

Exploring Personality Disorders

Personality – A fairly stable and lasting set of behavioral and emotional traits

- When things change our behavior, it is called “out of character”
- Being mentally healthy means enjoying relationships, and managing social, work, and other responsibilities

Personality Disorder – A long, inflexible pattern of seeing things differently, and having extremes of thinking, feeling and behaving. The patterns are usually the same in most personal and social situations and they make it harder to function

- May include intense or rapidly changing emotional responses, and impulsivity
- The behaviors do not directly distress the person, but they impact people who have relationships with them
- Is not to be self-diagnosed, but based on a psychiatrist’s diagnosis

Diagnosis of Personality Disorder

- Is probably made in adulthood, even if it begins in teen years – Need to see if another psychiatric illness is causing the symptoms before making a diagnosis
- Need to consider if physical illness, substance use, or medication effects could be causing symptoms
- Having cultural differences in self-concept, emotional expression and coping **does not** mean there is a personality disorder

Why do people develop Personality Disorders?

- May be from a complex mixture of genetics (family history of personality disorders), lack of nurturing as a child, or severe life experiences
- Research is being done to test the theory that personality disorders are a milder form of the major psychiatric disorders

Modified from: Robinson, D. J. (1999). Field guide to personality disorders. Rapid Psychler Press: Port Huron, Michigan