

DISSOCIATIVE Disorder



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DISSOCIATIVE DISORDER

Dissociative disorders are characterised by an involuntary escape from reality characterised by a disconnection between thoughts, identity, consciousness and memory.

SYMPTOMS

The symptoms of a dissociative disorder usually first develop as a response to a traumatic event, such as abuse or military combat, to keep those memories under control. Stressful situations can worsen symptoms and cause problems with functioning in everyday activities. However, the symptoms a person experiences will depend on the type of dissociative disorder that a person has.

- Significant memory loss of specific times, people and events
- Out-of-body experiences, such as feeling as though you are watching a movie of yourself
- Mental health problems such as depression, anxiety and thoughts of suicide
- A sense of detachment from your emotions, or emotional numbness
- A lack of a sense of self-identity

TYPES OF DISSOCIATIVE DISORDER

- Dissociative Amnesia
- Depersonalisation disorder
- Dissociative identity disorder (DID)

Dissociative Amnesia

The main symptom is difficulty remembering important information about one's self. Dissociative amnesia may surround a particular event, such as combat or abuse, or more rarely, information about identity and life history. The onset for an amnesic episode is usually sudden, and an episode can last minutes, hours, days, or, rarely, months or years. There is no average for age onset or percentage, and a person may experience multiple episodes throughout her life.

Depersonalisation disorder

This disorder involves ongoing feelings of detachment from actions, feelings, thoughts and sensations as if they are watching a movie (depersonalisation). Sometimes other people and things may feel like people and things in the world around them are unreal (derealisation). A person may experience depersonalisation, derealisation or both. Symptoms can last just a matter of moments or return at times over the years. The average onset age is 16, although depersonalisation episodes can start anywhere from early to mid childhood. Less than 20% of people with this disorder start experiencing episodes after the age of 20.

Dissociative identity disorder (DID)

Formerly known as multiple personality disorder, this disorder is characterised by alternating between multiple identities. A person may feel like one or more voices are trying to take control in their head. Often these identities may have unique names, characteristics, mannerisms and voices. People with DID will experience gaps in memory of every day events, personal information and trauma. Women are more likely to be diagnosed, as they more frequently present with acute dissociative symptoms. Men are more likely to deny symptoms and trauma histories, and commonly exhibit more violent behaviour, rather than amnesia or fugue states. This can lead to elevated false negative diagnosis.