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Personality disorders

A person with a personality disorder thinks, feels, behaves or relates to others very differently from the average person.

There are several different types of personality disorder.

This page gives some information about personality disorders in general, linking to other sources for more detail.

Symptoms of a personality disorder

Symptoms vary depending on the type of personality disorder.

For example, a person with [borderline personality disorder](#) (one of the most common types) tends to have disturbed ways of thinking, impulsive behaviour and problems controlling their emotions.

They may have intense but unstable relationships and worry about people abandoning them.

A person with antisocial personality traits will typically get easily frustrated and have difficulty controlling their anger.

They may blame other people for problems in their life, and be aggressive and violent, upsetting others with their behaviour.

Someone with a personality disorder may also have other mental health problems, such as [depression](#) and [drug addiction](#).

Other types of personality disorder will have different symptoms.

[Find out more about diagnosing personality disorder on the Mind website](#)

Mild, moderate and severe personality disorders

The way personality disorders are diagnosed is changing. Instead of being diagnosed with a type of personality disorder (such as borderline personality disorder), you may be diagnosed with mild, moderate or severe personality disorder, with particular personality traits. A mental health professional can talk to you about what your diagnosis means.

Treatment for a personality disorder

Treatment for a personality disorder usually involves a [talking therapy](#) and can also include other types of therapy and medicine.

Talking therapies

This is where the person talks to a therapist to get a better understanding of their own thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

Treatment can last several months or years, depending on the severity of the condition and other problems the person may have.

As well as listening and discussing important issues with the person, the therapist may identify strategies to resolve problems and, if necessary, help them change their attitudes and behaviour.

Therapeutic communities

Treatment at a therapeutic community may be offered to some people with personality disorders. Therapeutic communities (TCs) are places where someone visits or stays for an intensive form of group therapy. The experience of having a personality disorder is explored in depth.

The person usually attends for a number of weeks or months.

Medicine

Medicine may be prescribed to treat problems associated with a personality disorder, such as [depression](#), [anxiety](#) or [psychotic symptoms](#).

For example, moderate to severe symptoms of depression might be treated with a type of [antidepressant](#) called a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI).

Read more about the treatment for [borderline personality disorder](#).

Find out more about treatments for personality disorders:

- [Mind: treatment for personality disorder](#)
- [Rethink Mental Illness: personality disorders](#)

Recovery

Many people with a personality disorder recover over time. Psychological or medical treatment is often helpful, but support is sometimes all that's needed.

There's no single approach that suits everyone – treatment should be tailored to the individual.

Causes

It's not clear exactly what causes personality disorders, but they're thought to result from a combination of the genes a person inherits and early environmental influences – for example, a distressing childhood experience (such as abuse or neglect).

Pregnancy, becoming a parent and personality disorders

If you have a personality disorder, you may need extra support during your pregnancy and after your child is born.

You can speak to a GP, midwife or health visitor if you would like support.

Find out more about [mental health in pregnancy](#).

Support for people living with a personality disorder

Having a personality disorder can have a big effect on the person's life, as well as their family and friends, but support is available.

If you'd like support for yourself or someone you know, you may find the following links useful:

- [Mind: helping someone diagnosed with personality disorder](#)
- [Rethink Mental Illness: personality disorders](#)
- [Royal College of Psychiatrists: personality disorder](#)

Ask a GP about support groups for personality disorders near you. Or find out [how you can access NHS mental health services](#).

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