

What is a Personality Disorder?

Those who struggle with a personality disorder have great difficulty dealing with other people. They tend to be inflexible, rigid, and unable to respond to the changes and demands of life. Although they feel that their behavior patterns are “normal” or “right,” people with personality disorders tend to have a narrow view of the world and find it difficult to participate in social activities.

There are many formally identified personality disorders, each with their own set of behaviors and symptoms. Many of these fall into three different categories or clusters.

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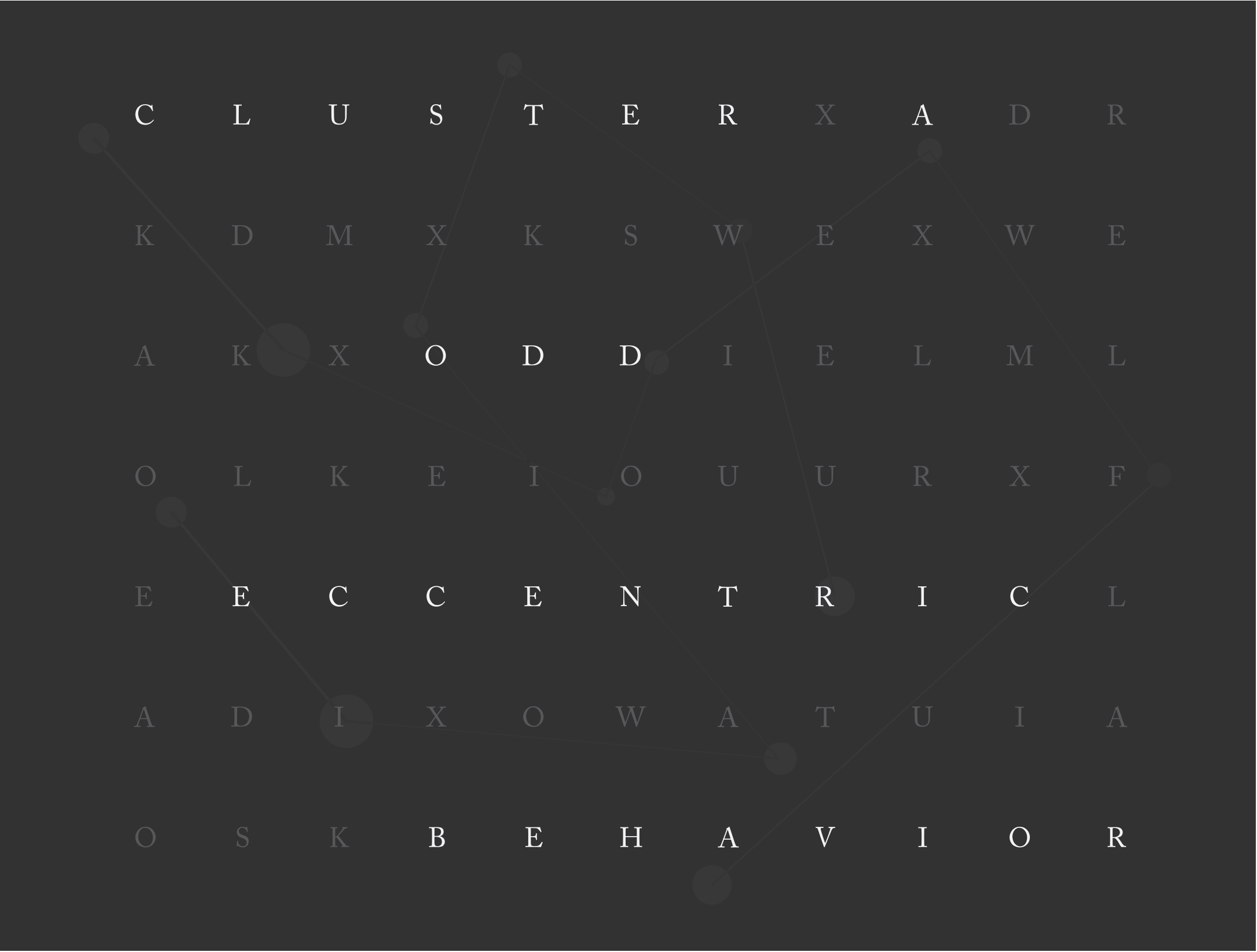
CLUSTER A
ODD, ECCENTRIC BEHAVIOR
Paranoid, Schizotypal, Schizoid

