

Chapter 16

Personality Disorders

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Personality

◆ What is personality?

- Personality is a unique and long-term pattern of inner experience and outward behavior
- Personality tends to be consistent and is often described in terms of “traits”
 - These traits may be inherited, learned, or both
- Personality is also flexible, allowing us to adapt to new environments
 - For those with personality disorders, however, that flexibility is usually missing

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Personality Disorders

◆ What is a personality disorder?

- A very rigid pattern of inner experience and outward behavior
- This pattern is seen in most interactions, differs from the experiences and behaviors usually expected, and continues for years

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Classifying Personality Disorders

- ◆ A personality disorder is diagnosed only when it causes impairments in social or occupational functioning, or when it causes personal distress
 - Personality disorders typically become recognizable in adolescence or early adulthood
 - Generally, the affected person does not regard his or her behavior as undesirable or problematic
 - It has been estimated that 9 to 13% of all adults may have a personality disorder

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Classifying Personality Disorders

- ◆ Classifying these disorders is difficult because little is known about their origins or development
- ◆ They are diagnosed on Axis II of the DSM-IV

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Classifying Personality Disorders

- ◆ Those diagnosed with personality disorders are often also diagnosed with an Axis I disorder
 - This relationship is called "comorbidity"
 - Axis II disorders may predispose people to develop an Axis I disorder, or Axis I disorders may set the stage for Axis II disorders, or some biological condition may set the stage for both!
 - Whatever the reason, research indicates that the presence of a personality disorder complicates and reduces a person's chances for a successful recovery

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Classifying Personality Disorders

- ◆ The DSM-IV identifies ten personality disorders and separates these into three categories or “clusters”:
 - Odd or eccentric behavior
 - Paranoid, schizoid, and schizotypal personality disorders
 - Dramatic, emotional, or erratic behavior
 - Antisocial, borderline, narcissistic, and histrionic personality disorders
 - Anxious or fearful behavior
 - Avoidant, dependent, and obsessive-compulsive personality disorders

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Classifying Personality Disorders

- ◆ The various personality disorders overlap each other so much that it can be difficult to distinguish one from another
- ◆ The frequent lack of agreement between clinicians and diagnosticians has raised concerns about the validity and reliability of these categories

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“Odd” Personality Disorders

- ◆ The cluster of “odd” personality disorders includes:
 - Paranoid personality disorder
 - Schizoid personality disorder
 - Schizotypal personality disorder

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“Odd” Personality Disorders

- ◆ People with these disorders display behaviors similar to, but not as extensive as, schizophrenia
 - Behaviors include extreme suspiciousness, social withdrawal, and peculiar ways of thinking and perceiving things
 - Such behaviors leave the person isolated
 - Some clinicians believe that these disorders are actually related to schizophrenia, and thus call them “schizophrenia-spectrum disorders”

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“Odd” Personality Disorders

- ◆ Clinicians have learned much about the symptoms of odd personality disorders but little about effective treatment for these disorders
 - In fact, people with these disorders rarely seek treatment

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Paranoid Personality Disorder

- ◆ This disorder is characterized by deep suspicion or mistrust of others
 - Although inaccurate, the suspicion is usually not “delusional”
- ◆ As a result of their mistrust, people with paranoid personality disorder often avoid relationships

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Paranoid Personality Disorder

- ◆ Other symptoms can include hypersensitivity, vigilance, and caution when dealing with others
- ◆ Between 0.5 and 3% of adults are believed to experience this disorder, apparently more men than women

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How Do Theorists Explain Paranoid Personality Disorder?

- ◆ The proposed explanations of this disorder, like those of most other personality disorders, have received little systematic research
 - Psychodynamic theorists trace the pattern back to early interactions with demanding parents
 - Cognitive theorists suggest that maladaptive assumptions such as “People are evil and will attack you if given the chance” are to blame
 - Biological theorists propose genetic causes and have looked at twin studies to support this model

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Treatments for Paranoid Personality Disorder

- ◆ People with paranoid personality disorder do not typically see themselves as needing help
 - Few come to treatment willingly
 - Those who are in treatment often distrust and rebel against their therapists
- ◆ As a result, therapy for this disorder, as for most of the other personality disorders, has limited effect and moves slowly

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Treatments for Paranoid Personality Disorder

