

Facts about addiction and personality disorders

People with alcohol and other drug dependencies often suffer from co-occurring mental health illnesses.

Mental health and recovery

Individuals with untreated mental health issues may experience more difficulty in recovery.

For some people alcohol and drug use and withdrawal can cause symptoms of personality disorder. In these cases the symptoms may be substance related and will subside with prolonged abstinence. For others the symptoms persist and may even worsen with prolonged abstinence. For these individuals, treatment options are available.

What is a personality disorder?

An individual's personality is shown in the way he or she thinks, feels, behaves, and relates to other people. In many ways, our personality helps define who we are as individuals. For example, some people may tend to act impulsively while others are more thoughtful. This is normal. However, when a person's thinking, emotions, and behaviors create significant problems for that person or for others, professional help may be needed.

There are many types of personality disorders. They can range from mild to severe in terms of how much they interfere with day-to-day functioning. Most people can live normal lives with mild personality symptoms. However, increased times of stress can make a personality disorder more problematic.

Types of personality disorders

Antisocial Personality Disorder

- Lack of regard for social standards, whether moral or legal.
- Inability to get along with others or abide by social rules.
- Difficulty with impulsivity or poor judgment.

Avoidant Personality Disorder

- Avoid social situations.
- Feelings of inadequacy; extreme sensitivity to criticism.

Borderline Personality Disorder

- Lack of identity; rapid changes in mood and self-image.
- Severe relationship problems.
- Impulsivity.

Dependent Personality Disorder

- Extreme need of other people, to a point where the person can't make decisions, think, or act independently.
- Fear of separation, submissive behavior, lack of decisiveness, and self-confidence.

Histrionic Personality Disorder

- Exaggerated and often inappropriate displays of emotional reactions to everyday situations.
- Sudden and rapid shifting of emotional expressions.

Narcissistic Personality Disorder

- Grandiosity, or an exaggerated view of one's self.
- A lack of concern for others coupled with the need to be admired by others.
- An inability to see the viewpoint of others and hypersensitivity to the opinions of others.

Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder

- Perfectionism and inflexibility.
- Recurrent unwanted thoughts and/or repetitive behaviors such as hand washing.

Paranoid Personality Disorder

- Believing that others are exploiting, harming, or trying to deceive them.
- Lack of trust and belief of others; unforgiving and grudge holding.

Schizoid Personality Disorder

- Limited ability to express or feel emotions.
- Indifference to social relationships.

Schizotypal Personality Disorder

- Odd beliefs and characteristics of appearance, behavior, interpersonal style and thoughts.

Diagnosis of personality disorders

Careful diagnosis is critical. If you experience symptoms of a personality disorder, it is important that you have an assessment by a mental health professional who has expertise in alcohol and drug dependency.

Treatments available

Treatment of personality disorders for alcoholics and addicts often involves therapy and medication. Because some medications can be addictive, it is important to discuss options with a mental health professional who is knowledgeable about substance abuse and dependency.

About Mental Health Services

Mental health services at Hazelden are part of the internationally recognized Hazelden Foundation. Hazelden, a national nonprofit organization founded in 1949, helps people reclaim their lives from the disease of addiction. Built on decades of knowledge and experience, Hazelden's comprehensive approach to addiction addresses the full range of patient, family, and professional needs, including treatment and continuing care for youth and adults, research, higher learning, public education and advocacy, and publishing.

For more information about mental health services at Hazelden, please call 800-257-7800.

Reference

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Health Disorders. Fourth Edition, Text Revision. (2000) American Psychiatric Association, Washington, D.C.