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CLUSTER B
DRAMATIC, EMOTIONAL, OR ERRATIC BEHAVIOR
Antisocial, Narcissistic, Borderline

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CLUSTER C
ANXIOUS, FEARFUL BEHAVIOR
Dependent, Obsessive-Compulsive, Avoidant



PARANOID
PERSONALITY
DISORDER

Common
Characteristics

Untrusting
Unforgiving
Guarded
Serious

People with paranoid personality disorder are generally characterized by having a long-standing pattern of pervasive distrust and suspiciousness of others. A person with paranoid personality disorder will nearly always believe that other people’s motives are suspect or even malevolent.

Individuals with this disorder assume that other people will exploit, harm, or deceive them, even if no evidence exists to support this expectation. While it is fairly normal for everyone to have some degree of paranoia about certain situations in their lives, people with paranoid personality disorder take this to an extreme — it pervades virtually every professional and personal relationship they have.

T R U S T

Because they are hypervigilant for potential threats, they may act in a guarded, secretive, or devious manner and appear to be “cold” and lacking in tender feelings. Their combative and suspicious nature may elicit a hostile response in others, which then serves to confirm their original expectations.

As individuals with Paranoid Personality Disorder lack trust in others, they have an excessive need to be self-sufficient and a strong sense of autonomy. They also need to have a high degree of control over those around them. They are often rigid, critical of others, and unable to collaborate, and they have great difficulty accepting criticism.

SCHIZOTYPAL PERSONALITY DISORDER

Common
Characteristics

Odd manners
Strange beliefs
Anxious

Schizotypal personality disorder is characterized by someone who has

GREAT
DIFFICULTY

in establishing and maintaining close relationships with others. A person with schizotypal personality disorder may have

extreme discomfort

with such relationships, and therefore have less of a capacity for them. Someone with this disorder usually has

*cognitive or
perceptual distortions*

as well as

eccentricities

in their everyday behavior.

Individuals with Schizotypal Personality Disorder often have ideas of reference (e.g., they have

incorrect interpretations

of casual incidents and external events as having a particular and unusual meaning specifically for the person). People with this disorder may be unusually superstitious or preoccupied with

para -
normal
phe -
nomena

that are outside the norms of their subculture.