- ◆ Object relations therapists try to see past the patient's anger and work on the underlying wish for a satisfying relationship
- ◆ Behavioral and cognitive therapists try to help clients control anxiety and improve interpersonal skills
 - Cognitive therapists also try to restructure clients' maladaptive assumptions and interpretations
- ◆ Drug therapy is generally ineffective

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Schizoid Personality Disorder

- ◆ This disorder is characterized by persistent avoidance of social relationships and limited emotional expression
 - Withdrawn and reclusive, people with this disorder are not interested in relationships with others
 - People with schizoid personality disorder focus mainly on themselves and are often seen as flat and cold
 - The disorder is estimated to affect less than 1% of the population
 - It is slightly more likely to occur in men than in women

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How Do Theorists Explain Schizoid Personality Disorder?

- ◆ Many psychodynamic theorists, particularly object relations theorists, link schizoid personality disorder to an unsatisfied need for human contact
 - The parents of those with the disorder are believed to have been unaccepting or abusive of their children

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How Do Theorists Explain Schizoid Personality Disorder?

- ◆ Cognitive theorists propose that people with schizoid personality disorder suffer from deficiencies in their thinking
 - Their thoughts tend to be vague and empty, and they have trouble scanning the environment for cues

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Treatments for Schizoid Personality Disorder

- ◆ Their extreme social withdrawal prevents most people with this disorder from entering therapy unless some other disorder makes treatment necessary
 - Even then, patients are likely to remain emotionally distant from the therapist

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Treatments for Schizoid Personality Disorder

- ◆ Cognitive therapists have sometimes been able to help people with this disorder experience more positive emotions and more satisfying social interactions
- ◆ Behavioral therapists have had some success in teaching social skills
- ◆ Group therapy is apparently useful when it offers a safe environment for social contact
- ◆ Drug therapy is of little benefit

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Schizotypal Personality Disorder

- ◆ This disorder is characterized by a range of interpersonal problems, odd (even bizarre) ways of thinking and perceiving, and behavioral eccentricities
 - These symptoms may include ideas of reference and/or bodily illusions
 - People with the disorder often have great difficulty keeping their attention focused; conversation is typically digressive and vague

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Schizotypal Personality Disorder

- ◆ Socially withdrawn, people with schizotypal personality disorder seek isolation and have few friends
- ◆ This disorder is the most severe of the three in this cluster
 - It has been estimated that 2 to 4% of all people (slightly more males than females) may have the disorder

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How Do Theorists Explain Schizotypal Personality Disorder?

- ◆ Because the symptoms of schizotypal personality disorder so often resemble those of schizophrenia, researchers have hypothesized that similar factors are at work in both disorders
 - Schizotypal symptoms are often linked to poor family communication and to psychological disorders in parents
 - Researchers have also begun to link schizotypal personality disorder to some of the same biological factors found in schizophrenia
- ◆ The disorder has also been linked to mood disorders

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Treatments for Schizotypal Personality Disorder

- ◆ Therapy is as difficult in cases of schizotypal personality disorder as in cases of paranoid and schizoid personality disorders
- ◆ Most therapists agree on the need to help clients “reconnect” and recognize the limitations of their thinking and powers
 - Cognitive therapists further try to teach clients to objectively evaluate their thoughts and perceptions
- ◆ Antipsychotic drugs appear to be helpful in reducing certain thought problems

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“Dramatic” Personality Disorders

- ◆ The cluster of “dramatic” personality disorders includes:
 - Antisocial personality disorder
 - Borderline personality disorder
 - Histrionic personality disorder
 - Narcissistic personality disorder

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“Dramatic” Personality Disorders

- ◆ The behaviors of people with these disorders are so dramatic, emotional, or erratic that it is almost impossible for them to have relationships that are truly giving and satisfying
- ◆ These personality disorders are more commonly diagnosed than the others
 - Only antisocial and borderline personality disorders have received much study
- ◆ The causes of the disorders are not well understood

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Antisocial Personality Disorder

- ◆ Sometimes described as “psychopaths” or “sociopaths,” people with antisocial personality disorder persistently disregard and violate others’ rights
 - Aside from substance-related disorders, this is the disorder most linked to adult criminal behavior
- ◆ The DSM-IV requires that a person be at least 18 years of age to receive this diagnosis
 - Most people with an antisocial personality disorder displayed some patterns of misbehavior before they were 15 years old

