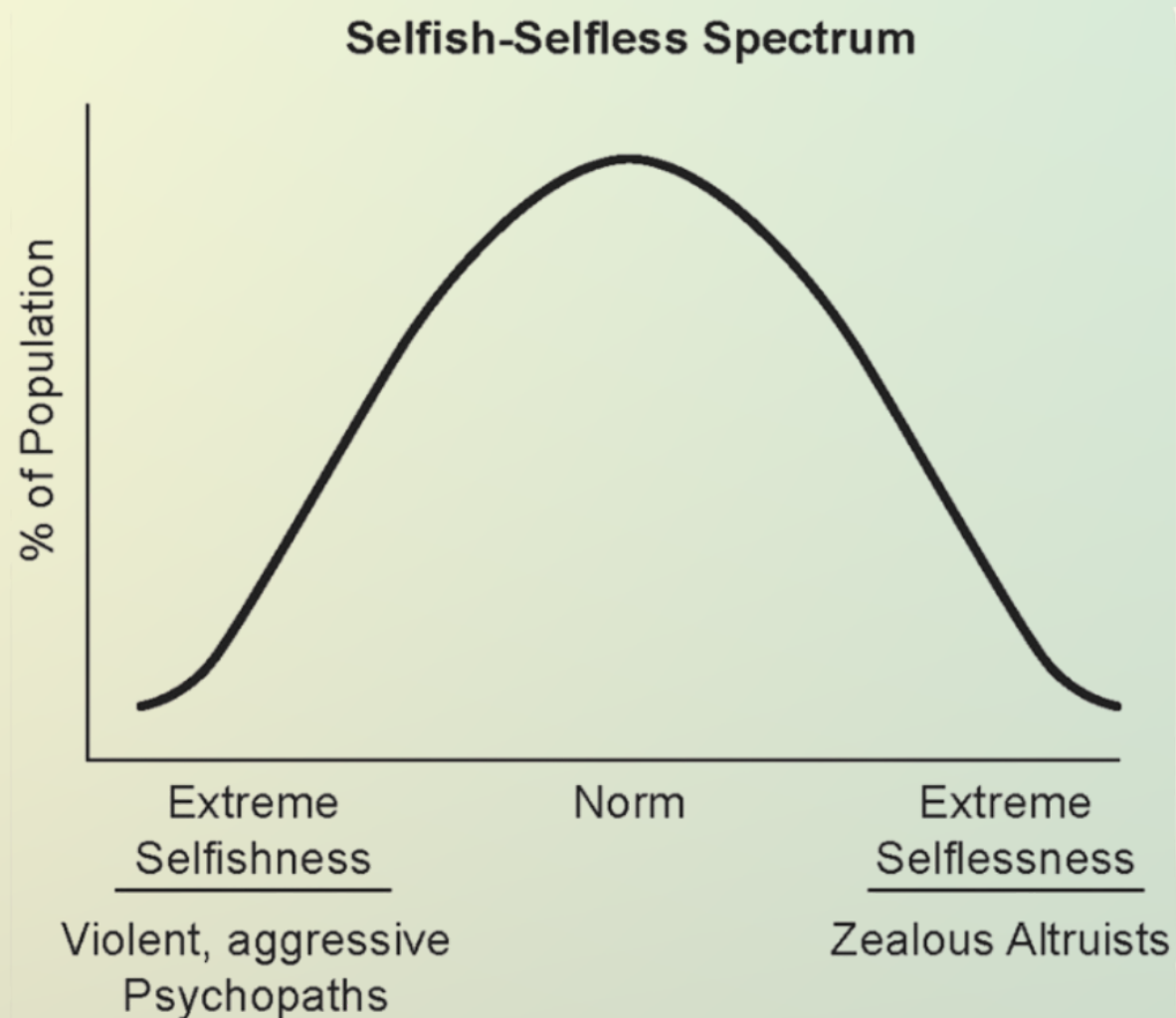


The Selfishness Spectrum

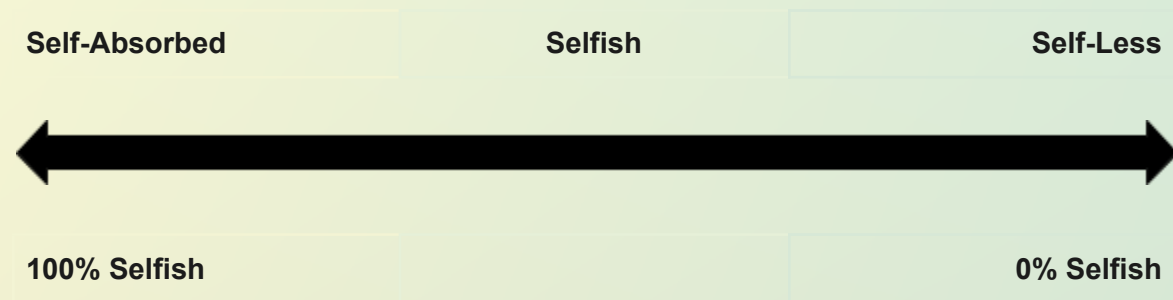
If you've ever been called 'selfish', you probably know that our society doesn't see selfishness as a good thing. We see selfishness as only caring about yourself at the expense of others, being reckless or irresponsible, and not working towards the common good. But in actuality, selfishness is a spectrum and there is a very healthy degree of selfishness.



*Illustrated by Matt Hazard in the article: Sonne JWH, Gash DM. Psychopathy to Altruism: Neurobiology of the Selfish-Selfless Spectrum. Front Psychol. 2018 Apr 19;9:575. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2018.00575. PMID: 29725317; PMCID: PMC5917043.

Therapy Uninterrupted's Version Of The Selfishness Spectrum:

We have adapted this science to include a spectrum of selfishness that you can use to start to identify where your behaviours line up and be able to evaluate how you'd like to continue to behave moving forward.



Self-Absorbed	Selfish	Self-Less
- Egotistical - High regard for self - Low regard for others - Likely to take advantage of others/use others to meet their needs - Craves power/money/status at all costs - Overinflated sense of self on the surface, usually with low self-esteem underneath - Does not respond well to boundaries	- Self-assured - High regard for self - High regard for others - Takes care of self - Meets the needs of others when their tank is full - Positive sense of self - High self-esteem and self-worth - Good ability to set boundaries - Confident in their need to prioritize themselves first	- Self-sacrificing - Low regard for self - High regard for others - Altruistic, but often depriving self of having their needs met by themselves and others - Very few boundaries with others or themselves - Often people pleasers, fearful of being unliked or rejected/abandoned - Low self-esteem and self-worth

There are different degrees of selfishness on this spectrum, and you can place yourself anywhere in a flexible way that is always changing based on your behaviours, thoughts, and emotions.

Where Should You Land On The Selfishness Spectrum?

Our goal is actually to be somewhere in the middle realm of selfishness. We do need to prioritize ourselves to be able to be a good human and take care of ourselves. We do so by not relying on others to take care of us when we eventually burn out from being too self-less or from demanding all of our needs to be met by others from being too self-absorbed. Instead, when we take care of our own needs and ask others to support us when we need them to, we can also take care of others as well because we have the energy to do so.

