

# PERSONALITY DISORDERS: An Overview

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## Definition of Personality:

- Totality of emotional and behavioral traits that characterize the person in day-to-day living
- Relatively stable and predictable
- Synonymous with **Character**

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## Definition of Personality:

- Way in which people perceive and relate to themselves and the outside world
- Interpersonal relatedness
- Ability to deal with conflict, success, stress
- Adaptability

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## Common Personality Terms:

- Self-centered
- Type A
- Anal-retentive
- Shy
- Outgoing
- Loner
- Arrogant
- Eccentric
- Introverted/Extroverted

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## Definition of Personality Disorder:

*From DSM-IV:*

A Personality Disorder is an **enduring** pattern of inner experience and behavior that deviates markedly from the expectations of the individual's culture, is pervasive and inflexible...and leads to distress or impairment

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## Personality Disorder:

- A variant of "normal" character traits that goes beyond the range found in most people
- Inflexible and Maladaptive
- Causes either functional impairment or subjective distress

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- Patients with personality disorders show deeply ingrained, inflexible, and maladaptive patterns of relating to and perceiving both the environment and themselves

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### Axis I vs. Axis II:

- All of the identified mental disorders are listed on **Axis I**, with the exception of Personality Disorders and Mental Retardation.
- **Axis II distinction:** To ensure that the presence of PD or MR not be overlooked when attention is being paid to "the usually more florid Axis I disorders."

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### PD Classification:

- 10 formal diagnoses + PD NOS
- Grouped into **Clusters**
- In practice, don't often see "pure" PD
- Combinations of features much more common

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## Clusters

- **CLUSTER A:** Odd-eccentric
- **CLUSTER B:** Dramatic-emotional
- **CLUSTER C:** Anxious-fearful

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## CLUSTER A

- **Paranoid PD:** Pattern of distrust and suspiciousness of others
- **Schizoid PD:** Pattern of detachment from social relationships, restricted range of emotional expression
- **Schizotypal PD:** Pattern of eccentricities of behavior, discomfort in close social relationships

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## CLUSTER B

- **Antisocial PD:** Pattern of disregard for, and violation of, the rights of others
- **Borderline PD:** Pattern of instability in interpersonal relationships, self-image, and affect, and marked impulsivity
- **Histrionic PD:** Pattern of excessive emotionality and attention-seeking
- **Narcissistic PD:** Pattern of grandiosity, need for admiration, and lack of empathy

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## CLUSTER C

- **Avoidant PD:** Pattern of social inhibition, feelings of inadequacy, and hypersensitivity to negative evaluation
- **Dependent PD:** Pattern of submissive and clinging behavior related to an excessive need to be taken care of
- **Obsessive-Compulsive PD:** Pattern of preoccupation with orderliness, perfectionism, and control

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## Paranoid PD

- Suspects that others are exploiting, harming or deceiving him/her
- Preoccupied with unjustified doubts about the loyalty or trustworthiness of others
- Reluctant to confide in others
- Reads hidden meaning into benign remarks or events
- Persistently bears grudges and is unforgiving
- Incorrectly perceives attacks on his/her character or reputation
- Recurrent suspicions, without justification, regarding fidelity of sexual partner

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## Schizoid PD

- Neither desires nor enjoys close relationships, including being part of a family
- Chooses solitary activities
- Little interest in having sexual experiences with another person
- Takes pleasure in few, if any, activities
- Lacks close friends or confidants
- Appears indifferent to praise or criticism of others
- Shows emotional coldness, detachment, or flattened affect

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## Schizotypal PD

- Odd beliefs or magical thinking
- Odd thinking and speech
- Inappropriate or constricted affect
- Odd/eccentric behavior or appearance
- Lack of close friends or confidants
- Excessive social anxiety that does not diminish with familiarity
- Ideas of reference
- Unusual perceptual experiences
- Suspiciousness

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## Antisocial PD

- Failure to conform to lawful behavior
- Deceitfulness, including lying and conning
- Impulsivity, failure to plan ahead
- Irritability and aggressiveness, repeated physical fights
- Reckless disregard for the safety of self or others
- Consistent irresponsibility – failure to hold job
- Lack of remorse – pattern of rationalizing harmful behavior

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## Borderline PD

- Pattern of unstable and intense interpersonal relationships
- Frantic efforts to avoid real or imagined abandonment
- Identity disturbance, unstable self-image
- Impulsivity of sex, driving, spending, binge eating, ...
- Recurrent suicidal or self-mutilating behavior
- Affective instability
- Inappropriate, intense anger or difficulty controlling anger
- Chronic feelings of emptiness
- Transient dissociative episodes

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## Histrionic PD

- Uncomfortable in situations where he/she is not center of attention
- Interactions often inappropriately seductive or provocative
- Displays rapidly shifting and shallow expressions of emotions
- Consistently uses physical appearance to draw attention to self
- Style of speech often impressionistic or lacking detail
- Shows self-dramatization, theatricality, and exaggerated expression of emotion
- Is suggestible – easily influenced by others or circumstances
- Considers relationships to be more intimate than they actually are

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## Narcissistic PD

- Grandiose sense of self-importance
- Preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, power, beauty, etc.
- Believes he/she is "special" and should associate with others of high status
- Requires excessive admiration
- Has sense of entitlement
- Interpersonally exploitative – takes advantage of others
- Lacks empathy
- Often envious of others
- Shows arrogant, haughty behaviors or attitudes

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## Avoidant PD

- Avoids activities that involve significant interpersonal contact because of fears of criticism
- Unwilling to get involved with people unless certain of being liked
- Shows restraint within intimate relationships because of fear of being shamed/ridiculed
- Inhibited in new interpersonal situations because of feelings of inadequacy
- Views self as socially inept, unappealing, inferior
- Unusually reluctant to take personal risks or engage in new activities for fear of embarrassment

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## Dependent PD

- Difficulty making everyday decisions without excessive advice/reassurance
- Needs others to assume responsibility for most major areas of his/her life
- Difficulty expressing disagreement with others
- Difficulty initiating projects or doing things independently because of lack of confidence
- Goes to excessive lengths to obtain nurturance and support of others (often to the point of volunteering to do unpleasant things)
- Feels uncomfortable or helpless when alone (fears being unable to take care of himself/herself)
- Urgently seeks another relationship as source of support after one ends
- Preoccupied with fears of being left alone to take care of self

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## Obsessive-Compulsive PD

- Preoccupied with details, rules, lists, order, and schedules, to the extent that the major point of the activity is lost
- Shows perfectionism – interferes with task completion
- Excessively devoted to work and productivity to the exclusion of leisure/friendships
- Overconscientious and inflexible about matters of morality, ethics, or values
- Reluctant to delegate tasks or work with others unless they submit to exacting standards
- Unable to discard worn-out, worthless objects, even if no sentimental value
- Adopts a miserly spending style toward both self and others
- Shows rigidity and stubbornness

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