SCHIZOID
PERSONALITY
DISORDER

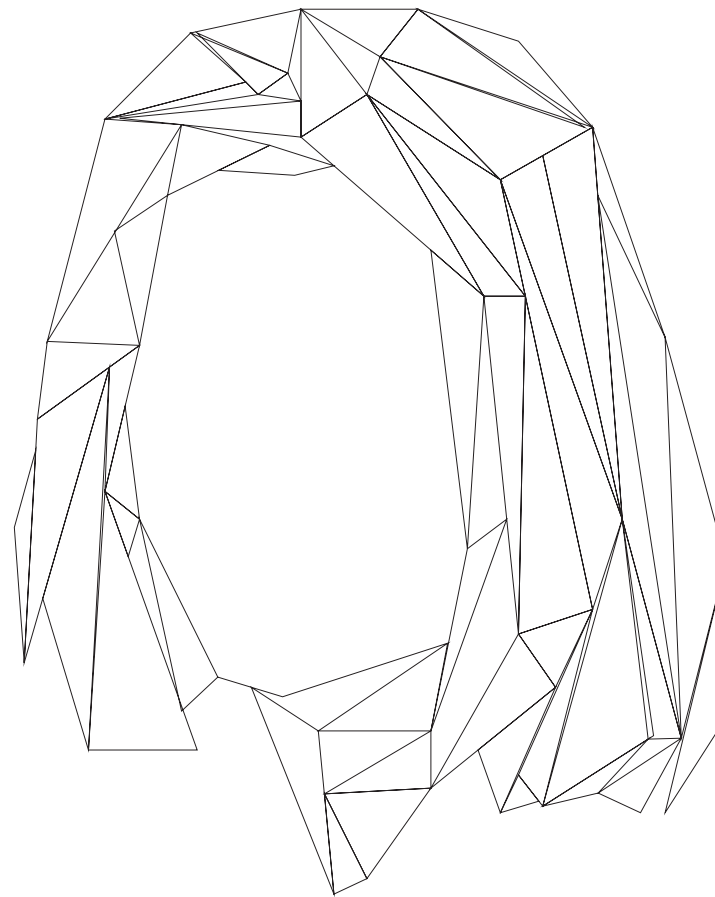
Common
Characteristics

Introverted
Withdrawn
Solitary
Cold
Distant

Schizoid personalities are introverted, withdrawn, solitary, emotionally cold, and distant. They are often absorbed with their own thoughts and feelings and are fearful of closeness and intimacy with others.

Individuals with Schizoid Personality Disorder may have particular difficulty expressing anger, even in response to direct provocation, which contributes to the impression that they lack emotion. Their lives sometimes seem directionless, and they may appear to “drift” in their goals. Such individuals often react passively to adverse circumstances and have difficulty responding appropriately to important life events.

Because of their lack of social skills and lack of desire for sexual experiences, individuals with this disorder have few friendships, date infrequently, and often do not marry. Employment or work functioning may be impaired, particularly if interpersonal involvement is required, but individuals with this disorder may do well when they work under conditions of social isolation.







ANTISOCIAL PERSONALITY DISORDER

Common Characteristics

Impulsive
Irresponsible
Callous

Antisocial personality disorder is characterized by a long-standing pattern of a disregard for other people's rights, often crossing the line and violating those rights. It usually begins in childhood or as a teen and continues into their adult lives.

Antisocial personality disorder is often referred to as psychopathy or sociopathy in popular culture. However, neither psychopathy nor sociopathy are recognized professional labels used for diagnosis.

Individuals with Antisocial Personality Disorder frequently lack empathy and tend to be callous, cynical, and contemptuous of the feelings, rights, and sufferings of others. They may have an inflated and arrogant self-appraisal (e.g., feel that ordinary work is

beneath them or lack a realistic concern about their current problems or their future) and may be excessively opinionated, self-assured, or cocky. They may display a glib, superficial charm and can be quite voluble and verbally facile (e.g., using technical terms or jargon that might impress someone who is unfamiliar with the topic).

Lack of empathy, inflated self-appraisal, and superficial charm are features that have been commonly included in traditional conceptions of psychopathy and may be particularly distinguishing of Antisocial Personality Disorder in prison or forensic settings where criminal, delinquent, or aggressive acts are likely to be nonspecific. These individuals may also be irresponsible and exploitative in their sexual relationships.

NARCISSISTIC PERSONALITY DISORDER

Common
Characteristics

Lack of empathy
Self-absorbed
Attention-seeking

self

Narcissistic Personality Disorder is characterized by a long-standing pattern of grandiosity (either in fantasy or actual behavior), an overwhelming need for admiration, and usually a complete lack of empathy toward others. People with this disorder often believe they are of primary importance in everybody's life or to anyone they meet.

