



# Cynicism - The Invisible Pandemic



Dr. Tatijana Busic, PhD.  
Psychologist & Organizational Consultant

Why is cynicism the trendiest psychological fashion around? Wherever you look, cynicism prevails. Sometimes it's explicit, like, "Ivy League universities reveal longitudinal data that 9 out of 10 people suck. So don't trust them." Or it's implicit and subtle, like, "Depression is everywhere, so read my blogs, follow these steps, and we can all be happy."

Cynicism is everywhere because it sells. It is a top tool used in marketing and advertising. I think we're facing another pandemic, but this one is harder to see, and we've normalized the side effects. We are in the era of cynicism and negativity.

We don't have to look far to find stories of how horrible our world is and how bad people are. On top of this, we're doom scrolling. How many of you have caught yourself scrolling the news or Instagram before bed? Human beings are spending an excessive amount of screen time devoted to absorbing negative news. While some news sources are more legitimate than others, overall, the majority are biased toward the negative.

## Why so negative?

Well, the glamorization of pain is sexy and it sells. Everyone remembers a disturbing story. Humans have something like 150+ biases already programmed in our brains. It is impossible for a human being to be unbiased. The key is becoming aware of when your biases kick in so that you can choose how to react to them.

One of these biases is the negativity bias. It evolved a long time ago when being paranoid equated to survival. Don't eat any of the berries! We don't know which one is poisonous (the era of the hunter and the gatherer). So we're drawn to negative stories, not because we're bad, but because it soothes our biologically programmed negative bias.

Remember that emotional commander? Well, that guy is in charge of biases too! And that guy wants to soothe the emotions that kick in when paranoia is in town.... Where's the bad news to validate my feelings and confirm my belief? People are bad and the world is scary; I am going back to my cave...

We also see cynicism all around the workplace and academia. One reason is that cynicism sounds so smart. So rational. And that's because cynicism and negativity offer an explanation for, well, everything. So when we hear it, we tend to think, "OMG, that guy's so smart, so rational. He really knows what's going on and is ready for the storm." Considering that the average person has about 12-60k thoughts in one day and that we're being exposed to unprecedented amounts of data, this is going to have some pretty serious consequences on how that orchestra performs.

If we want to do more than merely survive this complex and turbulent time, it's time to pause, look inward, and own this:

You are born with the biologically-based tools to grow, adapt, and flourish. It's time to rekindle your birthright. Emotional intelligence is in all of us. But it's like going to the gym. When you first start exercising, it's painful. But with time, exposure, and repetition, your muscles become stronger and more agile. Exercising our EQ will create the foundation you need inside you to build a life worth living and a life in which our future generations will be proud of their ancestors.

Sincerely *Tatijana*