

The science of psychopathology

Business



When a person thinks an irrational idea such as harming someone or even killing someone, what stops them? The force holding a person back from going through with an absurd action is the brain's chemistry. Those who cannot hold back from such an insane idea are known as psychopaths. The difference between a normal brain and a psychopathic brain is a chemical imbalance. A psychopath can be defined as a person suffering a chronic mental disorder with abnormal or violent social behavior. This is understood that psychopaths cannot control their tempers, as their brain does not take into consideration the consequences of their actions.

Looking around, a psychopath might not be easily identified. About one percent of the population consists of psychopaths and twenty-five percent of male offenders in federal corrections facilities. Most psychopaths are withheld in asylums or prisons and kept away from society to prevent threats. Psychopaths show a number of traits that can distinguish them from a crowd. Since psychopathology is a mental illness, then their traits or actions would also be key in classifying a psychopath.

A common trait that is seen in many psychopaths is feeling no remorse. Psychopaths are seen to do grotesque actions and not feel guilt ("Psychopathic Traits."). The explanation of this connects with the next trait which is anti-sociality and the lack of controlling anger. They tend to be very manipulative and shallow, so they do not get along well with others. When they become angry, they are not able to express that anger in a positive way, which is common in a lot of people.

When a normal human gets angry they might think irrationally, but once their brain reminds them that they will have consequences, they come back down to Earth (“ Psychopathic Traits.”). That is the problem with psychopaths, they do not see the consequences and their brain does not have the function to remind them that they will have to face consequences. That is another trait that psychopaths carry, which is failure to accept responsibility for their own actions. They lack self-discipline which ends them up in prison. This trait is very common in psychopaths, which is criminal versatility.

They are very prone to commit a diversity of different offenses. Another characteristic psychopaths share is difficulty in long term relationships with family and friends. Because psychopaths are very impulsive and have a high need for stimulation they get bored easily and find it hard to commit to deep and long term relationships. This characteristic is not voluntary, because in a study conducted by Aina Gullhaugen, it showed that most psychopaths suffer from underlying psychological pain that is caused by early childhood abuse (The Norwegian University of Science and Technology). Most psychopaths were psychologically or physically abused in some way during their childhood that caused them to have difficulty connecting or becoming close with others. The last trait is having superficial charm, or being able to be smooth, slick, and charming (“ Psychopathic Traits.

“). This characteristic contributes with the manipulative trait because they use their charm to manipulate people or catch them at their weakest without feeling any shame or guilt. The last characteristic or trait that may be carried in a psychopath is promiscuous sexual behavior. This trait connects with <https://assignbuster.com/the-science-of-psychopathology/>

criminal versatility due to psychopaths committing crimes such as rape or corruption of a minor. Psychopaths tend to express themselves dominantly.

They tend to be active in multiple relationships or engaged in an affair. They have brief indiscriminate relationships and take pride in the discussion of sexual conquests. Many people are concerned with the developmental process of a psychopath. Some researchers say that it is biological factors, and others say that it is from early childhood abuse. Biological factors would include the foundation of the brain and how it was developed. This could include inheritance or birth defects in the brain.

Most of the blame, however, seemed to stem from their childhood (The Norwegian University of Science and Technology). Most psychopaths researched in studies were shown to have dark abusive childhoods. This abuse came from various parenting styles. Most parenting styles fall on a scale between the absence of care to completely controlling and obsessive, but the psychopaths being studied seemed to bare the extremes. They were either totally neglected or insanely controlled. Children are sometimes overlooked in the psychopathic scale due to the misbehaving mindset of a regular child.

But there are signs to determine that a child might be psychopathic. One major sign involves the hurting of others or animals. The most commonly seen sign of psychopathic children is animal abuse (" Psychopathic Traits."). Most psychopaths have grown up torturing or murdering animals whether it is a house pet, stray animals or wild animals found in the woods.

This behavior is so common that it is being closely looked at by the FBI.

Another sign seen in children is lying frequently and ignoring rules. Lying is a common behavior of a child but constant dishonesty is a factor seen in psychopathic children. A regular child might cry when being caught in a lie, but a psychopathic child might become aggressive. They view this as someone else's fault for catching them, and not theirs for being dishonest.

