**IS SOCIAL MEDIA TURNING US INTO NARCSSISISTS**

**Male speaker**: Welcome to The Chalene Show. Chalene is a New York Times Best-Selling Author, celebrity fitness trainer and obsessed with helping you live your dream life.

**Chalene Johnson:** Thanks for joining me. My name is Chalene Johnson and you’re about to listen to The Chalene Show. But before I begin, can I just say thank you. I’m going to make it brief because I know you’ve heard it before but seriously, the reviews you guys have been writing on iTunes are hysterical and awesome and heartwarming and funny and informative because you guys are amazing. This episode of The Chalene Show is brought to you by the Marketing Impact Academy. That is an online academy specifically for those of you who have a business or are struggling to develop your business. To learn more, go to marketingimpactacademy.com.

In September of 2011, friends, supporters and fans of Trey Pennington were shocked to find out that one of the most popular social media figures, one of the early adopters of Twitter and Facebook had committed suicide. His last tweet, “Sure am thankful for online friends who are real friends offline, too. Love you.” And while there’s lots of speculation about what did happen and the turmoil that was happening as his personal life intertwined with his people online whom he believed were friends and supporters and how they got muddied and complicated and jealous and bizarre at times. And while we’ll never know for sure what really happened, what we do know is that it can be confusing. And not just for the social media person who’s gaining a lot of followers and suddenly getting a lot of attention, but we’re finding and we’re seeing that it’s potentially really dangerous for people who want to be connected, people who seem to have an inability to form deep, real relationships in “real life” and tend to believe and sometimes even fantasize that the person who they’re following in social media has become not only someone they enjoy watching but someone whom they believe is a friend, someone whom they believe they are in a relationship with. I want to get deep with this.

And it’s why I’m not recording this live on Periscope because I didn’t want to be distracted by exactly that. I find myself even, when I’m doing live streaming broadcast, thinking, I better say and so and so’s name, I just saw their comment go by in. I don’t even know this person but they’re here all the time and they support me and what if I don’t say their name and will that hurt their feelings? Will they not come back? Will they not support me? Will it ruin their day? And I’ll let their comments go by several times. And I’ll think to myself, “Oh, man, now I’m seeing that same comment. They’re pasting it over and over and over and they’re getting kind of desperate. So, do I acknowledge the comment or do I just ignore it and continue on? Or do I acknowledge somebody new who’s trying to get my attention?” And those are some of my thoughts as a broadcaster. But I’m also a viewer. I mean, just like you, I listen to people on podcast and I feel like I - I feel like I know them. I feel like I know everything about them. I know how they would respond to certain questions. I know their history, their marital situation. I know their faith. I know their sense of humor. I feel like I know them. I feel like they are a friend, especially those who not only do I listen to them on podcast but I’ve watched them on video and I’m a pretty confident, secure person in my relationships.

But as someone who’s had the ability to, I guess, you could say, I always hate to say like fame, like that sounds so weird and it sounds so narcissistic. But I’ve had the good future of being in millions of people’s homes on exercise DVDs and podcast and Facebook posts. I mean, like, my social media reaches far greater than anything I ever did in fitness. And because of that, you do tend to attract people who are considered borderline personalities and you don’t always know it. They’re the people who reach out and they’re so nice and they’re so sweet and they’re just the best supporters and they show up day after day after day in your tweeter feed and they comment regularly on your Facebook wall and they defend you. And they look up your address and send gifts to your office. And then you start to raise an eyebrow.

But, you know, other people have to and they seem so normal, but then there is this person or these types of individuals who you can just sense that it goes too far. And not only are they fans and supporters but they become obsessive, obsessive in their kind of like almost bragging that they know everything about you. And in their own minds it becomes more than just being an admirer. They really do believe that they’re in a relationship with you. And I’ve had plenty of scares. Not the kind of scares where I would like fear for my life because, I mean, let’s face it, I don’t have like guys who are like, “Oh, my god, she’s so hot, I’m going to have to kidnap her.” Like, I don’t get those kind of fans. I get a lot of female fans who tend to be very obsessive. And I don’t know if this is right or wrong but from a profiling standpoint they tend to be less dangerous, more so just obsessive.

