

# Celebrity obsession

Psychology



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## Celebrity Obsession

Obsession is defined as a compulsive preoccupation with an unchanging idea. Many obsess over the simplest of things such as ice cream or coffee.

While, others obsess over substantial things in life. They may include hobbies, people- usually public figures and unique possessions.

Celebrity obsession more commonly known as the Celebrity Worship Syndrome is an obsession with any person who is a public figure. This includes obsessing over television, film and sports stars, authors, journalists and politicians. This syndrome is typical of a mental state subjected to the celebrity affecting the fan consciously and subconsciously. The person's feelings get overshadowed by his thoughts and perception of a particular or a group of celebrities.

Celebrity Worship Syndrome is also defined as an addictive disorder where one is very much interested in knowing every minute detail about a celebrity's personal life. The term was first coined by James Chapman (2003) in his article "Do you worship the celebs?" in the Daily Mail. He derived this term by studying the journal paper Maltby et al. (2003) which talks about the Celebrity Worship Scale.

Psychologists from USA and UK produced a celebrity worship scale to discover the distinctive features that describe such a syndrome. According to James Houran's team, there is a high side of obsession which comprises of compassion, over identification and a strange fascination with the celebrity where as the lower levels of celebrity worship involve watching, listening to, reading and learning about celebrities, all of which form the individualistic behavior of a person. Upon conducting a research in UK, the psychologists detected three aspects of celebrity worship. They are:

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### Entertainment-social

People who fall under this aspect of celebrity worship are charmed by the celebrities who have the knack for entertainment. Such celebrities are their focus and become their immediate favorites. People involved in this dimension simply love talking about their favorite celebrities.

### Intense-personal

This category deals with the combination of intense and irrational feelings towards a celebrity. People under this category claim to feel an unexplainable attachment with their much loved celebrities and are very sensitive about them. Any harm to them is considered as harm at a personal level.

### Borderline-pathological

This group is typical of fantasizing about the celebrity one is blindly in love with. Very often, the youth worshipping their beloved celebrities are seen talking about how much they would love to go on a date with their desired superstars. People falling under this segment feel dazed under the spell of their most loved icons. Their attitude also depicts some strange out of the box wishes of being rescued by their idols at times of misery. Imagining that one receives letters from their favorite celebrity, goes for shopping with them are scenarios which suggest the signs of one suffering from the obsessive disorder.

Studies show that obsessing over celebrities is somewhat related to mental health. Maltby et al. (2001) found out that intense personal celebrity worship is a result of severe depression and anxiety. He further discovered that illness also resulted in this form of celebrity worship.

In a clinical context, Maltby et al studies examined the three above

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mentioned dimensions in relation to fantasy proneness, dissociation and ego identity . The results implied that fantasy proneness which includes hallucinations and vivid memories and dissociation which is a cause of a number of psychiatric problems due to the lack of assimilation of thoughts and feelings in the memory together form a major basis for the three discovered aspects of celebrity worship.

In spite of many holding the celebrity worship scale in high regard, there are also some who oppose it. Several questions have been raised over the reliability of data and constant changes in figures in different published studies have further triggered the questions over its validity. However, whatever the case be, celebrity obsession has always been a subject of great interest for people in general and an exciting phenomenon for researchers in particular.

#### Sources

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