Reflection Question: What would you need to change to be able to be more in the center of this spectrum?

What Is the Impact Of The Selfishness Spectrum?

If this document has felt difficult to absorb or you find it really hard to imagine making any change, you may be a People Pleaser. People Pleasers are often created through childhood trauma and the need to take care of others around them in order to have their needs met (or with a hope that if they take care of other people 'enough', someone will eventually come to take care of them). When you move into adulthood, these survival tendencies that were created as a child become the norm - the way you operate automatically in the world.

People Pleasing can have lots of benefits, but many more down sides. It often comes with people relying on you, wanting to be around you, and sharing openly with you. People feel seen, heard, taken care of, and safe with People Pleasers, because their needs are prioritized. As a People Pleaser, it feels good to be needed and have people around you. The downsides of this are that these relationships often take a lot of work on the part of the People Pleaser.

Expectations may be set early on in relationships for the People Pleaser to always prioritize the other person's needs, even anticipate their needs in some cases, and always be available to the other person. These expectations mean that the People Pleaser's needs are often being suppressed or unmet, which can lead to exhaustion, burnout, and resentment.

Do You Need More Support Prioritizing Yourself?

It's hard to make meaningful change, especially when a lot of these survival behaviours were created a long time ago! Reach out to our team of trained therapists who can support you in getting out of the People Pleasing cycle and closer to the center of the Selfishness Spectrum. Your therapist can support you in making a personalized plan to dive deeper into understanding your decisions and feelings, where they came from, and how to challenge them to make healthier decisions moving forward. Learn more about our team members on our website - www.therapyuninterrupted.ca/our-team - or book your free consultation with a therapist [here](#)!