

Depersonalization disorder is a psychiatric disorder affecting emotions and behavior. It is characterized by an alteration in how an affected individual perceives or experiences his or her unique sense of self. The usual sense of one's own reality is temporarily lost or changed. A feeling of detachment from, or being an outside observer of, one's mental processes or body occurs such as the sensation of being in a dream. The exact cause of depersonalization disorder is not known. A traumatic event such as military combat, a car accident, or being a victim of a violent crime may trigger an episode of depersonalization disorder. Substance use may cause depersonalization episodes, but not the disorder. Depersonalization disorder is believed to affect women twice as much as men. The disorder most commonly affects individuals between the ages of 15 and 30. It is rarely seen in those over the age of 40. The diagnosis of depersonalization disorder can be suspected after a complete physical examination and laboratory tests have ruled out any substance or general medical condition. A complete psychiatric evaluation should also be conducted.