Personality Disorders

Personality disorders are ways in which personality persistently causes problems for oneself or others. Irregular emotions are a component of many personality disorders, which suggests a relation to Basic Emotions. One approach to understanding personality disorders is Psychoanalysis.

The Dark Side of Personality

Among non-psychologists, it is common to confuse personality disorders with psychological disorders generally (i.e., psychopathology), when in fact personality disorders are only one variety of psychopathology. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV, American Psychiatric Association, 1994) distinguishes disorders like depression and schizophrenia (Axis I disorders) from personality disorders (Axis II disorders). Although there is a great deal of overlap among these different kinds of disorders (e.g., borderline personality disorder often occurs with depression, and personality disorders often occur together), it is probably worthwhile at least to be aware of the conceptual distinction.
Personality disorders, by definition, are disorders of personality. Consequently, they are typified by early onset and pervasive effects. Nevertheless, there are treatments that can help those with personality disorders learn to cope with their distinctive problems in living.

The following acronyms for the personality disorders (Pinkofsky, 1997) should make them understandable and memorable. The group headings are based respectively on the *DSM-IV*, the structural analysis of social behavior (SASB; Benjamin, 1996), and the psychoticism - extraversion - neuroticism (PEN) model (Eysenck, 1987). It is because of their relation to *theories that have inspired scientific research* that personality disorders are included herein.

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**Cluster A**

**Odd, Eccentric Group**

**Psychotics**

Paranoid personality disorder: **SUSPECT** (4 criteria).

- **S**: Spouse fidelity suspected
- **U**: Unforgiving (bears grudges)
- **S**: Suspicious of others
- **P**: Perceives attacks (and reacts quickly)
- **E**: "Enemy or friend" (suspects associates, friends)
- **C**: Confiding in others feared
- **T**: Threats perceived in benign events

Schizoid personality disorder: **DISTANT** (4 criteria).

- **D**: Detached (or flattened) affect
- **I**: Indifferent to criticism and praise
- **S**: Sexual experiences of little interest
- **T**: Tasks (activities) done solitarily
- **A**: Absence of close friends
- **N**: Neither desires nor enjoys close relations
- **T**: Takes pleasure in few activities

Schizotypal personality disorder: **ME PECULIAR** (5 criteria).
M: Magical thinking or odd beliefs
E: Experiences unusual perceptions

P: Paranoid ideation
E: Eccentric behavior or appearance
C: Constricted (or inappropriate) affect
U: Unusual (odd) thinking and speech
L: Lacks close friends
I: Ideas of reference
A: Anxiety in social situations
R: Rule out psychotic disorders and pervasive developmental disorder

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Cluster B
Dramatic, Erratic Group
Extraverts

Antisocial personality disorder: CORRUPT (3 criteria).

C: Conformity to law lacking
O: Obligations ignored
R: Reckless disregard for safety of self or others
R: Remorse lacking
U: Underhanded (deceitful, lies, cons others)
P: Planning insufficient (impulsive)
T: Temper (irritable and aggressive)

Borderline personality disorder: AM SUICIDE (5 criteria).

A: Abandonment
M: Mood instability (marked reactivity of mood)

S: Suicidal (or self-mutilating) behavior
U: Unstable and intense relationships
I: Impulsivity (in two potentially self-damaging areas)
C: Control of anger
I: Identity disturbance
D: Dissociative (or paranoid) symptoms that are transient and stress-related
E: Emptiness (chronic feelings of)
Histrionic personality disorder: PRAISE ME (5 criteria).

P: Provocative (or sexually seductive) behavior
R: Relationships (considered more intimate than they are)
A: Attention (uncomfortable when not the center of attention)
I: Influenced easily
S: Style of speech (impressionistic, lacks detail)
E: Emotions (rapidly shifting and shallow)

M: Made up (physical appearance used to draw attention to self)
E: Emotions exaggerated (theatrical)

Narcissistic personality disorder: SPECIAL (5 criteria).

S: Special (believes he or she is special and unique)
P: Preoccupied with fantasies (of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love)
E: Entitlement
C: Conceited (grandiose sense of self-importance)
I: Interpersonal exploitation
A: Arrogant (haughty)
L: Lacks empathy

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Cluster C
Anxious, Fearful Group
Neurotics

Avoidant personality disorder: CRINGES (4 criteria).