Breaking rules is also a psychopathic trait that will carry into adulthood. They believe that rules do not apply to them or that they simply do not care about them (" Psychopathic Traits."). This leads back to not seeing the consequences they will face which leads to the next sign, which is not being bothered by consequences. They do not care about the punishment which gives them no reason to stop themselves from engaging in irrational activities. Extreme tantrums and constant stimulation is a regular toddler's agenda, but for psychopathic children as well as adults, they are very easily bored and are always looking for some exciting piece of entertainment.

Adults are able to find their own sense of entertainment but children are dependent on adults that they feel the need to throw extensive and exaggerated tantrums (" Psychopathic Traits."). The last sign of psychopathic children includes lack of empathy and stealing for enjoyment. They do not feel any remorse for taking something from someone and knowing that the victim enjoyed or cared about that item. They find pleasure in wrongful doings and feel obligated to take something from someone.

Numerous studies have shown the difference between a psychopathic brain and a normal brain (" The psychopathic Brain: Is It Different from a Normal Brain?").

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The main parts in differentiating the brain of a psychopath to the brain of a normal human is located in the amygdala, which is the region of the brain that reinforces learning and how to behave in social places. This area is also important because it help a person recognize important emotional information such as a threat. The difference in the amygdala is that psychopaths show less activity in this region meaning that they do not respond as well to learning or emotional behaviors. The next rear of the brain that shows unusual activity is the prefrontal cortex, which is the part of the brain in charge of monitoring behavior and estimating consequences which will affect future decision making (“ The psychopathic Brain: Is It Different from a Normal Brain?”). This area showed less activation for psychopaths because whatever they learned emotionally would not have an effect on their decision making process.

This also is understood that belittle the thought of consequences. Because they are very impulsive they do not take the time to think about the consequences of their actions nor would they care. When psychopaths decided to cooperate, this area showed less activity, but when they viewed someone else being punished, this region spiked higher activity than the average brain would normally reach (“ The psychopathic Brain: Is It Different from a Normal Brain?”). A brain imbalance was also showed to spot yet another difference between the psychopath and the average being. In a study of twenty-eight men who have committed violent crimes, researchers tested these men for levels of 5-HIAA and HVA (“ Brain Imbalance ‘ Causes’ psychopaths.

“). These substances are involved with chemical reactions in the body that regulate emotions. The substance 5-HIAA is developed during the breakdown of serotonin, a neurotransmitter which carries signal throughout nerves. HVA is a substance that is produced during the breakdown of dopamine, which is a chemical in the body that is connected with our emotions, how we feel and overall is important in helping complete everyday tasks. The study found that psychopaths indicated higher levels of HVA and lower levels of 5-HIAA. Studies such as this one help researchers determine treatment for those suffering from psychopathy (“ Brain Imbalance ‘ Causes’ psychopaths.

“). Understanding how psychopaths think involves looking at an everyday life of a psychopath. They might not be alarmed by a picture of a gun because a gun might be part of everyday life to them (The Norwegian University of Science and Technology). The way that they grew up seems like the most rational way to them and cannot view any other prospective. The behaviors of psychopaths vary because they are all wired differently.

This is seen by the criminal diversity to the way they deal emotional damage. Most suffering psychopaths are still finding ways to cope with the pain of not being able to develop a close relationship with someone. They need and want closeness but when they think about it they feel that it is impossible and immediately give up (The Norwegian University of Science and Technology). This might cause anger, which leads to another coping mechanism, which is addressing the pain. Not only psychopaths, but everyday people cope with anger in a negative way which can lead to bad decisions.

Instead of addressing it a more positive way such as sports or therapy people turn to destructiveness and become violent and hostile towards one another. This comes back to rational thinking and wanting to appear a certain way. They grew up under harsh conditions and have built up a wall, wanting to appear strong, stubborn and show that nothing can break them. In another study conducted by Ania Gullhaugen, she examined the wide range of emotions between a group of psychopaths and group of "normal" people. She found that psychopaths tend to experience more negative emotions, versus positive where they showed little to no difference (The Norwegian University of Science and Technology). A popular psychopath that shares many of these traits and characteristics is Lizzie Borden.

