

## Personality Disorders

### Cluster B: Antisocial, Borderline, Histrionic, Narcissistic

#### What is a personality disorder?

- A way of thinking, feeling and behaving that deviates from the expectations of one's culture, causes distress or problems in functioning, and lasts over time, and which is not due to use of substances or another medical condition.
- A deeply ingrained way of thinking/feeling/relating stemming from early childhood, as distinct from discrete, episodic onsets. (People "get" depressed at times, but you never "get" borderline.)
- Distinguished from mental disorders in the DSM-III (1980).
- Estimated 15% of adults have a PD, including 50%(!) of adults in counseling.

#### How to recognize a personality disorder

- Deeply rigid and inflexible way of viewing the world and regulating emotions, different from most other people
- Inability to control impulses and adapt to different social settings
- Significant personal distress (usually accompanied by anxiety, depression, anger, etc.) or impairment in social relationships and/or occupation
- Extremely resistant to change—personality disorders usually last a lifetime

Cluster A (odd)	Cluster B (dramatic)	Cluster C (anxious)
<i>Paranoid</i> : doubting and suspicious	<i>Antisocial</i> : dangerous and manipulative	<i>Avoidant</i> : scared and insecure
<i>Schizoid</i> : detached and apathetic	<i>Borderline</i> : stormy and unstable	<i>Dependent</i> : needy and clingy
<i>Schizotypal</i> : odd and eccentric	<i>Histrionic</i> : theatrical and attention-seeking	<i>Obsessive-compulsive</i> : rigid and perfectionistic
	<i>Narcissistic</i> : self-absorbed and entitled	

#### Antisocial Personality Disorder

- Key traits
  - *Not* asocial (if you don't feel like going to a party, that doesn't make you antisocial!)
  - Deceptive and manipulative
  - Disregard for rules and other people's feelings/safety
  - No remorse for wrong actions; they only feel bad about getting caught
  - Often charming, good at first impressions
  - Gaslighting: they will turn the tables and make *you* feel crazy/at fault

- Response
  - Avoid whenever possible; your safety could be at risk
  - Take precautions and set boundaries/consequences
  - Trust but verify

### **Borderline Personality Disorder**

- Key traits
  - Emotionally/relationally unstable
  - Fragmented sense of identity and worthlessness/emptiness
  - Dichotomous or “black-and-white” thinking; love me/hate me
  - Rapid cycles of negative emotions (unlike bipolar, no “manic” episodes)
  - Expectation of abandonment, perception of being victimized
  - Threaten suicide as a manipulation tool (but they are the most likely PD type to commit suicide)
  - Self-mutilation
- Response
  - Expect turmoil
  - Expect to play the parental role for them well into adulthood
  - Do not reward self-destructive behavior/emotional blackmail
  - Challenge black-and-white thinking
  - Provide lots of affirmation whenever possible

### **Histrionic Personality Disorder**

- Key traits
  - Loves the spotlight (“drama queen”); high maintenance
  - Often flirtatious, provocative with others
  - Exaggerates intimacy early and even in casual relationships
  - Superficial and suggestible
- Response
  - Set boundaries on attention-seeking behavior
  - Provide consistent feedback, positive and negative
  - Encourage empathy by modeling it and rewarding it

### **Narcissistic Personality Disorder**

- Key traits
  - Exaggerated sense of self, achievements, power, beauty, etc.
  - Demands to be treated as special
  - Exploitative, arrogant, and envious
  - Lack of empathy
  - Belittles others to feel superior
- Response
  - Self-care
  - See them as a wounded child
  - Recognize the projection of envy as a defense mechanism
  - Reinforce small gains in empathy