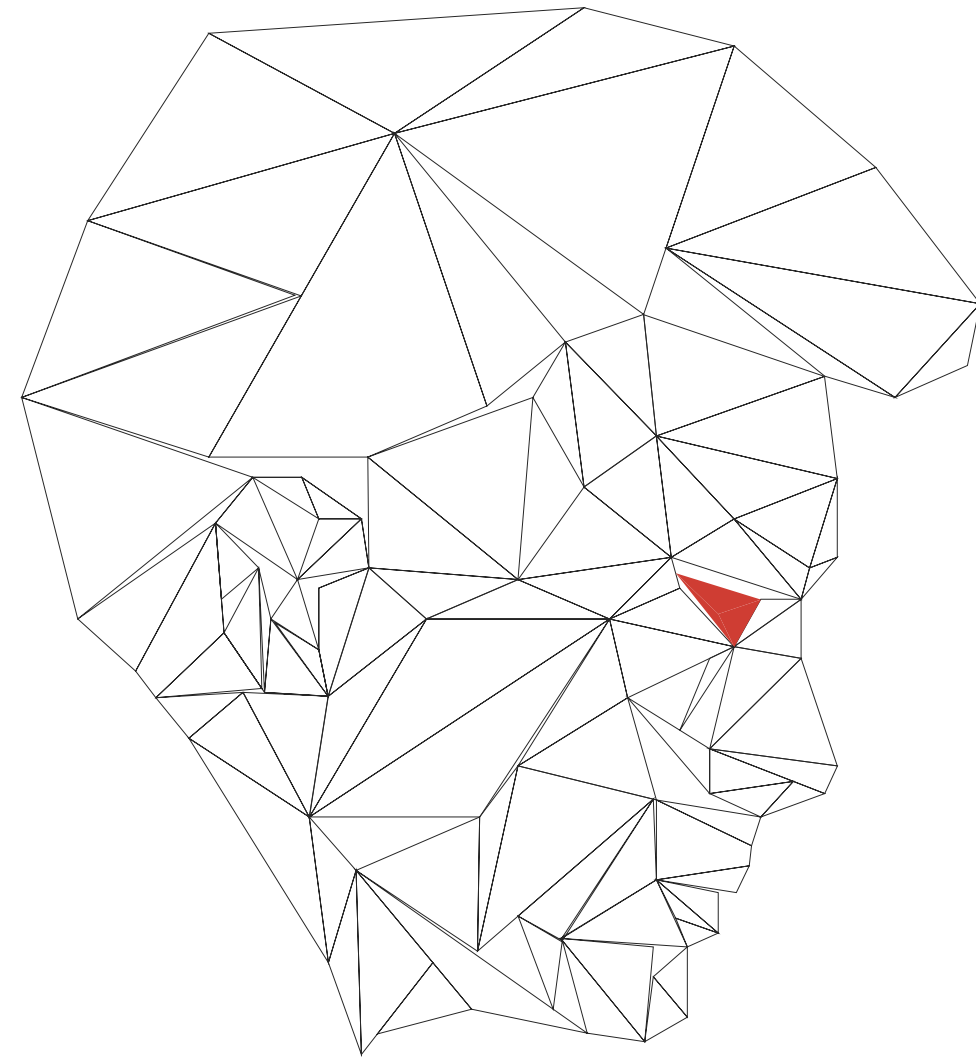
People with narcissistic personality disorder display snobbish, disdainful, or patronizing attitudes.

