

What is histrionic personality disorder?

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Histrionic personality disorder (HPD) is a condition that causes a person to demonstrate behavior that is highly emotional and dramatic. A person with this condition may also excessively seek attention from other people.

Originally, people believed that women were more likely to receive a diagnosis of HPD. However, [researchTrusted Source](#) now suggests that it affects all genders equally.

Keep reading to learn more about HPD, including its symptoms, causes, and treatment options.

Symptoms

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HPD is one of several cluster B personality disorders. [Cluster B personality disorders](#) often involve behavior that is overly emotional, erratic, and dramatic.

People with HPD may feel disheartened or dismissed when they are not the center of attention. They may often seem to be vibrant or overly seductive, and other people may describe them as “the life of the party.”

People with HPD will likely demonstrate some of the following [symptoms](#):

- feels discomfort at not being the center of attention
- exhibits oversexualized behaviors
- has shifting and shallow emotions, such as jealousy or greed
- uses their appearance to get attention
- has impressionistic speech that lacks detail
- experiences emotions that often appear exaggerated and dramatic
- is suggestible
- believes that relationships are more intimate than they actually are

One [2018 study](#)[Trusted Source](#) also suggests that people with HPD may have [alexithymia](#). This refers to a trait wherein a person is unable to recognize or describe emotions that they or others experience.

Defense mechanisms are unconscious mental processes that protect a person from becoming overwhelmed by [anxiety](#). People with HPD may often use repression, dissociation, or both as forms of [defense mechanism](#)[Trusted Source](#).

Repression refers to when a person keeps painful stimuli such as memories, thoughts, and feelings out of conscious awareness.

Dissociation refers to the mental process wherein a person becomes disconnected from their thoughts, feelings, memories, and sense of identity.

Causes

The exact causes of HPD are currently unknown. However, some [researchers believe](#)[Trusted Source](#) that it may develop due to a combination of learned behaviors and inherited factors.

For example, some mental health professionals believe that a person may inherit HPD, as it can affect multiple members of the same family.

Parenting styles may also play a part in a person's chance of developing HPD. For example, if a child observes their parent or caregiver engaging in volatile, inappropriate, or oversexualized behavior, they may be more likely to develop HPD.

Another possible explanation is that HPD develops as an adaptation to traumatic childhood experiences.

Treatments

In the United States, there is no Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved medication for the [specific treatment](#) of personality disorders.

Psychotherapy is usually the primary treatment for HPD. This involves a person discussing their feelings and experiences with a therapist. The therapist can then help the person determine the reason behind certain actions and behaviors.

Some examples of psychotherapy that may be useful for people with HPD include cognitive analytic therapy (CAT) and [cognitive behavioral therapy \(CBT\)](#).

CAT is a talking therapy that focuses on the way a person thinks, feels, and acts. [Older research](#) suggests that this type of therapy can help reduce the intensity of HPD symptoms, though researchers must continue to study its effectiveness.

CBT helps identify and address a person's negative thought patterns. It can help a person with HPD improve their erratic behaviors by teaching them to think and act more calmly.

Diagnosis

There are no specific psychometric tests to diagnose HPD, but a psychiatrist will likely use the criteria in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition* to assess whether or not someone has HPD.

To receive a diagnosis of HPD, a person will need to demonstrate [five of the eight symptoms](#)[Trusted Source](#) listed under the “Symptoms” section of this article, as well as present regular and extensive signs of emotional dysregulation.

The symptoms must also begin by the time a person reaches early adulthood.

Complications

A person with HPD may experience some complications related to the symptoms of the condition. For example, behaving in an oversexualized way might make it difficult to maintain long-term romantic relationships.

A person with HPD may become angry if they receive criticism or negative feedback. This may make certain work environments more challenging for them, their colleagues, and their employers.

People with cluster B disorders such as HPD also tend to seek adventure. This can lead to risk taking behaviors such as substance use.

It is not [uncommon](#) [Trusted Source](#) for people with a cluster B personality disorder to also experience [depression](#) or anxiety. Therefore, a person may experience symptoms of these conditions alongside those of HPD.

Outlook

The way a person experiences HPD is likely to vary. For example, some people may struggle with focusing on goals, maintaining romantic relationships, or keeping a job. However, some people with HPD may feel comfortable in casual settings.

With therapy, people with HPD can learn to better regulate their emotions, understand the impact they have on others, and change any maladaptive thinking patterns.

This may help a person in their intimate relationships and working environments.

When to see a doctor

Because people with HPD can sometimes function well in casual social situations, some people may think that they do not have a problem.

However, if a person believes that they are experiencing symptoms of HPD and it is negatively affecting aspects of their life, such as intimate relationships and work, they may wish to consider seeing a mental healthcare professional.

Summary

HPD is a mental health condition wherein a person craves being the center of attention and demonstrates exaggerated emotions.

Because HPD symptoms may negatively impact intimate relationships and working life, seeking therapy can help reduce the intensity of the symptoms and thoughts that a person with HPD may be experiencing.

People with HPD often thrive in social situations, and with the right support, they can lead fulfilling lives.

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/histrionic-personality-disorder>