C: Certainty (of being liked required before willing to get involved with others)
R: Rejection (or criticism) preoccupies one's thoughts in social situations
I: Intimate relationships (restraint in intimate relationships due to fear of being shamed)
N: New interpersonal relationships (is inhibited in)
G: Gets around occupational activity (involving significant interpersonal contact)
E: Embarrassment (potential) prevents new activity or taking personal risks
S: Self viewed as unappealing, inept, or inferior
Dependent personality disorder: RELIANCE (5 criteria).

R: Reassurance required for decisions
E: Expressing disagreement difficult (due to fear of loss of support or approval)
L: Life responsibilities (needs to have these assumed by others)
I: Initiating projects difficult (due to lack of self-confidence)
A: Alone (feels helpless and discomfort when alone)
N: Nurturance (goes to excessive lengths to obtain nurturance and support)
C: Companionship (another relationship) sought urgently when close relationship ends
E: Exaggerated fears of being left to care for self

Obsessive-compulsive personality disorder: LAW FIRMS (4 criteria).

L: Loses point of activity (due to preoccupation with detail)
A: Ability to complete tasks (compromised by perfectionism)
W: Worthless objects (unable to discard)
F: Friendships (and leisure activities) excluded (due to a preoccupation with work)
I: Inflexible, scrupulous, overconscientious (on ethics, values, or morality, not accounted for by religion or culture)
R: Reluctant to delegate (unless others submit to exact guidelines)
M: Miserly (toward self and others)
S: Stubbornness (and rigidity)

References


**Personality Disorders Links**

*Personality Disorders: Student Papers in This Website*

"**Creative Genius of Psychotic? A Look at the Strong Positive Correlation Between Creativity and Psychoses**"  
This paper shows how intelligence, latent inhibition, and fantasy proneness all factor into a theory of how creativity and psychoses are intertwined. By Jonathan S. Byrd.

"**A Critical Review of Eysenck's Theory of Psychoticism and How It Relates to Creativity**"  
This paper describes Eysenck's contribution to the notion that the personality trait of psychoticism is related to creativity, along with criticisms of this notion. By Shane K. Porzio.

*Personality Disorders: Websites Elsewhere*

**Borderline Personality Disorder Sanctuary**  
This website includes resources such as pages where a physician and a therapist answer visitors' questions about BPD. By Patty Pheil and Tim Phiel.

**BPD Central**  
This is a website on borderline personality disorder. By Paul Mason and Randi Kreger.

**European Royalty: Inherited Personality Traits**  
This website discusses the personality types of European royalty and other illustrious individuals based on Mendelian genetics. By Anthony M. Benis.

**Google Web Directory: Personality Disorders**  
This page contains numerous links to websites on personality disorders rank-ordered by popularity. By Google.

**Internet Mental Health**  
This website links to description, diagnosis, treatment, research, booklets, magazine articles, and links, for the following personality disorders: (1) **antisocial**, (2) **borderline**, (3) **dependent**, (4) **histrionic**, (5) **schizoid**, (6) **schizotypal**.

**Institute for Advanced Studies in Personology and Psychopathology**  
This website of a leading researcher on personality disorders includes sections on instrumentation, theory, taxonomy, and more. By Theodore Millon.

**Laura Paxton**  
This website offers tools, inspiration, and support to those suffering from borderline personality disorder. By Laura Paxton.

**Malignant Self-Love: Narcissism Re-Visited**  
This website includes frequently asked questions and other resources on narcissism. By Sam Vaknin.
Narcissism: A Genetic Trait
This website contains articles and a message board on narcissism. By Anthony M. Benis.

Open Directory: Personality Disorders
This page contains numerous links to websites on personality disorders ordered alphabetically. By the Open Directory Project.

Personality Disorders
This website contains links to symptoms, treatment, on-line resources, organizations, and on-line support. By Mental Health Net.

Personality Disorders
This list of links is part of Mental Health Infosource Index. By Heather Orey.

Personality Disorders: General Information
This website features DSM-IV criteria and many links. By Dave Kelly.

Robert Hare's Page
This is the website of a leading researcher on psychopathy. By Robert D. Hare.

Personality Disorders: Reference Sources
Key References Relating to the Study of Psychopathy
This is a lengthy list of references on psychopathy. By Steve D. Hart, Adelle E. Forth, and Robert D. Hare.

Suggested Readings
A list of suggested readings on this topic is also available. By G. Scott Acton.

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