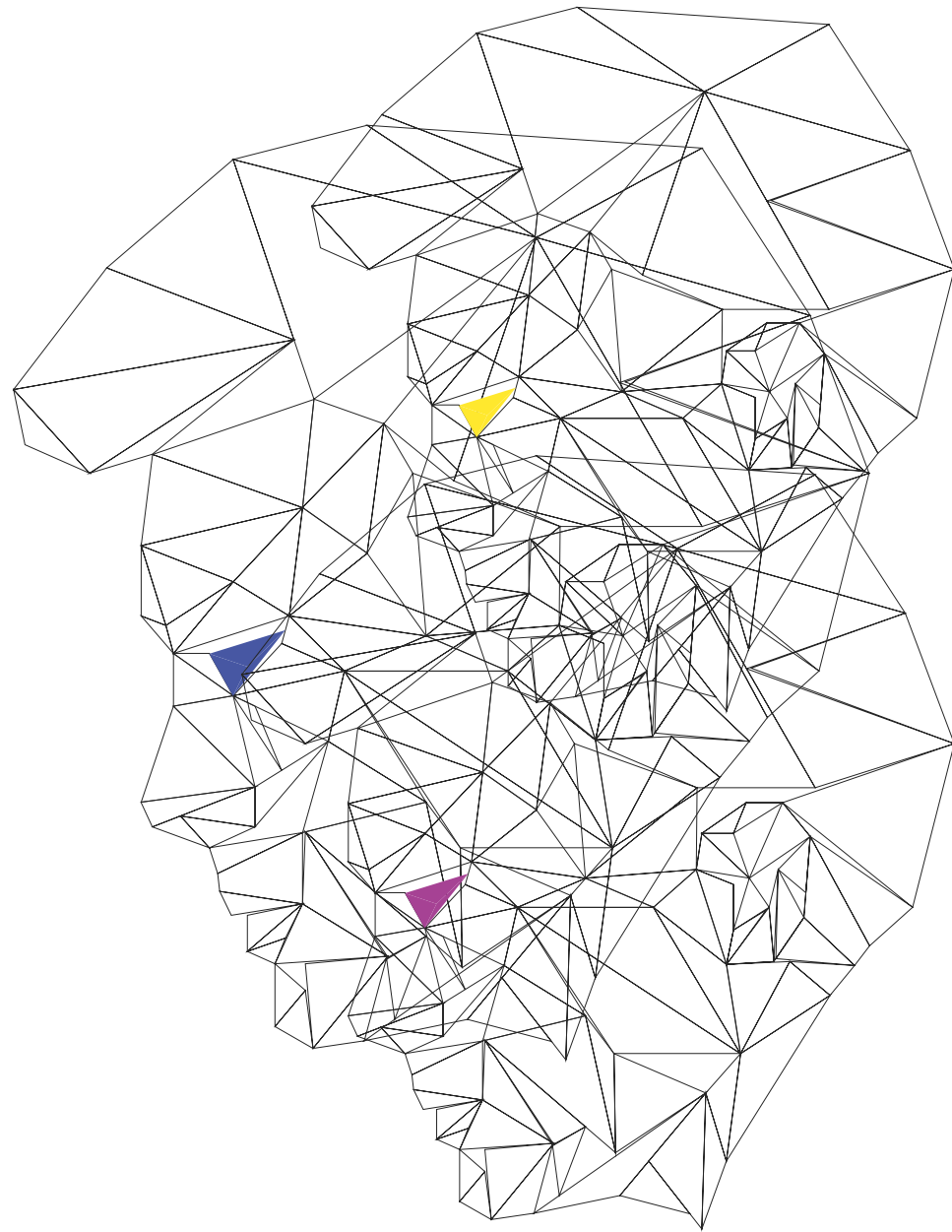
BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER

Common Characteristics: *Risk-seeking. Impulsive. Unstable self-image and emotions.*

The main feature of borderline personality disorder (BPD) is a pervasive pattern of instability in interpersonal relationships, self-image and emotions. People with borderline personality disorder are also usually very impulsive, oftentimes demonstrating self-injurious behaviors (risky sexual behaviors, cutting, suicide attempts).

Borderline personality disorder occurs in most by early adulthood. The unstable pattern of interacting with others has persisted for years and is usually closely related to the person's self-image and early social interactions. The pattern is present in a variety of settings (e.g., not just at work or home) and often is accompanied by a similar lability (fluctuating back and forth, sometimes in a quick manner) in a person's emotions and feelings.





