

Facts

There are ten different types of personality disorders. The most well-known is Borderline Personality Disorder. Personality disorders usually begin when people are teenagers or young adults and remain throughout life.

Personality disorders are chronic, enduring patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving that affect a person's ability to function in everyday activities, especially work, family, and social life. There are biological and psychological parts to most personality disorders. The preferred treatment is psychotherapy, although medication may be needed to treat serious symptoms.

The ten personality disorders are sometimes grouped into three clusters based on similarities. One cluster includes the Paranoid, Schizoid, and Schizotypal Personality Disorders. People with these disorders often appear odd or eccentric. The second cluster includes the Antisocial, Borderline, Histrionic, and Narcissistic Personality Disorders. Individuals with these disorders often appear dramatic, emotional or erratic. The third cluster includes the Avoidant, Dependent, and Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorders. People with these disorders often appear anxious or fearful.

It is believed that personality disorders may affect 1-3% of the general population.

Signs & Symptoms

Each of the ten personality disorders has its own set of signs and symptoms, but, in general, a person with a personality disorder has a deeply rooted, inflexible pattern of thinking, relating, and perceiving and has great difficulty dealing with other people. Often a person with a personality disorder has a narrow view of the world, and finds it difficult to participate in social activities. An individual with a personality disorder often sees nothing wrong with his or her behavior.

Personality disorders are most common

during times of increased stress and interpersonal difficulties in one's life.

Causes

Research has not narrowed down the cause to any one factor, but adoption and twin studies indicate that both genetic and environmental factors contribute to the risk of the disorders.

Treatment

Personality disorders are difficult to treat because they are, by definition, an important part of what defines an individual and how he or she views him or herself.

The preferred treatment is psychotherapy, although medication may be needed to treat serious symptoms.

Treatment is often focused on short-term symptom relief, the reinforcement of existing coping mechanisms, and the teaching of new ones. Examination of the person's current support system can also be beneficial.

Individual, group, or family psychotherapy may be aimed at helping the person see the underlying conflicts that contribute to or cause their symptoms, or help the person become more flexible and better able to see the effects of their behavior on others.

Therapy also helps the person to cope more effectively with the disorder by teaching them to take better control of their lives, their emotions, and themselves through self-knowledge, emotional regulation, and learning how to appropriately express emotions to important people in their lives. Insight-oriented therapies enable people to see what prompts their behavior and learn how to become more independent, assertive, and self-reliant.

Serving people in Crawford, Grand Traverse, Leelanau, Missaukee, Roscommon and Wexford Counties.

Helping Someone Else

If you are a friend or family member of a person with a personality disorder it is important to recognize that people who suffer from these disorders often have noticeable symptoms of them throughout their lives.

One way you can help is to learn as much as possible about the particular disorder.

Understanding can help you cope, while obtaining information can help you learn methods to interact with the person in a helpful way. Take things slowly, step by step. The speed of progress is not as important as the direction.

Sources:

Diagnostic Statistical Manual, 4th Edition (DSM-IV)

American Psychiatric Association

Mental Health Net

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill

National Mental Health Association

For more information contact

Northern Lakes Community Mental Health
1-800-492-5742
(231) 922-4850

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill
www.nami.org, (800) 950-6264

National Institute of Mental Health
www.nimh.nih.gov
(800) 421-4211 (depression info)
(888) 826-9438 (anxiety info)
(301) 443-4513 (other info)

National Mental Health Association
www.nmha.org
(800) 969-6642

The Center for Mental Health Services
www.mentalhealth.org/cmhs/