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Antisocial Personality Disorder

- ◆ People with the disorder are likely to lie repeatedly, be reckless, sexually promiscuous, and impulsive
 - They have a disregard for other individuals, and can be cruel, sadistic, reckless, and violent

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Antisocial Personality Disorder

- ◆ Surveys indicate that up to 3.5% of people in the U.S. meet the criteria for this disorder
 - Caucasians are somewhat more likely to be diagnosed than are African Americans
 - The disorder is four times more common in men than women
- ◆ Because people with this disorder are often arrested, researchers frequently look for people with antisocial patterns in prison populations
 - Studies indicate higher rates of alcoholism and other substance-related disorders among this group

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Antisocial Personality Disorder

- ◆ Children with a conduct disorder and an accompanying attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder apparently have a heightened risk of developing antisocial personality disorder

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How Do Theorists Explain Antisocial Personality Disorder?

- ◆ Psychodynamic theorists propose that this disorder begins with an absence of parental love, leading to a lack of basic trust
- ◆ Many behaviorists have suggested that antisocial symptoms may be learned through modeling or reinforcement

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How Do Theorists Explain Antisocial Personality Disorder?

- ◆ The cognitive view says that people with the disorder hold attitudes that trivialize the importance of other people's needs
- ◆ A number of studies suggest that biological factors may play a role
 - Findings suggest that people with antisocial personality disorder have lower levels of trait anxiety and arousal, leading them to be more likely than others to take risks and seek thrills

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Treatments for Antisocial Personality Disorder

- ◆ About 25% of all people with antisocial personality disorder receive treatment for it, yet no treatment appears to be effective
 - A major problem is the individual's lack of conscience or desire to change
 - Most have been mandated to treatment
 - Some cognitive therapists try to guide clients to think about moral issues and the needs of other people
 - Hospitals have attempted to create therapeutic communities
 - Generally, most of today's treatment approaches have little or no impact on the disorder

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Borderline Personality Disorder

- ◆ People with this disorder display great instability, including major shifts in mood, an unstable self-image, and impulsivity
 - Interpersonal relationships are also unstable
- ◆ People with borderline personality disorder are prone to bouts of anger, which sometimes result in physical aggression and violence
 - Just as often, however, they direct their impulsive anger inward and harm themselves

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Borderline Personality Disorder

- ◆ Many of the patients who come to mental health emergency rooms are individuals with borderline personality disorder who have intentionally hurt themselves
- ◆ Their impulsive, self-destructive behavior can include:
 - Alcohol and substance abuse
 - Reckless behavior, including driving and unsafe sex
 - Cutting themselves
 - Suicidal actions and threats

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Borderline Personality Disorder

- ◆ Almost 2% of the general population are thought to suffer from this disorder
 - Close to 75% of those diagnosed are women
- ◆ The course of the disorder varies
 - In the most common pattern, the instability and risk of suicide reach a peak during young adulthood and then gradually lessen with advancing age

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How Do Theorists Explain Borderline Personality Disorder?

- ◆ Because a fear of abandonment tortures so many people with the disorder, psychodynamic theorists look to early parental relationships to explain the disorder
 - Object-relations theorists propose a lack of early acceptance by parents
 - Research has found some support for this view

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How Do Theorists Explain Borderline Personality Disorder?

- ◆ Some features of the disorder have also been linked to biological abnormalities
 - Sufferers who are particularly impulsive apparently have lower brain serotonin activity
 - Close relatives of those with borderline personality disorder are five times more likely than the general population to have the disorder
- ◆ Some sociocultural theorists suggest that cases of borderline personality disorder are particularly likely to emerge in cultures that change rapidly

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Treatments for Borderline Personality Disorder

- ◆ It appears that psychotherapy can eventually lead to some degree of improvement for people with this disorder
 - It is not easy, though, for a therapist to strike a balance between empathizing with a patient's dependency and anger and challenging his or her way of thinking
 - Furthermore, termination of therapy is often incredibly difficult

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Treatments for Borderline Personality Disorder