But I have had encounters. I’ve had encounters where people have made ultimatums or threats that if I didn’t call them or if I didn’t write them or if I didn’t - while I was doing an appearance, if they would do a meet and greet and tell me what their room number was and if I didn’t go to see them to spend some time with them that night that they would know I was a bad person or, you know, just kind of bizarre threats from people who I didn’t know. And I know it’s weird sometimes when you see people at events. Like I watch reality TV and I watch The Kardshians and I know you guys hate reality TV or maybe you don’t. Maybe you love it. But I watch those shows sometimes. I see them running around with security and I use to think to myself, “Boy, they’re awfully special, aren’t they? They just think they are just so this or that because they’ve got to have a big security guy.”

Well, the big security guy isn’t necessarily to keep mobs of people away. Sometimes you need security detail just to make sure that one crazy person doesn’t do something crazy. Why take a chance? And I can tell you some pretty freaky stories. Stories that if my mom and dad heard them they would be like, “You need to go into hiding. This is very dangerous. You need to arm yourself.” Like, you know what I mean? For me it’s just like, okay, it’s someone who has a serious mental condition. And it was weird and it was uncomfortable and it was a little freaky but I didn’t fear for my life. I’ve never had somebody come to my house but I’ve had these encounters at events. And so, whenever you see me at event - most events, I will have someone there just to help. And I try to make sure I’ve got someone there who’s really good at reading people, so they can tell the difference between someone who wants to share a personal story and somebody who wants to choke me out and drag me back to their hotel room. I shouldn’t joke about that.

The purpose of this podcast is to talk about narcissism. No one would ever want to think of themselves as a narcissist. Obviously, there’s a big difference between being a narcissist and being someone who’s diagnosed as having a narcissist personality disorder, quite different. But narcissism as a trait, an overinflated ego, a belief that you’re more important than you really are, a belief that people are more interested in you than they should be other people, it’s a dangerous thing to have happen but yet by the same token, it’s kind of our goal, right? Like, my business grows the more I can get people to pay attention to what I’m doing on social media. And that’s weird, I guess. I mean, it is. Because, as I’m looking through it, some of the quizzes online today and preparation for this podcast, I was answering these questions and I’m thinking, “Well, gosh, I’m answering this as honestly as I possibly can but I kind of want to put a little asterisk by it and say, ‘But I have to because that’s how I get the word out. That’s how I make sure people know I’ve got a podcast and that’s how I can help people. But it teeters on the border sometimes.

And I just have to be like super honest right now and tell you in preparation for this podcast, I was like, “You know what, I have been guilty of some of these thoughts.: Why would I think people would find it interesting to watch a video or a live stream of me doing “fill in the blank” when I don’t want to watch that of most people? Like, 99.9 percent of the population, I don’t want to watch them cooking dinner with their spouse. I mean, there’s 0.1 percent of the population I might want to; maybe even higher than that, maybe 5%; no, no, 1 percent. Yeah, one out of every 100 people, that’s realistic, right? So, who am I to think that’s interesting to other people? And it’s forced me to reflect on how much time I spend cultivating real-life connections, my real-life friends. By real life I mean, people who I’ve spent time with. I’ve gone through something difficult in my life with them or I’ve been there when they had to go through something. And how much time in recent years I spend building these big networks, right, like, followings, if you will. I mean, there’s no other way to call it except for - it’s a shallow connection.

I just mean that they’re not deep connections. These aren’t the people who we can call in the middle of the night and say, “I need you right now.” But yet I’m going to cut myself a little slack here too and the people who came to mind for me, I thought to myself, “Well, gees, I haven’t spent much time with them because they’re kind of doing the same thing. We’re all so busy building these large networks, these connections online, that it’s difficult to find time for your true friendships, the people you can really rely upon. I believe as social media gets bigger and more persuasive and faster. And by faster I mean the connection part of it. That live streaming video, like there’s no way to deny that live streaming video expedites the process of feeling like you know someone. I believe the bigger that gets the lonelier people are going to feel, like Trey Pennington, someone who had hundreds of thousands of fans yet in his final days felt so alone. And I think it’s most dangerous for people who have a difficult time connecting with people in real life.

Ironically, the goal of social media is attention. And we can’t escape it. I mean, you’re listening to a podcast. This is a piece. This is a form of social media. It’s via social media that we expand our thoughts. We take in new knowledge. We learn about opportunities and we meet people. But in order for people to pass along a podcast or share with you a Facebook post, the end goal is to seek other people’s attention. It’s self-promotion which we just have to be aware at some point that it can really lead to a dangerous level of narcissism, which is a very dangerous weapon. And most at risk are people who have a very fragile sense of self-worth.