These individuals are very sensitive to environmental circumstances. The perception of impending separation or rejection, or the loss of external structure, can lead to profound changes in self-image, affect, cognition, and behavior. They experience intense abandonment fears and inappropriate anger, even when faced with a realistic time-limited separation or when there are unavoidable changes in plans (e.g., sudden despair in reaction to a clinician's announcing the end of the hour; panic or fury when someone important to them is just a few minutes late or must cancel an appointment). They may believe that this "abandonment" implies they are "bad." These abandonment fears are related to an intolerance of being alone and a need to have other people with them. Relationships and the person's emotions may sometimes be seen by others or characterized as being shallow.

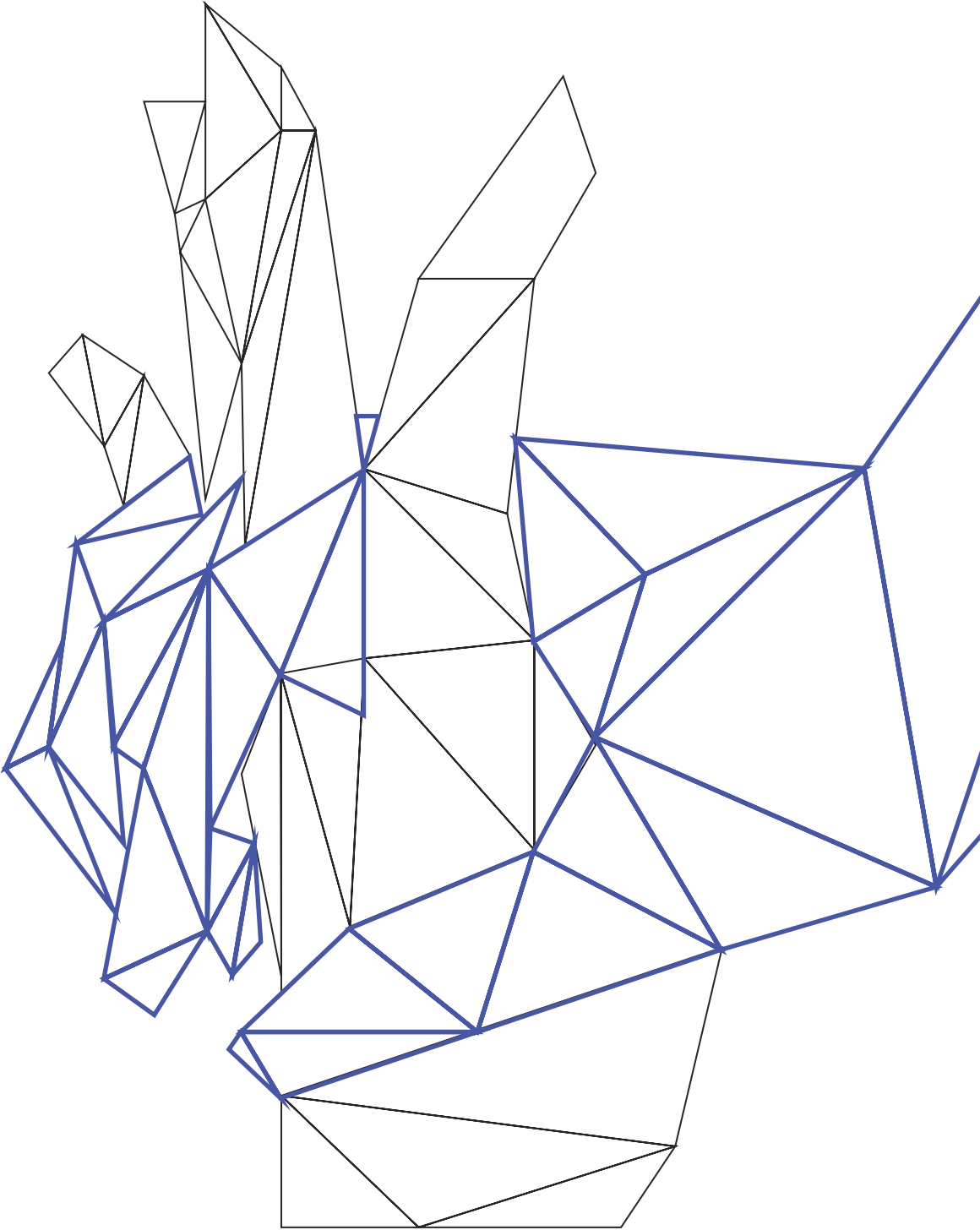
C L U S T E R C

A N X I O U S

F E A R F U L

B E H A V I O R







DEPENDENT PERSONALITY DISORDER

Common Characteristics: *Submissive. Helpless. Fear of rejection.*

Dependent personality disorder is characterized by a long-standing need for the person to be taken care of and a fear of being abandoned or separated from important individuals in his or her life. This leads the person to engage in dependent and submissive behaviors that are designed to elicit care-giving behaviors in others. The dependent behavior may be seen as being “clingy” or “clinging on” to others, because the person fears they can’t live their lives without the help of others.

Individuals with Dependent Personality Disorder are often characterized by pessimism and self-doubt, tend to belittle their abilities and assets, and may constantly refer to

themselves as “stupid.” They take criticism and disapproval as proof of their worthlessness and lose faith in themselves. They may seek overprotection and dominance from others. Occupational functioning may be impaired if independent initiative is required. They may avoid positions of responsibility and become anxious when faced with decisions. Social relations tend to be limited to those few people on whom the individual is dependent.

Chronic physical illness or Separation Anxiety Disorder in childhood or adolescence may predispose an individual to the development of dependent personality disorder.