- ◆ Psychodynamic therapy has been somewhat effective when it focuses on the patient's central relationship disturbance, poor sense of self, and pervasive loneliness
 - This treatment has sometimes been combined with cognitive-behavioral interventions designed to help people recognize and address the perspectives of others
 - This combination treatment ("dialectical behavior therapy"), has received growing research support and is now considered the treatment of choice in many clinical circles
- ◆ Group therapy has also been of some help

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Treatments for Borderline Personality Disorder

- ◆ Antidepressant, antibipolar, antianxiety, and antipsychotic drugs have helped some individuals to calm their emotional and aggressive storms
 - Given the high risk of suicide attempts by these patients, their use of drugs on an outpatient basis is controversial
- ◆ Some patients have benefited from a combination of drug therapy and psychotherapy

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Histrionic Personality Disorder

- ◆ People with histrionic personality disorder are extremely emotional and continually seek to be the center of attention
 - They often engage in attention-getting behaviors
 - Approval and praise are the lifeblood of these individuals
 - People with histrionic personality disorder are often described as vain, self-centered, and demanding
 - Some make suicide attempts, often to manipulate others

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Histrionic Personality Disorder

- ◆ This disorder was once believed to be more common in women than in men
 - However, research has revealed gender bias in past diagnoses
- ◆ The latest statistics suggest that around 2% of adults have this personality disorder, with males and females equally affected

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How Do Theorists Explain Histrionic Personality Disorder?

- ◆ The psychodynamic perspective was originally developed to explain histrionic personality disorder and theorists have retained their interest in the disorder
 - Most psychodynamic theorists believe that, as children, people with this disorder experienced unhealthy relationships in which cold parents left them feeling unloved
 - To defend against deep-seated fears of loss, the individuals learned to behave dramatically, inventing crises that would require people to act protectively

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How Do Theorists Explain Histrionic Personality Disorder?

- ◆ Cognitive theorists look at the lack of substance and the extreme suggestibility found in people with the disorder
 - Some propose that people with histrionic personality disorder hold a general assumption that they are helpless to care for themselves
- ◆ Sociocultural theorists believe the disorder is caused in part by society's norms and expectations
 - The vain, dramatic, and selfish behavior may be an exaggeration of femininity as defined by our culture

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Treatments for Histrionic Personality Disorder

- ◆ Unlike people with most other personality disorders, those with histrionic personality disorder often seek treatment on their own
- ◆ Working with them can be difficult because of their demands, tantrums, seductiveness, and attempts to please the therapist

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Treatments for Histrionic Personality Disorder

- ◆ Cognitive therapists try to help people with this disorder change their belief that they are helpless and try to help them develop better, more deliberate ways of thinking and solving problems
- ◆ Psychodynamic therapy and group therapy have also been applied
- ◆ Clinical case reports suggest that each of the approaches can be useful
 - Drug therapy is less successful, except as a means of relieving the depression experienced by some patients

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Narcissistic Personality Disorder

- ◆ People with narcissistic personality disorder are generally grandiose, need much admiration, and feel no empathy for others
- ◆ Convinced of their own great success, power, or beauty, they expect constant attention and admiration from those around them
- ◆ People with this disorder exaggerate their achievements and talents, and often appear arrogant

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Narcissistic Personality Disorder

- ◆ People with this disorder are seldom interested in the feelings of others
 - Many take advantage of others to achieve their own ends
- ◆ Less than 1% of adults display narcissistic personality disorder
 - Up to 75% of these are men
- ◆ This type of behavior is common among normal teenagers and does not usually lead to adult narcissism

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How Do Theorists Explain Narcissistic Personality Disorder?

- ◆ Psychodynamic theorists more than others have theorized about this disorder, focusing on cold, rejecting parents
 - Object-relations theorists interpret the grandiose self-presentation as a way for people with this disorder to convince themselves that they are self-sufficient and without need of warm relationships
 - In support of this theory, research has found increased risk for developing the disorder among abused children and those from divorced families

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How Do Theorists Explain Narcissistic Personality Disorder?

