

# Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Training



## Personality Disorders

**Student Guide**

## What are Personality Disorders?

Personality is the way of thinking, feeling and behaving that makes a person different from other people. An individual's personality is influenced by experiences, environment (surroundings, life situations) and inherited characteristics. A personality disorder is a way of thinking, feeling and behaving that deviates from the expectations of the culture, causes distress or problems functioning, and lasts over time.<sup>1</sup>

There are 10 specific types of personality disorders (such as borderline personality disorder). Common to all personality disorders is a long-term pattern of behavior and inner experience that differs significantly from what is expected. The pattern of experience and behavior begins by late adolescence or early adulthood, and causes distress or problems in functioning. Without treatment, the behavior and experience is inflexible and usually long-lasting. The pattern is seen in at least two of these areas:

- Way of thinking about oneself and others
- Way of responding emotionally
- Way of relating to other people
- Way of controlling one's behavior



*“My pain and sadness give me my strength.  
My strength ruins my mind, body and soul.  
I’ve been trapped all my life.  
Not by man or cages  
But by my own emotions.  
Where I’ve been by traveling inside myself  
Can be summed up by one word —  
Damn.  
Pain manifests itself into peace and growth....  
Only when you deal with the root of it the  
right way.”*

Brandon Marshall is a NFL wide receiver and advocate for mental health awareness. He has self disclosed living with borderline personality disorder.

**The 10 specific personality disorders are grouped into three categories called “clusters”.**

**Cluster A:**

- **Schizoid Personality Disorder.** Schizoid personalities are introverted, withdrawn, solitary, emotionally cold, and distant. They are often absorbed with their own thoughts and feelings and are fearful of closeness and intimacy with others. For example, a person suffering from schizoid personality is more of a daydreamer than a practical action taker.
- **Paranoid Personality Disorder.** The essential feature for this type of personality disorder is interpreting the actions of others as deliberately threatening or demeaning. People with paranoid personality disorder are untrusting, unforgiving, and prone to angry or aggressive outbursts without justification because they perceive others as unfaithful, disloyal, condescending or deceitful. This type of person may also be jealous, guarded, secretive, and scheming, and may appear to be emotionally “cold” or excessively serious.
- **Schizotypal Personality Disorder.** A pattern of peculiarities best describes those with schizotypal personality disorder. People may have odd or eccentric manners of speaking or dressing. Strange, outlandish or paranoid beliefs and thoughts are common. People with schizotypal personality disorder have difficulties forming relationships and experience extreme anxiety in social situations. They may react inappropriately or not react at all during a conversation or they may talk to themselves. They also display signs of “magical thinking” by saying they can see into the future or read other people’s minds.

**Cluster B:**

- **Antisocial Personality Disorder.** People with antisocial personality disorder characteristically act out their conflicts and ignore normal rules of social behavior. These individuals are impulsive, irresponsible, and callous. Typically, the antisocial personality has a history of legal difficulties, belligerent and irresponsible behavior, aggressive and even violent relationships. They show no respect for other people and feel no remorse about the effects of their behavior on others. These people are at high risk for substance abuse, especially alcoholism, since it helps them to relieve tension, irritability and boredom.
- **Borderline Personality Disorder.** People with borderline personality disorder are unstable in several areas, including interpersonal relationships, behavior, mood, and self-image. Abrupt and extreme mood changes, stormy interpersonal relationships, an unstable and fluctuating self-image, unpredictable and self-destructive actions characterize the person with borderline personality disorder. These individuals

generally have great difficulty with their own sense of identity. They often experience the world in extremes, viewing others as either “all good” or “all bad.” A person with borderline personality may form an intense personal attachment with someone only to quickly dissolve it over a perceived slight. Fears of abandonment may lead to an excessive dependency on others. Self-mutilation or recurrent suicidal gestures may be used to get attention or manipulate others. Impulsive actions, chronic feelings of boredom or emptiness, and bouts of intense inappropriate anger are other traits of this disorder, which is more common among females.

- **Narcissistic Personality Disorder.** People with narcissistic personality have an exaggerated sense of self-importance, are absorbed by fantasies of unlimited success, and seek constant attention. The narcissistic personality is oversensitive to failure and often complains of multiple somatic symptoms. Prone to extreme mood swings between self-admiration and insecurity, these people tend to exploit interpersonal relationships.

### **Cluster C:**

- **Avoidant Personality Disorder.** Avoidant personalities are often hypersensitive to rejection and are unwilling to become involved with others unless they are sure of being liked. Excessive social discomfort, timidity, fear of criticism, avoidance of social or work activities that involve interpersonal contact are characteristic of the avoidant personality. They are fearful of saying something considered foolish by others; worry they will blush or cry in front of others; and are very hurt by any disapproval by others. People with avoidant personality disorder may have no close relationships outside of their family circle, although they would like to, and are upset at their inability to relate well to others.
- **Dependent Personality Disorder.** People with dependent personality disorder may exhibit a pattern of dependent and submissive behavior, relying on others to make decisions for them. They require excessive reassurance and advice, and are easily hurt by criticism or disapproval. They feel uncomfortable and helpless if they are alone, and can be devastated when a close relationship ends. They have a strong fear of rejection. Typically lacking in self-confidence, the dependent personality rarely initiates projects or does things independently. This disorder usually begins by early adulthood and is diagnosed more frequently in females than males.
- **Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder.** Compulsive personalities are conscientious and have high levels of aspiration, but they also strive for perfection. Never satisfied with their achievements, people with compulsive personality disorder take on more and more responsibilities. They are reliable, dependable, orderly, and methodical, but their inflexibility often makes them incapable of adapting to changed circumstances. People with compulsive personality are highly cautious, weigh all

aspects of a problem, and pay attention to every detail, making it difficult for them to make decisions and complete tasks. When their feelings are not under strict control, events are unpredictable, or they must rely on others, compulsive personalities often feel a sense of isolation and helplessness.

