

Dissociative Disorders



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Dissociative disorders are defined by escapes from reality or memories. They develop as a response to painful events and can become worse under stress. Those with dissociative disorders can have difficulties with daily activities as they experience disconnects from thoughts, identity, and reality.

What are the symptoms?

- Significant memory loss
- Out-of-body experiences
- Feeling emotionally numb
- A lack of self-identity

Types of Dissociative Disorders

There are three types of dissociative disorders:

- **Dissociative amnesia.** Dissociative amnesia happens suddenly and can last for days, sometimes even months or years. Those with this disorder have a hard time remembering information about themselves. It may be caused by a terrifying event or memory, such as combat or abuse. There is no average for age for this to happen and a person may experience these many times throughout their life.
- **Depersonalization disorder.** Those with this disorder can feel like they are watching a movie of their life instead of living it. Experiences and people around them can feel unreal and this can last a matter of moments or return at times over the years.
- **Dissociative identity disorder (DID).** A person with DID may feel like one or more voices are trying to take control in their head. Each of these voices can feel like their own person, with different names, experiences, and voices. Those with DID will experience memory loss of everyday events, personal information, and trauma.

What are the causes?

Dissociative disorders usually are a way to deal with overwhelming emotions or experiences. They most often form in children.

- **Abuse.** A history of physical or sexual abuse can cause some to develop a dissociative disorder.
- **Stressful Events.** Such as natural disasters, combat, or other traumatic experiences.

Diagnosis

Doctors diagnose dissociative disorders based on symptoms and personal history. A doctor may perform tests to rule out other conditions that can cause as memory loss and a sense of unreality. If these are ruled out, a mental health specialist is will make an evaluation.

Treatment

Dissociative disorders are managed through various therapies including:

- **Therapies** such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT)
- **Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR)**
- **Medications** such as antidepressants can treat symptoms of related conditions