Lizzie Borden was born on July 19, 1860 and lived in Fall River, Massachusetts. Not long after she was born her mother died, and her father Andrew Borden remarried three years after to Abby Durfee Gray (Biography Editors). Lizzie had an older sister, Emma to whom she was somewhat close with. But, the Borden sisters were not very close with their new stepmother, for they were afraid that Abby's family would try to gain access from the Borden family's wealth. Lizzie and her sister helped their father with his manufacturing and real estate development career (Biography Editors). In 1892, Abby and Andrew Borden were murdered in their home in Fall River, Massachusetts.

That morning Lizzie alerted the maid of her father's dead body on the sofa he was sleeping on as he had been the victim of a brutal hatchet attack. While searching the home, the body of Abby Borden was also found in the upstairs bedroom. Lizzy was an immediate suspect in the case because she

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was the only one home, and she has been under close eye due to small discrepancies from previous years. Her sister was out of town during the attack. After the murders, Lizzie was seen burning a dress that supposedly had paint on it (Biography Editors).

Prosecutor's claimed that the dress was stained with blood and Lizzie was indicted on December 2 of the same year. Lizzie was eventually acquitted and living with her sister for the following decade from the money that her father's business earned. In 1905 her sister moved out of the shared house because townsfolk believed that Lizzie has confessed the murders to her sister and they never spoke again. She died on June 1, 1927 of pneumonia, her sister died days later in Newark, New Hampshire (Biography Editors).

One of the major traits of Lizzie Borden that connected to those of a psychopath is the difficulty in holding close relationships.

She has lived with family members for long periods of time but with some difficult. Eventually, she ended up murdering her parents most likely due to the fact that she did not get along well with her mother. Another well-known psychopath from history is Elizabeth Bathory. Elizabeth was born in 1560 in Transylvania to a high class family that consisted of Kings, knights and judges. Elizabeth's childhood was not considered " normal", as her uncle taught her Satanism, and her aunt sadomasochism, which is a sexual practice that stems from sadism and masochism (History Staff).

Around the age of fifteen, she was married to a Count Nadady and the couple resided in the family's castle. Count Nadady constructed torture chambers to please his wife. She used this chamber to torture and kill

servant girls by jamming pins and needles under fingernails, tying the girls down, and smearing the girls in honey and leaving them to be attacked by bees and ants. When her husband died in early 1600s, she recruited her former nurse, Ilona Joo, and a local witch named Dorotta Szentes (History Staff). Together, they began capturing more peasant girls to harm and kill for their enjoyment. Some of her torturous actions included biting chunks of flesh from the girls, and one girl was forced into cooking and eating her own skin.

Bathory believed that consuming the blood of these young girls would keep her young and beautiful (History Staff). Since her family was strongly involved in local government, these crimes were overlooked, but as soon as she began targeting the daughters of nobles Bathory and her aides were brought to trial in January of 1611. She was present in court for eighty counts of murder, and were convicted. Bathory managed to escaped the death penalty, but was held in a small room of the castle that consisted only of three slits for air and food. After three years of these living conditions Bathory was found dead in the cell in August 1614 (History Staff). Bathory, contains many typical traits and grew up in conditions that could have easily spawned a psychopath.

In her early childhood was not neglected and ignored, instead she belonged to a distinguished family. But Elizabeth experienced teachings from her aunts and uncles that could have created this guilt free attitude (Szandor LaVey). She was taught Satanism, which suggests to show no mercy and destroy people if not respected. She was also taught sadomasochism, which lead her to develop an enjoyment for watching people in pain and

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humiliation. Both of these practices contorted her brain into the brain of a psychopath. Learning that a at young age allowed the brain to grow and think that the torturous and sick practices were acceptable and normal (Szandor LaVey).

Compare to Lizzie Borden, Bathory was a more large-scale murder. These examples give a great demonstration that shows how psychopathic people can come in many shapes, sizes, and forms, even on their thinking levels or their purpose for killing. Psychopaths look at their lives and what they do, and why they do it, differently, yet they all fall under the category of a psychopath. They all share certain traits and brain imbalances, but compose different outcomes.