Are celebrities bad for you?

Celebrities are everywhere nowadays: on TV, in magazines, online. Is this preoccupation with famous people harmless fun or is it bad for us? How many people are truly obsessed with modern media idols? And on the other side of the coin, can fame be harmful to the celebrities?

Studies suggest that the vast majority of teenagers do not really worship celebrities. Researchers have identified three kinds of fans. About 15% of young people have an 'entertainment-social' interest. They love chatting about their favourite celebrities with friends and this does not appear to do any harm.

Another 5% feel that they have an 'intense-personal' relationship with a celebrity. Sometimes they see them as their soulmate and find that they are often thinking about them, even when they don't want to. These people are more at risk from depression and anxiety. If girls in this group idolise a female star with a body they consider to be perfect, they are more likely to be unhappy with their own bodies.

That leaves 2% of young people with a 'borderline-pathological' interest. They might say, for example, they would spend several thousand pounds on a paper plate the celebrity had used, or that they would do something illegal if the celebrity asked them to. These people are in most danger of being seriously disturbed.

What about the celebrities themselves? A study in the USA tried to measure narcissism or extreme self-centredness, when feelings of worthlessness and invisibility are compensated for by turning into the opposite: excessive showing off. Researchers looked at 200 celebrities, 200 young adults with Masters in Business Administration (a group known for being narcissistic) and a nationally representative sample using the same questionnaire. As was expected, the celebrities were significantly more narcissistic than the MBAs and both groups were a lot more narcissistic than the general population.

Four kinds of celebrity were included in the sample. The most narcissistic were the ones who had become famous through reality TV shows – they scored highest on vanity and willingness to exploit other people. Next came comedians, who scored highest on exhibitionism and feelings of superiority. Then came actors, and the least narcissistic were musicians. One interesting result was that there was no connection between narcissism and the length of time the celebrity had been famous. This means that becoming famous probably did not make the celebrities narcissistic – they already were beforehand.

So, what can we learn from this? People who are very successful or famous tend to be narcissists and are liable to be ruthless, self-seeking workaholics. As we can see from celebrity magazines, they are also often desperate and lonely. They make disastrous role models.

1. Are the sentences true or false?

1. The article is about whether celebrity culture is harmful, for either the public or the celebrities themselves.

True

False

2. 15% of teenagers have an interest in celebrities that probably isn't a cause for concern.

True

False

3. Young people who feel they have an 'intense-personal' relationship with a celebrity do not experience any negative consequences related to it.

True

False

4. A study found that celebrities were more self-centred than business administration masters students.

True

False

5. Celebrities from reality TV were found to be the most vain and exploitative.

True

False

6. Actors were the least self-obsessed group of celebrities.

True

False

7. The research concluded that the experience of being a celebrity made people more narcissistic than they were previously.

True

False

8. The author says that celebrities tend to exhibit negative qualities and are therefore not good role models.

True

False

Write the correct word from the text to fill the gaps.

1.

p..... = something we think or worry about a lot (noun, paragraph 1)

2.

h..... = damaging or injurious (adjective, paragraph 1)

3.

w..... = have or show feelings of profound devotion (verb, paragraph 2)

4.

s..... = a person with whom you feel a deep affinity or connection (noun, paragraph 3)

5.

n..... = excessive interest in or admiration of oneself (noun, paragraph 5)

6.

s..... o.... = behaving in a way that is intended to attract attention (phrasal verb, paragraph 5)

7.

v..... = excessive pride or interest in your own attractiveness (noun, paragraph 6)

8.

r..... m..... = a person we look up to and want to be like (noun, paragraph 7)