

## Personality Disorders Explained

### Personality Disorders

Note: This information was taken pre-DSM-V.

There are ten basically defined personality disorders. These are defined below in alphabetical order.

Note: The following information has been taken from The A.D.A.M. Medical Encyclopedia (2012).

#### **Antisocial Personality Disorder.**

This personality disorder is also known as sociopathic personality. Some people believe that this is the same as psychopathy, but while it is somewhat similar, it is not the same. People with antisocial personality disorder display the following symptoms:

- Be able to act witty and charming
- Be good at flattery and manipulating other people's emotions
- Break the law repeatedly
- Disregard the safety of self and others
- Have problems with substance abuse
- Lie, steal, and fight often
- Not show guilt or remorse
- Often be angry or arrogant

To be diagnosed with antisocial personality disorder, a person must have had conduct disorder during childhood. This personality disorder is one of the most difficult to treat and many who have it only attend therapy when court ordered to do so. The symptoms of this order tend to peak during the person's early adult years.

#### **Avoidant Personality Disorder.**

A person with this personality disorder has the tendency to feel very shy, sensitive to rejection, and inadequate. People with this disorder cannot stop thinking about their own inadequacies. They form relationships with other people only if they believe they will not be rejected. Because people with avoidant personality disorder or so afraid of rejection they will choose to be lonely rather than attempt the risk of trying to connect with others. People with avoidant personality disorder display the following symptoms:

- Be easily hurt when people criticize or disapprove of them
- Hold back too much intimate relationships
- Be reluctant to become involved with people
- Avoid activities or jobs that involve contact with others
- Be shy in social situations out of fear of doing something wrong

- Make potential difficulties seem worse than they are
- Hold the view they are not good socially, not as good as other people, or unappealing

Without treatment, a person with this disorder may live a life of almost complete isolation.

### **Borderline Personality Disorder.**

People with borderline personality disorder tend to have long term behavioral patterns of impulsivity. They tend to have extreme and erratic emotional patterns and chaotic relationships with others. Some of the risk factors for developing this disorder are: abandonment in childhood or adolescence, disrupted family life, poor family communication, various types of childhood abuse. This disorder tends to affect women more often than men. The symptoms of borderline personality disorder include:

- Intense fear of being abandoned
- Cannot tolerate being alone
- Frequent feelings of emptiness and boredom
- Frequent displays of inappropriate anger
- Impulsiveness, such as with substance abuse or sexual relationships
- Repeated crises and acts of self-injury,
- View people, situations, and things in terms of extremes
- Have dichotomous thinking
- Constant shifting emotions which lead to intense and unstable interpersonal relationships

This disorder is comorbid with other disorders such as depression, drug abuse, and narcissism. Symptoms can improve with psychotherapy.

### **Dependent Personality Disorder.**

A person with dependent personality disorder tends to depend excessively on other people to meet their emotional and physical needs. This disorder usually begins in childhood and is equally occurring in both men and women. The symptoms of this disorder include:

- Do not trust themselves to make own decisions
- Inability to handle separation and loss
- May suffer abuse in relationships
- Avoiding being alone
- Avoiding personal responsibility
- Becoming easily hurt by criticism or disapproval
- Becoming overly focused on fears of being abandoned

- Becoming very passive in relationships
- Feeling very upset or helpless when relationships end
- Having difficulty making decisions without support from others
- Having problems expressing disagreements with others

People with this disorder tend to also have tendencies toward alcohol and drug abuse, anxiety, depression, and be a victim of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse.

### **Histrionic Personality Disorder.**

People with histrionic personality disorder act in extremely emotional and dramatic ways which draws attention to themselves. They tend to function well and have successful social and work lives. The disorder usually becomes evident in a person by the age of early adulthood. Some characteristics of people with this disorder are as follows:

- Acting or looking overly seductive
- Being easily influenced by other people
- Being overly concerned with their looks
- Being overly dramatic and emotional
- Being overly sensitive to criticism or disapproval
- Believing that relationships are more intimate than they actually are
- Blaming failure or disappointment on others
- Constantly seeking reassurance or approval
- Having a low tolerance for frustration or delayed gratification
- Needing to be the center of attention
- Quickly changing emotions, which may seem shallow to others

The areas affected in a person with this disorder are their interpersonal and romantic relationships. They have difficulties coping with loss and failure. A common character that displays the attributes of a person with this condition is Scarlett O' Hara in *Gone with the Wind*.