- ◆ Behavioral and cognitive theorists propose that narcissistic personality disorder may develop when people are treated too positively rather than too negatively in early life
 - Those with the disorder have been taught to “overvalue their self-worth”
 - In support of this explanation, first-born and only children score higher on measures of narcissism
- ◆ Finally, many sociocultural theorists see a link between narcissistic personality disorder and “eras of narcissism” in society

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Treatments for Narcissistic Personality Disorder

- ◆ This disorder is one of the most difficult personality patterns to treat
 - Clients who consult therapists usually do so because of a related disorder, most commonly depression
 - Once in treatment, the individuals may try to manipulate the therapist into supporting their sense of superiority
- ◆ None of the major treatment approaches have had much success

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“Anxious” Personality Disorders

- ◆ The cluster of “anxious” personality disorders includes:
 - Avoidant personality disorder
 - Dependent personality disorder
 - Obsessive-compulsive personality disorder

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“Anxious” Personality Disorders

- ◆ People with these disorders typically display anxious and fearful behavior
- ◆ Although many of the symptoms are similar to those of anxiety and depressive disorders, researchers have found no links between this cluster and those Axis I diagnoses
- ◆ As with most of the personality disorders, research is limited
 - But treatments for this cluster appear to be modestly to moderately helpful

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Avoidant Personality Disorder

- ◆ People with avoidant personality disorder are very uncomfortable and restrained in social situations, overwhelmed by feelings of inadequacy, and extremely sensitive to negative evaluation
 - They believe themselves unappealing or inferior and often have few close friends

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Avoidant Personality Disorder

- ◆ The disorder is similar to social phobia, and many people with one disorder experience the other
 - Similarities between the two disorders include a fear of humiliation and low self-confidence
 - A key difference is that people with social phobia mainly fear social circumstances, while people with avoidant personality disorder tend to fear close social relationships
- ◆ Between 1 and 2% of adults have avoidant personality disorder

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How Do Theorists Explain Avoidant Personality Disorder?

- ◆ Theorists often assume that avoidant personality disorder has the same causes as anxiety disorders, including:
 - Early trauma
 - Conditioned fears
 - Upsetting beliefs
 - Biochemical abnormalities
- ◆ Research has not directly tied the personality disorder to the anxiety disorders

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How Do Theorists Explain Avoidant Personality Disorder?

- ◆ Psychodynamic theorists focus mainly on the general sense of shame felt by people with avoidant personality disorder
 - Some trace the shame back to early toilet training experiences

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How Do Theorists Explain Avoidant Personality Disorder?

- ◆ Cognitive theorists believe that harsh criticism and rejection in early childhood may lead people to assume that others will always judge them harshly
- ◆ In several studies, individuals reported memories that supported both the psychodynamic and cognitive theories

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Treatments for Avoidant Personality Disorder

- ◆ People with avoidant personality disorder come to therapy seeking acceptance and affection
 - Keeping them in therapy can be challenging because they often begin to avoid sessions
- ◆ A key task of the therapist is to gain the individual's trust
 - Beyond building trust, therapists tend to treat the disorder as they treat social phobia and anxiety
 - These treatments have had modest success
- ◆ Group and drug therapy may also be useful

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Dependent Personality Disorder

- ◆ People with dependent personality disorder have a pervasive, excessive need to be taken care of
 - As a result, they are clinging and obedient, fearing separation from their loved ones
 - They rely on others so much that they cannot make the smallest decision for themselves
- ◆ The central feature of the disorder is a difficulty with separation

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Dependent Personality Disorder

- ◆ Many people with this disorder feel distressed, lonely, and sad
 - Often they dislike themselves
- ◆ They are at risk for depression and anxiety disorders and may be especially prone to suicidal thoughts
- ◆ The exact prevalence of the disorder is not known, but some studies estimate it at over 2%
 - Research suggests that men and women are affected equally

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How Do Theorists Explain Dependent Personality Disorder?

- ◆ Psychodynamic explanations for dependent personality disorder are very similar to those for depression
 - Freudian theorists argue that unresolved conflicts during the oral stage of development can give rise to a lifelong need for nurturance
 - Object-relations theorists say that early parental loss or rejection may prevent normal experiences of attachment and separation, leaving some children with lingering fears of abandonment
 - Other theorists argue that parents were overinvolved and overprotective, increasing their children's dependency

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How Do Theorists Explain Dependent Personality Disorder?

- ◆ Behaviorists propose that parents of those with dependent personality disorder unintentionally rewarded their children's clinging and "loyal" behavior while punishing acts of independence
 - Alternatively, some parents' own dependent behaviors may have served as models for their children

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How Do Theorists Explain Dependent Personality Disorder?