The usually deeply wounded, oftentimes they have things that make them feel as though they are inadequate. So by promoting themselves and putting together the right post, the right images, the right highlight reels, the right everything, they are able to promote themselves in a way that kind of puffs up their ego, kind of like a blowfish, so that you won’t notice that you could eat them. So for a lot of people it’s just a way to appear more accomplished, more successful, more worldly or more in other words. These are the people who collect the clique. They want to be worshipped as opposed to lead a group of people. They don’t want to be a part of something. They want to be the head of it. They want their minions to engage with each other and they do a lot of things to stroke their own ego even though there is a slippery slope between self-promotion and becoming un-narcissist, they’re pretty easy to spot because they rarely want you to notice anything other than them. And they will attach and be aggressive and ask all of the other minions or lifers or supporters to agree with them that this person or this tactic is bad. And they’ll spend a great deal of time making sure that everybody agrees that I’m right, everybody is clear that we’re just looking at me. They’re very rarely lifting one person up who might be able to steal their thunder. They really don’t want anyone to go above them because they habitually want to be on that pedestal. They need all of the attention. You know I love to give you either something to think about or something to do. I just want to give you something to think about, whether it’s self-reflection or taking a look at some of the people online that you feel like you’re in a relationship with.

So what are some of the most potentially dangerous signs of someone with characteristics of a narcissistic personality disorder? Number one, it’s a one-way street. They want the conversation focused on them. They usually lack empathy for other people. They’re impostors. And they’re so caught up in pretending to be something that they’re not that they get wrapped up in their own drama and they always lack the ability to see things from another person’s perspective. These types of narcissists are obsessed with rank, status, recognition, how many followers they have. It’s a boast fest and they’ll stop at nothing to get more of it. They always need to be in the limelight no matter what’s happening. These types of narcissist are incredibly defensive and hypersensitive to any opinion that varies from theirs and they’re hypersensitive and defensive about anything that feels like criticism. These people tend to protect their own self-esteem by launching into attacks on anyone who might disagree with them. They will publicly criticize them and then try to get everybody else involved just so that we can all be clear I’m right and those other people are wrong. And it’s almost like a warning like, “And don’t you dare to disagree with me either or this could happen to you.”

Narcissists tend to indulge themselves in acts of exhibitions. So that means these are the people who they tend to think everything about themselves and their lives is interesting. So they’ll just do absolutely anything, sometimes at a risk of exposing too much, you’ll hear the phrase “drop their pants” or “all press is good press” meaning, like it doesn’t matter how bad it is as long as people are talking about me, then I’ve got everyone’s attention. So they’ll open up sometimes about areas of their past or things that they have done in a way that’s not helpful or healing to others, but it’s just to grab everyone’s attention. Or they’ll engage in these histrionic battles where they pick one thing and it becomes their battle cry so that everybody can get behind it.

These types of individuals are forgiving. They have arched-enemies and they’re not going to let you forget about it. It’s all or nothing. So these are the folks who will go on twitter and battle with someone and they’ll never ever, ever forget what this person said to them.

And lastly, and this one is pretty important. The most dangerous type of narcissist doesn’t want you to look at or follow anyone else no matter how well aligned their views, their style, their personality or anything else, they just do not want you to pay attention to anyone but them. And so, they demand loyalty on the part of their fans and followers. It feels like betrayal. It feels like you’re back in fourth grade. They want everyone to declare whose team they’re on or they will “get on the bad list”. These are clearly not team players. They’re not rooting for everybody else. This is a team of one.

Dr. Linda Martinez-Lewi, she’s the author of the book High Level Narcissism, she wrote this, “The narcissist experience of emotional emptiness is beyond longing or sadness. It’s a severe and intractable wounding, a pain so savage and so deep that it seems intolerable to them. The psychological landscape of the narcissist is bleak. He has no inner resource to sustain himself. He cannot turn to himself or others for real affection or solace although he enjoys the transient loyalty of dedicated followers, there’s no one who he really feels cares about him.” Isn’t that interesting? That’s taking from a snippet of her book written in 2010.

