

Personality Disorders

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Personality disorders originate when the young child's need for love gets ignored for so long that it goes underground. It becomes unconscious. The child splits into two personalities—one is no longer conscious of the need for love and the child gets on with his or her life. The other personality, the one that is unconscious, remains dormant for awhile and then reaches out for love through projection. A person who splits has a personality disorder—two personalities fighting for control of the conscious mind.

What Causes Personality Disorders?

Research suggests that genetics, abuse and other factors contribute to the development of obsessive-compulsive, narcissistic or other personality disorders.

One study found a link between the number and type of childhood traumas and the development of personality disorders. People with borderline personality disorder, for example, had especially high rates of childhood sexual trauma.

Verbal abuse: Even verbal abuse can have an impact. In a study of 793 mothers and children, researchers asked mothers if they had screamed at their children, told them they didn't love them or threatened to send them away. Children who had experienced such verbal abuse were three times as likely as other children to have borderline, narcissistic, obsessive-compulsive or paranoid personality disorders in adulthood.

Hyper-Sensitivity: Overly sensitive children, who have what researchers call “high reactivity,” are more likely to develop shy, timid or anxious personalities. However, high reactivity’s role is still far from clear-cut. Twenty percent of infants are highly reactive, but less than 10 percent go on to develop social phobias.

Personal Journey

When I was four years old, my mother went into a mental hospital and I was sent to stay with my grandmother. I will spare you the details, but she abused me. As a result, I split into two personalities. One was codependent and the other was angry. I was later diagnosed with borderline personality disorder.

To this day, I still get defensive and lash out at people and then beg them for forgiveness. This is the “shortcoming” that I am working on in recovery.

Personality disorders are hard to treat, but what helps is self-awareness followed by a real effort to change.

Changing

1. Identify what needs to be changed.
2. Write about it in something like a fourth step inventory. List the things that trigger your other personality and signs that the split is coming.
3. Announce what has to be changed to people you can trust. (Therapist or peer support group.)

4. Observe yourself in the midst of acting out.
5. Make a decision to stop.
6. Keep trying until you are successful.
7. Become a whole new person with one personality.