

FACTS ABOUT DID

WHAT IS DISSOCIATIVE IDENTITY DISORDER (DID)

Previously known as multiple personality disorder (MPD) it is a disorder involving a disturbance of identity in which two or more separate and distinct personality states (or identities) control the individual's behaviour at different times. It is thought that as many as 100 personalities or fragments of personalities can coexist within the individual with identities showing unique behaviour, voice and posture.

DID sufferers have the ability to split off awareness to deal with unbearable situations. The person may be partially or completely unaware of these different identities (alters).

There is controversy surrounding this diagnosis with considerable evidence both for and against it. DID theorists assert that it is a response to having suffered severe trauma often during childhood and it is a defence mechanism to escape this. However other researchers suggests that individuals with DID are highly suggestible with alters being created in response to suggestive or leading questions during therapy or while the person is in a hypnotic state.

SYMPTOMS

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Inability to recall important personal information in excess of ordinary forgetfulness
- Mood Swings
- Auditory and visual hallucinations
- Post-traumatic symptoms such as nightmares, flashbacks, and startle responses
- Switching from one personality to another
- Suicidal or self-injuring behaviour

- Usually primary identity carries given name
- Alternate identities frequently use different names and characteristics that contrast with the primary identity
- Aggressive or hostile identities may at times interrupt activity
- Loss of time 'blackouts' unrelated to drugs, alcohol or neurological disorders
- Spontaneous trance states including talking to oneself
- Substance use issues

CAUSES

DID theorists believe that when an individual is faced with severe and often repeated trauma from which there is no escape such as, physical or sexual abuse, the individual resorts to psychological escape as a defence mechanism. This often occurs before the age of seven, when a child's personality is being formed. The individuals are thought to cope with these events by dissociating themselves from what is going on.

Over time, this part of their consciousness becomes stronger and more defined until it splits from the main personality altogether. It is extremely rare, and only a few hundred cases have been reported.

DID is widely viewed as resulting from dissociative mental processes—i.e., the splitting off from conscious awareness and control of thoughts, feelings, memories, and other mental components in response to situations that are painful, disturbing, or somehow unacceptable to the person experiencing them. It is more common in females and those with a history of mental illness.

TREATMENT

- Psychotherapy – the aim is merge the alters back into the patient’s personality, which can take many years and relapses are common, particularly during times of stress. Once the patient has reclaimed their memories of abuse, any trigger that reminds them of that trauma can bring on a dissociative episode.
- Psychiatric treatment.
- Medication
- Hypnosis - Hypnosis can help the client/patient recall his/her true identity and remember the events of the past.
- Support Groups

REFERRAL/SUPPORT INFO

Drug ARM 1300 656 800
info@drugarm.com.au
drugarm.com.au

Drug ARM Central Intake
07 3620 8880

Lifeline Australia 13 11 14
24/7 crisis support

Or contact your local GP (General Practitioner)

HOW TO HELP YOURSELF

Adopt a healthy lifestyle including diet and exercise, and make time to relax. Try to avoid triggers when you are feeling particularly vulnerable. If this is not practical, confide in a close friend who may be able to assist you. Recovery can be a long and difficult process but it can and does happen.

HOW CAN FAMILY AND FRIENDS HELP?

When talking to a DID sufferer, always assume that the other alters may be listening. The “host” is not always aware of the other “alters”, and in turn, not all “alters” know each other.

Friends and family, have to remember it takes time for many DID sufferers to trust people as they may have been manipulated and abused in the past by people who were in a position of trust, such as parents, friends, teachers and spouses.

It is also important to be prepared to repeat things you’ve said to each of the alternate identities.

REFERENCES

1 Psychology Today (2017). Dissociative identity disorder. Retrieved on 26/07/2017 from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/conditions/dissociative-identity-disorder-multiple-personalitydisorder>



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