



The Personality Disorders

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Have you ever met someone who seems to have thinking patterns that are distorted, emotional responses that are problematic, lack of impulse control and interpersonal difficulties? Although it is important not to try to diagnose this person, it is a good idea to know that there are ten different personality disorders and it is not uncommon for someone to have more than one of them.

Cluster A personality disorders are described as "odd, eccentric" and include:

Paranoid - This person has a great deal of suspiciousness and distrusts others. Because of their fear of being harmed, they try to protect themselves by avoiding people and can be hostile in their efforts to remain at a distance. They can be jealous, hold grudges and tend not to confide in others because of their distrust.

Schizoid - This person can be described as a "loner" who prefers to be alone. They have a limited emotional range of expression and therefore do not pick up or return basic social cues. Although this personality disorder is rather rare, the person who experiences it has little pleasure in life and tends to present as detached from social experiences.

Schizotypal - Like the Schizoid personality disorder, this person experiences social and interpersonal limitations. They also, however, have cognitive distortions and eccentric behaviours that can include odd or superstitious beliefs, thinking they can read the thoughts of others, or seeing things that are not there.

Cluster B personality disorders are described as "dramatic, emotional and erratic" and include:

Antisocial - This disorder disregards the rights of others and can be evidenced in hostility, manipulation or lying as well as hostility and aggression. Often this person destroys property, hurts others and takes risks that lead to incarceration.

Histrionic - These are the individuals we know as "drama queens". They want to be the center of attention and are depressed when this isn't the case. They tend to use excessive emotion and attention-seeking behaviours often thinking that their relationships are more intimate than is actually the case.

Narcissistic - These people have a sense of entitlement and a problem with their sense of self-worth. They have a need to be powerful, successful and of a superior status using manipulation to achieve this. Black and white thinking about self and others leads them to think of people as "all good" or "all bad".

Borderline - Intense and unstable moods and emotions can change very quickly with this personality disorder. Poor impulse regulation can lead the person to choose substance abuse, risky sexual encounters, binge eating, or self-harming behaviours as short-term methods of soothing themselves.

Cluster C personality disorders described as "anxious and fearful" and include:

Avoidant - This personality disorder is characterized by a pervasive pattern of social inhibition, feelings of inadequacy, and a hypersensitivity to negative evaluation. The

individuals are afraid of ridicule, criticism and rejection so they stay away from social situations believing that they are not good enough and that people don't like them.

Dependent - This person has a desperate need to be taken care of by others and can be quite "clingy". They are easily manipulated or abused by others because they feel that they need constant support and therefore do not want to lose relationships

Obsessive-Compulsive - Rules, regulations and orderliness dominate this person's thought life. These are the "perfectionists" who are desperate for control and therefore often appear as being rigid and inflexible. They choose behaviours that do not always make sense in an attempt to reduce the intense anxiety that they are feeling.