The question is, “What do we do about it?” Well, number one, we’ve just got to be self-aware. It was a good eye-opening experience for me to go through the preparation for this podcast and look at my own behaviors and kind of put myself in check and realize some of this stuff I am doing and question myself in saying, “Why am I doing it?” I say it’s because it builds my business and it does and is that the honest answer. I truly want you to look at everyone and anyone who can make your life better. If there is someone who knows more and inspires you, that’s why I’m always introducing you to people who I get that from. So that’s my little checks and balance.

It’s about self-awareness, awareness of how you are interpreting, people following you in social media, how you are using social media to build awareness and to draw attention to others and to spread your word and to help, to serve, really, to make sure that you’re serving people. And then, I think part of that self-awareness is to be mindful of the people that you’re following and to always know that that’s a really good test like, “Is this person serving others or are they really just trying to serve themselves?”

Brett Borders wrote an article in December of 2009, “Why narcissist personality disorders love social media.” He writes, “The narcissist selectively chooses an inner circle of others who will resonate with their vision of self. The successful narcissist creates an intricate matrix of positive feedback in the form of fans, friends, followers and partners who will fulfill their endless needs. When the source of these ego-awards comments, accolades, re-tweets, et cetera, become unavailable or fail, the narcissist will experience intense feelings of emptiness, then anger, then rage. He cautions, “If you don’t need or really want anything from social media narcissist, once you’ve identified that you’re dealing with one, it’s best to be cordial and distant from them. Keep firm boundaries. Stay far away. Don’t get drawn in to their charisma. Don’t get drawn in to their charismatic web of illusion. If they attack you, don’t attack back. Recognition and awareness of this painful yet common disorder in social media can save you a lot of annoyance and grief.” Amen, amen, amen. It’s hard sometimes.

You know, we all want to be liked and accepted. We all want people to agree with us, but we have to remember it doesn’t define us. We don’t have relationships with these people. We can support them. We can get behind them. We can re-tweet them. We can share their broadcast. We can ask others to do the same for us. For me, the lesson learned in reviewing all of this and giving a lot of thought is to just always ask myself, “Does this serve me or does it serve other people?” And listen, I’m not Mother Teresa. There’s plenty of things I put out there because I’m like, “Okay, people are going to find this funny and that’s going to serve them in the form of entertainment, but it serves me too because I like it when people say, ‘this video made my day.’” It strokes my ego when someone says, “I’ve never laughed so hard or you’re the funniest person or you’re my best friend.” I love that, like, I would be so lying if I didn’t say that makes me feel good.

But ultimately, the litmus test for me and I think this is how I’m going to look at people that I follow to is to just keep asking myself, is their goal to serve, ultimately, is their goal to serve others. And if the answer is yes, then I’m going to stick around, which by the way, thanks for sticking around today. Lifers, I’m a lifer to you. I am devoted to you because together we make a difference. So until we have a chance to spend this time together again soon, I just want you to know, truly, you are the bomb dot com.

This episode has been sponsored by CourageousConfidenceClub.com. It’s a club that I have created specifically to help people who struggle with confidence and insecurities in social settings and just standing up for themselves, being yourself and feeling good about it. All of us could benefit from having more confidence. I’d love for you to just experience a taste of it. So please be my guest by going to ChaleneJohnson.com/confidencetips. Now if you don’t feel like writing that web address down or remembering to go there later, all you have to do is, while you’re listening from your phone, send me a text message. The number is 949-565-4337. And that is for US residents. Then just send me the word “confidence” and I will send you access to this video.

This video will help you to eliminate self-doubt and just feel more confident in any situation whether it’s work or personal or just your social interactions. Every one of us can benefit from having more confidence. There you’ll submit your email address and I will immediately send to your inbox my latest training video where I teach you step by step how to feel more confident in just about any social setting. I think you’ll find this incredibly useful whether it’s business or personal or just in your everyday interactions.

Confidence is something that makes life easier. It helps you to raise more confident, self-efficient children. It allows us to speak our mind, to stand up for ourselves, to do the things that otherwise we are paralyzed by fear and we just allow our own thoughts to stop us by learning how to overcome self-doubt and fear of success, you can become that confident person that others are attracted to, the person you want to be, the person you deserve to be, the person you know is inside of you. So thank you for checking out my free tools by going to ChaleneJohnson.com/confidencetips.

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