OBSESSIVE -
COMPULSIVE
PERSONALITY
DISORDER

Common
Characteristics

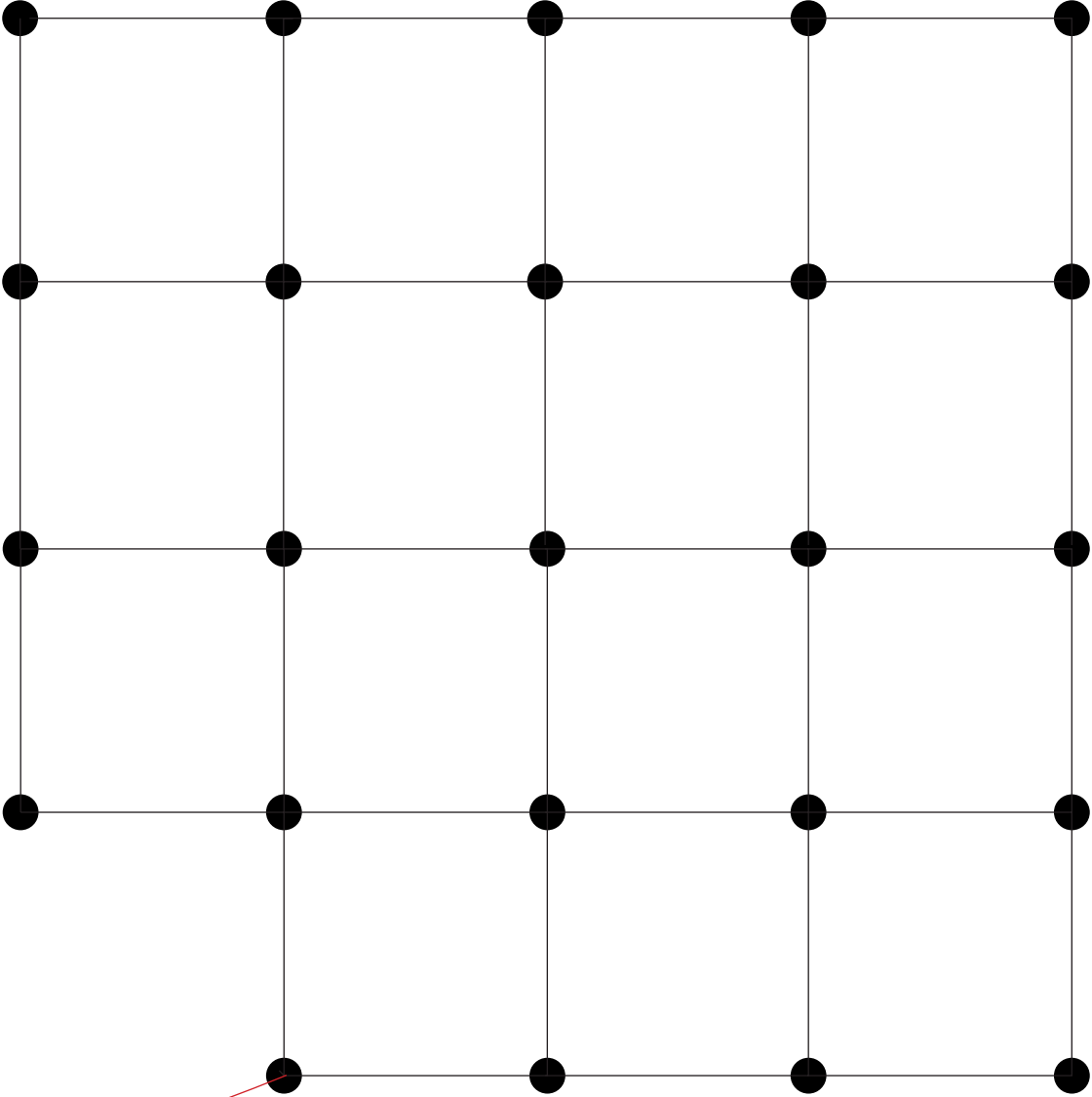
Reliable
Dependable
Orderly
Cautious

Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder is characterized by a preoccupation with orderliness, perfectionism, and mental and interpersonal control, at the expense of flexibility, openness, and efficiency.

When rules and established procedures do not dictate the correct answer, decision making may become a time-consuming, often painful process. Individuals with Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder may have such difficulty deciding which tasks take priority or what is the best way of doing some particular

task that they may never get started on anything.

They are prone to become upset or angry in situations in which they are not able to maintain control of their physical or interpersonal environment, although the anger is typically not expressed directly. For example, a person may be angry when service in a restaurant is poor, but instead of complaining to the management, the individual ruminates about how much to leave as a tip. On other occasions, anger may be expressed with righteous indignation over a seemingly minor matter.



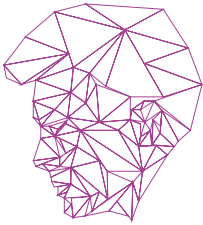
CLUSTER C



AVOIDANT PERSONALITY DISORDER

Common Characteristics

Timid
Hypersensitive
Socially inhibited



People with avoidant personality disorder experience long-standing feelings of inadequacy and are extremely sensitive to what others think about them. These feelings of inadequacy leads to the person to be socially inhibited and feel socially inept. Because of these feelings of inadequacy and inhibition, the person with avoidant personality disorder will seek to avoid work, school and any activities that involve socializing or interacting with others.

Individuals with Avoidant Personality Disorder often vigilantly appraise the movements and expressions of those with whom they come into contact. Their fearful and tense demeanor may elicit ridicule from others, which in turn confirms their self-doubts. They are very anxious about the possibility that they will react to criticism with blushing or crying. They are described by others as being “shy,” “timid,” “lonely,” and “isolated.”

The major problems associated with this disorder occur in social and occupational functioning. The low self-esteem and hypersensitivity to rejection are associated with restricted interpersonal contacts. These individuals may become relatively isolated and usually do not have a large social support network that can help them weather crises. They desire affection and acceptance and may fantasize about idealized relationships with others. The avoidant behaviors can also adversely affect occupational functioning because these individuals try to avoid the types of social situations that may be important for meeting the basic demands of the job or for advancement.



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