

## **MODULE ELEVEN**

### **PERSONALITY DISORDERS**

Personality problems are problems in the basic personality structure of the individual. Personality disorders often begin in adolescence and continue throughout a lifetime.

Personality disorders are a class of psychological conditions that are characterized by a pattern of long term behavior that deviates from societal expectations, and create serious problems in relationships and society.

People with personality disorders tend to be inflexible, rigid and manipulative. Although most feel that their behaviors are justified and perfectly fine, they often have a tunnel-vision view of the world and have problems connecting with others in socially acceptable ways.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) has identified a **list of personality disorders** and classified them in three groups or clusters based on nature of the symptoms:

#### **Class A**

##### **Odd or eccentric disorders**

##### **Paranoid personality disorder**

Characterized by suspiciousness and a deep mistrust of people, paranoid personalities often think of others as manipulative, cunning or dishonest.

This kind of a person may appear guarded, secretive, and excessively critical.

### **Schizoid personality disorder**

People with schizoid personalities are emotionally distant and tend to prefer to be alone. They are generally immersed in their own thoughts and have little interest in bonding and intimacy with others.

### **Schizotypal personality disorder**

This disorder is characterized by odd and unusual “magical” beliefs. These individuals may have an eccentric way of behaving or dressing. They also tend to display outlandish beliefs such as believing that they can see the future or travel to other dimensions.

People with this condition often have difficulty connecting with others and establishing long term relationships. Overtime, they may develop a fear of social gatherings.

## **Class B**

### **Dramatic, emotional or erratic disorders**

#### **Antisocial/psychopath personality disorder**

Individuals with this disorder are known to be manipulative, irresponsible, and have a history of legal difficulties. They show little respect for the rights of others and feel no remorse for their actions. They also leave a trail of unfulfilled promises and broken hearts.

Antisocial personalities are also at high risk for drug abuse (e.g., alcoholism; meth) since many are “rush” seekers. While they seldom suffer from depression or anxiety, they often use drugs to relieve boredom and irritability.

### **Borderline personality disorder**

Borderline personalities are impulsive and have extreme views of people as either “all good” or “bad”.

These people are unstable in relationships and have a strong fear of abandonment. They may form an intense personal attachment with someone they barely know and end it without any apparent reason. They might also engage in a “pull” and “push” behavior that usually ends with their partner leaving permanently.

Self-mutilation, suicidal gestures or attention-seeking destructive behaviors are not uncommon. Borderline personalities are three times more likely to be female.

### **Histrionic personality disorder**

People with this condition engage in persistent attention-seeking behaviors that include inappropriate sexual behavior and exaggerated emotions. They can be oversensitive about themselves and constantly seek reassurance or approval from others.

Excessive need to be the center of attention, low tolerance for frustration, blaming others for failures is also characteristics of the histrionic personality.

## **Narcissistic personality disorder**

Narcissistic personalities have a blown up perception of themselves and an excessive desire for attention and admiration. Individuals with this disorder have a false sense of entitlement and little respect for other people's feelings. They are oversensitive to criticism and often blame others for their failures.

Prone to outbursts of anger and irritability, the narcissistic personality tends to be manipulative in interpersonal relationships. But deep beneath the surface lays a vulnerable self-esteem, susceptible to depression and feelings of inferiority.

## **Class C**

### **Anxious or fearful disorders**

#### **Avoidant personality disorder**

This disorder is described by chronic social withdrawal, feelings of inferiority, over-sensitivity and social withdrawal.

People with avoidant personality disorder are constantly fearful of rejection and ridicule. They form relationships only with people that they trust. The pain of rejection is so strong that these individuals prefer to isolate rather than risk disappointment.

#### **Dependent personality disorder**

Individuals with this condition have an abnormal desire to be nurtured that leads to submissive and clinging behavior. Dependent personalities

have difficulty making their own decisions and seek others to take over most important areas in their lives.

They will often go to great length to obtain nurturance from others, have separation anxiety when alone and desperately seek another partner when a close relationship ends.

### **Obsessive-compulsive personality disorder (OCPD)**

Not to be confused with OCD. People with OCPD are perceived as strict and demanding by others. They have a persistent preoccupation with perfectionism, orderliness, and efficiency, at the expense of interpersonal relationships. They also show an excessive devotion to work, productivity and exhibit rigidity and stubbornness.

People with OCPD usually have a negative view of life and often become withdrawn and depressed.

### **ACTIVITY**

1 (a) What are personality disorders?

(b) Briefly explain the following personality disorders below.

- (i). Paranoid P.D
- (ii). Borderline P.D
- (iii). Obsessive compulsive
- (iv). Dependent P.D