

Acute Training Solutions

Personality Disorder & Paranoia - Descriptions

Cluster A

Paranoid personality disorder

A person with a paranoid personality disorder can be distrustful and suspicious. Other features include:

- Thinking other people are lying to them or trying to manipulate them
- Feeling they cannot really trust their friends and associates
- Worrying that any confidential information shared with others will be used against them
- Thinking there are hidden meanings in remarks most would regard as innocent
- Worrying that their spouse or partner is unfaithful, despite a lack of evidence

Schizoid personality disorder

Someone with a schizoid personality disorder may appear cold and detached, and avoid making close social contact with others. Other features include:

- Preferring to take part in activities that do not require interaction with others
- Having little desire to form close relationships, including sexual relationships
- Being uninterested when receiving criticism or praise
- Having a limited ability to experience pleasure or joy

Schizotypal personality disorder

A person with a schizotypal personality disorder may have poor social skills and delusional thoughts, and behave in unusual ways. Other features include:

- Attaching undue and misguided significance to everyday events – such as thinking newspaper headlines are secret messages to them
- Believing in special powers – such as telepathy or the ability to influence other people's emotions and actions
- Having unusual ways of speaking – such as long, rambling vague sentences or going off on a tangent
- Experiencing excessive anxiety in social situations – even if they have known a particular person or group of people a long time

Cluster B

Antisocial personality disorder

A person with an antisocial personality disorder may see other people as vulnerable and may intimidate or bully others without remorse. They lack concern about the consequences of their actions.

Symptoms include:

- Lack of concern, regret or remorse about other people's distress
- Irresponsibility and disregard for normal social behaviour
- Difficulty in sustaining long-term relationships
- Little ability to tolerate frustration and to control their anger
- Lack of guilt, or not learning from their mistakes
- Blaming others for problems in their lives

Borderline personality disorder

A person with borderline personality disorder can be emotionally unstable, can have impulses to self-harm, and has very intense and unstable relationships with others.

Histrionic personality disorder

A person with histrionic personality disorder is anxious about being ignored. As a result, they feel a compulsion (overwhelming urge) to be noticed and the centre of everyone's attention. Features include:

- Displaying excessive emotion, yet appearing to lack real emotional sincerity
- Dressing provocatively and engaging in inappropriate flirting or sexually seductive behaviour
- Moving quickly from one emotional state to another
- Being self-centred and caring little about other people
- Constantly seeking reassurance and approval from other people

Symptoms and signs may co-exist with borderline and narcissistic personality disorders.

Narcissistic personality disorder

A person with narcissistic personality disorder swings between seeing themselves as special and fearing they are worthless. They may act as if they have an inflated sense of their own importance and show an intense need for other people to look up to them.

Other symptoms include:

- Exaggerating their own achievements and abilities
- Thinking they are entitled to be treated better than other people
- Exploiting other people for their own personal gain
- Lacking empathy for other people's weaknesses
- Looking down on people they feel "beneath" them, while feeling deeply envious of people they see as being "above" them

Cluster C

Avoidant personality disorder

A person with avoidant personality disorder can appear shy, is socially inhibited, feels inadequate and is very sensitive to rejection. Unlike people with schizoid personality disorders, they desire close relationships with others, but lack the confidence and ability to form them.

Dependent personality disorder

A person with dependent personality disorder feels they have no ability to be independent. They may show an excessive need for others to look after them. Other features include:

- Finding it difficult to make decisions without other people's guidance
- Needing others to take responsibility over what should be their own important life choices
- Not being able to express disagreement with other people
- Finding it difficult to start new activities due to a lack of confidence
- Going to extremes to obtain support and comfort
- Feeling helpless and uncomfortable when alone
- Urgently needing to start a new relationship once a previous relationship comes to an end
- Having an unrealistic and constant fear they will be left alone to fend for themselves

Obsessive compulsive personality disorder

A person with obsessive compulsive personality disorder is anxious about issues that seem out of control or "messy". They are preoccupied with orderliness and ways to control their environment.

Other features include:

- Having an excessive interest in lists, timetables and rules
- Being so concerned with completing a task perfectly that they have problems completing it (perfectionism)
- Being a workaholic
- Having very rigid views about issues such as morality, ethics and how a person should behave in daily life
- Hoarding items that seem to have no monetary or sentimental value
- Being unable to delegate tasks to other people
- Disliking spending money, as they think it is always better to save for a "rainy day"

This personality disorder differs from obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), a related mental health condition, in several ways:

- People with OCD are aware that their behaviour is different and can be anxious about it. Most people with obsessive compulsive personality disorder think their behaviour is perfectly acceptable and have no desire to change it.
- Some people with OCD may carry out rituals, such as having to touch every second lamppost as they walk down the street. This is not usually the case with people with obsessive compulsive personality disorder.
- People with OCD may make lists or organise items in their house, but feel anxious about doing so. People with obsessive compulsive personality disorder find relief from anxiety when doing such tasks.