

What is a Personality Disorder?

A personality disorder is a type of mental health problem in which you have a rigid pattern of thinking, feeling, and behaving, which causes significant distress and difficulties with functioning. The symptoms of a personality disorder are present for years (at least two) and impact several areas of your life. There are several types of personality disorders. Some personality disorders related to impulsivity and emotional difficulties are 10-25x more prevalent in justice-involved individuals.



Symptoms of Common Personality Disorders

Borderline Personality Disorder

- Impulsive and risky behavior
- Unstable self-image (not sure of who you are)
- Unstable and intense relationships
- Up and down moods (changes quickly)
- Suicidal behavior or threats of self-injury
- Intense fear of being alone or abandoned
- Ongoing feelings of emptiness
- Frequent, intense displays of anger
- Stress-related paranoia that comes and goes

Antisocial Personality Disorder

- Conduct disorder was present before age 15
- Disregard for safety of self and others
- Repeated lying/deception
- Recurring problems with the law
- Repeated violation of the rights of others
- Aggressive, often violent behavior
- Impulsive behavior
- Consistently irresponsible
- Limited remorse for behavior



Risks for Borderline and Antisocial Personality Disorders

Exposure to community violence

Hostile and rigid thinking pattern

Child abuse and neglect

Poverty

Adverse and traumatic experiences

Neuropsychological differences



Treatment for Personality Disorders

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT): Present focus (mindfulness), improving communication (interpersonal effectiveness), managing emotion (emotion regulation), making it through crises (distress tolerance)

Contingency Management: Rewarding positive and prosocial behaviors (especially useful with substance use problems)