

Dissociative Identity Disorder: Causes, Symptoms, Treatment and Navigating Mental Health

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DESCRIPTION

Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), formerly known as multiple personality disorder, is a complex and often misunderstood mental health condition. It is characterized by the presence of two or more distinct identities or personality states, each with its own pattern of perceiving, thinking and relating to the world. DID is a severe form of dissociation, a mental process used by the brain to cope with overwhelming stress or trauma. The disorder can have profound effects on an individual's daily functioning, relationships and overall mental health.

Causes of dissociative identity disorder

The primary cause of dissociative identity disorder is believed to be a result of severe, chronic trauma, often during early childhood. This trauma is frequently a form of abuse, such as physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. The mind, in its attempt to protect the individual from unbearable emotional pain, may split into different identities as a coping mechanism. This dissociative response allows the person to mentally compartmentalize the trauma, thus preventing it from fully influencing their conscious awareness. In addition to trauma, other factors may contribute to the development of DID, including:

Early childhood neglect: Children, who experience neglect, especially during formative years, may be more prone to dissociative disorders.

Cultural factors: In some cases, cultural beliefs and practices that involve altered states of consciousness may influence the manifestation of DID.

Genetic and psychological vulnerability: Some individuals may be genetically predisposed to dissociation, especially if they have a family history of mental health disorders.

Symptoms of dissociative identity disorder

The symptoms of dissociative identity disorder can vary greatly

from person to person. The sign feature is the presence of distinct identities or personality states, which may have unique names, characteristics, and behaviors. Other common symptoms include:

Memory gaps: Individuals with DID often experience significant memory lapses, known as dissociative amnesia. These memory gaps can involve forgetting personal information, past experiences, or entire period of time.

Feeling detached: People with DID may report feeling detached from their own body or like they are observing themselves from the outside, a symptom known as depersonalization.

Behavioral shifts: Different identities may have distinct preferences, interests and behaviors, leading to sudden shifts in a person's actions, likes and dislikes. These changes can be dramatic and difficult to control.

Frequent trances: Individuals may experience periods of time where they are unaware of their actions or the events around them, often referred to as "blackouts" or dissociative episodes.

Identity confusion: There may be confusion or internal conflict regarding the person's identity, leading to uncertainty about who they are or how they fit into the world.

Navigating mental health with DID

Living with dissociative identity disorder presents unique challenges. The disorder can significantly affect one's relationships, work life, and overall mental health. Individuals with DID often experience a sense of fragmentation and confusion, which can be isolating and difficult to manage without proper support.

Education and awareness: It is important for individuals with DID to educate themselves about the disorder, as well as for their loved ones to understand its impact. Raising awareness reduces stigma and promotes empathy, which is vital for the healing process.

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Seeking professional help: Navigating DID requires working closely with mental health professionals who specialize in trauma and dissociation. Long-term, consistent treatment is often necessary for recovery and individuals must be patient with themselves as they work toward healing.

Self-care: Engaging in self-care practices like mindfulness, meditation and stress reduction techniques can be beneficial for individuals with DID. Taking time to advance oneself and manage emotional triggers is an important part of managing mental health.

CONCLUSION

Dissociative identity disorder is a complex mental health condition rooted in trauma and emotional distress. While its

symptoms can be challenging, early diagnosis and treatment can significantly improve outcomes. Therapy, medication, and support networks are essential in managing DID and helping individuals regain control over their lives. Understanding and compassion from both individuals with DID and those around them are important in navigating the road to recovery and healing. With the right treatment, people living with DID can lead fulfilling, integrated lives.