- ◆ Cognitive theorists identify two maladaptive attitudes as helping to produce and maintain this disorder:
 - "I am inadequate and helpless to deal with the world"
 - "I must find a person to provide protection so I can cope"
- ◆ Such thinking prevents sufferers of the disorder from making efforts to be independent

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Treatments for Dependent Personality Disorder

- ◆ In therapy, people with this disorder usually place all responsibility for their treatment on the clinician
 - A key task is to help patients accept responsibility for themselves
 - Couple or family therapy can be helpful; both are often recommended

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Treatments for Dependent Personality Disorder

- ◆ Treatment can be at least modestly helpful
 - Psychodynamic therapy focuses on many of the same issues as therapy for people with depression
 - Cognitive therapists try to help clients challenge and change their assumptions of incompetence and helplessness
 - Antidepressant drug therapy has been helpful for those whose disorder is accompanied by depression
 - Group therapy can be helpful because it provides clients an opportunity to receive support from a number of peers and because group members may serve as models for one another

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Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder

- ◆ People with obsessive-compulsive personality disorder are so focused on order, perfection, and control that they lose all flexibility, openness, and efficiency
 - They set unreasonably high standards for themselves and others and, fearing a mistake, may be afraid to make decisions
- ◆ These individuals tend to be rigid and stubborn
 - They may have trouble expressing affection and their relationships are often stiff and superficial

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Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder

- ◆ Between 2 and 5% of the population has this disorder, with white, educated, married, and employed individuals receiving the diagnosis most often
 - Men are twice as likely as women to display the disorder
- ◆ Many clinicians believe that obsessive-compulsive personality disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder (the anxiety disorder) are closely related
 - While the disorders share similar symptoms, researchers have not found a specific link between them

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How Do Theorists Explain Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder?

- ◆ Most explanations of obsessive-compulsive personality disorder borrow heavily from those of obsessive-compulsive anxiety disorder, despite doubts concerning a link between the two
- ◆ Psychodynamic explanations dominate and research is limited

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How Do Theorists Explain Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder?

- ◆ Freudian theorists suggest that people with obsessive-compulsive personality disorder are anal regressive
 - Because of overly harsh toilet training, people become angry and remain fixated at this stage of psychosexual development
 - To keep their anger under control, they resist both their anger and their instincts to have bowel movements
 - As a result, they become extremely orderly and restrained

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How Do Theorists Explain Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder?

- ◆ Cognitive theorists have little to say about the origins of the disorder, but they do propose that illogical thinking processes help maintain it

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Treatments for Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder

- ◆ People with obsessive-compulsive personality disorder do not usually believe there is anything wrong with them
 - They are therefore unlikely to seek treatment unless they also are suffering from another disorder, most frequently anxiety or depression

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Treatments for Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder

- ◆ Although drug therapy and behavioral therapy have been effective for people with OCD (the anxiety disorder), people with the personality disorder often appear to respond better to psychodynamic or cognitive therapy

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What Problems Are Posed by the DSM Categories?

- ◆ Most of today's clinicians believe that personality disorders are important and troubling patterns
 - Yet these disorders are particularly hard to diagnose, easy to misdiagnose, and raise serious issues of reliability and validity
 - Several specific problems have been raised...

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What Problems Are Posed by the DSM Categories?

- ◆ Some of the diagnostic criteria cannot be observed directly
 - The diagnoses often rely heavily on the impressions of the individual clinician
 - Similarly, clinicians differ widely in their judgments about when a normal personality style crosses the line and deserves to be called a disorder

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What Problems Are Posed by the DSM Categories?

- ◆ The similarity of disorders within a cluster or between clusters creates classification difficulties
- ◆ People with quite different personalities may be given the same diagnosis
 - Individuals must meet a certain number of criteria to receive a given diagnosis, but no single feature is necessary for any diagnosis

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What Problems Are Posed by the DSM Categories?

- ◆ Because of these problems, diagnosticians keep changing the criteria used to assess the personality disorders
- ◆ Given these problems, some theorists believe that the personality disorders actually differ more in degree than in type of dysfunction
 - Some theorists have proposed that the disorders be organized by how severe certain key traits are rather than by the presence or absence of specific traits

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