



Mental Health Association of Tarrant County
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Fort Worth, TX 76107
817-335-5405/www.mhatc.org

Dissociation and Dissociative Disorders

What is Dissociation?

Dissociation is a mental process that causes a lack of connection in a person's thoughts, memory and sense of identity. Dissociation seems to fall on a continuum of severity. Mild dissociation would be like daydreaming, getting "lost" in a book, or when you are driving down a familiar stretch of road and realize that you do not remember the last several miles. A severe and more chronic form of dissociation is seen in the disorder Dissociative Identity Disorder, once called Multiple Personality Disorder, and other Dissociative Disorders.

How Common is Dissociation?

Transient and mild dissociative experiences are common. Almost 1/3rd of people say they occasionally feel as though they are watching themselves in a movie, and 4% say they feel that way as much as 1/3rd of the time. The incidence of these experiences is highest in youth and steadily declines after the age of 20. 7% of the population may have suffered from a dissociative disorder at some time. But these disorders are difficult to identify and may go undiagnosed for many years.

Other Forms of Dissociation

Other dissociative disorders include "psychogenic amnesia" (the inability to recall personally significant memories), "psychogenic fugue" (memory loss characteristic of amnesia, loss of one's identity, and fleeing from one's home environment), and "multiple personality" (the person has two or more distinct personalities that alternate with one another. This is also known as "Dissociative Identity Disorder" or "Multiple Personality Disorder").

Treatment

When dissociative experiences are the central, chronic, and overwhelming problem, treatment usually demands long-term individual psychotherapy. People with these disorders often have good reasons to mistrust authority as well as a lifelong habit of keeping secrets from themselves and others. A working alliance must be established with an often demoralized and suspicious person who believes the world is unjust or that he/she is an evil person.

For More Information:

Contact the Mental Health Association of Tarrant County, 817-335-5405, www.mhatc.org, your community mental health center, or the:

National Mental Health Association

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[Mental Health Resource Center](http://www.nmha.org) 800/969-NMHA
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