### **Narcissistic Personality Disorder.**

A person who has narcissistic personality disorder has an excessive sense of self-importance, an extreme reoccupation with themselves, and a lack of empathy for others. The following list shows the characteristics of people with this condition:

- React to criticism with rage, shame, or humiliation
- Take advantage of other people to achieve his or her own goals
- Have excessive feelings of self-importance

- Exaggerate achievements and talents
- Be preoccupied with fantasies of success, power, beauty, intelligence, or ideal love
- Have unreasonable expectations of favorable treatment
- Need constant attention and admiration
- Disregard the feelings of others, and have little ability to feel empathy
- Have obsessive self-interest
- Pursue mainly selfish goals
- Problems with interpersonal relationships

### **Obsessive Compulsive Personality Disorder.**

A person with obsessive-compulsive personality disorder is a preoccupied with rules, orderliness, and control. It affects both genders, but tends to occur most often in men. Note: Obsessive Compulsive Personality Disorder is very different from Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. See below for further details on these differences. Following is a list of symptoms for this personality disorder:

- Perfectionism
- Restricted emotional expression
- Have a chronic sense of urgency
- Become upset if people interfere with their rigid routines
- Unable to express anger directly
- Over-devotion to work
- Unable to throw some things away
- Lack flexibility
- May withdraw emotionally when not in control
- Lack of generosity
- Unwilling to allow others to do things
- Preoccupied with details, rules, and lists

The person with this condition has problems with their interpersonal relationships. In some ways they fare better than others with personality disorders because their rigidity and control may prevent them from becoming alcoholics or drug abusers. Because of their isolation, anger and anxiety they may become depressed.

### **Difference between Obsessive Compulsive (OCD) Personality Disorder and OCD.**

Obsessive Compulsive Personality Disorder (OCPD) is not the same as Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD.) For one thing, people with OCD have insight and understand that they have a problem. People with OCPD are unaware that anything is wrong with them. People with OCD tend to have unrealistic obsessions while those with OCPD have obsessions with daily tasks. People with OCD suffer in many areas of their lives with their condition; however, people with OCPD tend to be very efficient workers and tend to have troubles within their interpersonal relationships (International OCD Foundation, 2010).

### **Paranoid Personality Disorder.**

This mental health condition involves a long term pattern of distrust and suspicion of others, yet it does not have the full-blown psychotic features of schizophrenia. This condition is more common in men than women. Common symptoms are:

- Distrust of others
- Severely limited social lives
- Often believe they are in danger and find evidence to support this
- Concern that other people have hidden motives
- Expectation that they will be exploited (used) by others
- Inability to work together with others
- Social isolation
- Detachment
- Hostility

Because people with this condition are so suspicious of others it is hard for them to make friends or seek treatment. They also have many problems at school or work.

### **Schizoid Personality Disorder.**

A person with schizoid personality disorder has a lifelong pattern of indifference to others and tends to be socially isolated. This disorder may be related to schizophrenia and has similar risk factors, however, it is not as disabling as schizophrenia and there are no symptoms of hallucinations or delusions with this disorder. Symptoms include:

- Appears aloof and detached
- Avoids social activities that involve emotional intimacy with other people
- Does not want or enjoy close relationships, even with family members

People with this disorder do not seek treatment. It has been found that the best way to cope with people with this disorder is to put few interpersonal demands on them. They tend to function best in relationships that focus on work or intellectual activities and expectations.

### **Schizotypal Personality Disorder.**

A person with schizotypal personality disorder is a mental health condition involving a person who has disturbed thought patterns, appearance, and behavior. Schizotypal personality disorder is not schizophrenia. While people with schizotypal personality disorder do have odd beliefs and behaviors, they do not have the psychotic symptoms of schizophrenia, such as hallucinations or paranoid delusions. People with this disorder tend to cling to their beliefs to the point that their personal relationships are damaged. Symptoms of this disorder include:

- Uncomfortable being in social situations
- Have inappropriate displays of emotions
- Have no close friends
- Have odd behaviors, appearance, beliefs, speech, and preoccupations

#### Reference

A.D.A.M. Medical Encyclopedia. ( 2012). *US National Library of Medicine*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0001919/>