## **How are Personality Disorders Treated?**

When these characteristics are carried to an extreme, when they endure over time and when they interfere with healthy functioning, a diagnostic evaluation with a licensed physician or mental health professional is recommended.

There are many types of help available for the different personality disorders. Treatment may include:

- Psychoanalytic/psychodynamic therapy
- Dialectical behavior therapy
- Cognitive behavioral therapy
- Group therapy
- Psychoeducation (teaching the individual and family members about the illness, treatment and ways of coping)

Psychotherapy for patients with personality disorders focuses on helping them see the subconscious conflicts that are contributing to or causing their symptoms. It also helps people become more flexible and is aimed at reducing the behavior patterns that interfere with everyday living.

In psychotherapy, people with personality disorders can better recognize the effects of their behavior on others. Behavior and cognitive therapies focus on resolving symptoms or traits that are characteristic of the disorder, such as the inability to make important life decisions or the inability to initiate relationships.

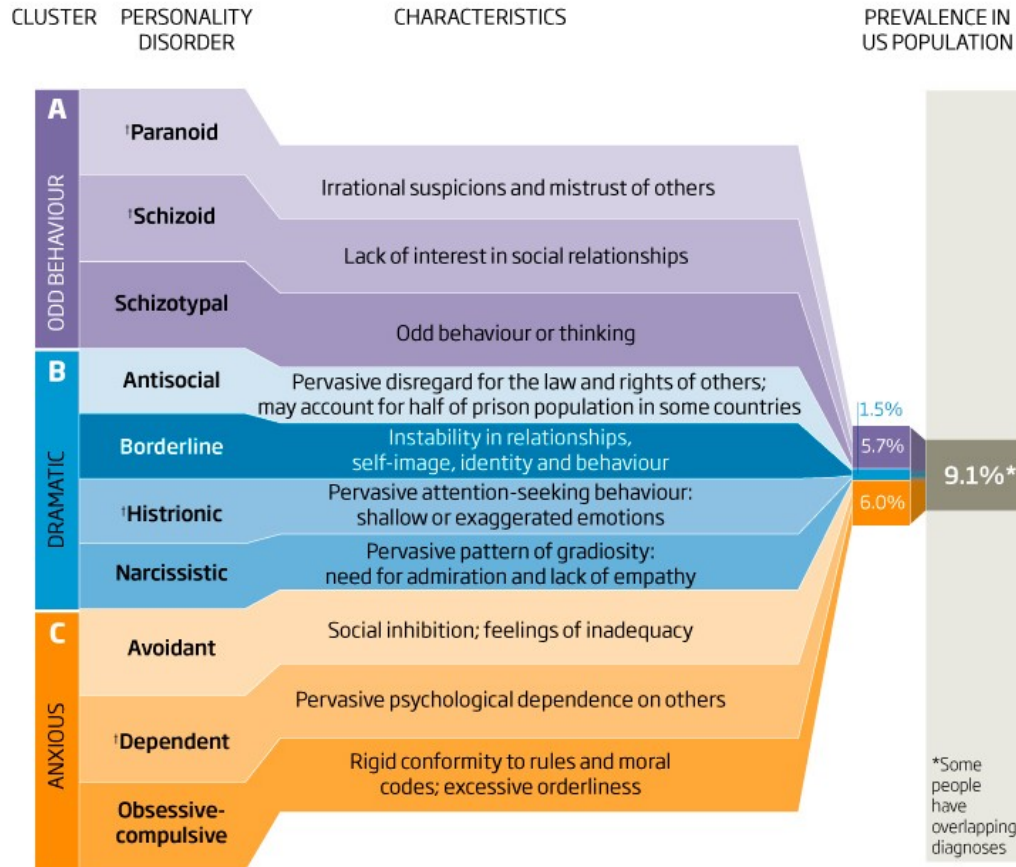
## **There is Hope**

The more you learn about personality disorders the more you will understand that they are illnesses, with causes and treatments. People can improve with proper care. By seeking out information you can recognize the signs and symptoms of a personality disorder and help yourself or someone you know live a healthier more fulfilling life.

# Spectrum of personality disorders

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There are currently 10 personality disorders but psychiatrists think this diagnostic framework is in need of an overhaul



†Terms proposed for removal in next edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*

## Resources

National Institute of Mental Health [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

National Alliance on Mental Illness [www.NAMI.org](http://www.NAMI.org)

Disability.gov

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Agency <https://www.samhsa.gov>

American Psychiatric Association