

MENTAL HEALTH GUIDE

DISSOCIATIVE IDENTITY DISORDER



Silence
~~the Shame~~

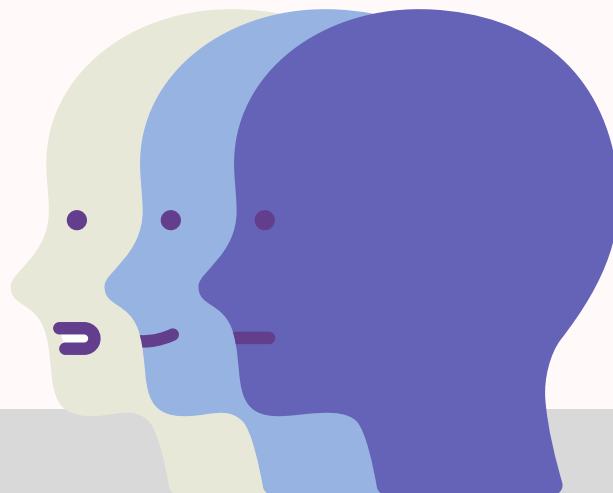
WHAT IS DISSOCIATIVE IDENTITY DISORDER?

Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), formerly known as multiple personality disorder, is a type of dissociative disorder in which an individual alternates between multiple personalities. People with DID may feel like one or more voices are trying to take control in their head. Often these identities may have unique names, characteristics, mannerisms and voices. People with DID will experience gaps in memory of every day events, personal information and trauma.

Women are more likely to be diagnosed, as they more frequently present with acute dissociative symptoms.

Men are more likely to deny symptoms and trauma histories, and commonly exhibit more violent behavior, rather than amnesia or fugue states. This can lead to elevated false negative diagnosis.

Silence
~~the Shame~~



Signs & Symptoms of DID

A person with DID has two or more distinct identities. The “core” identity is the person’s usual personality. “Alters” are the person’s alternate personalities. Some people with DID have up to 100 alters.

Alters tend to be very different from one another. The identities might have different genders, ethnicities, interests and ways of interacting with their environments. Other common signs and symptoms of DID can include:

- Anxiety.
- Delusions.
- Depression.
- Disorientation.
- Drug or alcohol abuse.
- Memory loss.
- Suicidal thoughts or self-harm.



Silence
~~the Shame~~

Risk Factors for DID

Dissociative disorders usually develop as a way of dealing with trauma. Many attribute the disorder to the effects of exposure to situations of extreme ambivalence and abuse in early childhood that are coped with by an elaborate form of denial so that the child believes the event to be happening to someone else. As a result, dissociative disorders most often form in younger children exposed to long-term physical, sexual or emotional abuse. Natural disasters and combat can also cause dissociative disorders.



Diagnosing DID

Doctors diagnose dissociative disorders based on a review of symptoms and personal history. A doctor may perform tests to rule out physical conditions that can cause symptoms such as memory loss and a sense of unreality (for example, head injury, brain lesions or tumors, sleep deprivation or intoxication). If physical causes are ruled out, a mental health specialist is often consulted to make an evaluation. Symptoms of DID often show up in childhood, between the ages of 5 and 10 with emergence of alters at about the age of 6. However, parents, teachers or healthcare providers may miss the signs. DID might be confused with other behavioral or learning problems common in children, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). For this reason, DID usually isn't diagnosed until adulthood.



Silence
~~the Shame~~

Treating DID

Dissociative disorders are managed through various therapies including:

- **Psychotherapies** such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT) with the goal of these therapies being identifying and working through past trauma or abuse, managing sudden behavioral changes, and merging separate identities into a *single* identity.
- **Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing** (EMDR)
- **Medications** such as antidepressants can treat symptoms of related conditions



Silence
the ~~Shame~~

Works Cited

Dissociative Disorders | NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness. (n.d.). Retrieved July 13, 2021, from <https://www.nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Mental-Health-Conditions/Dissociative-Disorders>

Dissociative Identity Disorder: What Is It, Symptoms & Treatment. (n.d.). Cleveland Clinic. Retrieved July 13, 2021, from <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/9792-dissociative-identity-disorder-multiple-personality-disorder>

Gillig, P. M. (2009). Dissociative Identity Disorder. *Psychiatry (Edgmont)*, 6(3), 24–29.